

THE BATTLE FOR CHINA: THE U.S. NAVY, MARINE CORPS AND THE COLD
WAR IN ASIA, 1944-1949

A Dissertation

by

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ABSTRACT

The U.S. Navy and Marine Corps' long history in China before World War II was a prelude to a little known struggle. In the aftermath of Japan's surrender in August 1945, the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps embarked on a complex series of operations to rescue Allied prisoners of war, stabilize North China, and repatriate millions of Japanese soldiers and civilians. The more than 50,000 Marines and over a hundred vessels of the U.S. Seventh Fleet committed to China repatriated over three million Japanese and transported 200,000 Chinese Nationalist soldiers to North China. While doing so, they became enmeshed in the complex military and political landscape that was the Chinese Civil War. Over the next four years, U.S. Navy leaders, intent on reestablishing the longstanding presence and strategic role of the Navy in China, opposed efforts by the U.S. Army and State Department to withdraw all U.S. forces from the vast country. From 1944 to 1949, a core group of civilian and naval leaders worked steadily to shore up Nationalist China in the face of a growing and intractable Chinese Communist Party. Unwavering in their view that China was a strategic priority and that Asia stood at the forefront of the nascent Cold War, these leaders repeatedly clashed with General George C. Marshall and President Harry Truman. Exacerbated by an atmosphere of distrust and intra-service rivalry, this conflict over China revealed stark divisions between the U.S. Navy and its sister services, and illuminated inherent differences as the United States struggled to come to terms with both the new Cold War and the reality of nuclear warfare.

DEDICATION

To my *laopo*, the love of my life.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A project such as this often endures many iterations, as the graduate student struggles to both amass both the research and experience necessary to create an acceptable dissertation. Originally, this project was intended to fill an obvious gap in the post-WWII historiography, that of the role of the U.S. Seventh Fleet and III Marine Expeditionary Force in North China. In the course of my research it became apparent that a study analyzing the complex and amorphous reasons for American involvement in China was needed. The existing historiography focused heavily on the separate roles of the Navy and Marines in China, or more broadly on the overall American effort in East Asia. Yet I felt this was an inadequate approach. The two services were bound inextricably together in their service in post-WWII North China. Furthermore, a study that focused more narrowly on the strong and complex disagreements that arose between the U.S. Navy and Army leadership over China would expose the deep intra-service rivalries that seemed to consume the American military during this period.

My research made clear that for a small group of senior Navy leaders, China could not be cast aside in the tsunami of worldwide communist expansion. For cultural and historic reasons, the preservation of China became a strategic priority. As such the U.S. Navy's leaders were determined to retain their traditional position as the lead U.S. service in East Asia and China. Overwhelming yet exaggerated concerns over the Cold War in Asia and the Navy's proprietary relationship with China fueled its leaders' desire to stay in a country that, in many ways, no longer resembled the enormous and ancient empire of previous decades.

Over the past two and half years I have travelled to more than a dozen archives and libraries around the United States. If anything this experience has taught me that no shortcuts exist in quality historical research, and time is both your best ally and enemy. Yet no amount of adequate research can compete with proper organization. If I could go back and advise my younger self, I would tell him that a properly formatted and categorized digital photo is worth a hundred that are not.

Like all graduate students who embark on this journey, I was the recipient of assistance from many smart and generous people. I cannot begin to adequately thank my adviser, Dr. James Bradford, for his knowledge, support and guidance over the past five years. With a command of naval history and editing acumen second to none, he repeatedly challenged me to keep writing and improving the final product. I am eternally grateful to all that he's done for me. For the remainder of my committee words cannot adequately express my gratitude. Dr. Jason Parker, Olga Dror, and D. Bruce Dickson tirelessly answered my questions and assisted me with their combined decades worth of knowledge and expertise. A special thank you goes out to Dr. Sally Paine, of the Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island. Her encyclopedic knowledge of China and its history was invaluable to me. Overall my committee was a study in superlatives.

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NOMENCLATURE

AAF	Army Air Forces
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CBI	China-Burma-India Theater of Operations
CINCPAC	Commander in Chief, Pacific
CNO	Chief of Naval Operations
CTO	China Theater of Operations
FRUS	Foreign Relations of the United States
GMD	Guomindang
MEF	Marine Expeditionary Force
PRC	People's Republic of China
OSS	Office of Strategic Services
SACO	Sino-American Cooperative Organization
UNRRA	United Nations Recovery and Relief Administration
USA	United States Army
USMC	United States Marine Corps
USN	United States Navy

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INTRODUCTION

On September 10th 1945, Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek sent a message to President Harry S. Truman asking that the United States establish a “military advisory board” to assist China in “reorganiz[ing] her defensive military machine.” Truman replied that he would take matter under consideration and referred the request to members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff for study.¹ Just over a month later, on October 18th, Chief of Naval Operations Ernest J. King sent a memorandum to Army Chief of Staff George C. Marshall outlining a structure for such an and organization. Marshall responded by saying:

“Two principles that appear to me to be essential in the establishment of the U.S. Advisory Group in China are:

- a. That there be no possibility of differing viewpoints on similar matters being placed before the Generalissimo for resolution.
- b. That there be some method to insure that duplication and overlapping of functions be avoided between the various groups in China.”

Marshall explained his concerns about potential disunity, saying, “Differences in view between the Army and Navy as to what matters are of joint interest have probably occurred recently more often in China than any other areas of the world.”² The Army Chief of Staff hoped to avoid in the future the difficulties he had observed during the previous four years of war. From 1941 to 1945 Army and Navy leaders both in

¹ Chiang to Truman, September 10, 1945; Truman to Chiang, September 13, 1945. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1945* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 19xx);, 7: 554, 557.

² Larry I. Bland and Sharon Ritenour Stevens, eds., *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, vol. 5: *The Finest Soldier – January 1st, 1945 – January 7th, 1947* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2003): 333.

Washington and the Pacific debated how best to defeat Japan and competed for the allocation of resources to their theaters of operations.

With Japan's surrender in August 1945, State Department officials, Army and Navy leaders began to debate how best to stabilize China and what role each service should play in that undertaking. The concurrent rise of the Cold War in Europe and the Mediterranean and conflict over defense unification overshadowed the development of U.S. policy concerning China both at that time and among diplomatic historians since. Indeed, the entire postwar American military intervention in China has been neglected by military and naval historians. Very few histories of World War II, the Cold War, or the Korean War even mention the presence of an entire U.S. Navy fleet or two reinforced Marine Corps divisions in China. Those few scholars who have studied the American intervention in China tend to focus on either the Navy or Marine Corps' separate roles. Although a few studies of the end of World War II shed light on the first phase of the Navy and Marine Corps intervention, no single study has attempted to place the 1944-1949 intra-service rivalry over China within the context of the burgeoning Cold War in Asia. The conflict over China had many components and causes, and involved much more than simple intra-service rivalry. For the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps, these disputes overlapped with a little remembered intervention into mainland China that saw the ending of one war and the beginning of another.

The intervention can be divided into three main phases. The first, October 1944 through December 1945, was perhaps the most contentious. This period coincided with the beginning of U.S. Army Lieutenant General Albert Wedemeyer's tour as

Commander of the China Theater, and ended with the arrival of General George C. Marshall as a special envoy to attempt reconciliation between the Nationalists and Communists. The second phase, from January 1946 to January 1947, began with signs of progress in negotiations aimed at establishing a framework for peace between the armies and governments led by Chiang Kai-shek and Mao Zedong, as well as cooperation between leaders of the U.S. Army and Navy. But within weeks optimism gave way to confusion and disillusionment as the cease fire brokered by Marshall in January broke down and disagreements over the future role of the American military in East Asia intensified. During the third and final phase of U.S. operations in China, the Cold War engulfed East Asia and contributed to increasingly sharp and often public debates about the remaining U.S. Navy and Marine Corps personnel in China, and what to do with them. In this last phase the State Department led the opposition to the Navy's efforts to remain in China.

Determined to protect key strategic interests, guard against communist expansion, and maintain their longstanding proprietary and historical relationship, a core group of senior U.S. Navy leaders demanded that there be no withdrawal from China. For Army leaders such as George Marshall and Douglas MacArthur, China was a peripheral concern. Their disappointing experience with Nationalist leader Chiang Kai-shek during the war with Japan led them to distance themselves from what they considered a corrupt and unreliable ally. Navy leaders felt differently. Secretary of the Navy James V. Forrestal, Chief of Naval Operations Ernest King, and Seventh Fleet commanders Thomas C. Kinkaid, Daniel E. Barbey, and Charles M. Cooke believed

China lay at the heart of America's longstanding relationship with East Asia. For cultural and historic reasons, the U.S. Navy and Marines believed China to be a strategic priority. Facing the headwinds of the new Cold War and a new and unfamiliar postwar world, the Navy's leaders were slow to realize that the China of past years was gone forever. Overwhelming yet misplaced concerns over the Cold War in Asia and the Navy's proprietary relationship with China fueled its leaders' desire to stay in a country torn asunder and beyond any other nation's control.

The American post-WWII intervention in China is dimly remembered today. Having occurred in the years between the end of World War II and the beginning of the Korean conflict, even modern members of the U.S. Navy or Marine Corps have little knowledge of the size and scope of the American effort in China. Yet even by the colossal standards of World War II it was a major military operation. At its height more than 50,000 U.S. Marines were utilized in various roles in the aftermath of Japan's surrender, as were over a hundred U.S. Navy warships and their crews. Millions of Asians were repatriated or transported by U.S. Navy vessels to new homes or to new battlefields. Some of the U.S. Navy's operations were useful to Chinese and Japanese alike. Others were not. Despite its best intentions the military presence of the United States in China deepened the mistrust between the administration of Harry Truman and the Chinese Communist Party under Mao Zedong. This would have profound consequences for the future.

This study places the conflict between the U.S. Army and Navy in the context of the Navy and Marine Corps' role in the Cold War world. Reduced to a fraction of its

wartime strength by 1946 and beset by ideological and strategic challenges on all sides, both the Navy and Marine Corps were forced to fight a defensive struggle against new technologies and false predictions for future warfare. One of its greatest defenders, Navy and later Defense Secretary James Forrestal, would play a prominent role in the Navy's China policy, much more than has been previously understood. Other luminaries in this rivalry include George Marshall, who so dominated U.S. foreign and diplomatic policy in the late 1940s, especially with regards to China. These and other American leaders would argue, bitterly at times, over the proper place for the Navy and Marines in China. Their personalities, backgrounds, and service loyalty would all play an important part in the struggle that follows.

Figure 1: Map of North China and Manchuria



Source: Newspaper PM, inc. 1945, Map Reading Room, Library of Congress.

Note on Geographical Names: For this study the Pinyin system of Chinese place names has been utilized, with the following exceptions. Due to their familiarity to Western readers, the cities of Port Arthur and Mukden are referred to by the traditional and historical spelling.

Table 1: Prominent Geographical Names by Transliteration System

<u>Pinyin</u>	<u>Traditional System</u>	<u>Wade-Giles</u>
Beijing	Peking	Pei-ching
Chongqing	Chungking	Ch'ung-ch'ing
Dalian	Dairen	Ta-lien
Fuzhou	Foochow	Fu-chou
Guangdong	Kwantung	Kuang-tung
Guangzhou	Canton	Kuang-chou
Guling	Kuling	Kuling
Haerbin	Harbin	Ha-erh-pin
Jiulong	Kowloon	Chiu-lung
Lushun	Port Arthur	Lu-shun
Liaoning	Liaoning	Liao-ning
Beidaihe	Peitaiho	Pei Tai Ho
Qingdao	Tsingtao	Ch'ing-tao
Shanghai	Shanghai	Shangh-hai
Shenyang	Mukden	Shen-yang
Tianjin	Tientsin	T'ien-chin
Wuzhou	Wuchow	Wu-chou
Xiamen	Amoy	Hsia-men
Yanan	Yenan	Yen-an
Yantai	Chefoo	Yan-t'ai

Source: Bruce Elleman and S.C.M. Paine, *Modern China: Continuity and Change 1644 to the Present* (New York: Prentice Hall, 2010): A1

CHAPTER I

THE U.S. NAVY, ARMY, AND MARINE CORPS IN CHINA, 1900-1945

On June 22nd 1945 the island of Okinawa was declared secure, eighty-two days after savage battle had soaked the rocky ground with blood. The casualties were horrific. The United States suffered nearly 13,000 killed in action and more than 80,000 wounded. Conservative estimates placed the number of Japanese dead, both military and civilian, at more than 100,000. And then there were the kamikazes. Hundreds of barely trained Japanese pilots had hurled themselves in a form of ritual suicide at anything afloat flying an American flag, sinking and damaging dozens of warships and killing nearly 5,000 sailors. Americans had faced the unique Japanese desire to fight to the death since Guadalcanal in 1942 but the scale of Okinawa stunned nonetheless. In his history of the closing months of the war historian Max Hastings concluded that, “At every level, from high command to fighting soldiers, sailors, and Marines, Americans emerged from the battle shocked by the ferocity of the resistance they encountered, the determination of the Japanese combatants to die rather than accept defeat.”¹

By August the First Marine Division on Okinawa circulated with rumors. Many weary leathernecks along with the exhausted and bloodied sailors offshore looked north towards the Japanese home islands, envisioning another Okinawa on an even more horrifying scale. Very few expected to be sent home. With the thunderclap announcement of the atomic destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the all but

¹ Max Hastings, *Retribution: The Battle for Japan, 1944-45* (2007): 403.

disbelieved surrender of Japan most believed that they would be sent to Tokyo as part of the occupation force. It was met with some astonishment when word reached the sailors and Marines that many of them would be sent to North China. Instead of northward to Honshu they turned their gaze westward toward a land that both the Navy and Marine Corps knew well.

One of the First Division Marines, a thoughtful yet hardened Alabama native, recorded that his tent mate responded to the surprise announcement with a shout, exclaiming, “Hey you guys, we’ll be China Marines!”² For many of the American sailors and Marines duty in China harkened back to another era, when the Navy and Marine Corps were permanent guests in the fabled land. Many of the youngest of them had heard stories from older chiefs and sergeants about service in China. Soon they would see the country for themselves. The First Division Marines would be among nearly 100,000 personnel who would be sent to strategic points in North China in the closing months of 1945. Eugene B. Sledge, the quiet Alabaman Marine whose memoirs have earned the status of a modern classic, summarized the setting, “In the fall of 1945, there existed in China a power vacuum that many opposing factions stood ready to fill. Into this seething cauldron of political and ideological unrest we arrived – the survivors of the battle for Okinawa – more like schoolboys on holiday than mighty conquerors.”³ But it would not be just the Marines in China. The U.S. Navy would go as well, and would set up its new Western Pacific headquarters in the North China port city of

² E. B. Sledge, *China Marine: An Infantryman’s Life after World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002): 9.

³ *Ibid.*, 1

Qingdao. For the next four years China would be home for the recently created Seventh Fleet.⁴

The Old China Marines, 1900-1941

Long before Tokyo's surrender the Navy Department considered China an area of special interest and responsibility. Armed with legal standing to work and trade in China and ostensibly positioned to protect American Christian missionaries and economic interests, the U.S. Navy maintained a small but highly regarded force of sailors and Marines at strategic points in the vast country. Over time this small force developed a culture and existence all its own.

The story of American sailors and Marines in China during the first decades of the 20th century carries an almost mythical quality to it. Many of the young American servicemen who found themselves in China during the Twenties and Thirties brought back fantastic tales of a technologically primitive yet cultured land fondly remembered. Nothing in the farms of the Midwest or even the streets of Manhattan could prepare them for the ancient civilization they encountered. But beyond the cultural impressions of China these men also built up a well of experience and familiarity with the vast country. Before thousands of American bluejackets and leathernecks returned to Chinese waters in October of 1945 the older veterans among them had regaled them of tales of "Old China." They had been here before.

⁴ Note: The entity known as the U.S. Seventh Fleet would go through several name changes during this period. From late 1943 to January 1st, 1947 it would be known simply as 7th Fleet; then Naval Forces Western Pacific, 1947-19 August 1949; and finally United States Seventh Task Fleet, 19 August 1949-11 February 1950. Afterwards it became known as United States Seventh Fleet, a title that it has kept to this day. For simplicity purposes of this study it will be referred to as Seventh Fleet for the remainder of this study.

American merchant sailors had carried the Stars and Stripes into China even before the adoption of the U.S. Constitution. In 1784 the small American merchant ship *Empress of China* sailed into the teeming port of Canton, inaugurating a small but important portion of America's international trade.⁵ A century later, as a result of relentless Western imperialism and its own internal weakness China had come to resemble an enormous roast that had been carved to pieces by outsiders. The Qing Dynasty that had ruled China since 1644 saw its power to direct events slipping away in the world's most populous nation. Following its defeat at the hands of the British in the Opium War (1839-1842) and a series of other humiliations the Qing were forced to cede sovereignty to Western powers in more than a dozen treaty ports, most notably British-dominated Shanghai and Hong Kong, Russian Port Arthur and Dalian, German Qingdao, and the French in the southern port of Guangzhouwan (see Table 1 for Chinese geographical names). Extraterritoriality, the legal premise that Western laws and customs were sovereign in these treaty ports, became one of the most glaring examples of Chinese humiliation and fed an attitude of disdain for the West.

Rarely in history has so large a nation been under the thumb of outsiders. By the summer of 1900, anger at Western domination, coupled with a series of droughts and bad harvests, exploded into an uprising that terrified and astonished European and American capitals. The "Brotherhood of Harmonious Fists," known to history as the Boxers, began a deadly campaign to purge China of all foreigners, any Chinese convert

⁵ Eric Jay Dolin's *When the United States First Met China: An Exotic History of Tea, Drugs, and Sail* (New York: Liveright Publishing, 2012), pp. 22-23.

to Christianity, and all those who sheltered Westerners. In Shanxi more than forty foreign missionaries were beheaded, and tens of thousands of Chinese Christians were executed by the most gruesome methods. The Boxer rising culminated in the encirclement of the foreign legations in Beijing and a subsequent fifty-five day siege. Inside citizens of more than a dozen Western nations along with thousands of desperate Chinese Christians clung to life, most with almost nothing to eat and all waiting for rescue.

The Boxers seemed to possess a legendary status even before proclaiming themselves immune to modern weapons. Yet, as Chinese historian Jonathan Fenby has pointed out, the Boxers, who saw themselves as “a divine army marching to eradicate the demons threatening their country” were not rebels in the traditional sense, but instead were a violent and motivated minority seeking to destroy all foreign influence.⁶ In spite of a firm belief in their own invincibility as well as the support of the Qing Empress Dowager Cixi, the Boxers proved unable to cope with the military power of the West. A relief force totaling nearly twenty thousand men from eight nations, including several hundred U.S. sailors and Marines, ended the siege of Beijing in August 1900, and soon exacted a heavy price on the Qing Dynasty. Signed in September of 1901, the Boxer Protocol forced China to pay a large indemnity and make territorial concessions to the victors. Furthermore each of the signatories retained the right to station military personnel in Beijing for the defense of their foreign legations.⁷

⁶ Jonathan Fenby, *Modern China: The Fall and Rise of a Great Power, 1850 to the Present* (New York: Harper Collins, 2008): 83.

⁷ Evan F. Carlson, “Marines as an Aid to Diplomacy in China,” *Marine Corps Gazette*, February 1936: 48.

In her study of the Boxer rebellion, Diana Preston argues that the uprising “saw the first steps in America’s gradual assumption from Britain of the role of an often misunderstood, sometimes misguided, and occasionally hypocritical world policeman.”⁸ This assumption of global leadership actually began a few years earlier, with America’s swift victory in the Spanish-American War. The subsequent annexation of the Philippines placed China much closer to America’s economic grasp. In 1899, in response to Germany obtaining a “sphere of influence” in China’s Shandong Peninsula, Secretary of State John Hay issued the first Open Door Note, which declared that “all nations in China should enjoy perfect equality of treatment for their commerce and navigation within such ‘spheres’.”⁹

Thus began a new era in Asia for the United States. After using admittedly brutal methods to pacify and occupy the Philippines, the entry into China revealed a new willingness among Americans to embrace certain aspects of imperialism, even though most chose not to view it that way. American diplomats and businessmen saw in China a land open to their interests, a new frontier of investment and trade tempered by their desires to avoid outright imperialism. American missionaries saw in China millions of souls eager to receive Christianity. The prevailing view among Americans was that their country was not a true imperialist power. Diplomatic historian Michael Schaller argues that when they did think of China most Americans assumed they would be welcomed

⁸ Diana Preston, *The Boxer Rebellion: The Dramatic Story of China’s War on Foreigners that Shook the World in the Summer of 1900*. (New York: Berkley Books, 2001): x.

⁹ John Hay to Andrew D. White, “First Open Door Note,” Department of State, September 6, 1899. <http://www.vlib.us/amdocs/texts/opendoor.html>. Retrieved on November 4, 2014.

because they were not Europeans, and thus untainted by with the stigma of imperialism. Schaller concludes that in this view Americans clung to a dangerous hypocrisy, writing, “The fact that the United States demanded and acquired all the imperialist privileges which others wrung from the Chinese government seemed a mere technicality.”¹⁰

These privileges were based on a series of treaties American diplomats and military leaders used to legitimize their rights in China. The first and most important of these was signed in 1844. Backed by a three-ship squadron, Caleb Cushing, a former congressman, concluded an agreement with the Qing Dynasty. Signed in Macao, the Treaty of Wanghia granted the United States most favored-nation tariff status, authorization to trade at Canton and four other treaty ports, and the exemption of Americans in China from local laws.¹¹ The subsequent Burlingame Treaty of 1868 also granted religious freedom to Americans in China, which gave legal authorization for the subsequent missionary crusade in Asia. As bluntly stated by naval historian William Braisted, “Until such time as the Chinese were deemed fit to exercise the full rights of sovereign independence, it was the responsibility of the U.S. Navy to extend to Americans within its reach protection under the unequal treaties.” Every American president from Theodore to Franklin Roosevelt stretched these treaties to maximum

¹⁰ Michael Schaller, *The U.S. Crusade in China, 1938-1945* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979): 1.

¹¹ Teemu Ruskola, “Canton is Not Boston: The Invention of American Imperial Sovereignty,” *American Quarterly*, Vol. 57:3 (September 2005): 860.

advantage, and had no qualms about establishing a semi-permanent military presence in China.¹²

During the decades following the American Civil War the U.S. Navy gradually increased its permanent presence in Asian waters. Previously titled the East India Squadron (1835-1861), the Asiatic Squadron (1865-1901), and the 1st Squadron of the Pacific Fleet (1901-1907), the U.S. Asiatic Fleet was formally established in the Philippines in 1907. The smallest of the U.S. Navy's three fleets, by 1920 it numbered only twenty-six vessels, six of which were obsolete gunboats assigned to the Yangtze Patrol.¹³ The fleet followed a seasonal deployment, wintering at its homeport in Manila and in the spring and summer months sailing a long arc in the Western Pacific and South China Sea. The annual cruise was as much about diplomacy as a show of force. While the fleet's handful of cruisers and destroyers were regular visitors to the ports of China, French Indochina, and the Dutch East Indies, its river gunboats, permanently on the Yangtze River, were its most visible assets in China.¹⁴

Formally established in 1922, the Yangtze Patrol was unique. One of the most peculiar organizations ever created by the U.S. Navy one Yangtze boat captain captured the singular nature this way, writing, "Naval officers are often assigned to strange types of duty, but for duty afloat I believe there is none more unusual than duty on a river

¹² William R. Braisted, *Diplomats in Blue: U.S. Naval Officers in China, 1922-1933* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2009): 3.

¹³ Felix L. Johnson, "The Asiatic Station." US Naval Institute *Proceedings* [henceforth USNIP], 58:5 (May 1932): 698.

¹⁴ Braisted, *Diplomats in Blue*, 4.

gunboat.”¹⁵ Though an American river patrol had existed since the 1850’s not until 1903 did a permanent naval presence emerge, when the river gunboats *Elcano*, *Villabos*, and *Pompey* arrived in Shanghai. The patrol’s mission officially was to protect American economic interests and citizens along the river highway that was the Yangtze. Based out of Hankow, approximately 600 miles from Shanghai, the patrol’s most publicized function was to provide protection and support to thousands of American Christian missionaries.¹⁶

In 1925 Congress authorized funding for construction of six river gunboats to replace the collection of craft left over from the Spanish-American War.¹⁷ These vessels formed the nucleus of Yangtze Patrol during the late 1920s and 1930s. Service on these small, shallow draft craft that resembled large houseboats was a tour of duty found nowhere else. The crew of around fifty officers and men included Chinese mess servants and barbers. A special armed guard of six enlisted men carried Thompson submachine guns and Browning rifles at all times, unusual duty for a sailor. Navigation on the Yangtze was complex and dangerous, requiring great skill. Despite the availability of native pilots, the shallow waters and poor navigation aids led to numerous groundings. Even navigating through fresh water the engineers below had to struggle to keep the muddy, contaminated waters of the river from clogging the evaporators that fed clean water to the engine boilers.¹⁸

¹⁵ Roy Plaff, “Sea Duty on the Yangtze,” USNIP, 58:11 (November 1933): 1612.

¹⁶ Kemp Tolley, *Yangtze Patrol: The U.S. Navy in China* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press): 58.

¹⁷ *Annual Reports of the Navy Department for the Fiscal Year (Including Operations to November 15, 1925)* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1925): 6

¹⁸ Plaff, “Sea Duty on the Yangtze,” 1612-14.

Though preceded by the Navy, the U.S. Marine Corps also established itself in China after the Boxer rising. For most years following the First World War the Marine garrison in China numbered no more than a thousand men in Beijing and Shanghai. However this small but prominent contingent became a fixture of American foreign policy in Asia. Deployment to China was highly coveted by most Marines, and several who served in Beijing would become legends in the Corps. Future Medal of Honor recipients Lewis “Chesty” Puller, Alexander Vandegrift, and Merrit B. Edson were perhaps the most famous of the Marines whose service in China preceded their remarkable exploits on Guadalcanal and elsewhere in World War II. All recalled their China service with pride.

Augmenting the Navy and Marine Corps dominance in China was the U.S. Army’s 15th Infantry Regiment. Through a complex series of circumstances from 1912 to 1938 the 15th Regiment, minus one battalion deployed in the Philippines, was stationed at Tianjin in the former German legation. A unit whose placement in China was as complex as its exotic mixture of traditions, “a dismounted American version of the Bengal Lancers” in the view of Asian historian Robert O’Conner, the “Can-Do” 15th also included a remarkable showcase of future military leaders.¹⁹ George C. Marshall, Joseph Stilwell, and Matthew Ridgway all passed through Tianjin on their way to higher commands. For then Lieutenant Colonel Marshall, who served as executive officer of the regiment from 1924 to 1927, the three years in China were most enjoyable. Marshall

¹⁹ Richard O’Connor, *Pacific Destiny: An Informal History of the U.S. in the Far East: 1776-1968* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1969): 419.

biographer Edward Cray notes that, “Unlike the 15th’s newly arrived Major Joseph Stilwell, Marshall, despite his sympathy for the Chinese people made no special effort to immerse himself in their history or culture.”²⁰ He did, however, make a strong effort to learn the challenging Chinese language, and was able to achieve considerable proficiency in less than six months. Yet as Marshall’s official biographer Forrest Pogue concludes, Marshall considered his China tour as merely one among many in his long road to General of the Army.²¹

Unlike Marshall, who was joined by his wife Lily in Tianjin, most American servicemen were unmarried or unaccompanied by their wives in China. The presence of so many unattached men in iniquitous locales like Shanghai led to endless opportunities to get drunk, and worse. Chinese and Russian prostitutes were plentiful, as were opportunities for a drunken brawl. One notorious section of Shanghai known as Blood Alley was the scene for many such confrontations. O’Conner has described it as, “the arena in which the American Marines and Seaforth Highlanders staged some of their most memorable brawls. When those contingents met in a bar, the furniture and glassware of the establishment was immediately written off as a total loss.”²²

Violent brawls notwithstanding most American sailors and Marines would describe their time in East Asia as a peaceful and enjoyable tour of duty. Life was good in China. Wares were cheap, duty was light and opportunities for leisure activities such

²⁰ Edward Cray, *General of the Army: George C. Marshall, Soldier and Statesman* (New York: Cooper Square Press, 2000): 100.

²¹ Forrest Pogue, *George C. Marshall: The Education of a General, 1880-1939* (New York: Viking Press, 1963): 233.

²² O’Connor, *Pacific Destiny*, 397.

as hunting and fishing were plentiful. Liquor, an illegal commodity during Prohibition, was easy to obtain.²³ Even for a private earning \$21 a month, a fifth of whiskey and a quart of beer could be purchased for little more than a dollar.²⁴ Both services enjoyed the cheap labor of Chinese cooks and servants, with even the most junior sailor or private able to afford his own personal “boy.” One Marine officer speaking years later summed up the experience with simple nostalgia, saying, “The Old China days, the Shanghai and Peking days were wonderful.”²⁵

A few Marines even enjoyed the rare opportunity to join the Navy on the Yangtze. Periodically Marine officers would be invited to embark on a gunboat traveling upriver to Chongqing. One Marine officer, 2nd Lieutenant Ian Bethel, took such an opportunity and joined the newly commissioned USS *Panay* on her month-long 1,500-mile voyage in 1928. Recalling the event as “one of the greatest experiences that I ever had” in China, he also recalled the segregated nature of Chinese society. With some bewilderment he noted that because they were from a different province, but perhaps also because they worked for the Americans, “the Chinese that were aboard this boat as mess boys, pilots, assistant pilots and so forth, wouldn’t get off and go ashore in Chongqing. They were just as unwelcome in Chongqing – or probably more so – than we were.”²⁶

²³ James P. Berkeley Oral History Interview, “Reminiscences of James P. Berkeley, 1969.” Marine Corps Project, Bemis M. Frank, Columbia University Oral History Collection, 91-92.

²⁴ Chester M. Biggs, *The U.S. Marines in North China, 1894-1942* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Co., 2003): 171.

²⁵ James P. Berkeley Oral History Interview, Bemis M. Frank, 74

²⁶ Reminiscences of Ian Maywood Bethel, 1968, Marine Corps Project, Bemis M. Frank. interview, Columbia Oral History Collection, 40-41.

This fractured nature of China would soon be exploited by its smaller but more powerful island neighbor. While China stumbled through the first decades of the 20th century Japan had remade itself into a great power, beating the Russian colossus in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905. Simultaneously the collapse of much of the world economy in 1929 ushered in a new and terrible reality. In a phrase borrowed from Winston Churchill, historian Piers Brendon describes the decade of the 1930s as a dark valley, “inhabited by the giants of unemployment, hardship, strife, and fear.”²⁷ The Western powers, most notably the United States, France, and Great Britain, saw their will and power sapped by the Great Depression but maintained their democratic institutions. In Japan the march towards militarism was more gradual than in Germany, but inexorable. In 1931 Japan seized Manchuria in an operation that was universally condemned but drew little else in response. This aggressive move marked the first step in Japan’s war with not only China but toward war with the United States as well.

Americans who served in China during the 1930s cast a wary eye towards Japan, but were more concerned with their own host country. Although the duties and missions of the Navy and Marines in China were quite different, they shared many of the same fears and concerns. They were visitors in a land of over three hundred million people, replete with bandits and independent warlord armies. Around them China was going through wrenching and momentous changes. After the fall of the Manchu Dynasty in 1911 China endured nearly two decades of internal chaos and strife. Only in the late 1920s, when Chiang Kai-Shek’s Guomindang (also known as the Nationalist) party had

²⁷ Piers Brendon, *The Dark Valley: A Panorama of the 1930's* (New York: Random House, 2002): xiii.

defeated most of its warlord rivals did a manner of stability return. Louis Morton, in a study of the American military experience in China, summarized the U.S. presence in the ancient empire, concluding that, “The maintenance of a garrison in China created numerous problems. Not only did the Army and Navy have to maintain this force in the territory of a foreign sovereign nation – in itself a perplexing and complicated task – but they also had to develop and keep up to date elaborate plans to reinforce the garrison in the event of attack, or, if necessary, to withdraw it altogether.”²⁸

Public Opinion and the American Military in China

Far from the barracks of Beijing most Americans gave little thought to their servicemen in China. A few powerful politicians, however, not only noticed but felt that their presence was a thirty-year mistake. Among the most critical was Republican Senator William Edgar Borah of Idaho. A determined isolationist who took pride in having never traveled outside the United States, by the late 1930s he was in his seventies and in poor health. But even infirm he remained a brilliant orator, and would become one of the most vocal critics of American policy in East Asia. A powerful cabal of senators, largely from the West and Midwest, often joined Borah in demanding that American sailors and Marines depart China as quickly as possible.

During the 1930s many Americans shared Borah’s views. The average American was overcome with a single concern: surviving the Great Depression. The economic

²⁸ Louis Morton, “Army and Marines on China Station: A Study in Military and Political Rivalry,” *Pacific Historical Review*, 29:1 (February 1960): 51.

cataclysm was at its peak in the years of 1931-32, and most Americans had no desire to become involved in the desolate lands of Manchuria. In her study of the often ugly battle between American isolationists and interventionists in the years before Pearl Harbor, historian Lynne Olsen notes that, “The misty idealism of the pre-World War I period had given way to a hard-eyed, determined isolationism, which precluded accepting any of the inherent responsibilities that came with America’s position as the world’s leading economic power.”²⁹ A poll conducted in September 1937 found that just over half of Americans favored a complete military withdrawal from China.³⁰

Most American diplomats and military leaders in China viewed the situation quite differently. Among them was Nelson T. Johnson, a career diplomat who became American ambassador to China in 1935. At the time an energetic forty-eight years old, he was fluent in Mandarin Chinese and had lived more than a decade in Asia.³¹ Johnson saw Japan’s intentions in China presciently. In a December 1935 letter to the veteran diplomat and Asian expert Stanley Hornbeck, a discouraged Johnson wrote that, “I am convinced that the Japanese military leadership has definitely embarked on a well-considered plan which is intended to place China under the control and supervision of Japan, and this plan will be persistently and consistently pursued by the Japanese until it has been accomplished.” He warned that American missionaries would soon be at risk,

²⁹ Lynne Olson, *Those Angry Days: Roosevelt, Lindbergh, and America’s Fight over World War II, 1939-1941* (New York: Random House, 2013): 28.

³⁰ “54 Percent Would Remove Troops from China,” *Washington Post*, September 5, 1937.

³¹ “Nelson T. Johnson Becomes First U.S. Ambassador,” *China Weekly Review*, September 21, 1935: 1.

and that the lack of Chinese unity in the face of a determined and aggressive Japan would likely spell disaster in the near future.³²

In the spring of 1937 a leader who shared Johnson's views took command of the Asiatic Fleet. Admiral Harry T. Yarnell, an 1899 graduate of the United States Naval Academy, was one of its most accomplished yet little known graduates. A visionary in aviation and submarine warfare, he predicted the dominance of fleet submarines and carrier aviation in the next war. Like Johnson he also foresaw Japan's aggressive plans for Southeast Asia. In a 1937 letter to the High Commissioner of the Philippines Yarnell wrote that he had no doubt that the Japanese Navy would encroach upon the archipelago in the next few years, and would probably seize the Philippine archipelago if they could. With fierce words he argued that whatever mistakes the United States had made in governing the Philippines it could not abandon them to the Japanese, and that a stronger China made Japanese aggression less likely to succeed. He also derided American isolationists for living in the past. Referring to the idea that the United States could protect itself by withdrawing from the world, he wrote, "The time has passed when a great nation can increase her safety by such a method. The world has shrunk too much."³³

The Sino-Japanese War

Events soon overtook Johnson and Yarnell's most pessimistic predictions. Anticipating a quick victory against the Chinese on July 7th, 1937 the Japanese initiated

³² Nelson T. Johnson to Stanley Hornbeck, Nelson T. Johnson Papers, Box 1, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, 1-3. Hereafter abbreviated as LOC.

³³ Letter from Admiral Harry Yarnell to J. Weldon Jones, April 1, 1937, Harry Yarnell Papers, LOC.

the “China Incident,” better known as the Sino-Japanese War. In a disputed set of circumstances, the Japanese guard at the ancient Marco Polo Bridge southwest of Beijing opened fire on Chinese soldiers, sparking an apocalyptic war whose price in blood no one expected. In the words of one of the most respected historians of Chinese military history, “neither the Chinese nor the Japanese high command anticipated the outbreak of a total war that would ultimately spread throughout China and beyond, and would last eight long years.”³⁴ Millions would eventually die due to Japan’s miscalculations. In an August 1st letter Marine Corps Captain John Letcher recorded that he had been able to visit the village of Nan Yuan, a short drive from Beijing. Dozens of Chinese soldiers lay unburied on a road, most cut down by Japanese machine gun fire while transiting the area. It would be a small foretaste of what was to come.³⁵

Total war would soon consume China. In fits and starts Japan advanced ever deeper into the country’s enormous interior, and in horror and disappointment the Chinese Nationalists watched as their armies disintegrated in the face of the Japanese onslaught. Facing a modern and exceptionally destructive modern military the GMD government withdrew inland, eventually setting up its government in the central city of Chongqing. One specialist on the Sino-Japanese War described Chiang’s strategy against the Japanese as a time honored defensive one, writing, “Nationalist China opted for defensive warfare, for trading space for time, and for drawing out the Japanese forces so

³⁴ Edward J. Drea and Hans van de Ven, “An Overview of Major Military Campaigns during the Sino-Japanese War, 1937-1945” in Marc Peattie, Edward J. Drea, and Hans van de Ven, eds., *The Battle for China: Essays on the Military History of the Sino-Japanese War of 1937-1945* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010): 27.

³⁵ Katie Letcher Lyle, ed. *Goodbye to Old Peking: The Wartime Letters of U.S. Marine Captain John Seymour Letcher* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1998): 62-63.

as to wear them down and prevent them from translating their battlefield success into a durable victory.”³⁶

Yet such a strategy could not stem Japanese brutality, and to the world’s horror the fury of Japanese militarism exploded upon the Nationalist capital of Nanjing in December 1937. Japanese soldiers inflicted cruel and inhuman suffering upon Chinese women and children in Nanjing, something even acknowledged by Japanese military leaders at the time. In vivid and searing language historian Piers Brendon concludes that the Japanese, “embarked on a saturnalia of destruction such as had not been seen since the sack of Magdeburg during the Thirty Years War.” In this orgy of rape, pillage, and murder tens of thousands of civilians were slaughtered; the exact number will never be known. Conservative estimates range from 50,000 to 100,000 men, women, and children.³⁷

Even Americans impressed by Japan’s achievements over the past century began to take a dim view of Nippon in the wake of the Nanjing massacre. Despite the destruction most remained committed to not getting involved. On December 12th the desires of many isolationists to remain neutral in Asia was put to its first major test. While underway on the Yangtze and flying its largest American flags the USS *Panay* was bombed and sunk by Japanese aircraft. Three Americans and one Italian journalist were killed, and forty-six Americans and three Chinese were wounded.³⁸

³⁶ Hans van de Ven, “The Sino-Japanese War in History,” in Pettie, et al., *The Battle for China*, 447.

³⁷ Piers Brendon, *The Dark Valley*, 460.

³⁸ Political Report for December 1937/January 1938, 1-2, U.S. Embassy China, Harry Yarnell Papers, Box 12, LOC.

Isolationists in the United States were quick to downplay the event. While lamenting the loss of life some Americans felt the United States had brought the deaths upon itself by the continued presence of military personnel in China. Most isolationists embraced Japan's prompt admission of guilt and promise of substantial monetary compensation.³⁹ Senator Borah termed the event a "regrettable thing," while Senator Elbert Thomas of Utah, another staunch isolationist, took special note of Japan's contrition and declared, "You can't go to war with a nation which admits it was wrong." One Texas congressman even declared that it was "about time for us to mind our own business." Many in Congress demanded the swift withdrawal of all American military personnel from China. With Japan's prompt apology and subsequent compensation to victim's families the *Panay* Incident soon faded from memory.⁴⁰

After the *Panay* sinking the United States and Japan all but became locked on a collision course to war. American public opinion turned against Japan but isolationists continued to push to keep the country out of war. Thanks to the remarkable diplomatic efforts of Admiral Yarnell, who walked a tightrope during his tenure as head of the Asiatic Fleet, a series of confrontations between U.S. Navy and Japanese military personnel did not lead to bloodshed.⁴¹ Likewise the Marines in Shanghai and Beijing repeatedly had to endure insults and indignities from the Japanese Army, who members,

³⁹ "Texts of Notes on the Panay Attack: The Japanese Note," *New York Times*, December 15, 1937: 16.

⁴⁰ "Congress Leaders Decry Jingoism," *New York Times*, December 14, 1937.

⁴¹ One prominent example of this occurred in September 1938, when an escalating series of incidents in the Chinese port of Tsingtao nearly led to an outbreak of hostilities. A series of heated misunderstandings between Japanese soldiers and U.S. Navy personnel escalated during a tense week. Only through swift and careful diplomacy with his Japanese counterpart, Vice Admiral Toyoda, was the crisis averted. See Letters to and from Admiral Yarnell to Vice Admiral Toyoda, September 1938, Harry Yarnell Papers, Box 12, LOC

on numerous occasions, tried to provoke the Marines on guard duty into opening fire. But despite these close calls none of the incidents led to a clash of arms.⁴²

For the next four years Japan became ever more trapped in a China quagmire of its own creation. From 1937 to 1941 Japan suffered more than 600,000 casualties in a war that it could not conclude on its own terms. Despite the loss of millions of lives and their capital at Nanjing, Chinese leaders did not surrender, to the surprise and dismay of the Japanese. One Chinese historian has concluded that, “for four years, China, expending oceans of blood and undertaking huge material sacrifices... carried on the struggle against Japan virtually alone, with a heroism and stoicism far too little appreciated in the West.”⁴³ The West, particularly the United States, responded by increasing pressure on Japan’s most vulnerable point, its dependence on foreign oil. By early 1941 the United States had steadily tightened the noose of economic sanctions around Japan’s vulnerable neck, and in the summer declared an embargo on oil exports to the resource hungry empire.⁴⁴ Furthermore during the previous two decades American naval planners had crafted a comprehensive war plan to defeat the Japanese Navy. The Japanese leadership knew that despite outward appearances of isolationism the American fleet, on paper, would be prepared. Faced with a choice in their minds of economic and political ruin or war, Japan’s leaders chose war.⁴⁵

⁴² Memorandum from Colonel Price to Lt. Colonel Oka, Harry Yarnell Papers, Box 12, LOC.

⁴³ Wang Qisheng, “The Battle of Hunan and the Chinese Military Response to Operation Ichigo” in Peattie, et al. *The Battle for China*, 422.

⁴⁴ Edward S. Miller, *Bankrupting the Enemy: The U.S. Financial Siege of Japan Before Pearl Harbor* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2007).

⁴⁵ For the best study on U.S. naval planning against Japan, see Edward S. Miller, *War Plan Orange: The U.S. Strategy to Defeat Japan, 1897-1945* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1991).

Before the Japanese struck most American military and civilian personnel were evacuated from China. Most American military leaders in the region recognized that they were more a liability than an asset in the event of a war with Japan. The Army's 15th Regiment in Tianjin had packed up and left China in 1938, and as relations continued to deteriorate by August 1941 Yarnell's successor, Admiral Thomas C. Hart, recommended that the Marines in China be sent home. The 1200 man Fourth Marine detachment in Shanghai shipped out first in November, to be followed by the remaining legation personnel in Beijing and Tianjin.⁴⁶ At the same time most of the remaining American gunboats on the Yangtze and their crews were withdrawn. Those seaworthy enough to do so made the voyage to Philippines. The few unfortunate enough to be left behind were scuttled. On December 5th the Navy officially dissolved the Yangtze Patrol. One of the U.S. Navy's most unusual and distinctive missions had come to an end.⁴⁷

Keeping China in the War: 1941-43

On the morning of December 8th, 1941 the two hundred Marines still in Beijing and the nearby port of Qingwandao awoke to find their country at war with Japan. Rather than fight a hopeless battle they chose to surrender. One of the Marine officers who would soon endure the brutality of a Japanese prisoner of war camp declared to a fellow officer that, "Do you know that this is the first time that a United States Marine

⁴⁶ Biggs, *The United States Marines in North China*, 205-6.

⁴⁷ Tolley, *Yangtze Patrol*, 282.

command has surrendered without a fight?”⁴⁸ As the United States gradually recovered from its shock, the nation that was now at war with Japan saw China as a centerpiece of American strategy for the Pacific. For the first two years of the war American strategic planning in Asia centered around two points: keeping China in the war and using it as a base to launch a counteroffensive. Yet as the war progressed American and Chinese leaders grew frustrated with one another. Chiang, having led his country through four years of brutal war, demanded more support than the United States and Great Britain were willing to provide. The Anglo-Saxon powers, for their part, wanted to keep China in the war but balked at providing the level of material support Chiang demanded. The “Germany First” policy that guided Anglo-American cooperation and strategy kept China a secondary theater throughout the war.⁴⁹

To the frustration of Navy and Marine Corps leaders the U.S. Army took over leadership of American operations in China after Pearl Harbor. In light of the severe losses sustained by the Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor and in the Philippines this made strategic sense but frustrated the Navy Department, as Army thinking and control came to dominate the newly established China-India-Burma Theater. Appointed the senior American commander in the CBI in January of 1942, Lieutenant General Joseph Stilwell proceeded to undercut numerous attempts by the Navy to assert its currently limited influence in China.

⁴⁸ George Clark, *Treading Softly: The U.S. Marines in China, 1919-1949* (New York: Praeger Press, 2001): 125.

⁴⁹ Wang Qisheng, “The Battle of Hunan and the Chinese Military Response to Operation Ichigo” in Peattie, et al., *The Battle for China*, 422.

Long a land torn apart by rival warlords China would be no different when the Americans returned to the country in early 1942. The best known of these contests emerged between Chiang and General Stilwell himself. As the head of the China-Burma-India (CBI) Theater as well as Chiang's Chief of Staff Joseph Stilwell was a hard-edged soldier who had considerable experience in China, having developed a respectable fluency in Mandarin Chinese. Yet historians are sharply divided over his leadership during the war. An irreverent and abrasive personality who in private referred to Roosevelt's close aide Harry Hopkins as a "strange gnomelike creature"⁵⁰ and used the pejorative "Peanut" to describe Chiang, Stilwell respected only raw strength.⁵¹ He also owed some of his stature in the Army to his friendship with George Marshall. Stilwell's courage and leadership under atrocious conditions during the 1942 Burma campaign earned him undying praise, yet in matters of personality, temperament, and diplomacy he has rightly come under enormous criticism. One historian concludes that despite his gifts Stilwell was ultimately a poor choice for the China post, concluding, "Leadership of the CBI required a person of remarkable stamina, determination, and tact. Stilwell was the personification of the first two but failed miserably with the third."⁵²

In fairness to Stilwell the obstacles he confronted in China were all but insurmountable. After his arrival in March 1942 an initial period of goodwill between himself and Generalissimo and Madame Chiang soon evaporated. For his part Chiang

⁵⁰ Joseph Stilwell, *The Stilwell Papers*, arranged and edited by Theodore H. White (New York: William Sloane and Associates, 1948): 36.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 157.

⁵² John McLaughlin, *General Albert Wedemeyer: America's Unsung Strategist in World War II* (Philadelphia, PA: Casemate Publishing, 2012): 86.

came to resent the American's arrogant cockiness and overconfidence.⁵³ Stilwell came to see the GMD as corrupt and Chiang himself as a dictatorial misfit who was only interested in getting American assistance against the Japanese so he could crush Mao Zedong's Communists after the war. But Stilwell's problems went beyond Chiang and the GMD. "Vinegar Joe" wore several hats with conflicting responsibilities in the CBI. As Mark Stoler points out, for example, "As head of the U.S. military mission to China, [Stilwell] controlled Lend-Lease supplies, but as chief of staff to Chiang, he was subordinate to a government leader who wanted to control those supplies himself." The CBI's innate complexities coupled with its dizzying and overlapping command requirements would have taxed the strongest of leaders. For the undiplomatic Stilwell they were simply too much.⁵⁴

A second great rivalry in China was also between Stilwell and a man he despised, though in this case it was a fellow American. U.S. Army Air Corps General Claire Chennault, head of the Flying Tigers and later the 14th Air Force in China and a fierce proponent of airpower, as well as an ally of Chiang, developed into a bitter enemy of Stilwell. This triangle of hate and mistrust is best summarized by historian S.C.M. Paine, who concludes, "Stilwell despised the Chiangs, both Generalissimo and Madame, while Chennault was devoted to them. Stilwell and Chennault also despised each other and had friends in high places, Marshall and Roosevelt, respectively, who kept them in their

⁵³ Jay Taylor, *The Generalissimo: Chiang Kai-Shek and the Struggle for Modern China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009): 199.

⁵⁴ Mark A. Stoler, *George C. Marshall: Soldier-Statesman of the American Century* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1989): 134. For a contrasting view see Barbara Tuchman, *Stilwell and the American Experience in China, 1911-1945* (New York: MacMillan Press, 1977)

positions long after their personal vitriol damaged rather than furthered U.S. foreign policy.”⁵⁵

For the United States the strategic utility of China steadily declined throughout the war. The bloody but successful American advance across the Central Pacific made China’s value as a springboard to assault Japan less and less necessary. Chiang’s strained relationship with Stilwell coupled with the poor performance of the Nationalist war effort as well as Roosevelt’s eroding patience further diminished China’s usefulness. Douglas MacArthur’s insistence that the Philippines be retaken also reduced the likelihood that American troops would land anywhere near Shanghai or Formosa. Thus by the close of 1943 the strategic situation had changed. China was no longer viewed as the decisive factor in defeating Japan that it had once been, despite Roosevelt’s continued desires to make China in a great power.⁵⁶ In his classic study on the often torturous relationship between the GMD and Washington during the war Herbert Feis acknowledges that by November 1943, “the need or value of China in the winning of the war was on the wane; while in contrast the need for taking measures to secure its future unity position was growing graver.”⁵⁷ Less than a year later Stilwell would be gone and new American leadership would be confronted with the question of China’s place in the postwar world.

⁵⁵ S.C.M. Paine, *The Wars for Asia, 1911-1949* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013): 197.

⁵⁶ Robert Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995): 485-490.

⁵⁷ Herbert Feis, *The China Tangle: The American Effort in China From Pearl Harbor to the Marshall Mission* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1953): 106.

Unlike in Japan, historians have been far more critical of American policies and actions in China during the postwar era. Unencumbered by the absolute need to station tens of thousands of troops in such a vast country, the United States could have chosen to withdraw completely from China in the fall of 1945. Instead, American leaders deployed two reinforced divisions of Marines, supported by the U.S. Navy's Seventh Fleet in north China, a decision that would have a significant impact on the future Cold War and the American future in Asia.

On August 8th 1945 U.S. Army Intelligence released a report on postwar East Asia. The report highlighted the progress made by the Chinese Nationalist Government in organizing its military forces and gaining some key victories against the Japanese over the past two years. The document also provided a stark warning about the postwar world, "The war against Japan will not be over when the shooting stops. There will still remain many military tasks to be accomplished, for example: the disarming and return of all Japanese troops, the restoration of civil law and order in China, the occupation of Japan, and the administration of trustee areas." This statement succinctly laid out the primary tasks that would be undertaken by the U. S. Navy and Marine Corps in China. Much would need to be done to assure the peace, yet a new war was building long before the Japanese surrender finally came.⁵⁸

The precarious state of China's position went far beyond local concerns. Three larger strategic realities drove the perceived necessity to intervene. The first was that the

⁵⁸ China Intelligence Report, August 8, 1945, Record Group 493, Records of U.S. Army Forces in the China-Burma-India Theaters of Operation, 1942-1947, National Archives at College Park, MD. Hereafter abbreviated as NARA.

war had broken China. Asian historian Rana Mitter, in his outstanding study of China as the “forgotten ally” during the war with Japan, concludes that “the battered, punch drunk state that was Nationalist China in 1945 had been fundamentally destroyed by the war with Japan.”⁵⁹ And the fighting was unlikely to end with Japan’s surrender. As the war approached its end the chances of a civil war between the exhausted Nationalists and the strengthened Chinese Communist Party (CCP) seemed greater than ever. Based in the northern Chinese city of Yanan, Mao’s forces controlled large swathes of territory and had grown considerably stronger during the long war with Japan. Many American leaders in the CBI feared the Communists would take advantage of the chaos surrounding the Japanese surrender to strengthen their position for what they felt was the coming civil war.

The Japanese Empire was being steadily compressed by unyielding naval power. Yet in China the Japanese would go on one last offensive. In April of 1944 the Japanese Kwantung Army launched its largest land operation of the war. The offensive threatened the Nationalist government in Chongqing and coincided with the low point in Sino-American wartime relations.⁶⁰ By the fall of 1944 the bitter feud between Chiang Kai-shek and Joseph Stilwell had reached a boiling point. Both men were exasperated with each other, and their conflict spilled over from personal animosity to threatening the entire course of the war. Rana Mitter blames both men, writing, “Chiang and Stilwell

⁵⁹ Rana Mitter, *Forgotten Ally: China’s World War II, 1937-1945* (London: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Press, 2013): 13.

⁶⁰ Edward J. Drea and Hans Van de Ven, “An Overview of Major Military Campaigns during the Sino-Japanese War, 1937-45,” 43.

both acted irresponsibly. Their pique and personal prejudices led to decisions that caused the deaths of thousands of the Chinese soldiers both claimed to hold in such high regard.”⁶¹

Events came to a head in October of 1944. After months of recriminations and demands from his Chinese ally Roosevelt felt he had no choice and ordered Stilwell’s recall. As Roosevelt historian Robert Dallek concludes the president’s decision was based primarily on his long term goal to transform China into a great and independent power, writing, “Roosevelt’s decision to accommodate Chiang rested more on political than military considerations. He believed a direct confrontation over Stilwell’s appointment might precipitate Chiang’s collapse. To have a part in overturning China’s government would destroy all he had done to advance her emergence as an independent, sovereign state.”⁶²

Roosevelt and the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff decided to divide the CBI into two separate commands, an act long overdue. The enormous size and complexity of the theatre necessitated separate areas of responsibility. The CBI was dissolved and new Burma-India and China Theatres were established.⁶³ But who would replace Stilwell? On October 24th a little known American general serving in Ceylon received an urgent message from Washington. Serving as Lord Louis Mountbatten’s deputy in the British Southeast Asia Theater, Major General Albert Wedemeyer opened the message and

⁶¹ Mitter, *Forgotten Ally*, 325.

⁶² Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932-1945*, 499.

⁶³ Memorandum for Daniel Sultan from War Department, October 27, 1944, Folder 1, RG 493, NARA. Note: U.S. Army Lt General Dan Sultan assumed command of the India-Burma Theatre on the same date.

entered a new world. He was ordered to “proceed without delay” to Chongqing and report to Chiang as the commander of U.S. Army forces in China.⁶⁴ A talented officer and reserved intellectual who was in many ways the polar opposite of “Vinegar” Joe, Wedemeyer would inadvertently return the U.S. Navy and Marines to China in 1945 and wield enormous influence in shaping postwar policy between the United States and China.

A native of Kansas and 1919 graduate of West Point, Albert Coady Wedemeyer enjoyed a distinguished but little noticed career. He first achieved notoriety in 1941 as a member of the War Plans Division in Washington, D.C. Not for the last time he found himself in a remarkably ironic situation. A lifelong anti-communist he had long admired Germany, a nation he respected for its martial spirit and industrial power. He privately opposed American entry into any European war, but was chosen to craft a comprehensive plan to defeat Nazi Germany. Historian Lynne Olsen points out that, “In a supreme irony, the man chosen to direct this extraordinarily complex study, dubbed the Victory Program, was none other than Major Albert Wedemeyer, one of the most isolationist officers in the Army.” Like Charles Lindbergh he sought a strong America that could remain aloof from European wars. Unlike the aviator Wedemeyer chose to put his personal views aside and prepare for battle.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Memorandum for General Albert Wedemeyer from General George Marshall, October 24, 1944, Box 83, Wedemeyer Papers, China Papers Collection, Stanford University, Hoover Institution. Hereafter abbreviated as CHIS.

⁶⁵ Lynne Olson, *Those Angry Days*, 413.

Despite his role in the Victory Program, a planning effort that would lay the foundations for everything from the Eighth Air Force to the Normandy landings, Wedemeyer remained in the background for much of the war. His lack of notoriety was a product of two main factors. As his sole biographer John McLaughlin notes, “It was Wedemeyer’s fate to have his role in the Asian theatre diminished by Stilwell admirers, especially Barbara Tuchman, and later, his contributions as a major strategist of the war overshadowed by such luminaries as Generals Marshall, Eisenhower, and others.”⁶⁶ Wedemeyer was a strategist and planner, not a combat commander. He excelled at grand strategy, and considered one of America’s most fundamental weaknesses to be its lack of long term strategic planning. As a result of all this combined with his lack of battlefield command experience Wedemeyer’s has not fared well in the popular American history of the war.⁶⁷

Secondly, the general disagreed with American global strategy both during and after the war. He was a bundle of contradictions, professing a profound love for the U.S. Army but consistently criticized both its leaders and grand strategy. He advocated strong interaction with the nations of the world but labeled himself a non-interventionist and opposed nearly all forms of military action except self-defense. A strident anti-communist, Wedemeyer viewed the Soviet Union as a grave threat to the freedom of mankind but considered containment an inappropriate strategy. His pessimistic memoirs,

⁶⁶ McLaughlin, *General Albert C. Wedemeyer: America’s Unsung Strategist in World War II*, 211.

⁶⁷ Popular historian Barbara Tuchman’s *Stilwell and the American Experience in China*, is largely responsible for the negative historical view of Wedemeyer. For decades the standard work on Stilwell, only in recent years have studies emerged that challenge Tuchman’s highly laudatory account of American leadership in the CBI.

compiled at a time when Americans were searching for reaffirmation of their struggles in World War II, cast a long shadow on his considerable wartime accomplishments.⁶⁸

Those memoirs reveal a conflicted man of strategic vision who professed grave misgivings about America's role in the world. He refused to call the conclusion of World War II a "victory," and argues that the war in Europe could have been decisively shortened had a 1943 invasion of France been implemented over British objections. He also argues that some form of assistance to the German resistance movement against Adolf Hitler could have accelerated Nazi capitulation. By the mid 1950's the evils of the Nazi regime were well documented, yet he virtually ignores the Holocaust. He consistently argued that Nazi Germany was destroyed only for the world to watch the Soviets establish dominance in Eastern Europe.⁶⁹

Yet this was all in Wedemeyer's future. As he arrived in Chongqing the general was under no illusions about the enormity of his task. His new headquarters was in disarray and the Japanese were on the offensive. Since 1941 most of the fighting in the Chinese theater had been confined to Burma. This changed in April 1944, when Japan launched the Ichigo offensive (Offensive Number One). Using more than 80 percent of the Japanese China Expeditionary Army's 620,000 troops, the primary objective of the offensive was to capture and destroy the new XXth Bomber Command's

⁶⁸ Albert Wedemeyer, *Wedemeyer Reports!* See Chapter XXVI and Conclusion. In these concluding chapters Wedemeyer laments what he considers the failures of the unconditional surrender doctrine and heavily criticizes both Roosevelt and Churchill for their single-minded fixation on Nazi Germany, when in his view the Soviet Union was the greater long term threat.

⁶⁹ Wedemeyer, *Wedemeyer Reports!* See Chapters XXVI, XXVII, and Conclusion.

airfields in central China.⁷⁰ As John McLaughlin describes it, “Militarily, it was China’s darkest hour. The capital at Chongqing was in serious danger of being lost. The mauled and malnourished Chinese Army seemed to have little fight left. With the exception of the campaign in Burma, they had not defeated the Japanese in any battle.”⁷¹

Adding to the difficulty for Wedemeyer was the discovery that Stilwell had left his command in an appalling state. No orders or instructions were left behind and Wedemeyer found most of his new staff incompetent. Stilwell had micromanaged his subordinates so completely that a proper briefing on the situation was impossible. Wedemeyer concluded that his predecessor did not have the requisite ability to be a regimental commander, and in a letter home wrote that in the future “he will be the most deflated hero in the history of our fine army.”⁷²

Writing to Marshall six weeks after his arrival, Wedemeyer described his difficulties in detail. Arguing that the Chinese had “no conception of organization, logistics, or modern warfare,” he concluded that for a single leader to direct strategy from Chongqing would require “a Churchill, Disraeli, and Machiavelli all in one.”⁷³ His colorful descriptions highlighted the myriad problems Stilwell encountered: a highly decentralized, provincial state, poor command and control, and a single leader who was only nominally in control of his military. Yet Wedemeyer also developed considerable respect for China and its people, acknowledging that, “As the weeks passed I began to

⁷⁰ Edward J. Drea and Hans van de Ven, “An Overview of Major Military Campaigns during the Sino-Japanese War, 1937-1945,” Peattie, et al., *The Battle for China: Essays on the Military History of the Sino-Japanese War of 1937-1945* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011): 45-46.

⁷¹ McLaughlin, *General Albert C. Wedemeyer*, 126

⁷² Albert Wedemeyer to Stanley Embick, December 7th 1944, Box 81, Wedemeyer Papers, CHIS.

⁷³ Albert Wedemeyer, Report to George Marshall, 10 December 1944, Box 82, Wedemeyer Papers, CHIS.

understand that the Nationalist Government of China, far from being reluctant to fight as pictured by Stilwell and some of his friends among the American correspondents, had shown amazing tenacity and endurance in resisting Japan. France had gone down to defeat six weeks after Germany launched her offensive. In 1944 China was still resisting, seven years after Japan had launched her initial attack.”⁷⁴

The China Theater: The Nationalists, Communists, and SACO

Wedemeyer proved an able organizer and strategist in China, and unlike his predecessor was able to work with Chiang. Instead of trying to win the war by fighting in Burma and courting the American press he was determined to build a Nationalist Chinese Army capable of consistently beating the Japanese. Given more time Wedemeyer might have succeeded. As it was he achieved much in a short amount of time. Since 1937 the Chinese armies had been on the defensive, mounting an effective insurgency against the Japanese but never able to organize and train as a national force. Stilwell’s fixation on the Burma theater and his worsening relationship with Chiang did little to change this. Often Chinese armies found themselves beaten by numerically smaller Japanese units. Only on rare occasions could Chinese armies hold a defensive line against the better equipped, motivated, and led Japanese army.

Why was building a capable Chinese Nationalist Army such a nearly hopeless task? Many Western observers pointed towards the corruption endemic in the Nationalist government, the low morale and education of the average Chinese conscript,

⁷⁴ Wedemeyer, *Wedemeyer Reports!*, 279.

and a general unwillingness to fight. A classified 1943 British report on the Chinese Army assessed the main problem to be a product of Chinese culture which scorned the profession of arms.⁷⁵ Chinese historian Guangqiu Xu has argued that the root of problem lay in China's provincial nature, writing, "From the military point of view, American generals and leaders were right in identifying such problems as ineffectiveness, corruption, and low morale in the Chinese Army, but they were unaware that many of the Chinese military forces were still provincial in nature. The Chinese army under Chiang's control was a loose coalition of semi-independent military forces bound together by personal loyalties and material rewards."⁷⁶

An even more searing description of the Chinese Nationalist Army comes from one of Chiang's own generals. In a series of interviews after the Chinese Civil War, General Li-Zongren offered a frank and brutal description of his former army and its soldiers: "The Chinese Army also had several good points which deserve to be described. First, we fought with a bereaved army that met a strong invading foe in order to protect their homes and safeguard their country. At the beginning of the war, the strong morale [of] our men was without historic precedent. The saying goes, 'When one man is prepared to give up his life, ten thousand men may not overtake him.' And our whole country was prepared to fight the enemy to the end. Apart from these few strong points, however, we too had many defects. Our officers and men lacked rigid training; their discipline was lax and their combat power was weak. The conscription authorities

⁷⁵ Report by Victor Odlum to Lord Louis Mountbatten, December 23rd, 1943, Folder 1, RG 493, NARA.

⁷⁶ Guangqiu Xu, "The Issue of U.S. Air Support for China during the Second World War, 1942-1945," *Journal of Contemporary History*, 36:3 (July 2001): 479.

of the central government simply grabbed men from all over the country for military service. The new recruits were ill-trained and sent to the front lines hurriedly. This was just like driving sheep to feed the tigers. Pay was low and food was bad. The men were malnourished and underweight. Doctors and medicines were scarce and the wounded or sick men faced conditions which defied description.”⁷⁷

Most Americans in China were appalled by the methods of conscription used by the Nationalists. Press gangs would appear in the spring and would forcibly abduct farmers from their lands for service in the army, leaving their families destitute and starving. After their conscription the “new soldiers” would be marched with their hands tied behind their backs, with little food and no medical care. Beaten and malnourished, many did not survive the long journey to a training center. The press gang leaders more resembled slave traders than any 20th century form of conscription. Most were well-compensated for their efforts, and those who delivered their exhausted and diseased ridden recruits to the training centers quickly moved on to new towns and villages for the next wave.⁷⁸

Even after they had joined the army the conscripts were underfed and malnourished, many near death. Thousands chose to desert rather than face death from starvation. Even healthy men who began training often arrived at their assigned units in deplorable condition. Also troubling for the long term was that few could read or write.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Reminiscences of Tsung Jen-Li, Interviewed by Te-kong Tong, Chinese Oral History Project, East Asian Institute, Columbia University, Chapter 41:8. Hereafter abbreviated as COCU.

⁷⁸ Report on Chinese Nationalist Conscription, August 1943, Box 85, Wedemeyer Papers, CHIS.

⁷⁹ Wedemeyer, letter to Marshall, December 10th, 1944, Box 82, Wedemeyer Papers, CHIS.

Despite this nearly hopeless situation Wedemeyer was determined to succeed, and unlike Stilwell was willing to try new and innovative methods. He soon implemented reforms, especially in feeding, supplying, and training the Chinese armies. Most notably, he organized the new Chinese Nationalist Army around 36 American-style divisions and 20 Commando groups, enlarged and improved the Chinese Training Command, and established an air force. He also established a Central Procurement Agency for the Nationalist Army that partially solved the food supply problem by curbing the graft and corruption that accounted for so much suffering in the ranks. Perhaps most importantly he made great strides in having American advisers train their Chinese counterparts directly, rather than through intermediaries.⁸⁰ Despite the improvements the Ichigo offensive revealed China's continued military weakness.

Adding to Wedemeyer's woes were the strained relations between the U.S. Army and Navy in China. Ever since the creation of the CBI in January 1942 many Navy leaders chafed at the Army's domination in a region they had previously considered their own. The brilliant and ferocious Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Ernest J. King, was among those determined to attack Japan by way of either the Chinese mainland or Formosa. King took a special interest in returning the Navy to China, both as a way of reasserting influence in the country and perhaps as a way to challenge Army control. As summarized by historian Michael Schaller, "The U.S. Navy, with its China tradition

⁸⁰ "Report of the China Theater, 24 October 1944 to 15 January 1946," no date, Box 82, Wedemeyer Papers, CHIS.

going back to the Yangtze patrol gunboats and Asiatic Fleet, bitterly resented the leading position which the army assumed in China after 1941.”⁸¹

To this end a relatively junior American naval officer was sent to China soon after Pearl Harbor. Newly promoted Commander Milton “Mary” Miles was summoned to the office of the Chief of Naval Operations and secretly ordered to go to China and prepare the coast for future American amphibious landings. He was also, in Admiral King’s words, to “heckle the Japanese.” Miles, an officer with considerable experience on the Yangtze Patrol, became one of King’s most trusted officers in Asia. Promoted rapidly (he ended the war as a Rear Admiral) Miles oversaw the establishment of a remarkable covert, hybrid group of saboteurs, spies, and guerillas that went far beyond King’s original vision.⁸²

Soon after his arrival in April 1942 Miles met Dai Li, one of Chiang’s most trusted deputies. The head of Chiang’s secret police, Dai Li was known for his ruthless acumen and history as an assassin. Most Americans who knew anything about China regarded him as deeply corrupt and an unreliable partner, even when fighting the Japanese. Yet Miles and Dai Li forged an unlikely partnership which led to the creation of the Sino-American Cooperative Organization, better known as SACO. A curious creation, SACO was a Navy command with few maritime assets assigned a covert mission deep inside a foreign country nominally under the command of a foreign

⁸¹ Michael Schaller, *The U.S. Crusade in China*, 133.

⁸² Milton E. Miles, *A Different Kind of War: The Little-Known Story of the Combined Guerilla Forces Created in China by the U.S. Navy and the Chinese During World War II* (New York: Doubleday, 1967): 18.

intelligence officer. On paper Dai Li was the head of SACO but in reality Miles ran the daily operations as his deputy. As Miles summarizes in his memoirs, “One of the most surprising things about SACO – the Sino-American Cooperative Organization - was that we two individuals without a common language, who represented countries of such different cultures, military customs, and political development, could work out a program of combined secret services that could be accepted almost without revision by both countries.” Because of this understanding the two men were free to design resourceful and effective covert operations against the Japanese.⁸³

For nearly three years SACO employed several thousand Navy personnel in a variety of roles, including rescuing downed Allied airmen, meteorology, sabotage, and intelligence gathering. Miles’ most remarkable and controversial activity, however, was his efforts to train and equip Chinese guerillas. Eight SACO naval units were established in cities such as Hwei Chow and Sian to train a secret insurgent army.⁸⁴ By October of 1944 Miles reported to Nimitz that he had more than 16,000 trained guerillas armed and ready, with several more thousand spread in various throughout east and central China. As a measure of his resourcefulness SACO also trained several thousand pirates, arming their Chinese junks with American machine guns and rockets. Even pirates, historically the most hated enemy of professional mariners, had their place in Miles’ organization.⁸⁵

⁸³ Ibid., 108.

⁸⁴ T.F. Beyerly, no date, Activities of Naval Group China, Box 38, Papers of Milton Miles, Records of the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, 1875-2006, RG38, NARA.

⁸⁵ Letter, Miles to Nimitz, October 30th, 1944, Box 38, Papers of Milton Miles, RG 38, NARA.

George Marshall and many senior Army leaders viewed SACO with disdain. The leaders of SACO's primary Army rival in China, the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), made repeated efforts to sideline and minimize the U.S. Navy and SACO in China. The complex war of words between the OSS and SACO is beyond the boundaries of this study, but a brief discussion is warranted. Between 1942 and 1945 the conflict reached the highest levels of the War and Navy Departments, as both Marshall and King became involved in protecting their respective services' interests in Asia. The battle between the U.S. Army and Navy over covert operations in China became a live grenade, and the bitter fight over SACO embodied that weapon.

In his history of the OSS in China, Maochun Yu makes clear that both Stilwell and Marshall viewed SACO as an obstacle. The adoption of the document that created SACO in 1942 soon aroused Army countermeasures. As Yu notes, "The signing of the SACO agreement sent an immediate shock wave through Stilwell's staff circle. Although the general had approved the plan, many of his low-ranking officers were particularly jealous of the navy's success in controlling virtually all non-combat related intelligence gathering. Almost immediately, sabotage efforts were initiated at the general's headquarters."⁸⁶ Stilwell's successor was no less hostile. Wedemeyer mentions Miles and SACO only once in his memoirs, describing them as an "embarrassing problem."⁸⁷ As previously noted, one of the reasons for the Army's disdain for SACO was simple: Miles and his team got results. Frustration with Chiang

⁸⁶ Maochun Yu, *OSS in China: Prelude to the Cold War* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1996): 106.

⁸⁷ Wedemeyer, *Wedemeyer Reports!*, 341.

and his regime were endemic among U.S. Army personnel in China. Perhaps Miles simply understood the Chinese mind better, but more likely he was able to set aside his moral qualms about Dai Li and focus on pragmatic cooperation with the Nationalists. In one of the earliest and best studies done on SACO, Michael Schaller concludes that, “More than cloak and dagger heroics, the real importance of the SACO experience lies in what it tells us about American policy and American-Chinese Nationalist cooperation. While Stilwell was prevented from commanding well-trained and adequately supplied Chinese troops, and Chennault wallowed in the battles of publicity, Miles succeeded in working out a close military and political relationship with the Nationalists.”⁸⁸

SACO made many enemies in China but the group received unwavering support from Admiral King, who convinced the president to promote Miles to the rank of commodore in April 1944.⁸⁹ For Wedemeyer, however, SACO was an intractable problem that he was determined to eliminate. Relations between the CBI head and Miles were always strained, and at one point they exploded into a tense confrontation. In January 1945 Miles reported to the general in Chongqing, and after waiting a few days the two men finally sat down in a meeting that lasted nearly two hours. An initially civil discussion over logistics degenerated into a shouting match, mostly directed by Wedemeyer against his Navy subordinate. The general told Miles that he did not like having any organization in his theatre that operated independently from his command, that he considered the SACO agreement to be an abomination, and that Admiral Nimitz

⁸⁸ Michael Schaller, “SACO! The United States Secret War in China,” *Pacific Quarterly Historical Review*, Vol. 44, No. 4(Nov. 1975): 527-553.

⁸⁹ Yu, *OSS in China*, 143.

would never allow an Army command to operate independently from him in the Pacific. Miles retorted that China was very different due to the presence of Nationalists and the complexities of the Sino-American alliance. Wedemeyer disagreed and raised the stakes by declaring that on his next trip to Washington he would demand that SACO be placed under his direct control.⁹⁰

The discussion cooled down afterwards but the relations between the two men were always tense. For his part, Miles could never understand why SACO, with less than 1,300 U.S Navy personnel and consuming a tiny fraction of the allocated supplies for the China theater, would be such a problem for the OSS and the U.S. Army.⁹¹ SACO would be eventually be placed under CBI command, but Miles continued to enjoy the unyielding support of Admiral King. Beyond fighting the Japanese, Miles and his organization had, in the eyes of King and many other senior naval personnel, already served their purpose: to provide the U.S. Navy a door back into China. Given Wedemeyer's reputation as a cerebral intellectual, it is remarkable that Miles and SACO caused him such grief, but they reflected not only disagreements over command but also the longstanding Navy view that the Army was intruding on its traditional area of operations.

While dealing with SACO and countless other problems Wedemeyer's efforts to assist Chiang were bearing fruit. In part because of constant harassment by both the 14th Air Force and XXth Bomber Command but also due to better performance from the

⁹⁰ Account of Conference between Miles and Wedemeyer, January 25th, 1945, Box 38, RG 38, NARA.

⁹¹ Miles, *A Different Kind of War*, 439-440.

average Chinese soldier. By the spring of 1945 the Ichigo offensive had been spent. The Nationalists lost more than 130,000 killed as a result of the operation, six to eight times as many as did the Japanese. Ten major American air bases, thirty-six airports, and the cities of Henan, Hunan, and Guangxi also fell. The Ichigo Offensive meant little in a strategic sense, however. With the capture of the Mariana Islands of Saipan and Tinian the United States no longer needed the central China airbases for its B-29 bombers. Historian Sally Paine summarizes the situation and concludes that, “Ichigo had a greater impact on the civil war than on the global war by making the Nationalists look militarily incompetent, wiping out formations vital to defeat the Communists, and leaving Central China wide open to Communist infiltration.”⁹²

As the danger from the offensive waned Wedemeyer worried less about the Japanese and more about the Chinese Communists. Throughout the war Mao’s forces in and around north China had fought the Japanese but had also bided their time, making preparations for the postwar struggle for the country. By the start of 1945 it was estimated that Mao’s forces, both regular, and irregular numbered nearly 500,000 men, and enjoyed remarkable support from the local population in many areas of north China.⁹³ An American intelligence report on Mao and his deputy, Zhou Enlai, reported that both men were confident of their final victory, believing that that Nationalists’ days

⁹² S.C.M. Paine, *The Wars for Asia*, 202-203.

⁹³ Commander Berchstemmer, “Strengths and Weaknesses of the Chinese Communists,” date unknown, RG 38, NARA.

were numbered.⁹⁴ Wedemeyer feared that should the war end suddenly, the Communists would use the confusion to seize weapons surrendered by the Japanese and position themselves favorably for the civil war. Only by stationing a large number of American personnel in postwar China, he believed, could this gloomy prospect be prevented.⁹⁵

The Yalta Conference, China, and the Soviet Union

Few meetings of political or military leaders have garnered greater historical interest than that held at Yalta in February 1945. Aside from the overreaching objective of ending the war in Europe, Roosevelt went to Yalta determined to bring the Soviet Union into the war against Japan. And, he was willing to go to great lengths to get it. Buried within formal plenary sessions and countless informal meetings were a series of agreements made by Roosevelt and Stalin, agreements that would have an enormous influence on postwar China.

The U.S. Joint Chiefs had desired Soviet participation against Japan since Pearl Harbor, but Stalin refused to make any commitment until the Tehran Conference in December 1943 and January 1944. There the Soviet leader announced that the Soviet Union would attack Japan once Nazi Germany had been defeated.⁹⁶ Negotiations concerning the details of that entry continued throughout 1944, and as Roosevelt prepared to embark for Crimea in January 1945 he was determined to bring the Soviets

⁹⁴ "Current Relations between Chiang Kai-Shek and the Communists," December 23rd, Box 17, Record Group 493; Records of U.S. Army Forces in the China-Burma-India Theater of Operations, 1942-47, NARA.

⁹⁵ Wedemeyer to Marshall, August 1st, 1945, Box 83, Wedemeyer Papers, CHIS.

⁹⁶ Sextant Conference, Minutes of the Third Plenary Meeting, December 4, 1943, Record of Intra-Allied Conferences, CD-ROM, OSD.

into the war as soon as possible. The reasons were simple: Soviet participation could tie down the Japanese Kwantung Army in Manchuria and ease pressure on the probable invasion of Kyushu or Honshu thereby helping to end the war more swiftly. At the time of Yalta the atomic bomb was an unknown quantity, and uncertainty persisted as to whether it would actually work.

Stalin also went to Yalta with specific objectives. In return for declaring war on Japan and seizing control of Manchuria the Soviet dictator insisted upon the return of the territory lost during the Russo-Japanese War (1904-05), most notably the northern portion of Sakhalin Island, the Kurile Islands, and Port Arthur, plus access to the port Dalian. Stalin also demanded that Soviet forces be allowed to remain in Manchuria for three months after Japan's surrender and that the Soviets share control of the Chinese Eastern Railway. A huge region of 503,000 square miles, roughly twice the size of Texas, Manchuria possessed tremendous untapped natural resources.⁹⁷ The population in 1945 - estimated at 45 million people - was mostly Manchu Chinese but also included a small minority of Mongolians, Russians, and Koreans.⁹⁸

Beyond the natural resources of Manchuria, however, was the prize of a viable, deep water ice free port, for centuries a Russian obsession. Port Arthur was too shallow for this purpose and Stalin wanted the city more for sentimental than military purposes. Thus, Stalin cast his eyes on the south Manchurian port of Dalian, and insisted on joint

⁹⁷ General Survey on Manchuria, Box 23A, William J. Donovan Papers, Army Heritage and Education Center, 1-2. Hereafter abbreviated as AHEC.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 4-5.

control of the port with Chiang's government.⁹⁹ A year-round warm water port that offered the finest harbor and facilities on the northern Yellow Sea, Dalian was largely untouched by the war and featured a large anchorage and berths to accommodate more than fifty ships. The daily capacity of the port was estimated at 30,000 long tons. With access to Dalian and the Far East railways the Soviet Union would at long last have year-round access to the Pacific.¹⁰⁰

When he arrived in the Crimea Joseph Stalin was in the strongest position of the war, and when he left his hand was stronger still, especially on China. Sakhalin, the Kuriles, and nominal control over Manchuria were his for the taking. During a series of secret meetings with Stalin at Yalta the Roosevelt largely acceded to his demands on China and Manchuria, without consulting Chiang Kai-shek. This was a remarkable act for a president who had long trumpeted the Wilsonian dictum of self-determination for the free nations of the world. As aptly summarized by historian S. M. Plokhy in his recent study of the conference, "Roosevelt had obtained Stalin's all-important commitment to enter the war against Japan, but that commitment had come at a high price. The president had agreed to hand over territories even before the war was over – the very policies he had condemned both publicly and privately on numerous occasions, notably in the Atlantic Charter."¹⁰¹

When informed of the Yalta agreement in late March, U.S. Ambassador to China Patrick J. Hurley was shocked at the official concessions to the Soviet Union. Hurley

⁹⁹ T.V. Soong, Meeting with Harriman, July 3rd, 1945, Moscow Files, Averell Harriman Papers, LOC.

¹⁰⁰ General Survey on Manchuria, Box 23A, William J. Donovan Papers, AHEC, 11-12.

¹⁰¹ S.M. Plokhy, *Yalta: The Price of Peace*, 228.

was instructed to meet with Chiang by June 15th and “make every effort to obtain his approval.”¹⁰² When Chiang was finally informed of the Yalta agreements he lost much of his remaining belief in American good faith. As his biographer Jay Taylor writes, “The concessions on Manchuria themselves were not what distressed him; in less than a year he would be willing to offer Stalin even more in that region. More galling to Chiang was the insult to himself and China in the way the Anglo-Saxons had assumed the right to give away China’s sovereign rights.”¹⁰³

A month after the Yalta conference General Wedemeyer visited Roosevelt in the White House. Anticipating the intellectual vigor he had come to expect from the president the general was aghast, writing, “I had not seen the President for several months and was shocked at his physical appearance. His color was ashen, his face drawn, and his jaw drooping. I had difficulty conveying information to him because he seemed in a daze.”¹⁰⁴ A few weeks later, on April 12th, Franklin Roosevelt died while resting at Warm Springs, Georgia. The president’s longtime chief of staff and friend, Admiral William Leahy lamented in his diary that, “The Captain of the Team is gone, and we are all at loose ends and confused as to who may be capable of giving sage advice and counsel to the new leader in his handling of the staggering burdens of war

¹⁰² Memorandum from Acting Secretary of State Grew to Ambassador Hurley, June 9th, Box 7, Naval Aide to the President Files 1945-53, Communication Files, Truman Presidential Library. Hereafter abbreviated as TPL.

¹⁰³ Taylor, *The Generalissimo*, 302-03

¹⁰⁴ Albert Wedemeyer, *Wedemeyer Reports!*, 340.

and peace that he must carry.” Leahy also privately wondered if Harry Truman would be up to the herculean task.¹⁰⁵

Roosevelt was a capable wartime leader who overcame enormous obstacles but made several critical mistakes. One of these was with his successor. Clearly aware of his failing health the president chose to conceal his condition from his new vice-president. In key areas of foreign policy Roosevelt also neglected Truman mightily, and when summoned to the White House on April 12, 1945, the Missourian had not even been briefed on the development of the atomic bomb. Upon taking the oath of office, the new president faced an overwhelming array of mammoth tasks, as well as a horrifying technology that would change the world forever. He had little time or energy to devote to the problems of Chiang Kai-Shek and the Nationalist Chinese. With the unfortunate agreement made at Yalta tying his hands Truman felt obliged to continue his predecessor’s course.

By May 1945, some leaders in Washington began to wonder if Soviet intervention against Japan was still necessary. On May 12th Acting Secretary of State Secretary of State Joseph Grew queried the Joint Chiefs and Secretary of War Henry Stimson if the Soviet demands agreed to at Yalta could be reconsidered. Stimson replied that at this point the Soviets could take what they wanted in Manchuria regardless of the Yalta accords, and the United States was in no position to stop them. Stimson painted a disturbing picture, noting that, “If the present schism in China continues, and, at the

¹⁰⁵ Diary of Admiral William Leahy, William Leahy Papers, LOC, 55.

same time Russian forces advance to areas giving them close contact with the Chinese Communists, our present problems in China will become more complicated.”¹⁰⁶

In July, Ambassador Hurley Chiang reported to Truman that with some negotiations he could accede to the Soviet demands. However, he insisted that Dalian be made a free port run by the Chinese government, though he was more than willing to employ Soviet technical advisers.¹⁰⁷ Stalin had no intention of sharing Dalian with the Guomindang. At a private meeting at Yalta with Foreign Minister Molotov and George Kennan, Stalin expressed the demand that the port be run by the NKVD, the Soviet secret police.¹⁰⁸ Hurley confided to Truman that to push Chiang any further on this issue could be disastrous, declaring, “We have gone as far as the public opinion of China will stand, we may have even gone beyond the limit that the Chinese people will support.”¹⁰⁹

The Yalta agreements on China gave the Soviets considerable leverage for their designs on East Asia. Though they never came to fruition, several historians have shown that Stalin’s designs on East Asia went far beyond Manchuria. David Glantz’s classic study on the Soviet invasion of Manchuria provides compelling evidence that complex plans were drawn up on Stalin’s orders for the invasion of Japan’s northernmost island of Hokkaido. In part due to concerns raised from two of his top advisers, Marshal Zhukov and Foreign Minister Molotov, Stalin chose to cancel the

¹⁰⁷ Hurley, Dispatch to Secretary of State Brynes, July 20th, 1945, Naval Aide to the President Files, 1945-1953, Communication Files, Box 7, TPL.

¹⁰⁸ Recollections on Yalta and Darien by George Kennan, letter to Herbert Feis, January 24, 1952, Box 58, Herbert Feis Papers, LOC

¹⁰⁹ Dispatch to Byrnes, July 20th, 1945, Naval Aide to the President Files, Box 7, TPL.

operation.¹¹⁰ More recently Tsuyoshi Hasegawa has detailed how Stalin only pulled back when U.S. intelligence became aware of his Hokkaido plans and when he judged the diplomatic costs for the operation to be too high.¹¹¹

Japan's Surrender and Wedemeyer's Plea

By October of 1944 advantage in the war had shifted decisively in favor of the Allies. Nazi Germany was being squeezed into oblivion between the inexorable onslaught of the Soviet Union and the Western Allies. The battles of the Philippine Sea and Leyte Gulf had virtually destroyed the Imperial Japanese Navy. The majority of Japan's elite naval aviators had been killed in action, and the U.S. Navy's relentless submarine offensive was strangling Japan's maritime commerce. Yet the Japanese fought on. Millions of soldiers remained in China and the home islands. Faced with the likelihood of increasingly violent resistance, American planners began to create blueprints for landing on Iwo Jima and Okinawa. The dreaded invasion of Japan's home islands and the enormous bloodletting that would likely occur weighed heavily on every American in uniform.

As late as February of 1945 most American planners did not foresee a Japanese surrender occurring that same year. After the Yalta Conference, Admiral King notified Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal that the earliest likely date for the defeat of Germany was July 1st, 1945. The defeat of Japan was forecast for eighteen months after

¹¹⁰ Glantz, *The Soviet Strategic Offensive in Manchuria, 1945: 'August Storm'*, 305-306

¹¹¹ Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, *Racing the Enemy: Stalin, Truman, and the Surrender of Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2005): 273-274.

Germany's fall.¹¹² Given the anticipated ferocity of Japanese resistance, American planners expected a long campaign. However, by July of 1945, with the surrender of Germany, the success of the atomic bomb tests in New Mexico, and the destruction by strategic bombing of Japan's major cities, the war's end seemed much closer. The day after the atomic bombing of Hiroshima the Soviet ambassador formally notified the Japanese government of his government's decision to abrogate the five-year neutrality agreement with Japan.¹¹³ The next morning, after months of moving divisions of infantry, armor and artillery from Europe the Soviet Union invaded Manchuria. Thanks to a superbly executed combination of deception and espionage the Japanese were taken by complete surprise. With the loss of the initiative the exhausted Kwantung Army could do little to even slow the Soviet juggernaut, and within a week the Japanese government announced it would surrender.¹¹⁴

Did the atomic bombs compel the Japanese surrender, did the Soviet invasion, or was it a complex combination of these decisive acts? Historians will continue to argue this topic as long as the history of our world is debated.¹¹⁵ Of more concern to historians

¹¹² Ernest J. King, Memorandum for James Forrestal, February 14, 1945, Box 5, Correspondence and Memorandum January 1945-May 1946, Ernest J. King Papers, Navy History and Heritage Command Archives, 2. Hereafter abbreviated as NHHC.

¹¹³ Memorandum, "Declaration of war on Japan by U.S.S.R., August 8th, 1945, Moscow Files, Harriman Papers, LOC.

¹¹⁴ Edward Drea, "Missing Intentions: Japanese Intelligence and the Soviet Invasion of Manchuria, 1945," *Military Affairs*, Vol. 45, No. 2 (April 1984): 66-67.

¹¹⁵ Historians such as Richard Frank argue that the twin shocks of the atomic bombs, not the Soviet invasion of Manchuria, was the decisive factor in the Japanese surrender. Tsuyoshi Hasegawa instead argues that the combination of the twin atomic bombs and the Soviet declaration were as a whole responsible. John Pape disagrees with both, contending that the naval blockade and Soviet invasion would have ended the war without the atomic bombs. See Richard B. Frank, *Downfall: The End of the Imperial Japanese Empire* (New York: Penguin Publishers, 2001); Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, *Racing the Enemy: Stalin, Truman, and the Surrender of Japan*; John Pape, "Why Japan Surrendered," *International Security*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (Fall 1993): 154-201.

of postwar China, however, is not why Japan surrendered but when it did. Most of those without direct or indirect knowledge of the atomic bombs expected the war to last much longer. Enormous problems, long assumed to be in the still distant future, appeared fully formed in the present. How would the United States and China deal with the surrender of thousands of Japanese soldiers and civilians? Would the Russians leave Manchuria in a timely manner? How would the United States respond to an outbreak of civil war between the Nationalists and Communists?

Wedemeyer feared the worst. Through a series of messages to General Marshall during the first half of August he laid out an urgent case for American intervention. The mounting alarm evident in each succeeding message is startling. On August 1st he outlined the inherent weaknesses of the Chinese government, its inability to oversee the potential surrender of the Japanese, and the continuing reorganization of the Nationalist armies. He also emphasized the imminent threat represented by the increasingly belligerent Communists, and urged that a sizeable American force be assigned to China as soon as possible following the surrender of hostilities.¹¹⁶ Having received no adequate reply he dispatched another message on August 12th, with this blunt language: “Deeply concerned am I relative lack of appreciation in Washington of explosive and portentous possibilities when Japan surrenders.” Noting that China seemed to be on the bottom of the Asian list of priorities (behind Japan and Korea) he urgently recommended that five American divisions be assigned to China to assist with the myriad postwar problems.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ Wedemeyer to Marshall, Memorandum on postwar China, 1 August 1945, Box 83, Wedemeyer Papers, CHIS.

¹¹⁷ Wedemeyer to Marshall, Memorandum on postwar China, 12 August 1945, Ibid.

His last message to Marshall before the surrender reiterated his concerns, and was almost Churchillian in its imagery, writing, “I view Asia as an enormous pot, seething and boiling, the fumes of which may readily snuff out the advantages gained by Allied sacrifices the past several years.”¹¹⁸

Wedemeyer was not alone in his views. The U.S. ambassador to the Soviet Union, Averell Harriman, also recommended to Truman that American troops be landed in China after the surrender. He also feared Soviet influence in both North China and Manchuria.¹¹⁹ As for Wedemeyer, the general again found himself at the center of a profound irony. While attempting to both stabilize China and safeguard it against the Soviets and Chinese Communists the general opened the door to the intervention of American sailors and Marines. The Navy and Marines, not the Army, would be at the centerpiece of America’s postwar intervention in China.

For China’s long suffering people the end of the eight-year war was but a brief blessing. Their ancient land was in shambles, their economy wrecked, and countless towns and villages destroyed. No reliable figures exist for how many Chinese soldiers perished during the war but the best estimate comes to around 10 million, with more than double that number of civilians.¹²⁰ Chiang himself expressed astonishment at the surrender news but quickly released a series of broadcasts to the people of China and the United States, thanking both for their determination in the face of tyranny. Tempering

¹¹⁸ Wedemeyer to Marshall, Memorandum on postwar China, August 14th, 1945, Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Russell D. Buhite, *Soviet-American Relations in Asia*, 26.

¹²⁰ Drea and Van de Ven, “An Overview of the Major Military Campaigns during the Sino-Japanese War,” in Peattie, et al., *The Battle for China*, 46.

his mood, however, was this prediction: “Peace, when fighting has entirely ceased, will confront us with stupendous and difficult tasks, demanding greater strength and sacrifice than the years of war. At times we may feel that the problems of peace that descend upon us are more trying than those we met during the war.” This prophecy would turn out to be remarkably accurate. Within a few months, much of China would be in chaos as the long anticipated civil war erupted. Caught in the middle would be a weary group of Americans trying to cope with a world of neither war nor peace.¹²¹

¹²¹ Chiang Kai-Shek, *The Collected Wartime Messages of Chiang Kai-Shek*, Vol. 1, 1937-1940, Compiled by the Chinese Ministry of Information. New York: John Day Company, 1969: 851-852.

CHAPTER II

“AN ENORMOUS POT, SEETHING AND BOILING”

The abrupt end of the war caught nearly everyone in Asia by surprise. Most had expected a struggle of many more months, or even a year. Dropping of atomic bombs on Japan and Soviet entry into the war brought a swift conclusion to the long and brutal war. But Japan's surrender also resulted in a strong feeling among many Japanese citizens that they had been beaten by the United States, not the Chinese. For the average Japanese soldier it was widely believed that American technology coupled with overwhelming naval and air power had been the cause of their defeat. The weeks and months that followed announcement of the Japanese surrender on August 15th, 1945 revealed that the Japanese had lost none of their contempt for either the Chinese and the Russians. This would have serious implications for the United States' postwar China strategy.

The previous chapter described the experience of U.S. Navy and Marines in China during the early twentieth century as well as their expulsion from East Asia at the start of the war. Many of the younger American sailors and Marines had heard nostalgic stories of China from gunnery sergeants and petty officers who had served on the Yangtze River and in North China prior to the war. Though perhaps entertained by the tales of China in the 1920s and 1930s, most of those hearing them desired only to be sent home. If this was not possible and they were given the choice between being stationed in Japan or deployed to China most would prefer the latter. Whatever their thoughts the 50,000 men of the III Marine Expeditionary Force were ordered to reenter North China

during September and October 1945 and occupy the cities of Tianjin, Qingdao, and Beijing.

Albert Wedemeyer, Mao Zedong, and Chiang Kai-shek

For General Albert Wedemeyer the unexpected surrender of Japan brought little time for celebration. Instead it ushered in a host of potentially crushing challenges. As head of the China Theater the general was tasked with overseeing the Japanese surrender in East Asia, coordinating with Chiang Kai-shek the movement of his armies so that he, not Mao Zedong, could accept the surrender of Japanese forces and ensuring the safe and rapid return of American prisoners of war. Thousands of Allied POW's awaited rescue in camps scattered throughout North China and Manchuria, and their safe return was an obvious priority of all Americans. Wedemeyer needed American troops to oversee all of these vital tasks.

In early August Wedemeyer had conveyed to General George Marshall his concerns about the importance of China after Japan's surrender. During the first week of August Chiang had personally requested to Wedemeyer that a minimum of six American ground divisions be stationed in China after the war: two in the Tianjin/Beijing area, two in Shanghai, and one to Canton and Nanjing respectively.¹ He cabled Marshall that in his view China, not Korea or even Japan, should be the top priority for America's postwar resources in Asia.² The Army Chief of Staff wrote back that, "Your proposal

¹ Memorandum, Wedemeyer to Marshall, August 11th, 1945, William Leahy Papers, RG 218, Records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Box 3, NARA.

² Albert Wedemeyer to George Marshall, Memorandum on postwar China, August 12th 1945, Box 83, Wedemeyer Papers, CHIS; Wedemeyer to Marshall, Memorandum on postwar China, August 14th, 1945, Ibid.

that we give China first priority over Japan and Korea will not repeat not be acceptable.” He dismissed the proposal of sending six U.S. Army divisions to China in the near future, indicating that all available divisions were being earmarked for the occupation of Japan and Korea. The best Marshall could offer would be two divisions, though of what kind or service remained unclear.³

Several important decisions on China would soon be made. At a hastily convened conference held in Manila senior representatives from most of the major U.S. military commands in Asia and the Pacific gathered to discuss U.S. postwar role in China. After three days of meetings they agreed on a four-part strategy: First, two Marine Corps divisions would be assigned to duty in China, and would be estimated to arrive around September 30th. Second, priority would be given to North China, specifically Qingdao and Tianjin, though American naval forces would also establish a strong presence in Shanghai. Third, the U.S. Seventh Fleet would be tasked with providing naval support for China in the form of mine clearance and port security. Finally, to avoid hostilities and remove them from China as rapidly as possible, the repatriation of Japanese military personnel to the home islands would take priority.⁴

Back in Chongqing, Wedemeyer faced several overwhelming tasks with only limited resources to work with. With ten divisions assigned to Japan and two more to Korea, only the 50,000 Marines from the two battle tested divisions of the III Marine Expeditionary Force on Okinawa and Guam would be available for China. If he was

³ Memorandum, Marshall to Wedemeyer, August 14th 1945, Box 89, Ibid.

⁴ Report on Occupation Forces China Conference, August 21st 1945, Box 38, RG 38, NARA.

disappointed by the assignment of Marines rather than Army troops one can never know, but in his memoirs the Marines are barely discussed. Only a short mention of “these inadequate but extremely valuable reinforcements” reveals his thoughts on the matter.⁵ It seems likely that he would have preferred to have Army divisions in China. It is with no small irony that an Army general, who had long stymied U.S. Navy efforts in China, would find himself inadvertently bringing the Navy and Marines back to help close out the war.

On August 20th Wedemeyer’s headquarters in Chongqing issued a directive entitled China Theater Directive #25, which detailed the three major objectives central to American plans for North China. The Marines of the III MEF would: 1) assist the Nationalist Government by occupying key areas, 2) accept the surrender of Japanese forces around Tianjin and Beijing, and 3) locate and liberate American and Allied prisoners of war.⁶ At the time the III MEF Marines on Okinawa were training for Operation Coronet, the planned invasion of the Kanto plain on Honshu scheduled for March 1946, which would follow the November 1st American invasion of Kyushu.⁷ An August 26th Warning Order detailed preparatory steps to be taken prior to deployment in China, including bringing all equipment up to good working condition, administering a series of comprehensive immunizations to all personnel, and ensuring that all Marines

⁵ Wedemeyer, *Wedemeyer Reports!*, 348.

⁶ Michael Parkyn, “The Marines Return to China,” *Marine Corps Gazette* (July 2001): 3.

⁷ Hasegawa, *Racing the Enemy*, 103-104.

were issued new identification tags. The order specified that preparations should be complete by September 15th for a pending occupation in Asia.⁸

While the Marines prepared for service in North China, Wedemeyer confronted a host of challenges. Chief among them was determining how to deal with Mao and his Communists. In early August U.S. Ambassador to China Patrick J. Hurley called upon Mao, Chiang, and Wedemeyer to meet. Mao's unpredictable ally, Joseph Stalin, all but ordered his attendance. A reluctant Mao agreed to a meeting in Chongqing as soon as possible. Over four weeks Chiang and Mao met nine times privately and many more times publicly to discuss the status of the Chinese Communist Party, political prisoners, and working towards a new national government. Both Chiang and Mao proclaimed that the civil war between them must end.⁹

Before many of these outwardly cordial meetings would take place, however, a tense encounter occurred. On August 30th Wedemeyer met with Mao and Zhou Enlai at Hurley's residence. Wedemeyer, though outwardly affecting his usual cerebral calm, was seething inside. He had received a report that U.S. Army Captain John Birch, on detached service to the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), had been murdered by Communist guerillas in Suchow on the Shandong Peninsula. Birch's death, which has long been a source of controversy among historians, was quite possibly the result of Birch's deliberate taunting and abuse of Chinese Communists who he viewed as contemptuous enemies of the United States. Regardless of the exact causes of the

⁸ Warning Order 1-45, "Preparation for Mounting Out," August 26th, 1945, RG 127, Box 21, NARA.

⁹ Richard Bernstein, *China 1945: Mao's Revolution and America's Fateful Choice* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014): 290-91.

incident, Birch's body was discovered on August 27th. He had been shot, mutilated, and buried in a shallow grave.¹⁰

At their first meeting, Mao opened the discussions by asking Wedemeyer how many American troops were currently in China. Having heard that additional American forces would soon land in China, he also inquired where this would take place. Wedemeyer gave vague responses to both questions before telling Mao and Zhou Enlai about the circumstances of Birch's death. Both Communist leaders expressed concern and said they knew nothing about the incident. After some discussion an angry Wedemeyer told Mao directly, "I would like assurance that this will not happen again. I cannot have Americans killed by Chinese Communists in this theatre or anywhere else. I am directed by the president of the United States to use whatever force I require to protect American lives in China."¹¹

That Wedemeyer would speak so bluntly to Mao reflects the American general's perception of Mao's position in August 1945. With Japan defeated, a present and growing American military presence, and the apparently rejuvenated Nationalist government, the CCP seemed to be in a perilous state. Even Mao himself realized this. As Ronald Spector summarizes, "At Chongqing, Mao recognized that he was temporarily in a tight position. He had little doubt about the long-term outcome in a contest with the Nationalists. His movement was dynamic, growing and highly

¹⁰ James P. Walsh, "The Death of John Birch – Documented," *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, 58:3 (1975): 215-216.

¹¹ "Minutes of Meeting Held at Ambassador Hurley's Home, No. 2 Chialing Village 7:45pm, August 30th, 1945" Wedemeyer Papers, RG 218, Box 18, NARA, 1-2.

motivated, with good leaders and a proven strategy, while Chiang's was increasingly isolated, corrupt, reactionary and incompetent. Yet for the moment, with the Americans backing Chiang and Russian attitudes uncertain, he [Mao] was prepared to make concessions."¹²

Mao assured Wedemeyer that he would launch a full investigation into Birch's death. The meeting adjourned with conciliatory words of cooperation on both sides.¹³ Like much else said at the Chongqing summit, however, most of Mao's promises were just for show. He was primarily interested in playing for time and considered the agreements made with Chiang, such as assurances on a future coalition government, as mere words. As Richard Bernstein concludes, "His [Mao's] visit to Chungking (Chongqing) had served its purpose. He mollified the Americans, whom he was anxious to keep on the sidelines. He conveyed the image of a reasonable man seeking peace."¹⁴

The End of SACO

The close of August saw another dispute boil to the surface. The simmering row between the Army and Navy over Rear Admiral Milton Miles and the Sino-American Cooperative Organization (SACO) was renewed. For some time Wedemeyer had made it plain that he hoped both the SACO agreement and Miles' organization would be terminated at the war's conclusion. In the days after Japan's surrender announcement

¹² Ronald Spector, *In the Ruins of Empire*, 45.

¹³ "Minutes of Meeting Held at Ambassador Hurley's Home, No. 2 Chialing Village 7:45pm, August 30th, 1945" Wedemeyer Papers, RG 218, Box 18, NARA, 5-6.

¹⁴ Bernstein, *China 1945*, 292.

Wedemeyer recommended to General Marshall that SACO cease operations immediately after the official surrender. Admiral King quickly heard of this and soon communicated to Marshall his displeasure, writing “I agree with Admiral Miles that closing the SACO Agreement as of Surrender Day would leave an extremely bad impression with the Chinese government. In fact, I believe that it would prejudice the favored status with that government which we have been given to understand United States policy will strive to maintain.” King, ever the stalwart backer of Miles, pointed out that hostilities may continue well past the surrender date, and to shut down SACO could irreparably harm U.S. relations with Chiang’s government.¹⁵

From the Navy Department’s perspective the matter came down to differing interpretations of the agreement. General Wedemeyer seemed to favor a strict interpretation of the language in the agreement, arguing that according to the SACO agreement stipulated that the organization’s existence would cease upon the end of hostilities. King and Miles argued that any abrupt termination would be viewed negatively by Chiang’s government, and that SACO should at least be allowed to continue its weather monitoring activities after the war¹⁶ Most naval officers close to Miles and SACO felt that Wedemeyer had an ulterior motive; he simply wanted to shut down the Navy organization in order to renegotiate with Chiang for an intelligence sharing agreement that was more amenable to Army methods.¹⁷

¹⁵ “Continuation of SACO Agreement,” Memorandum, Admiral King to General Marshall, August 1945, RG 38, Box 38, NARA.

¹⁶ “Concluding the SACO Agreement,” Memorandum for Captain Metzel, August 28th, 1945, RG 38, Box 38, NARA.

¹⁷ “Subcommittee Report on JPS 739/D” Memorandum from Captain Metzel, August 28th, 1945, Ibid.

In truth it was likely matters of personality mattered as much as policy to Wedemeyer. The Army general had run out of patience with Miles and his organization. He felt that guerilla warfare was Army business, not that of the Navy. Wedemeyer was also deeply troubled by Miles' close relationship with Dai Li, a man whose brutal methods he could not tolerate. He was also looking to the future. Ever since SACO had established its training camps at Happy Valley the Chinese Communists had demonized the organization, accusing the American instructors of providing training not only in methods of espionage but also of assassination, thus making Dai Li's dreaded secret police even more dangerous. However exaggerated the Communist propaganda might be, to improve the chances of a postwar peace between the Nationalists and Communists Wedemeyer wanted SACO shut down as soon as possible.¹⁸

The rivalry between Wedemeyer and Miles was affecting diplomatic relations with China. Miles was a longtime favorite of Chiang Kai-shek and his wife who were not pleased at the prospect of Miles' departure. T.V. Soong had written to Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal explaining Chiang's urgent desire for Miles and SACO to have a prominent place in postwar China. Knowing that SACO would be disbanded soon, Soong requested that the U.S. government form a Naval Mission to assist the postwar Chinese government in building and training its own navy. Furthermore he drew special attention to the leadership of SACO, especially Milton Miles, and requested that these "capable and tried officers be included in the Naval Mission."¹⁹

¹⁸ Frederic Wakeman, *Spymaster: Dai Li and the Chinese Secret Service*, 303-305.

¹⁹ Letter, T.V. Soong to James Forrestal, August 27th, 1945, RG 38, Box 38, NARA.

On September 16th the Chiangs hosted Wedemeyer for a discussion on the postwar American advisory group and Miles' future in China. Both the Generalissimo and his wife argued forcefully for retaining Miles, perhaps as the head of the planned U.S. Navy advisory mission to China. But Wedemeyer was adamant. He could not and would not work with Miles any longer. The admiral's close connection to Dai Li and the inherent personality conflicts between the two men settled the matter as far as Wedemeyer was concerned. Disappointed by the general's decision, Chiang nevertheless eventually accepted it.²⁰

Ambassador Hurley had also tried to ease the tensions between the two men, but to no avail. Hurley later argued that the problems between the two men revolved around childish and petty differences. For the most part, however, the flamboyant ambassador privately blamed the Army general, whom he believed was jealous of Miles' closeness with Dai Li and resented Chiang's glowing statements about Miles. Hurley also felt that perhaps Wedemeyer was irked by the prevailing view among many Asians that it was the U.S. Navy that had largely defeated the Japanese. In early August Hurley delivered a speech in Pearl Harbor in which he stated that the war in the Pacific was largely won by naval power, not by the Russian invasion of Manchuria or by the atomic bomb. Word had filtered down that Hurley's speech had been poorly received by Wedemeyer, who felt the ambassador was failing to acknowledge the U.S. Army's contribution to victory over Japan.²¹

²⁰ "Notes on Meeting with General Wedemeyer, September 16th, 1945," RG 38, Box 38, NARA.

²¹ Memorandum, G.B. Berger for Captain Metzler, September 27th, 1945, RG 38, Box 38, NARA.

This was not a narrowly held view in China. To the countless Asians who had heard of the U.S. Navy's exploits in the Pacific, the overwhelming perception was that American naval power had defeated Japan. Dai Li spoke for many Chinese when he wrote to Admiral King's Chief of Staff, Rear Admiral Charles M. Cooke, and declared that the defeat of Japan was possible through the "fighting strength of the U.S. Navy."²² It was not long before American warships arrived in China. After a short delay in clearing both American and Japanese mines the first units of the Seventh Fleet steamed into Shanghai less than two weeks after Japan signed surrender documents on the deck of the USS *Missouri*. Admiral Kinkaid moored his flagship to the number one buoy in Shanghai harbor, an honor reserved for Royal Navy flagships during the past century.²³ Future Chief of Naval Operations Elmo Zumwalt, then a young Navy lieutenant, recalled the sight of the fleet's return to Shanghai as a "grim grey dragon of masts and guns and superstructures."²⁴ Upon their arrival Admiral Kinkaid and his fleet were welcomed by countless waving and cheering Chinese. Numerous businessmen and local leaders wrote letters to Kinkaid thanking him for their liberation, but perhaps the most poignant was from a local middle school principal. The letter requested that his young students could visit the American warships in person, "as those children have been growing up under the confinement of the enemy's yoke for so long a time of eight years and now having been set free by your grand naval influence as well as their own strength."²⁵

²² Letter, Dai Li to Charles M. Cooke, September 10th, 1945, Ibid.

²³ Gerald E. Wheeler, *Kinkaid of the Seventh Fleet: A Biography of Admiral Thomas C. Kinkaid* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1996): 436-37.

²⁴ Elmo Zumwalt, *On Watch: A Memoir* (New York: Quadrangle Books, 1976): 19.

²⁵ Letter, C.S. Sze to Thomas Kinkaid, October 2nd, 1945, Thomas Kinkaid Papers, Box 18, NHHC.

The popularity of the Navy was a serious concern for Wedemeyer, not simply because of any jealous motivation, but also due to a dramatic increase in tensions between Army personnel and those of the Nationalist Chinese Army. Throughout the summer of 1945 a series of incidents occurred in which U.S. Army and OSS personnel were harassed or abused by Chinese soldiers. The most serious took place in July in the town of Tushan, when members of the Chinese 12th Motorized Engineering Regiment encountered about a dozen U.S. Army enlisted personnel at the local International Café. Upon seeing that the Americans were in the company of young Chinese women, the soldiers physically and verbally harassed them, and at one point forced the Americans to line up along a wall at the point of their bayonets. One of the Chinese sergeants yelled, “We did not ask for American troops! We want equipment only!”²⁶ Although the incident was resolved without injury Wedemeyer quickly wrote to Chiang demanding that this and other incidents of harassment be investigated and that new procedures be put in place to prevent such acts in the future. With some justification Wedemeyer felt that American military personnel were gradually losing the goodwill of the average Chinese soldier.²⁷

These problems came at a time when the U.S. warships were not only operating in Shanghai but almost everywhere in Chinese coastal waters. Chiang had made it clear to Ambassador Hurley and President Truman that British ships were not welcome in

²⁶ Memorandum, Wedemeyer to Chiang, August 12th, 1945, Wedemeyer Papers, Box 85, CHIS.

²⁷ Memorandum, Wedemeyer to Chiang, August 13th, 1945, Ibid.

Chinese ports after Japan's surrender.²⁸ The bitter memories of British colonial domination of China had never died. With the exception of Hong Kong, American ships thus had a near monopoly in East Asian waters, with American cruisers and destroyers soon crowding anchorages from the Yellow Sea to as far south as Indochina. The no-British policy caused a few headaches for Admiral Kinkaid, who had numerous Royal Navy warships under his command that briefly moored in Shanghai, to the considerable consternation of Chiang's government.²⁹ After establishing his fleet's new headquarters in Shanghai, Kinkaid wrote to his wife that the situation in China resembled more of a circus than anything else, as he struggled to balance the interests of the Navy, Chiang's government, and the surrendering Japanese.³⁰

Despite the U.S. Navy's popularity and presence in Asia, Milton Miles was in no condition to counter General Wedemeyer's efforts to shut down SACO. Physically exhausted from the war and mentally impaired due to high doses of anti-malarial medication, Miles later admitted in his memoirs that he was not fully in control of his faculties at war's end. Reflecting back on what should have been a time to celebrate victory, he wrote instead that, "the month that followed the surrender of Japan was the worst through which I have ever lived."³¹ In her history of SACO Linda Kush

²⁸ Memorandum, Ambassador Hurley to Secretary of State, September 1st, 1945, *FRUS*, 1945: *The Far East, China*, 4:19.

²⁹ Naval Dispatch, Thomas Kinkaid to Chester Nimitz, September 26th, 1945, Naval Aide to the President, Communication Files 1945-1953, Box 7, Truman Presidential Library [henceforth TPL], Independence, Missouri.

³⁰ Thomas Kinkaid, Letter to Virginia Kinkaid, date unknown, Edward Marolda, *Ready Seapower: A History of the U.S. Seventh Fleet* (Washington, DC: Naval History and Heritage Command, 2012): 15.

³¹ Miles, *A Different Kind of War*, 522.

concluded that Miles' perilous mental state proved ruinous, writing that, "He could not remember certain events in which he had been most active. His professional self-editing function had evaporated, leading him to make foolish comments to his superiors, some, unfortunately, in writing. He wrote to a navy liaison officer that the future of the navy in China depended on getting out from under the army, whose red tape only hindered operations, and those remarks ended up on the desks of Wedemeyer and the Joint Chiefs out of context."³²

By the time of Wedemeyer's meeting with Chiang on September 16th these reports had been construed as direct insubordination, as Miles had laid out plans to continue SACO activities in direct violation of orders. Even the enormous reach of Admiral King could not protect him under these circumstances. After a tense and disastrous mid-September meeting with Wedemeyer in Shanghai Miles, was briefly placed under house arrest for health reasons, then flown back to the U.S. to rest and recuperate.³³ As for Dai Li, he continued to be a source of concern for Wedemeyer until his death in March 1946. Cloaked in conspiracy theories, the Chinese spymaster's fiery demise in a plane crash near Nanjing was blamed on everything from mechanical failure to vengeful Chinese spirits and Communist or even OSS sabotage. Only Chiang, Miles, and a few others in the GMD mourned his passing.³⁴

³² Linda Kush, *The Rice Paddy Navy: U.S. Sailors Undercover in China* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2012): 260.

³³ Miles, *A Different Kind of War*, 558-561.

³⁴ Wakeman, *Spymaster*, 356-67.

With Miles' departure the longstanding disputes between the Army and Navy eased. Although the SACO agreement continued to be in force on paper most of its operations had been shut down by September and with it the greatest source of contention between the two services.³⁵ Yet back in Washington another Army-Navy controversy over China was simmering. In early October George Marshall requested that a single military mission be created under the command of an army general. Predictably, Admiral King was strongly opposed to this proposal, and instead argued for separate Army and Navy missions with an independent coordinator. After much discussion, the Joint Chiefs adopted King's proposal³⁶ George Marshall accepted the arrangement but for the next four years he and James Forrestal rarely agreed on anything dealing with China. Even after Marshall became Secretary of State in January 1947 and Forrestal became the first Secretary of Defense the following September, each would aggressively defend his respective services in China.

Operation Beleager

In the seas and inland waters of East Asia the U.S. Seventh Fleet was far from idle. Concerned about the status of 1,500 Allied POW's in Manchuria, Admiral Thomas Kinkaid ordered the two destroyers of Destroyer Squadron 64 under Captain Chester Wood to Dalian on September 2nd. Already occupied by the Soviet Red Army, the

³⁵ Outgoing War Message, Joint Chiefs of Staff to Commander in Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet, October 16th, 1945, RG 218, Box 3, NARA.

³⁶ Samuel J. Cox, "U.S. Naval Strategy and Foreign Policy in China, 1945-1950," Unpublished Trident Scholar Report, U.S. Naval Academy (1980): 38.

strategic port city and the Yellow Sea became the scene of a proto-Cold War standoff. Kinkaid, irritated by what he considered rude and inappropriate behavior on the part of the Soviets given the urgent matter of the POW's, ordered several cruisers and destroyers to Dalian. More than 1,500 American and Allied POW's would finally be evacuated through the port in early September by U.S. Navy hospital ships and destroyers. Tensions between the two nations would cool afterwards but the Soviet domination of Dalian would continue to concern the U.S. Navy in East Asia.³⁷ The delicate and complex situation in Manchuria will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.

The Seventh Fleet was also busy elsewhere. After dealing with the aftermath of a vicious typhoon that swept northward through the Philippines towards Japan in early September 1945, the fleet loaded the Twenty-Fourth Army Corps at Buckner Bay, Okinawa, and headed north.³⁸ On September 9th the Seventh Fleet landed the army troops at Inchon, South Korea. The same day Admiral Kinkaid and U.S. Army Lieutenant General Courtney Hodge accepted the formal surrender of all Japanese forces south of the 38th parallel. General Nobuyuki Abe signed as the Japanese Governor General of Korea.³⁹ Admiral Daniel Barbey, the commander of Seventh Fleet amphibious forces, described the expressionless Abe as being racked by internal turmoil, writing "Although he could control the muscles of his face, he could not control the

³⁷ Ibid., 28-29.

³⁸ Daniel E. Barbey, *MacArthur's Amphibious Navy: Seventh Fleet Amphibious Forces, 1943-45* (Annapolis, MD: U.S. Naval Institute, 1969): 324.

³⁹ "Chronological Narrative of U.S. Seventh Fleet, 1 September 1945 to 1 October 1946," Narrative of Seventh Fleet and Western Naval Forces, Pacific, Seventh Fleet Papers, NHHC, 2-3.

muscles of his stomach, and midway in the signing he pulled out his handkerchief to catch its contents.”⁴⁰ The scene of surrendering Japanese officers, externally proud but internally tormented by what would have been unthinkable only months earlier, was one that would be repeated often in the coming weeks.

Back on Okinawa the 50,000 Marines of the III MEF prepared for deployment to China. The now code-named Operation Beleaguer would focus on occupying the key cities of Tianjin, Qingdao, and Beijing. Thanks in large part to its extensive wartime intelligence activities in China the U.S. had excellent knowledge of north China, especially the key Shandong Peninsula and the Gulf of Chihli. Located at the far western corner of the gulf, the strategic city of Dagu was one the first objectives. Dagu was located on the south bank of the Hai-Ho River, thirty miles downriver from Tianjin. According to most available intelligence the main road from Dagu to Tianjin was in very poor condition, but the double track railroad was intact and could be used to transport the Marines from Dagu to Tianjin.⁴¹

Once ashore at Dagu the 1st Marine Division was to oversee and accept the surrender of the Japanese North China Army, estimated to have at between 45,000 to 50,000 personnel and then to occupy and assume control of Hopeh Province before moving to Tianjin.⁴² Although the 1st and 6th Marine Divisions would not be facing armed opposition from entrenched Japanese, considerable risks remained. A large

⁴⁰ Barbey, *MacArthur's Amphibious Navy*, 328.

⁴¹ Annex King to Op Plan 3-45, 1st Marine Division, Reinforced, “Landing at Dagu-Tanku,” RG 127, Box 20, NARA.

⁴² Annex Able to Op-Plan 3-45, LT 3-7, “Intelligence Plan,” 1st Marine Division, RG 127, Box 21, NARA.

sandbar known simply as the Dagu Bar forced deep draft ships to anchor more than seven miles from the city of Dagu. The Marines would have to transfer to smaller landing craft to cover those seven miles. Most Marine Corps amphibious craft, such as the ubiquitous Higgins boat, could cross the bar at any time, but the larger LSM's (Landing Ship, Mechanized) could only cross during a two-hour period at high tide.⁴³

At dawn on September 30th the Navy transports carrying the 1st Marine Division anchored near the mouth of the Hai River. Upon their arrival dozens of sampans manned by cheering and jubilant Chinese crews began waving at the Americans. As the Marines climbed down the rope ladders to their landing craft, as they had done so many times before in the war, they were astonished to see the Chinese move their sampans within a few feet of their boats, waving wildly and even attempting to trade cheap souvenirs. It was a welcome change from the landings at Okinawa and Iwo Jima.⁴⁴

After coming ashore at Tangku the Marines were loaded onto waiting trains for the trip to Tianjin and then on to Beijing. The trip was a pleasant one for most, as riding on a train was an experience few had enjoyed during the war years. Everywhere they went the Marines encountered throngs of welcoming Chinese, most waving enthusiastically at the arriving Americans. The atmosphere of the journey changed rapidly, however, when word was passed that the Marines might have to fight their way through the Communists to reach Beijing. This proved to be a false rumor, and the

⁴³ Annex King to Op Plan 3-45, 1st Marine Division, Reinforced, "Landing at Taku-Tanku," RG 127, Box 20, NARA.

⁴⁴ Henry I. Shaw, Jr., *The United States Marines in North China, 1945-1949* (Washington, DC: Historical Branch, G-3 Division, U.S. Marine Corps): 2.

Marines reached the city without incident. E. B. Sledge described their arrival in the ancient Chinese capital, “Without any opposition or mishap, our train entered the huge rail yard at Beijing and pulled into the station. To our delight the trackside was lined with Chinese schoolchildren holding little American flags and waving and smiling at us.”⁴⁵

One of the most important reasons for the Marines’ deployment to northern China was to oversee the surrender of Japanese forces in China. In August President Truman and Chiang agreed that only Nationalist troops would accept the Japanese surrender.⁴⁶ The only exception to this would be their official representatives in North China, specifically the U.S. Marines. Further south as Japanese Guangdong Army units began surrendering to the Nationalist Chinese the contempt felt by the former for the latter was easily apparent. Historian Donald Gillin succinctly described the situation, concluding, “Everywhere in China, except in Manchuria where they were overwhelmed by the Soviet Union, the Japanese had no sense of having been defeated and were intent on making this clear to the Chinese.” In the metropolises of Beijing and Shanghai the Japanese commanders displayed the utmost contempt for their Nationalist Chinese counterparts when they surrendered. Elsewhere some Nationalists soldiers revealed that they still feared the Japanese, even after the surrender announcement. After being landed

⁴⁵ Sledge, *China Marine*, 18-19.

⁴⁶ Department of State Telegram, Byrnes to Hurley, August 11th, 1945, Naval Aide to the President, Communication Files 1945-1953, Box 7, TPL.

on the island of Taiwan 12,000 Nationalist soldiers refused to leave their American transports. Only when threatened with being thrown overboard did they disembark.⁴⁷

In marked contrast Japanese surrender ceremonies to the Americans in China were largely respectful and orderly, though the Japanese could not mask the inner fury at their defeat. On October 6th Marine General Kelly E. Rockey accepted the surrender of nearly 18,000 Japanese troops in Tianjin. Forced to walk half a block to the French Municipal Building, Lieutenant General Ginosuke Uchida and Major General Shiro Onato placed their swords on a table covered in green felt cloth.⁴⁸ With six impressions of his personal ivory and jade seal, General Uchida closed one of the final chapters of Japan's hold on North China.⁴⁹ The numerous Chinese civilians in attendance applauded the ceremony, and in the days that followed many took the surrender as a signal to exact revenge upon their former tormentors. Thousands of Japanese civilians who had previously ruled Tianjin found themselves beaten and robbed by Chinese gangs who claimed to be acting under American orders. The Marines soon set up motorized patrols to quell the riots, and within a week most of Tianjin had returned to a semblance of order.⁵⁰

A few weeks later the Sixth Marines oversaw the official surrender of the Japanese in Qingdao. They were thus witness to one of the last major surrender

⁴⁷ Donald G. Gillin, "Staying On: Japanese Soldiers and Civilians in China, 1945-1949," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 42:3 (May 1983): 497-498.

⁴⁸ "Chinese Cheer as Tientsin Japs Give Up," *Los Angeles Times*, October 7th, 1945.

⁴⁹ Carl Henry, Jr., Unpublished Memoir, Carl Henry, Jr Papers, USMC Archives and Special Collections [hereafter abbreviated as USMCA], Quantico, VA, 1.

⁵⁰ Spector, *In the Ruins of Empire*, 58.

ceremonies of the war. On the afternoon of October 25th General Rockey accepted the surrender from General Nagamo Eiji at the Qingdao racetrack, with 12,000 Marines and a battalion of Sherman tanks in formation. Speaking for Rockey, General Lemuel Shepherd offered no hand of reconciliation, only victory. Commenting on the historic nature of the ceremony, he declared, "I am the sure the personal satisfaction each of you obtains from witnessing the local Japanese Army Commander lay down his sword in complete defeat, will, in a small measure, compensate for the dangers and hardships to which you will have been exposed during your service in this war."⁵¹ Although a few smaller surrenders occurred one of the most immediate tasks of Operation Beleager had been accomplished.

For the officers and men of the Seventh Fleet, the first few weeks in Chinese waters were spent transporting the Marines, clearing the channels and ports of Japanese mines, and just waiting. Many longed for the coming day when they could sail back in to San Francisco or San Diego to a hero's welcome. Admiral Kinkaid addressed these concerns and offered his congratulations during a speech broadcasted live on October 12th. Speaking from his flagship, the USS *Catoctin*, anchored in Qingdao, Kinkaid acknowledged that for much of the Seventh Fleet work was only beginning in China but thanked all the men of the Seventh Fleet for their gallant service, declaring that, "Your own personal share in the victory is a priceless possession. I hope that you will always remember how it was won and why it had to be won. Those of you who return to civil

⁵¹ S. E. Smith, ed., *The United States Marine Corps in World War II: The One Volume History, From Wake to Tsingtao – By the Men Who Fought in the Pacific, and by Distinguished Marine Experts, Authors, and Newspapermen* (New York: Random House, 1969): 930.

life take with you a knowledge and understanding based upon the actual use of the instruments of war.” He urged all of them to utilize the skills they earned during the war for a better tomorrow.⁵²

The Seventh Fleet was also busy with another important and far more problematic mission. Less than a week after Kinkaid’s speech, more than 50,000 Nationalist troops were being ferried by 17th and 24th U.S. Navy Transport Squadrons to North China. As part of Chiang’s efforts to reinforce the north in the face of the growing Communist threat, he had completed an agreement with Wedemeyer in September whereby the Seventh Fleet, along with the 14th Air Force, would move more than 100,000 of his best troops from South to North China. This direct support for Chiang’s forces, in the midst of what would become one of the most controversial aspects of American involvement in China will be discussed in detail in later chapters.⁵³

China Marines Again

As the Marines moved into Qingdao, Beijing, and Tianjin, many eagerly explored their new surroundings. One Marine officer assigned to the former French Legation barracks in Tianjin referred to his new home as “a curious city.” He marveled at the international nature of Tianjin, which seemed to be from a bygone era. “You could drive a jeep along the Rue de Marechal Foch in the former French Concession and think

⁵² Thomas Kinkaid, speech onboard USS *Catoctin*, October 12th, 1945, Papers of Thomas C. Kinkaid, 1888-1972, Box 5, NHHHC.

⁵³ Samuel J. Cox, “U.S. Naval Strategy and Foreign Policy in China, 1945-1950,” Unpublished Trident Scholar Report, U.S. Naval Academy (1980): 33-34.

you were in France” he recalled, and, “You could turn into Victoria Road, flanked by stately bank buildings in the former British concession; or you could cross the International Bridge to the Via Marchese di San Giuliano in the former Italian Concession.”⁵⁴

For the young Marines and sailors China was an alien world, and the Chinese themselves both astonishing and incomprehensible. Their ways evoked admiration, contempt, and bewilderment. Many sailors and Marines thought highly of the Chinese emphasis on courtesy and manners. Other Americans expressed being surprised by the tremendous ingenuity and resourcefulness of merchants and tradesmen.⁵⁵ One Marine would recall that many Chinese craftsmen were capable of precise feats of woodworking and leather craftsmanship that most Americans would be unable to accomplish with modern power tools. The Chinese approach to the subject of time also made a positive impression. Unencumbered by the need to live according to mechanical constructs most Chinese seemed to exist in a timeless state. Eugene Sledge wrote poignantly that in China, “People were not rushing through life as victims of a timeframe set by machines, but they moved along calmly and enjoyed what pleasures and diversions their rich ancient culture afforded them, whether they were merchants or coolies.”⁵⁶

For the average Marine the overwhelming and salient reality of life in China was crushing poverty and many commented on it. After their arrival Marines were overwhelmed by not just the sights and sounds but also the smells of people struggling

⁵⁴ Carl Henry, Jr, Unpublished Memoir, Carl Henry, Jr., Papers, USMCA, 2-3.

⁵⁵ Spector, *In the Ruins of Empire*, 56-57.

⁵⁶ Sledge, *China Marine*, 51.

after eight years of brutal war. Young children would raid garbage cans for food, Chinese mothers would offer to sell their daughters for little more than twenty U.S. dollars, and to make ends meet some laborers would even collect human waste from the Marines' bathrooms and use it as manure in their cabbage fields. Ronald Spector concludes that, "While they found these practices appalling, or simply incomprehensible, most Marines recognized that the Chinese were engaged in a 'struggle for survival.'"⁵⁷

One aspect of Chinese culture that astounded many Marines was an extraordinary insensitivity to those in need. Both officer and enlisted alike were saddened by examples of this, such as the common sight of rows of shops in Qingdao, where one family would be eating mouthfuls of rice next to another shopkeeper who was visibly starving in the street.⁵⁸ Eugene Sledge describes a coolie pushing a heavy cart of lettuce that became stuck on a curb. After a crowd of more than a hundred Chinese stood nearby merely discussing the situation, Sledge and a friend grabbed the cart and heaved it onto the sidewalk, to the delight and gratitude of the exhausted coolie.⁵⁹ In a far more lethal incident, Private Jeptha Carrell recalled witnessing a Chinese laborer carrying a heavy bag of rice. After apparently suffering a heart attack, Carrell recalled that, "He keeled over, dropping his load, and lay, unmoving in the roadway. Until I drove up in a Jeep no one touched him or even stopped to check his condition." Carrell, Sledge and other Marines would later discover that anyone who helped an injured or dying person was

⁵⁷ Spector, *In the Ruins of Empire*, 55-56.

⁵⁸ Reminiscences of Thomas G. Ennis, interviewed by Frank M. Bemis, date unknown. Columbia University Oral History Project, East Asian Institute of Columbia University, 72.

⁵⁹ Sledge, *China Marine*, 52-53.

responsible for their care under Chinese law.⁶⁰ In retrospect this seeming universal callousness was the result of both the complexities of Chinese culture and the Japanese occupation. In the struggle for survival generosity was a privilege few could afford.

Even more disheartening to many Marines was the Chinese practice of abandoning or selling their young daughters for small amounts of money. A society that prized male children who could carry on the family legacy, the Chinese often considered rearing young females to be a burden and sold them if the opportunity arose. Marine Private Roy Rostad noted sadly that young girls “were given away, sold into virtual slavery, and if they showed prospects of turning out to be a good looker, they brought in the biggest buck by being sold in the oldest profession.”⁶¹

In addition to their contacts with Chinese and Japanese civilians, many American servicemen had a variety of encounters with the European expatriate communities in North China. Two of the most problematic were the Germans and Russians. German communities had been established in Tianjin and Qingdao around 1900 and soon became powerful and influential exclaves of business, trade, and politics. During the 1930s the Nazi Party was very active in both. By the conclusion of the war, however the German population of Tianjin was less than 600. Most of the remaining Germans, many of which had known life in China all their lives, were scheduled to be expatriated to Germany by the end of 1945.⁶² Qingdao, with a similar population of German nationals, saw the most direct contact between U.S. Marines and former Nazi party members. The

⁶⁰ Memoir of Jephtha Carrell, Jephtha Carrell Papers, USMCA, 48.

⁶¹ Personal Account of Roy Rostad, Roy Rostad Papers, USMCA, 3.

⁶² Memorandum on German Community in Tientsin, January 15th, 1946, RG 127, Box 72, NARA.

difficulty of identifying and repatriating much of the embedded German population in these cities, as well as the expatriate metropolis of Shanghai, would be a continuous effort during the American military intervention in China.⁶³

Divided into Red and White camps, the thousands of Russians in Shanghai, Beijing and Qingdao included several hundred prominent members of society, many of whom would be thrown into chaos soon after the war's end when the Nationalist government insisted that all Russians in China leave for the Soviet Union or request Chinese citizenship.⁶⁴ Only Red Russians (supporters of the current Communist government) could return to Soviet Union after the Russian Civil War (1918-1922). For the White Russians, who chose to support and defend the Tsar Nicholas and the Russian nobility, returning to their beloved *Rodina* (homeland) would mean the Soviet gulag, torture, or death, and sometimes all three. Many U.S. Marines and naval personnel would have memorable encounters with the Russians in China. Future Chief of Naval Operations Elmo Zumwalt, then a young Navy lieutenant, met his future wife, White Russian Mouza Coutelias-du-Roche in Shanghai after the surrender.⁶⁵ Another Marine officer who had encounters with both groups described the Whites as, "usually fun to be with. The Reds were not." Curious about the enigmatic Russian Communists he bought a ticket to an event commemorating the Russian Revolution. Held at Tianjin University's main auditorium in November 1945, the event was a magnificently staged piece of

⁶³ Intelligence Report on German Situation in Tsingtao, March 26th, 1947, Record Group 84, Records of the Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State China, Tsingtao Consulate, Classified General Records, 1946-1949, Box 2, NARA.

⁶⁴ Report on Russians in Peiping, January 19th, 1946, RG 127, Box 72, NARA.

⁶⁵ Zumwalt, *On Watch*, 21.

Soviet propaganda. After reading a personal letter from Joseph Stalin the organizers relentlessly demonstrated through song and sketch that the defeat of Nazi Germany was due wholly and incontestably because of the sacrifice of the Soviet Union. The event concluded when a Russian white knight ceremonially stabbed the black clad German devil. Little wonder that this secretive but enthusiastic group of Russian exiles in China would go on to attract so much attention from the U.S. State Department and U.S. intelligence agencies in the years to come.⁶⁶

A Cold Fall in China

By the end of October all the III MEF Marines had been billeted and organized ashore. The 1st Marine Division was primarily clustered in Beijing, Tianjin and Dagu, while the 6th Marines controlled Qingdao.⁶⁷ For air support the III MEF relied on the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, which established its headquarters at the old French Arsenal airfield east of Tianjin.⁶⁸ Beyond the initial parades and surrender ceremonies most of the work of the Marines was lonely and mundane. Throughout October and November their primary duties consisted of guarding rail lines, patrolling the streets of Tianjin and Beijing, and keeping a watchful eye on the Japanese prisoners of war prior to their repatriation to Japan. Later guarding vital coal mines for the coming winter became an important role. It was a dull, monotonous, and increasingly cold watch.

⁶⁶ Carl Henry, Jr, Unpublished Memoir, Carl Henry, Jr Papers, USMCA, 9-10.

⁶⁷ III MEF War Diary, 1 October-31 October 1945, RG 127, Box 17, NARA.

⁶⁸ Henry I. Shaw, Jr. *The United States Marines in North China, 1945-1949, 2nd Revised Edition* (Washington, DC: United States Marine Corps Press, 1962): 4.

The greatest danger came not from any vengeful Japanese but from the CCP. Throughout October the First Marines encountered various forms of hostility from the Communists. The first incident took place soon after the Dagu landings. On October 5th a Marine reconnaissance team discovered thirty-six unguarded roadblocks that prevented travel along the strategic Tianjin-Beijing highway. The following day an engineering team sent to clear the roadblocks was fired up on by then unknown forces, later revealed to be Communists. After taking rifle fire and suffering three wounded, the engineering team withdrew. On October 7th, supported by a tank platoon and carrier air cover, the roadblocks were finally removed.⁶⁹ As a gesture of good will Chiang Kai-shek released a message on October 12th, thanking the Marines for their valiant service in the Pacific and welcoming them to his troubled country. For the remainder of the month sniper attacks and sabotage of rail lines and equipment was frequent. No deaths occurred but several Marines were injured. Yet these series of incidents were only a taste of what was to come.⁷⁰

As the weather turned colder in northern China the Marines began to realize that a quick departure was increasingly unlikely, especially after the men of the III MEF were issued winter service-green uniforms. The sharp looking thick green wool overcoats were especially prized for their warmth, and their arrival from the U.S. was greeted with considerable acclaim.⁷¹ But beyond the new uniforms and words of thanks it was becoming apparent to many that their stay was likely to be much longer than they

⁶⁹ Ibid., 3-4.

⁷⁰ III MEF Monthly Report, 1-30 October 1945, RG 127, Box 17, NARA.

⁷¹ Sledge, *China Marine*, 33-34.

had anticipated. Confusion and concern over the Navy and Marines' mission in China had been growing, and soon a series of events would compel revision of existing U.S. policy.

Eugene Sledge recalled an incident that reflected the confusing nature of their mission. On guard duty near the village of Lang Fang on October 26th, he and his platoon nearly got into a firefight when gunfire erupted nearby. Several thousand Communist soldiers attacked the Nationalist-controlled village that night. Most of the fighting took place a few miles away from the Marines' position, yet to Sledge the situation was both ironic and bitter. "Here we were, [he wrote] about forty U.S. Marines, in the middle of what could explode into a vicious battle between two opposing Chinese forces numbering in the thousands. We had survived fierce combat in the Pacific and now none of us wanted to stretch his luck any further and get killed in a Chinese Civil War. We felt a terribly lonely sensation of being abandoned and expendable."⁷²

During November a number of violent incidents with the Communists occurred. By far the most serious took place on November 14th. While inspecting the rail line from Qingwandao to Beijing Major General Dewitt Peck, the commander of the 1st Marine Division, and his staff came under rifle fire from an unidentified group of men from a village six miles north of the small town of Kuyeh. A platoon of Marines responded with mortar fire, and like the previous incidents the hostiles dispersed before facing the brunt of Marine Corps firepower. After the Kuyeh incident General Rockey

⁷² Ibid., 39-40.

requested clarification from General Wedemeyer on the rules of engagement.⁷³ With the threat of additional bloodshed growing and their hands tied with restrictive rules, Marine Corps leadership in China had become frustrated and angry. No one felt the pressure to find a new direction for the U.S. military in China more than Albert Wedemeyer.

The November Debate

By November 1945 Wedemeyer had served as the senior American military officer in China for over a year. He had developed a strong working relationship with Chiang and had met with Mao and Zhou Enlai. He understood the situation in China about as well as any Westerner could. And the political, economic, and military conditions greatly disturbed him. After a series of consultations with General Rockey and Chiang Kai-shek, Wedemeyer submitted a series of detailed reports to the Joint Chiefs. He reported facing a perilous situation, far more complex than had been anticipated in August when the orders to deploy the Navy and Marines to China had first been issued.⁷⁴

By early November it had become obvious that the United States had five - often contradictory - goals in China. The first was to oversee the expeditious release of all American POW's, which by November had been accomplished. The second was the repatriation of the Japanese back to their homeland. Although nearly a million Japanese soldiers and civilians remained in China this goal seemed achievable in the near future.

⁷³ G-3 Periodic Report, III MEF, 1-30 November 1945, RG 127, Box 17, NARA.

⁷⁴ Memorandum, Wedemeyer to Marshall, November 20th, 1945, Wedemeyer Papers, Box 83, CHIS.

The third, and inextricably tied to the second, was to quietly support Chiang's Nationalists in their effort to gain control over both North China and later Manchuria. The fourth goal was to block Soviet expansion in East Asia. This goal, perhaps the most nebulous, would soon become a major point of contention between U.S. Navy and Army leadership. The final goal, and potentially the most intractable, was to encourage a lasting peace and a coalition government between the Nationalists and Communists. If the fifth goal could not be achieved, the United States was to somehow accomplish the first three objectives without becoming involved in fratricidal warfare between the two Chinese camps.

After expressing both sympathy and solidarity for Chiang in his report, Wedemeyer addressed a memorandum to Marshall explaining the situation.⁷⁵ The Chinese economy was all but collapsing due to high inflation, many Chinese civilians were starving, and the Nationalist government, despite its strength in the south, was unable to influence policy in the north, despite the presence of the Marines. Chiang could not hope to subjugate the Communists, much less take over the increasingly vital province of Manchuria without far greater American support than what had been currently promised. The United States thus found itself in an intolerable situation. If it withdrew support for Chiang and ended American ground and naval support, the corruption and graft endemic to the Nationalist government would probably lead to a Communist victory. But if the United States continued to support Chiang, it would find

⁷⁵ Memorandum, Chief of Staff, United States Army, to Commanding General, United States Forces, China Theater, *FRUS*, 1945, *The Far East, China*, 7: 644-645.

itself embroiled in the same conflict, contrary to its more basic goal which was to avoid becoming involved in “fratricidal war.”⁷⁶ But Wedemeyer also pointed out that more than 800,000 Japanese civilian and military personnel remained in China and that continued American naval support for the repatriation operation remained an absolute necessity.⁷⁷

Wedemeyer suggested three alternative policies for China: the United States could withdraw from China, commit additional troops to stabilize the country, or to call upon the newly created United Nations to make the United States a trustee for China similar to the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. The last was fanciful at best as there was little or no support in the U.S. government for such a grandiose plan. The second option, to side fully with the Nationalists, also seemed unlikely. Yet the first option, to withdraw from China and abandon a longtime ally to Communist aggression aided by the Soviet Union, was also unpalatable.

Wedemeyer’s reports on China were not the only ones submitted to the War and Navy Departments. Admiral Daniel Barbey, Kinkaid’s successor as commander of the Seventh Fleet, submitted an assessment of conditions in China at the behest of the Navy Department. In that report he conceded that repatriation of all Japanese from North China was both important and necessary, yet to remove of the Japanese followed by a withdrawal of the Marines would leave a power vacuum that the Chinese Communists would exploit. But for the Marines to remain would expose them to increasingly

⁷⁶ Memorandum, Wedemeyer to Marshall, 20 November 1945, Wedemeyer Papers, Box 83, CHIS.

⁷⁷ Report on the China Situation, 20 November 1945, Wedemeyer Papers, Box 83, CHIS.

dangerous conflict with the Communists. Barbey concluded that should diplomatic attempts to bring the Nationalist and Communists into a coalition government fail, the United States should withdraw all military personnel from China to prevent them becoming involved in an inevitable civil war. The report ended with a sensible but ultimately disregarded warning, “It must be perfectly clear to both the Nationalist leaders and the Communist leaders, the disastrous consequences of a civil war to the Chinese people, and to their leadership. I do not think either leader wants civil war. I think that both of them have been jockeying for position to obtain the best possible compromise.”⁷⁸

Despite its concise conclusions, Barbey’s report was viewed as less important than Wedemeyer’s and was read by a smaller number of the senior leaders in Washington. Although he had relieved Admiral Kinkaid on November 19th, and was highly respected by both services, some U.S. Navy leaders distrusted Barbey due to his longtime association with Douglas MacArthur. In their eyes, any naval officer who could successfully work with a tremendous source of enmity for so long had to be viewed with suspicion.⁷⁹ For these reasons Barbey’s report played less a role than it should have. Yet it is intriguing to speculate what would have happened had the Truman Administration adopted Barbey’s all or nothing approach, instead of the compromise plan that resulted.

The small furor created by these reports culminated in a series of November discussions between Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal, Secretary of War Robert

⁷⁸ Summary of North China – Manchuria Situation, November 19th, 1945, Dan Barbey Papers, Box 29, NHHC.

⁷⁹ Cox, “U.S. Naval Strategy and Policy in China, 1945-1949,” 45-46.

Patterson, and Secretary of State James F. Byrnes.⁸⁰ At the first meeting, held in Washington on November 6th, the participants agreed that either increasing support for Chiang or a complete withdrawal from China would have grave consequences. Concerns were also raised by Patterson and Byrnes about China's ability to govern Manchuria after the departure of the Soviets. Both were deeply concerned about continued Soviet interference or pressure in the region.⁸¹

Two weeks later Byrnes, Forrestal and Patterson reconvened to discuss the China situation further and make a final recommendation to President Truman. Both Forrestal and Patterson considered Wedemeyer's recent reports to be overly pessimistic. In a critical opinion that would often be repeated in the years ahead, Forrestal argued that despite Chiang's inarguably corrupt government it was the only capable source of government acceptable to the U.S. in China, and to abandon American support would result in Soviet domination of East Asia. With some variation the other secretaries agreed with Forrestal's assessment and the group concluded that, despite Wedemeyer's apparent pessimism, the United States should continue to support Chiang and the Nationalists.⁸²

Following a few weeks of further discussion and gaining the approval of Douglas MacArthur, Admiral Leahy presented a summary of the proposed China policy to President Truman. It called for an increase of support for the Nationalists, additional

⁸⁰ Spector, *In the Ruins of Empire*, 70.

⁸¹ Minutes of the Meetings of the Secretaries of State, War, and Navy, *Foreign Relations of the United States, China, 1945*, Vol. VII (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1945): 606-07.

⁸² Cox, "U.S. Naval Strategy and Policy in China, 1945-1949," 42-43.

shipping to accelerate the repatriation of the Japanese, and the furnishing of more vessels to be operated by the new Republic of China Navy. Upwards of 500,000 Japanese soldiers and civilians per month were to be repatriated under the new plan. As for the status of American forces in China, the report concluded that “The U.S. Marines will remain in North China for the time being for the purpose of assisting in the repatriation of Japanese nationals, military and civil from that area, the duration of such employment to be subject to future directives from the Joint Chiefs of Staff.”⁸³ The day after the report was presented to Truman, he approved it with only a few minor comments.⁸⁴

The U.S. government thus opted to continue its limited support of Chiang and the Nationalists. The accelerated repatriation effort was designed to achieve an important goal that remained the most positive component of postwar American effort in China. Despite these decisions public pressure was also growing on the Truman Administration to provide a clear and rapid exit for the Marines and sailors in China. After a trip to East Asia, Montana Congressman Mike Mansfield argued on the House floor that the United States was slowly being drawn into a renewed civil war between the Nationalists and Communists.⁸⁵ With the rapid demobilization of the U.S. military worldwide and the increasing Communist threat to their safety, several members of Congress voiced grave doubts about the announced policy. By December some congressmen began to voice their concerns to Truman personally. Representative Hugh de Lacy from Washington

⁸³ Memorandum from the Joint Chiefs of Staff to Truman, December 11th, 1945, Truman Secretary’s Files, Box 151, TPL.

⁸⁴ Memorandum from Truman to the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Secretary of War, *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ Spector, *In the Ruins of Empire*, 70.

wrote to the president in late December urging him to end support for Chiang's government and withdraw the Marines.⁸⁶ De Lacy and Mansfield's voices were only two in a chorus of politicians growing louder around a simple premise: the Marines should come home. The plan for equipping and training the Nationalist Navy drew less protest, but beyond limited naval support an emerging consensus was that the various factions of China be left to work out their problems with American diplomatic and economic assistance.

The appointment of a new American diplomatic emissary to China was one of two momentous yet separate events that occurred as 1945 came to an end. These were events that would have a profound influence on the future of China mission. On November 27th Patrick Hurley, the eccentric and unpredictable American ambassador to China, abruptly resigned his post. For months Hurley had been growing frustrated by his inability to bring the Nationalists and Communists together to form a coalition government. By November the optimism Hurley had felt at the August summit between Mao and Chiang was but a memory, after over two months of complex negotiations had accomplished little.⁸⁷ More personally Hurley had been vexed by certain members of the State Department who had long advocated a friendlier stance to Mao and the Chinese Communists. Without informing the president beforehand Hurley publicly lambasted the

⁸⁶ Letter from Representative Hugh de Lacy to Harry S. Truman, December 28th, 1945, Truman Secretary Files, Box 151, TPL.

⁸⁷ Dreyer, *China at War*, 315.

“career men” at the State Department who supported Communism worldwide and announced his resignation.⁸⁸

For the president Hurley’s announcement was a slap in the face. Wasting no time an incensed Truman immediately called George Marshall at his home in Leesburg, Virginia, and in a famous but exceptionally brief conversation the president asked Marshall, who was only a few days into his retirement, to go to China for him. The general responded in the affirmative, and then hung up the phone. No argument, no discussion, just America’s perhaps most estimable soldier following orders from his commander in chief. Only later did Marshall realize the extraordinary task that he had agreed to undertake on the president’s behalf.⁸⁹ In a series of meetings with Truman, Admiral Leahy, and Secretary of State James Byrnes, Marshall was told in no uncertain terms that even if Chiang failed to accept reasonable concessions to Mao’s Communists he was still to back the Nationalist government, and yet still produce a way forward for a democratic China centered around the Nationalist government. This was a tall order indeed, even for George Marshall.⁹⁰

The selection of Marshall was met with near universal acclaim. Representative Mansfield, in a letter to James Byrnes, put the matter eloquently, writing that, “No finer choice could have been made for the tremendously difficult job which confronts our country in China at this time. He has, I am sure, the tact, diplomacy, and courage

⁸⁸ “Text of Ambassador Hurley’s Statement,” *New York Times*, November 28th, 1945.

⁸⁹ Bernstein, *China 1945*, 340-41.

⁹⁰ Robert J. Donovan, *Conflict and Crisis: The Presidency of Harry S. Truman, 1945-1948* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1977): 151-52.

necessary to overcome the difficulties which he will face.”⁹¹ It was fully expected that Marshall would not only succeed where Hurley had failed, but that he would accomplish miracles in China. The shattering announcement utterly overshadowed the second key event that would affect the U.S. Navy in China, that of the retirement of Admiral Ernest J. King as Chief of Naval Operations. This iron-willed defender of sea power, whom General Dwight Eisenhower privately wished could be eliminated for the good of the American war effort, chose to retire in December. The longtime supporter of Milton Miles and zealous advocate for his beloved Navy, King was exhausted by the war and saw little place for himself in the Truman administration. Historian Michael Isenberg concluded that this man constructed of “barbed wire and razor blades,” felt that his time had come and that, “with the death of his patrons Knox and Roosevelt and the coming of peace, he knew he was ill-suited to shepherd the Navy into the postwar years.”⁹² With King’s departure the Navy lost its fiercest and most senior advocate for a greater American role in China. From 1946 onwards the fight for the U.S. Navy in China would be undertaken by Admiral Charles Cooke, Secretary of the Navy James V. Forrestal, and a few others.

On December 15th the Truman Administration released a detailed statement on the U.S. policy toward China. Declaring that a “strong, united, and democratic China is of the utmost importance to the success of this United Nations organization and for

⁹¹ Letter, Representative Mike Mansfield to Secretary of State James Byrnes, November 29th, 1945, Truman Secretary’s Files, Box 151, TPL.

⁹² Michael Isenberg, *Shield of the Republic: The U.S. Navy in an Era of Cold War and Violent Peace, Vol. I 1945-1962* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1993): 73.

world peace,” the statement described in detail American plans for China. It urged that a cease-fire immediately take place between Nationalist Government and the Communists, and that a “national conference of representatives” be convened to hammer out the shared future of China. As both a reminder of past sacrifices and its current military strength, the statement also declared that, “The United States has already been compelled to pay a great price to restore the peace which was first broken by the Japanese aggression in Manchuria. The maintenance of peace in the Pacific may be jeopardized, if not frustrated, unless Japanese influence in China is wholly removed and unless China takes her place as a unified, democratic and peaceful nation. This is the purpose of the maintenance for the time being of United States military and naval forces in China.”⁹³

The selection of George C. Marshall as the new American emissary to China marked the end of the U.S. military’s first postwar phase in China. Although it had always been understood by those in the highest levels of American government that the presence of American warships and Marines in China was as much about supporting Chiang Kai-shek and his government as it had been about tying up the loose ends of the World War II, the December 15th statement made American intentions far less opaque. For Truman to send the nation’s most prestigious (if not its most famous) soldier-statesman to China brought much greater attention to American involvement in East

⁹³ “Statement by the President – United States Policy Toward China” December 15th, 1945, George C. Marshall’s Mission to China, Student Research File, Box 1, TPL.

Asia. As for the U.S. Marines and sailors in China, they would remain. For how long was yet to be decided.

The United States accomplished much in the final months of 1945. The American efforts in China have often been overlooked compared to those in postwar Germany or Japan, but they were considerable. It is inarguable that without the American intervention the teeming masses of North China would have endured a harsh winter of starvation and violence. But during these critical months Harry Truman yoked his country irrevocably with Chiang Kai-shek and the Nationalists. Expectations were high that the estimable George Marshall would be able to overcome any and all obstacles.

One must now turn to the diplomatic arena of the Cold War. As tensions turned colder between the United States and the Soviet Union, the latter cast its eye with increasing suspicion at the American presence in China. Even Joseph Stalin himself developed a more than passing interest in just what the U.S. was planning. As American patience with the delayed Soviet withdrawal from Manchuria intensified, negotiations took place both on the ground and at the highest levels of government that would shape the Cold War in Asia.

CHAPTER III

NEGOTIATING WITH COMMUNISTS

As World War II approached its conclusion, the Soviet Union, eager to secure what it considered the rightful spoils of both war and diplomacy, seized control of Manchuria with a near fatal grip. The United States, increasingly determined to hold back Soviet influence in Asia, responded with both diplomacy and military pressure. The presence of U.S. Marines in North China as well as the Seventh Fleet in Chinese waters emerged as perhaps the most important counterweight to Soviet expansion in Asia. During the tense and delicate months after the fighting ended, U.S. Navy leadership assigned the China mission a level of importance far out of proportion to its numbers. And, although it never rose to the level of importance as Eastern Europe or even Greece in 1946, American and Soviet rivalry in China and Manchuria marked the start of Cold War in Asia as U.S. sailors and Marines were soon caught up in this new struggle for global supremacy.

The Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship

Just a few hours prior to the Japanese announcement of surrender, the Soviet Union and GMD negotiated the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Alliance. Signed on August 14th, 1945, the treaty was designed to work out some of the finer points of the Yalta accords and their implementation in East Asia. Although the United States and Soviet Union separately pushed for the treaty, many American diplomats and senior military officers soon viewed its provisions as overwhelmingly favoring the Soviet

Union. This imbalance would play a large role in the operations of both the U.S. Navy and Marines in North China.

The treaty was negotiated in Moscow during July and early August, primarily by Chinese Minister of Foreign Affairs T.V. Soong and Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov. Perhaps Joseph Stalin's most loyal sycophant, Molotov had served as Foreign Minister since 1939 and is best remembered for the astonishing but short-lived 1939-1941 Nazi-Soviet Pact. Ruthless and cruel, the short, bespectacled former journalist managed to outlast many of his contemporaries in Stalin's inner circle.¹ He was also intimately involved with Stalin's Great Terror of the late 1930s. As Soviet scholar Geoffrey Roberts has concluded, "Molotov's personal role in authorizing and sponsoring the Terror was second only to Stalin. Indeed, in 1937-1938, when the practice developed of Politburo members authorizing arrests, executions, and imprisonments by the list, Molotov signed more lists than Stalin – 373 compared to 362."² An unrepentant Stalinist to his last breath, other than his deadly boss Molotov became the most vocal critic of the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps mission in North China.³

After difficult negotiations in Moscow the treaty that emerged gave the Soviet Union nearly all of what had been spelled out in the February 1945 Yalta accords, and

¹ Roger Moorhouse, *The Devil's Alliance: Hitler's Pact with Stalin, 1939-1941* (New York: Basic Books, 2014): 16-17.

² Geoffrey Roberts, *Molotov: Stalin's Cold Warrior* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2012): 13-14.

³ Albert Resis, ed. *Molotov Remembers: Inside Kremlin Politics, Conversations with Felix Chuev* (Chicago, IL: Ivan R. Dee Publishing, 1993): 159-160. Note: In 1940 the Central Committee of the Soviet Politburo voted to expel Molotov's Jewish wife, Polina Semenova Zhemchuzhina, from membership of the Communist Party. This was done because of her association with the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee, a group that supported Jewish nationalism, which Stalin detested. On Stalin's orders Molotov both left and later divorced his wife, who was exiled in 1949. Immediately after Stalin's death she and Molotov were reunited.

even more. Beyond mutual respect for the respective sovereignty of both nations, the Soviet Union agreed to recognize the Nationalist government as the sole authority in China and Manchuria. For the United States the most crucial articles of the treaty concerned the status of Port Arthur and Dalian, as well as ownership of the Chinese Manchurian railways. The treaty stipulated that Port Arthur would be considered a naval base administered by the Chinese but with a joint Sino-Soviet commission to manage military matters, such as the movement of Soviet troops in wartime. Dalian would become a free port “open to the trade of all nations,” administered by a Russian harbor-master. The major railways in Manchuria would be jointly operated by both countries, but only in time of war against Japan could they be used to transport Soviet troops. The treaty would expire at the end of thirty years.⁴

Behind the scenes some Americans experienced in Soviet affairs raised concerns. Even before the treaty was agreed upon, U.S. Ambassador to the Soviet Union Averell Harriman cabled President Truman saying that the Soviets were justified in expecting the return of the southern end of Sakhalin and the Kurile Islands from the Japanese. But he questioned the provisions concerning Port Arthur and Dalian. Both were Chinese territory, and Harriman feared that the status of Dalian would prove troublesome, as he doubted the Soviets had any intention of truly operating the city as a free port. Regarding Soviet plans for Port Arthur, the ambassador pointed out that the Soviets had

⁴ Full Text of Sino-Soviet Amity Pact, date unknown, Daniel Barbey Papers, Box 29, NHHC.

already begun rebuilding facilities at the base constructed and occupied by the Imperial Russian Navy between 1897 and the 1904-05 Russo-Japanese War.⁵

Within a few days Harriman expanded on his concerns, noting that in peacetime Dalian was to be administered by the Chinese, but that in time of war the Soviets would exercise full authority. A further understanding of the treaty was that the Chinese administrators in Dalian would be favorably disposed towards the Soviet Union, which in Harriman's view meant they would be Communist, granting enormous power and influence to the Soviets.

The United States and the Soviet Union approved of the treaty for starkly different reasons. Eager to have Soviet support for a unified postwar China, the United States privately pressured Chiang Kai-shek to accept the treaty. On August 27th Secretary of State James Byrnes released a statement in which he declared the treaty, "an important step forward in the relations between China and the Soviet Union."⁶ But for Stalin the Sino-Soviet Treaty was simply a means to buy time while outwardly presenting a friendly posture to all sides. As historian Jay Taylor concludes, "In China as in Korea, Stalin's immediate goal was the departure of the American military. This required an American perception of a benign Soviet posture toward China. Consequently, Stalin believed that he had to go some distance in seeming to carry out his

⁵ Memorandum, Averell Harriman to President Harry Truman and Secretary of State James Byrnes, August 11th, 1945, Averell Harriman Papers, Moscow Files, LOC.

⁶ U.S. Department of State, *United States Relations with China: With Special Reference to the Period 1944-1949* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State, 1949): 122.

repeated commitments that he would support Chiang as the leader of a united China.”⁷

Within a few months Harriman concerns would be proven correct.⁸ The true importance of the treaty lay less in what was on paper but in how it was implemented, as the status of Dalian and Soviet manipulation of the finer points of the agreement would emerge as centerpieces of the emerging Cold War in Asia.

The Cardinal Mission⁹

Events on the ground in Manchuria would soon arouse deep suspicions of Soviet intentions in China. Among the first stirrings of the Cold War in Asia were a series of covert operations undertaken by the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) in China.

Although these missions did not involve U.S. Navy and Marine Corps personnel, these missions, one in particular, were often cited as reasons the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps presence was deemed vital by American supporters of the National Chinese. Despite the atomic bombs in September and the lightning Soviet invasion of Manchuria that followed, Japan’s surrender within days following the signing of the agreement caught many Americans by surprise.¹⁰

Upon receiving word of the surrender, however, the OSS moved quickly to execute long-standing plans by sending trained personnel to locate Japanese prisoner of

⁷ Jay Taylor, *The Generalissimo: Chiang Kai Shek and the Struggle for Modern China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009): 317.

⁸ Russell Buhite, *Soviet-American Relations in Asia, 1945-1954* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1982): 26-27.

⁹ Reprinted with permission from Taylor and Francis Group.

¹⁰ Ernest J. King, Memorandum for James Forrestal, February 14, 1945, Ernest J. King Papers, Box 5, Correspondence and Memorandum, January 1945-May 1946, NHHC.

war camps in East China and Manchuria, to make contact with Allied prisoners of war, and, if possible, to arrange for transporting the POWs back to Allied-held territory.

Aircraft, personnel, and fuel were quickly allocated for nine humanitarian POW missions, each consisting of a six-man team that would take off from the main OSS base near Xian, China, and parachute near known Japanese prisoner of war camps.¹¹

The nine missions were assigned avian code names. The most successful were undertaken in East China on August 17th, when the Duck and Magpie teams dropped on camps near Weixian and Beijing respectively. The Duck team made contact with a large camp two miles from Weixian that housed more than 1500 Allied POWs, including more than two hundred American and over a thousand British soldiers.¹² The Magpie team reported similar success, radioing the following message on the 18th: “Excellent landing. Contact Japanese Lt. General Takahashi. Party well treated by Japanese who claim war not officially over.”¹³ Further south the Sparrow (Shanghai), Pigeon (Hainan), and Raven (Vientiane) missions all established communication with POW’s held in smaller camps. Two operations were failures. Operation Flamingo to the north Manchurian city of Harbin was cancelled due to the heavy presence of Soviet forces, and its men and resources transferred to the Eagle mission sent into Korea. Due to poor OSS

¹¹ Operational Orders, “Operation DUCK,” Headquarters, Office of Strategic Services China Theater, August 13th, 1945, Record Group 226, Records of the Office of the Strategic Services, Box 187, NARA.

¹² Report on Operation Duck, August 19th, 1945, RG 226, Box 187, NARA.

¹³ Report on POW Missions in North China,” August 18th, 1945, Office of Strategic Services, China Theater, Communications Section, Ibid.

leadership and even worse operational planning the Eagle mission was a fiasco, and was forced to leave Korea before making contact with the large POW camp near Seoul.¹⁴

The last mission was Operation Cardinal, by far the most ambitious and complex. Led by OSS Major James Hennessey, the six-man team parachuted from a B-24 near the Hoten POW camp, ten miles south of Mukden on August 16th.¹⁵ Hennessey's primary goal was to contact the estimated 1,500 POW's at the camp. A secondary objective was to locate U.S. Army General Jonathan Wainwright, who had been forced to surrender the Philippines in April 1942, and to provide transportation for him and other senior Allied POW's out of Manchuria. The Cardinal mission was also a cover to establish an intelligence gathering operation against the Soviets. Both OSS head General Bill Donovan and Albert Wedemeyer wanted to gather as much information as possible on Soviet intentions. Therein lay the critical importance of the Cardinal mission. Cancellation of the Haerbin mission left the Mukden operation as the only opportunity to penetrate Manchuria and gather valuable intelligence before the door closed.¹⁶ The Cardinal team soon learned that the Hoten POW camp housed a total of 1,673 POW's, 1,321 of them American, but that General Wainwright was not among them.¹⁷ Over the next few days the OSS team surveyed the camp and a nearby airfield and assessed the medical condition of the POW's, eleven of whom required immediate medical evacuation.

¹⁴ Yu, *OSS in China*, 232-33.

¹⁵ Report on Cardinal Operation," September 24, 1945, Headquarters, Office of Strategic Services, China Theater, RG 226, Box 187, NARA.

¹⁶ Yu, *OSS in China*, 242-243.

¹⁷ "POW Report Mukden," August 18th, 1945, RG 226, Box 187, NARA.

On August 19th Soviet paratroopers and fighter aircraft landed at the Mukden airfield and made contact with the OSS team. The next night four Russian captains boldly walked into the Hoten camp and asked to speak to the senior American present. After pleasant introductions, a cheering, raucous crowd of now former POW's hoisted one of the Russian officers onto their shoulders and insisted he give a speech. Through an interpreter he proclaimed, "Friends, comrades! As a representative of the commanding general of the Russian Red Army in this area, I announce to you that from this moment you are free men!" The crowd cheered wildly and the celebrations continued.¹⁸ An hour later, after stern demands from the Russians to formally surrender to them, rather than to the Americans or Chinese, those present at the poorly illuminated football field watched as the Japanese officers and NCO's ceremonially handed their swords to Russian officers, while the enlisted men passed their rifles to the former captives.¹⁹

This celebration marked the high point of Soviet-American relations in Manchuria. For an ephemeral few days it seemed that the wartime alliance was alive and well on the foreign ground of Manchuria. Several of the American POWs were impressed by how the Russians conducted themselves. U.S. Army Colonel Philip Fry, a prisoner of war since his capture in the Philippines, recorded in his August 27th diary entry that things had calmed down in Mukden after a few days, writing, "Mukden is getting quiet and the Russians are doing everything to assist us. They have a big job to

¹⁸ Lewis Beebe, "Manuscript of Japanese POW Experiences of Brigadier Lewis C. Beebe," Lewis Beebe Papers, Carlisle, PA, Army Heritage and Education Center, [Hereafter abbreviated as AHEC], 167-68.

¹⁹ "Diary of Colonel James Hughes," August 18-20 1945, James Hughes Papers, CHIS.

do and are working wonders.” He also wrote that on the day before—ten days after the Cardinal team reached Mukden— news of General Wainwright had finally reached the camp.²⁰

The story of how Wainwright was located and rescued from Manchuria is a complex tale straight out an adventure novel. On August 16th elements of the Soviet army discovered Wainwright at the Xian POW camp. After the OSS scout team had made it to the Xian on August 19th, numerous transportation delays and Japanese obstructionism stalled the general’s return. Only with considerable Soviet pressure and American determination (including the borrowing of a Japanese locomotive) were Wainwright and other high-ranking POW’s finally transported to Mukden the night of August 25th.²¹ The following morning Wainwright was flown to Wedemeyer’s headquarters at Chongqing and then to Yokohama, Japan on August 31st, where he had an emotional reunion with Douglas MacArthur just prior to the Japanese surrender ceremony in Tokyo Bay.²²

Relations between the Russians and Americans soon deteriorated. Despite outward appearances the Soviets were surprised and not pleased to discover the OSS team in their new occupation zone. Their reactions ranged from grudging acceptance to a creeping hostility, and over the next few days a sharp divide emerged between the attitude of the Soviets towards the former POW’s and the OSS. The OSS Cardinal team

²⁰ Diary of Philip Fry, August 25-27th 1945, Philip Fry Papers, AHEC.

²¹ Beebe, “Manuscript of Japanese POW Experiences of Brigadier Lewis C. Beebe,” Lewis Beebe Papers, AHEC, 110-111.

²² “Report on Cardinal Operation,” September 24, 1945, Headquarters, Office of Strategic Services, China Theater, Ibid.

soon witnessed the full ferocity of the Russian occupation of Manchuria when the arrival of additional Soviet troops in Mukden led to a three-day whirlwind of theft, destruction, and murder.²³ An OSS report recorded that the Russians were “proceeding with a policy of scientific looting. Every bit of machinery is being removed and all stocks of merchandise from stores and warehouses. Mukden will be an empty city when they get through.”²⁴ But Mukden was only the beginning. The Russians would eventually strip all of Manchuria of anything valuable, including machinery, raw materials, and even entire Japanese factories as spoils of war.

Meanwhile, while venting their fury on the Japanese, the Soviets, motivated by their desire to get them out of Manchuria, generally treated the American and British POW’s well. For example, General Wainwright’s evacuation from Manchuria could not have been achieved without Russian assistance, and for a brief period Soviet officers assisted the OSS team in providing food and medical supplies for American and British POW’s. On other occasions Russian hostility to the Americans was demonstrated at the point of a gun. After praising the Russians in his diary on August 24th a former American POW recorded that while on an authorized sightseeing trip to Mukden a few days later, Russian soldiers armed with “tommy guns,” likely Soviet PPsh-41 submachine guns, attempted to commandeer their vehicle at gunpoint. When the Americans refused to give the jeep to them, the Russians simply walked away and

²³ “Report by Captain Hilsman, Jr. on Mukden,” September 13th, 1945, RG 226, Box 187, NARA.

²⁴ “OSS Report on Mukden,” September 13th, 1945, Ibid.

appropriated another vehicle, this one with a sole Chinese occupant who offered no such resistance.²⁵ Dozens of similar instances were reported during the week.

Over the next few days both the OSS and the former POW's encountered various levels of Soviet hostility. Much of this can be attributed to drunken Russian privates who sought to steal American watches, pistols, and other valuable items. In several cases, the Russian culprits were publicly reprimanded by their superiors but were subsequently observed to have escaped any substantial punishment.²⁶ As unwelcome as this and other encounters were, the Russians generally did not directly interfere with the OSS team and its mission. Yet other more serious incidents soon followed. The first of these occurred on the morning of August 21st, when a Russian soldier sabotaged the American B-24 scheduled to evacuate sick POW's. Evidently drunk the Russian stabbed the front tire of the bomber with his rifle's bayonet, delaying the departure by more than 24 hours. As with the other incidents his commanding officer apologized and offered to guard all American aircraft with Soviet personnel. This of course gave the Soviets added opportunity to observe the comings and goings of American military personnel at the airfield.²⁷

Far more damaging to diplomatic relations was an incident that occurred on August 29th. An American B-29 crew flying airdrop missions over Manchuria was attacked by Soviet Yak fighter aircraft, and forced to crash land near Kanko, Korea. The

²⁵ "Diary of Colonel James Hughes," August 29th, 1945, James Hughes Papers, CHIS.

²⁶ "Report by Captain Hilsman, Jr. on Mukden," September 13th, 1945, Ibid.

²⁷ James Hennessey, "OSS Report on Mukden," September 13th, 1945, Ibid.

incident caused no casualties and the Russians immediately apologized for the mistake.²⁸ To the angry American protests the Soviets countered that that the operation had never been authorized by them and that previous air drops in Korea had nearly killed a Russian officer. More likely they considered the presence of the B-29s in airspace they considered their own yet another provocative act. Some Soviets viewed the airdrops as merely a cover for conducting reconnaissance over Manchuria. Dropping supplies was the primary mission for the American bombers, but they certainly used the opportunity to conduct surveillance about Manchuria. Replying to an angry cable sent by Douglas MacArthur on the subject of the unprovoked attack, General Aleksei Antonov, head of the Soviet General Staff, responded that his fliers had “manifested only measures of self-defense against an unknown plane, and that there were no other intended acts.”²⁹

The B-29 incident coincided with a sharp increase in tensions between the Americans and Soviets in Mukden. The friendliness of the first Soviets to arrive in the city soon gave way to a more hardened stance, and they accelerated their demands that the POW’s be moved out of the country quickly. To avoid the possibility of American aerial surveillance the Soviets curtailed any further flights to evacuate the POW’s and insisted that they be transported by rail to Dalian, where they would be evacuated by U.S. Navy transports. This led to delays which cast yet another shadow on Soviet-American relations in Asia.³⁰

²⁸ Cable from SCAP to Ambassador Harriman, September 4, 1945. Moscow Files, Harriman Papers, LOC.

²⁹ Bill Streifer, “OSS in Manchuria: Operation Cardinal,” *OSS Society Journal*, Summer/Fall 2010: 24-25.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 25.

The first week of September witnessed a concerted display of American naval power around Dalian. Two American destroyers anchored in the Soviet-controlled port on September 2nd to gather information about the POW's, but the U.S. Navy officers who went ashore received precious little cooperation from the Soviets. As a way of pressuring the Soviets to expedite the return of American POWs, more than one hundred aircraft from the carriers *Antietam* and *Cabot* overflew Dalian soon afterwards. Frustrated by the situation, Admiral Thomas Kinkaid dispatched Rear Admiral Thomas Settle, who was fluent in Russian, to Dalian onboard the cruiser USS *Louisville*. Along with three additional heavy cruisers and five destroyers, the demonstration of naval power helped convince the Soviets to transport all American and British [or Allied] POW's to Dalian within a few days.³¹ After U.S. Navy minesweepers had cleared Dalian's harbor, the POW's were at long last evacuated from Dalian onboard two U.S. destroyers and the hospital ships USS *Relief* and USS *St. Olaf*.³²

While it succeeded in evacuating Allied POWs from Manchuria, the Cardinal mission did not achieve its secondary goal, the establishment of an espionage network in Manchuria. With the assistance of the French consulate in Mukden, OSS operatives produced some important intelligence but they could not organize a permanent intelligence network before October 3rd when the Soviets demanded that all remaining OSS members in Mukden leave within 48 hours or be arrested as spies.³³ Suspecting the

³¹ Samuel J. Cox, "U.S. Naval Strategy and Foreign Policy in China, 1945-1950," 29-30.

³² "Diary of Colonel James Hughes," September 11-12th, 1945, James Hughes Papers, CHIS.

³³ Yu, *OSS in China*, 244-245.

French consul of being an American agent, the Soviets forced him and his staff to leave as well.³⁴

After the last Americans departed, the Soviets completed perhaps the most tragic component of the occupation. Beyond the countless rapes and murders committed by Soviet forces in Manchuria what followed was the forced move of more than 600,000 Japanese soldiers and civilians to labor camps in Siberia, an act expressly forbidden by the Potsdam Declaration.³⁵ One of these ill-fated thousands, cipher officer Isao Yamamoto, describes coping with temperatures of more than forty degrees below zero, meals of thin gruel, and endless lice and bedbugs. Yamamoto was one of the fortunate. After two years and three months of cutting trees in the Siberian forests he was repatriated to Japan in November of 1947. The grim fate of roughly 60,000 that perished in Siberia demands more attention from scholars in the future.³⁶

Although Operation Cardinal and the other OSS missions had little direct bearing on the Navy and Marine Corps presence in China, other than the Seventh Fleet's role in transporting Allied POW's homeward, the operations revealed a great deal about Soviet operations in Manchuria. The scale of Soviet industrial looting, the human costs of deportation, and the enormous disparity between statements of goodwill and realities on the ground added enormously to American suspicion. These rising concerns only increased the widespread and growing belief that the Soviet Union was actively aiding

³⁴ Streifer, "OSS in Manchuria, 24-25.

³⁵ Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, *Racing the Enemy: Stalin, Truman, and the Surrender of Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005): 273-274.

³⁶ "Personal History of Isao Yamamoto," unknown date, Isao Yamamoto Papers, CHIS, 3-5.

Mao Zedong's Chinese Communists and hoping to dominate the region if and when the United States removed its military forces from North China.

The Soviet Union, the CCP, and the “Victory at Yantai”

For Mao Zedong and the Chinese Communist Party, the fall and early winter of 1945-46 was a difficult time. Eager to publicly pacify both Chiang and the United States, Joseph Stalin had recognized the Nationalist Chinese government as the sole government in China in the Sino-Soviet Treaty. Subsequently the CCP underwent a period of tremendous uncertainty, simultaneously making plans for what its members viewed as the inevitable struggle with the Nationalists and holding back operations to please the Soviets. Matters were not helped when Mao became seriously ill in mid-November 1945 and was placed under the care of Soviet physicians in Yanan. Operational leadership during the chairman's illness fell to one of Mao's top deputies, Liu Shaoqi, who pursued an agreed upon strategy to hold territory in South China and advance in the North.³⁷

The level of cooperation between the Soviet Union and the CCP in North China and Manchuria, especially in late 1945, has long been a subject of intense controversy among historians. Before 1991 it was generally believed in the West that enormous quantities of captured Japanese arms were turned over to Mao's cadres by the USSR in the months after Japan's surrender. The lack of Chinese and Russian sources made this argument difficult to evaluate, however. Writing in 1981, diplomatic historian Russell Buhite concluded that the Soviets had probably begun supplying CCP forces with

³⁷ Tanner, *The Battle for Manchuria*, 73.

weapons and other assistance as early as 1946, but cautioned that the lack of reliable sources made a definitive judgment difficult.³⁸ In 1987, historian Steven Levine stated that the lack of information made it impossible to support the conclusion that “the Soviets were consciously following a policy designed to promote the country-wide victory of the CCP,” saying that this assessment can be tested only when and if Soviet archives are opened to serious scholars.”³⁹

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 made available, albeit briefly, some of the Russian archives necessary for sustained research on the subject. A groundbreaking paper on the subject appeared in 1995. Utilizing Russian and Chinese archives, Bryan Murray argued that while publicly Soviet troops and the CCP expressed solidarity and comradeship Soviet leaders in Manchuria often viewed the presence of the CCP in Manchuria as unwelcome and thus provided only minimal assistance to Mao’s forces during the two months following the end of the war. For their part the Chinese Communists were appalled by the behavior of their Communist allies, especially the rape of thousands of Chinese women by Russian soldiers. These were hardly acts of a well-behaved proletarian army like the CCP had expected.⁴⁰

Modern China historian Harold Tanner has argued for a more nuanced and complex relationship. Utilizing Russian, Chinese, and American sources, Tanner argues

³⁸ Buhite, *Soviet-American Relations in Asia*, 46.

³⁹ Steven Levine, *Anvil of Victory: The Communist Revolution in Manchuria, 1945-1948* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987): 86.

⁴⁰ Brian Murray, “Stalin, the Cold War and the Division of China: A Multiarchival Mystery,” Cold War International History Project, Working Paper #12 (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center for Scholars, 1997): 3.

that early postwar Soviet assistance to the CCP waxed and waned according to the existing geopolitical situation. Stalin did not want to antagonize the United States in the immediate months after Japan's surrender, nor to be seen as directly undermining the Sino-Soviet Treaty. Nor did he want to turn his back completely on the CCP. The continued presence of U.S. Navy and Marine Corps personnel in North China convinced Stalin that he needed to support the CCP more openly. Tanner concludes that, after providing little support during August and September, Stalin shifted policy, and, "From early October through mid-November, continued American military presence in North China and American transport of Nationalist troops headed for Manchuria heightened Soviet concern and led them [the Soviets] to encourage the Communists to take a stronger stance. Military supplies once again became available." Assistance would drop during the winter, only to rise again following the final Soviet withdrawal from Manchuria in March 1946.⁴¹

None of this was apparent to the American military leadership in China at the time. As early as August 1945 General Wedemeyer had warned the Joint Chiefs of Staff that ascertaining the true nature of Soviet-CCP relations was extremely difficult, reporting, in part, that, "The attitude of Soviet Russia towards the Chinese Communists has never been determined accurately, nor have Soviet intentions in China been formalized to a degree that Americans can view with equanimity."⁴² Wedemeyer

⁴¹ Tanner, *The Battle for Manchuria*, 57.

⁴² Memorandum, Albert Wedemeyer to Joint Chiefs of Staff, August 14th, 1945, Wedemeyer Papers, Box 83, CHIS.

cautioned that the compatible ideologies of the Soviets and Mao's CCP could come to dominate Manchuria in the near future.

For Daniel Barbey and the Seventh Fleet, their mission was to land the Marines safely and repatriate the Japanese. This led to a curious and memorable encounter between U.S. Navy personnel and that of the CCP.⁴³ Barbey's original orders were to land the 29th Marines at Chefoo (now Yantai), a strategic port on the north side of the Shandong Peninsula. Highly sought after by Chiang, Chefoo had the advantage of being at the end of key railway line and on the southern edge of the Gulf of Chihli. Yet a small problem existed. Unlike all other major port cities in North China, Chefoo had been under Communist control since Japan's surrender. The Japanese garrison had withdrawn from Chefoo in mid-September, leaving the strategic port city in Communist hands. In most areas of North China the CCP had given instructions to its cadres that if the Americans appeared they were to be outwardly accommodating and unthreatening. However, at Chefoo orders were given to the local Communist commander, Yu Ku-ying, to oppose an American amphibious landing with all available force.⁴⁴

The Seventh Fleet's leadership had first become aware of the potential for problems on October 4th, when Rear Admiral Settle anchored off Chefoo in the USS *Louisville* and delivered a letter to Yu from Admiral Kinkaid. The letter described American plans to land the 29th Marines at Chefoo. Yu responded saying that the Marines should not land without official permission from the CCP in Yanan.⁴⁵ Given

⁴³ Spector, *In the Ruins of Empire*, 54.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 54-55.

⁴⁵ Barbey, *MacArthur's Amphibious Navy*, 334.

the potential for misunderstandings Admiral Barbey sought to settle this matter in person. Three days later he anchored off Chefoo in his flagship and, along with III MEF commanding General Keller Rockey, met with Yu and his staff. In diplomatic language, through an interpreter Yu, informed both Americans that the Japanese had left the city and there were no prisoner of war camps in the area. Thus, he stated there was no reason for U.S. Marines to enter Chefoo, and that any American landing would be met with force. This brazen statement matched official Communist policy from Yanan. That same day members of the American delegation still in Yanan were told that any landing at Chefoo would be opposed and, “would lead both the people of China and abroad to suspect American interference in internal Chinese politics.”⁴⁶

Anxious to avoid being accused of such meddling, not to mention being blamed for any bloodshed, Barbey accepted an invitation to meet with Yu at his office ashore. The contrast between the conditions in Chefoo and those the Marines had encountered in Tianjin and Qingdao, when they were surrounded by huge and cheering crowds, was striking. In his memoirs Barbey recalls, “That afternoon, when we arrived at the dock, we found the cars awaiting us. We were driven down a street to the mayor’s office. Most of the stores were closed, and the street was lined with armed soldiers standing at attention, as we drove between them from the dock to the mayor’s office. On the wall behind the mayor’s desk were pictures of Stalin and Mao but none of Chiang.”

Additional discussions between Barbey, General Rockey, and Yu indicated that nothing

⁴⁶ Memorandum by the Office of Far Eastern Affairs (Vincent) to the Under-Secretary of State, October 8th, 1945, *FRUS*, 1945: *The Far East*, China, 8:577.

had changed: the Americans were friends but any landing would be resisted by the Communist forces in the city. Barbey, with Rockey's concurrence, then communicated to General Wedemeyer that rather than fight their way ashore at Chefoo, the Marines should be diverted to join the remainder of the 6th Marine Division at Qingdao. Wedemeyer and the Joint Chiefs agreed that he had acted appropriately.⁴⁷

It is difficult to say with certainty if the Communist forces in Chefoo would have truly resisted landing by the Marines. Yet what is undeniable is that Admiral Barbey's actions likely prevented bloodshed and saved considerable face for the United States. But it also laid bare the enormous and all but impossible balancing act the United States had taken upon itself. As Ronald Spector concludes, "The Chefoo incident was an early illustration of the mutually contradictory aspects of American policy in China: to help Chiang while remaining neutral in the civil war, to thwart Communists but not fight them, to confront the Soviets militarily in northern China while carrying out worldwide demobilization."⁴⁸

The Moscow Conference and the China Marines

While the Marines of the III MEF were adjusting to life in North China, Soviet propaganda relating to their presence began to appear. Much like Mao Zedong, Joseph Stalin was surprised by the American military deployment to China. Although China was far from his top priority the Soviet dictator kept a watchful eye on the American

⁴⁷ Dan Barbey, *MacArthur's Amphibious Navy*, 336.

⁴⁸ Spector, *In the Ruins of Empire*, 55.

military presence, which was an impediment to his long term plans in the region. Likely he expected that by the end of 1945 most if not all of the U.S. Marines and naval personnel would have been withdrawn. Consternation over their continued presence was reflected by a series of December press reports and articles condemning both the Marines and the Seventh Fleet.

Early in 1946 the Soviet Union began publicizing its own interpretation of who was responsible for defeating the Japanese. The Soviet newspapers *Pravda* and *New Times* downplayed the role of the U.S. Navy or the atomic bombs in Japan's defeat, but instead emphasized that the Soviet invasion of Manchuria forced Japan's surrender.⁴⁹ The new American occupation of Japan under Douglas MacArthur was castigated as imperialist attempt to turn Japan into a puppet state against the Soviet Union. And rather than enduring cruel violence and mass rapes from their "liberators," Soviet newspapers announced that Chinese civilians in Manchuria had welcomed them as brothers in their struggle against the Japanese.⁵⁰

By October it had become an open secret what the Russians were doing in Manchuria. Beyond the reports of the OSS Cardinal team, numerous civilian eyewitness reports had documented the rapes and looting that occurred in Haerbin and Mukden.⁵¹ Subdued outrage over Manchuria in American diplomatic circles eventually coincided with a hastily conceived diplomatic conference held in Moscow. In late November U.S. Secretary of State James Byrnes had advised Harriman that he would like to propose a

⁴⁹ Daily News Summary, October 19th, 1945, Moscow Files, Harriman Papers, LOC.

⁵⁰ "Sixteenth Interpretive Report on Soviet Policy Based upon the Press for September 1945," Ibid.

⁵¹ Report on Soviet Activities in Mukden, 17 October 1945, Ibid.

meeting of American, British, and Soviet foreign ministers in Moscow. Despite objections by Harriman regarding the exclusion of both France and China, the meeting was scheduled and Byrnes arrived in Moscow on December 14th. For both Stalin and Molotov the conference offered a perfect opportunity to confront the Americans over their continued military presence in North China.⁵²

The Moscow Conference of Foreign Ministers occurred at a delicate time for Molotov and his relationship with Stalin. As always, in Stalin's inner circle no one was safe. Arguably the best military leader Stalin possessed, Marshal Georgy Zhukov, was expelled from the Communist Party in early 1946 and censured, though Stalin spared his life. Arrests of other senior generals and admirals soon followed. Anyone who had become overtly popular during the war with Germany and posed a threat to Stalin was potentially a target.⁵³ In Molotov's case, some in the Soviet Politburo felt that the Foreign Minister had been too accommodating to the West in recent months. Perceived disappointment over Molotov's performance during the London Council of Foreign Minister's conference in September hung heavily over the impending meeting in the Soviet capital. Molotov, to save both his position and possibly his life, thus sought to press the Western diplomats forcefully on the issues.⁵⁴

⁵² W. Averell Harriman and Elie Abel, *Special Envoy to Churchill and Stalin, 1941-1946* (New York: Random House, 1975): 523.

⁵³ Robert Conquest, *Stalin: Breaker of Nations* (New York: Penguin Books, 1991): 272. For the best study on Zhukov and his post-WWII 'disappearance' from the Soviet record, see Geoffrey Roberts's *Stalin's General: The Life of Georgy Zhukov* (New York: Random House, 2012).

⁵⁴ Roberts, *Molotov*, 96-97.

As the Moscow Conference began the Soviet newspaper *Pravda* published a detailed and critical article on the subject. The highlight of the article asked, “Why today, after more than three months have elapsed since [the] conclusion of war in [the] Far East and capitulation of Japan, are there numerous U.S. troops in China, including infantry, air forces, tanks and naval forces?” The article went on to criticize both the Americans and the Nationalist Chinese for their apparent inability to quickly repatriate the Japanese and concluded that due to Manchuria’s proximity to its borders the Soviet Union had far more right to remain in the occupied province than the United States had to retain forces in China.⁵⁵

Along with British Foreign Minister Ernest Bevin, Byrnes and his delegation spent eleven full days in Moscow. After a week of contentious discussions on Eastern Europe, atomic energy, and the U.S. occupation of Japan, talk turned to the subject of China on the afternoon of December 17th. Secretary Byrnes brought up the recent declaration from President Truman that clarified the reasons for a large American military presence in China. Molotov replied that he would like time to study both Truman’s China declaration and other documents relating to China. The meeting was then adjourned.⁵⁶

At a noon meeting two days later Molotov insisted that Byrnes and Harriman explain in further detail what exactly the U.S. Marines were doing in China. The

⁵⁵ “On Situation in China Following Capitulation of Japan, *Pravda*, December 17th, 1945, Moscow Files, Harriman Papers, LOC.

⁵⁶ Minutes of Meeting, Moscow Conference of Foreign Ministers, December 17th, 1945, Moscow Files, Harriman Papers, LOC.

secretary responded that the Marines were merely assisting the Nationalist Chinese in repatriation operations, primarily to process and disarm the more than 300,000 Japanese who still remained in North China and stated that their presence in the region had no bearing on Chinese national sovereignty, which both the United States and the Soviet Union had agreed to honor. With apparent incredulity Molotov commented that he found it unlikely that such a large number of Japanese soldiers could still be in possession of their weapons three months after the surrender. Byrnes replied that the repatriation process was time consuming and that the majority of Chiang's forces were in the south. Additional time was need to move more of Chiang's troops to North China so they could assist in the repatriation of the Japanese. Following further explanations on George Marshall's new role as mediator in China, Byrnes attempted to mollify the Russians by explaining the complexities of the situation. Near the end of the discussion Molotov flippantly remarked that after eight years of war Chiang should have enough experience to know how to deal with the Japanese, and that his forces should be sufficient to disarm and transport the remaining Japanese to Qingdao or other Chinese ports, to be repatriated by the U.S. Navy. He restated the Soviet position that the U.S. Marines should be evacuated as soon as possible. The session ended with an impasse on the issue.⁵⁷

Of course, neither Byrnes nor Molotov discussed some of the more relevant but unmentionable facts. Both sides were well aware that Chinese Communist guerillas had been sabotaging strategic north-south railways in an effort to slow the movement of

⁵⁷ Memorandum of Conversation – Meeting of Foreign Ministers, December 19th, 1945, Moscow Files, Harriman Papers, LOC.

Nationalist forces. The October and November encounters between the U.S. Marines and the Communists along the Dagu-Tianjin highway were ample proof of this. Without full use of these railways Chiang was limited by American supplied air and naval transport to move his forces. Molotov also omitted the fact that the Soviet Union had maintained regular but covert contacts with the CCP in both Yanan and in Manchuria since August. As Harold Tanner concludes, “The fact that the Chinese Communists were making a bid to establish a significant presence in Manchuria was increasingly obvious to Chiang Kai-shek, to the Americans, and to the Soviets. For the Soviets, it represented a diplomatic conundrum. The Soviet Union sympathized with and supported the [CCP], but for global diplomatic and strategic reasons, it had to act, or at least appear to act, more or less within the restraints of the Yalta Agreement and the Sino-Soviet treaty in which they had promised to transfer sovereignty over Manchuria to Chiang Kai-shek’s government.”⁵⁸

For Byrnes’ part he did not mention the fact that since late October the Seventh Fleet had been moving some of Chiang’s best troops, including the Nationalist 13th Army, from the south to the northern port of Qinhangdo (Chingwantao).⁵⁹ Nor did he discuss the fact that many of the Japanese Army units in Manchuria had been left with their rifles and other weapons to assist the Marines in guarding important railways and coal depots from potential Communist Chinese attacks. Though this practice had largely

⁵⁸ Harold M. Tanner, *The Battle for Manchuria and the Fate of China: Siping, 1946* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013): 43.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 62.

ended by December, it was an uncomfortable fact that Japanese soldiers continued to serve as armed guards over the same territory they had occupied a few months ago.

On December 21st the Soviet Foreign Ministry had released an official memorandum which strongly objected to “other foreign troops” beyond those legally obligated to be in Manchuria, namely Russian. The memorandum insisted that the guilty party in this case, the United States, agree to withdraw all its forces from North China simultaneously with all Soviet forces in Manchuria by mid-January 1946.⁶⁰ Two days later, on December 23rd, the last full day of the conference Molotov pressed Byrnes and Harriman to respond to the memorandum. With visible frustration Byrnes replied that he had already discussed the subject multiple times with Molotov and that the new Soviet memorandum only deepened misunderstandings. The United States, he asserted, was determined to be patient in China and support Chiang in his efforts to repatriate the Japanese and stabilize the country. The United States could not remove its troops immediately from China nor could it set a firm date for any future withdrawal. Molotov countered saying that the deployment of U.S. Marines to China had never been envisioned by signers of the Sino-Soviet Treaty. Byrnes responded that nothing in the treaty prevented deployment of the Marines in China. Tensions climbed between the two men as both sides appeared immovable.⁶¹

That afternoon Joseph Stalin had the final word on the subject. The American delegation met with the Soviet leader and Molotov for more than an hour, opening the

⁶⁰ U.S. Department of State, *United States Relations with China*, 124.

⁶¹ Memorandum of Conversation – Meeting of Foreign Ministers, December 23rd, 1945, Moscow Files, Harriman Papers, LOC.

discussion with talks on Eastern Europe and the creation of an international atomic energy organization. When the conversation turned to North China, Stalin inquired as to why the United States had not removed the Marines from the region, to which Byrnes replied that they would be removed as soon as possible. He reiterated that circumstances on the ground made that difficult, and that the weaknesses of the Nationalist Government in disarming the Japanese made the temporary use of American troops necessary. Stalin laughed when he heard Byrnes relay reports that Mao's CCP had more than 600,000 troops available in North China. All Chinese are boastful, he chuckled, but went on to describe George Marshall as a leader of exceptional ability. If anyone could bring Chiang and Mao to the negotiating table, Stalin declared, it was the former U.S. Army Chief of Staff.⁶²

A few weeks later Harriman called on Stalin for the last time. The veteran diplomat was preparing to resign his post as ambassador and return to the United States after five years abroad. Stalin said his farewells and expressed hope that Harriman could remain involved in Soviet-American relations in the future.⁶³ During their final discussion the two men spoke at length about East Asia, especially Japan and China. If Stalin had any lingering anger over the exclusion of the Soviet Union in the occupation of Japan he did not show it. On the subject of China he was outwardly frank, describing recent efforts by Chiang Kai-shek's son, Ching-Kuo, to enlist the Soviets as mediators

⁶² Memorandum of Conversation – Meeting of Joseph Stalin, James Byrnes, Molotov, Harriman, December 23rd, 1945, Ibid.

⁶³ Minutes of Meeting Between Harriman, Molotov, and Stalin, January 23rd, 1946, George C. Marshall Papers, China Mission 1945-1947, Box 122, George C. Marshall Research Library, Virginia Military Institute, Lexington, VA. Hereafter abbreviated GCMRL.

with the CCP as unfortunately a road to nowhere. Mao and Chiang did not trust each other, Stalin concluded, but the Soviet Union had poor contacts with Yanan and Mao's Communist leadership. Thus the Soviet dictator was reluctant to publicly intervene in the dispute.⁶⁴ As he left Moscow Harriman considered the Stalin he had come to know over the past four years, an enigmatic master of both great strength and bottomless brutality. In words that would guide future historians for decades he concluded that, "It is hard for me to reconcile the courtesy and consideration that he showed me personally with the ghastly cruelty of his wholesale liquidations."⁶⁵

From the Soviet perspective publicly working with both the Chiang Kai-shek government and the Truman administration on China while covertly supporting Mao made perfect sense. Moscow was ideologically bound to Mao's CCP but also wanted weak neighbors and a diminished American role in the Far East. As historian Russell Buhite has concluded, "The Soviets, like their czarists predecessors, saw a need to prevent foreign domination of those territories adjacent to their borders (Manchuria, Outer Mongolia, and Xinjiang) and they were concerned about defending themselves against a resurgent Japan or a potentially hostile China."⁶⁶ Despite American hopes, the possibility for real cooperation from the Soviets on China had all but disappeared by the end of 1945. Instead a proto-Cold War of sorts developed around the Yellow Sea. Although the Soviets would finally pull out of Manchuria in March of 1946 their presence would be felt long after they left the region. The trappings of the Cold War in

⁶⁴ Harriman, *Special Envoy*, 531-532.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 535-536.

⁶⁶ Russell Buhite, *Soviet-American Relations in Asia*, 34.

Europe, such as burgeoning hostility, vitriolic diplomacy, and espionage would soon come to characterize East Asia.

“Savvy” Cooke and the New Cold War

Both Ambassador Averell Harriman and the Moscow Charge d’Affaires George Kennan had predicted that Soviet designs on the Guangdong Peninsula and the Manchurian railways would cause difficulties for American efforts in China. Harriman had warned both Secretary of State Byrnes and President Truman even before the Sino-Soviet treaty had been signed that Dalian in particular would be problematic. Stalin and Molotov had promised to both respect the traditional Open Door policy and the agreements that Dalian would be an open port. In an August 8th memorandum, Harriman regretfully concluded that Stalin would not live up to his agreements. “It is difficult for me to believe,” he wrote, “in spite of Stalin’s assurances, that there can be a truly free port under Soviet management with security patrol by the Soviet secret police.”⁶⁷ Kennan, soon to be remembered as the greatest “Cold Warrior” of them all, concurred with Harriman’s view. The two men would soon be proven right. By the spring of 1946 an uneasy, dangerous calm emerged on the Yellow Sea, one that never attained the urgency or fame of West Berlin but nevertheless embodied many elements of the early Cold War.

⁶⁷ Paraphrase of Navy Cable, August 8th, 1945, From Harriman and Personal for the President and Secretary of State, Moscow Files, Harriman Papers, LOC.

Some scholars have downplayed the intensity of the early Cold War in Asia. Historian John Lewis Gaddis argued in his acclaimed 1997 study, *We Know Now: Rethinking Cold War History*, that, “Prior to 1949, the Cold War had barely touched the Asian mainland.”⁶⁸ In Gaddis’ view, the Cold War in Asia began with start of the Korean War in June 1950. This is a Euro-centric interpretation of the Cold War. By late 1945 signs of the Cold War had begun to appear in Qingdao, Dalian, and even Shanghai as American and Soviet officers, intelligence agents, and diplomats sought to increase the influence of their respective countries in the region.

On January 8th, 1946, newly promoted Admiral Charles Maynard Cooke relieved Daniel Barbey as commander of the Seventh Fleet.⁶⁹ A distinguished graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy class of 1910, ranking 2nd in his class, Cooke earned the nickname “Savvy” for his first rate intellect and intelligence. One of the few scholarly studies of the admiral describes him as possessing a unique and scholarly mind, concluding that Cooke “had a peculiar talent for retaining a mass of figures and facts, and a keen, incisive logic, which distinguished his scholastic work.”⁷⁰ Following graduation Cooke impressed his superiors, and for the next thirty years excelled as he worked his way up to nearly the pinnacle of the Navy’s hierarchy.

⁶⁸ John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997): 55.

⁶⁹ Narrative History of Seventh Fleet and Western Forces Pacific, 8 January 1946-24 February 1948, Charles M. Cooke Papers, Box 17, CHIS.

⁷⁰ Robert W. Love, “Admiral Charles Maynard Cooke, Jr.: The Education of a Strategist” Unpublished Master’s Thesis, Sonoma State College, 1972, 13.

By 1941 Cooke had achieved the milestone of a major command, as captain of the battleship USS *Pennsylvania* (BB-38). His ship was in dry dock during the attack on Pearl Harbor and suffered two major bomb hits and the loss of twenty-nine officers and men killed.⁷¹ In the aftermath Cooke caught the eye of Admiral Ernest J. King, who handpicked him to serve on his staff in Washington. Cooke served first as Assistant Chief of Staff (Plans) and later in the war as Chief of Staff to Admiral King.⁷² The physically fragile but brilliant Cooke became so invaluable to King that the two men often seemed to operate as a single entity. King hoped that his deputy would someday succeed him as CNO and at one point strongly suggested that Cooke return to sea duty to enhance his career. The ever loyal Cooke demurred, and remained on King's staff for the remainder of the war.⁷³

Cooke would become one of the strongest voices for a powerful U.S. Navy and Marine Corps presence in China. With the retirement of King in December 1945 and the accession of Admiral Chester Nimitz to the Navy's top post of Chief of Naval Operations, Cooke was promoted to full admiral and took command of a materially diminished but now legendary fleet whose wartime exploits had amazed the world. Like his mentor, Cooke had a strong interest in China and the Navy's role in the country. Writing to Nimitz in January 1946, Cooke conveyed his impressions and the initial sense of optimism he felt about the Seventh Fleet's role in China. Building the new Republic

⁷¹ Ibid., 225.

⁷² Thomas B. Buell, *Master of Seapower: A Biography of Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1980): 156.

⁷³ Ibid., 232.

of China Navy would be a top priority, Cooke wrote, but he was cautiously optimistic about such an enormous endeavor. He also spoke warmly of Army/Navy relations in China, and informed Nimitz that he would soon be meeting with Chiang Kai-shek in Chongqing. The new CNO rarely took an active interest in matters pertaining to the Seventh Fleet during his tenure, and this left Cooke great latitude in dealing with both the Chinese and the Russians.⁷⁴

Meeting Chiang Kai-shek in Chongqing was a memorable experience. Arriving in the midst of the Chinese New Year festivities Cooke was impressed by the subdued elegance of the wartime capital. Like most men, Eastern or Western, he fell under the spell of Chiang's famous wife, Soong Meiling, whom he described as "a very handsome woman." Her expert fluency in English also impressed him.⁷⁵ Soong had returned to China after more than a year in the United States, with a renewed sense of purpose concerning her marriage and her husband's embattled position. She quickly became his primary translator and aide in dealing with the Americans in the tumultuous years ahead.⁷⁶ Over the next few days Cooke dined and met with the principal U.S. Army and Navy leaders in China. He also had lengthy discussions with George Marshall and Dai Li, less than a month before the latter's death in the enigmatic plane crash. When he left the temporary Chinese capital, Cooke was reasonably optimistic about the future of

⁷⁴ Letter, Charles M. Cooke to Chester Nimitz, January 28th, 1946, Box 7, Charles M. Cooke Papers, CHIS.

⁷⁵ Charles M. Cooke, Log of Trip to Chungking, February 1946, Box 17, Cooke Papers, CHIS.

⁷⁶ Taylor, *The Generalissimo*, 333-334.

China, the prospects for working with the U.S. Army, and the Navy's role in the region.⁷⁷

Cooke's optimism about Army-Navy relations soon evaporated when he clashed with both Marshall and the U.S. State Department in China. As the Seventh Fleet continued the repatriation of the Japanese, sweeping mines, and supporting the Marines ashore, a sense that it would remain in China for the foreseeable future began to set in, as did an assumption that the fleet would continue to provide support for the Nationalists as epitomized by its continuing transport of Chiang's Kai-shek's forces from South to North China. The longer the U.S. Navy conducted such operations and stationed ships in Qingdao, the more difficult it would become for the Seventh Fleet to withdraw from China.

As Cooke assumed command of the Seventh Fleet the Cold War had become an intractable reality in Asia. Allies of convenience during the war against Germany and then Japan, the United States and the Soviet Union were now on opposing sides. During the six months after Japan's surrender, the suspicion and paranoia that would come to characterize the Cold War was the new reality. Tense diplomacy between the superpowers became an established fact. And caught between them in China were the Seventh Fleet and III MEF Marines. Looked upon with enormous suspicion by the Soviets, and with firm determination by men like Cooke and Forrestal, the American presence had become a controversial counterweight to Soviet expansion.

⁷⁷ Charles M. Cooke, Log of Trip to Chungking, February 1946, Box 17, Cooke Papers, CHIS.

CHAPTER IV

THE U.S. NAVY AND CHINA, 1945-1947

During the winter of 1945-46 China stood on a precipice. The winter was an especially harsh one in North China, and Chiang Kai-shek's government in Chongqing had neither the will nor the resources to combat the human catastrophe that was unfolding. Millions of Chinese were hungry, fuel was in short supply, and rampant inflation was making paper currency almost worthless. In crowded Beijing, swollen with tens of thousands of starving refugees, shortages of coal and food led to unrest alleviated largely by the III MEF Marines. Their presence ensured that the desperately needed coal from the Nationalist controlled mines in North China reached the vast urban centers during the long winter.¹ Both the GMD and the Communists publicly supported peace talks but privately prepared for war. Special Envoy General George Marshall's peace mission calmed both sides for a time, but this was but a temporary illusion. While Marshall did work remarkable if short lived wonders, even his immense reputation was not enough to bring peace between the two sides. Yet as his noble but doomed peace mission continued, the groundwork was being laid for a bitter intra-service feud over American goals in China.

The tremendous demobilization of American military forces worldwide weighed heavily on U.S. planners in East Asia and throughout the world. Perhaps never in history had such a huge military force been disarmed so rapidly. By October 1945 even Harry

¹ Li Sung Jen, Oral History Interview, Columbia Center for Oral History, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Chinese Collection, Columbia University, Volume 5, Chapter 43:6. Hereafter abbreviated as CCOH.

Truman concluded that demobilization had turned into “disintegration,” but he was largely powerless to stop it. Public pressure for the rapid return of millions of American servicemen was overwhelming. The president was further trapped when Douglas MacArthur announced in September that within six months the American occupation force in Japan would only require 200,000 servicemen.² Across the Yellow Sea General Albert Wedemeyer reacted to MacArthur’s announcement with dismay. Although he still commanded the China Theater on paper Wedemeyer was largely subordinate to Marshall after December 1945.³ Although he had officially retired from the Army in November, Marshall’s five stars and tremendous prestige made him the senior American official in East Asia. He was expected to work miracles in China, and his strong relationship with Truman ensured that he was listened to far more than Wedemeyer or even MacArthur, the latter of whom the president was increasingly suspicious.

Marshall’s year-long peace mission to China has earned the status of a noble failure. Given the ultimate outcome of the Chinese Civil War, this is understandable. Yet at the outset many Americans were optimistic about Marshall’s ability to achieve peace. The high expectations many Americans had placed on Marshall’s shoulders seemed almost achievable. Wedemeyer, the senior American officer in China, viewed Marshall’s arrival as a mixed blessing. Although he never doubted Marshall’s talent and abilities, Wedemeyer thought the indefatigable Marshall was tired, irritable, and worn

² Robert J. Donovan, *Conflict and Crisis: The Presidency of Harry S. Truman* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1977): 127.

³ Note: The China Theater was officially disestablished on May 1st, 1946. Responsibilities for all Marine Corps personnel in China reverted to Commander, Seventh Fleet on this date. Source: Memorandum, Joint Chiefs of Staff to Albert Wedemeyer, 26 March 1946, *FRUS*, 1946: *The Far East: China*, 10:859.

down by the strains of war. Upon meeting each other in Chongqing he conveyed his doubts about the possibility of a negotiated settlement to Marshall, asserting that neither the Nationalists or Communists were interested in anything less than total victory. According to Wedemeyer's account Marshall snapped back that he was there to achieve such a settlement and that Wedemeyer was going to help him. Surprised by Marshall's tone, the younger general vowed to do everything he could to assist.⁴

This story may be a bit of self-serving exaggeration. According to Forrest Pogue, General Marshall was comfortable and courteous with his new team of advisers in China and listened carefully to their advice and counsel. The idea that Wedemeyer alone had predicted that the peace mission would fail was untrue, as other American diplomats in China also warned Marshall of the near impossibility of his task. Undoubtedly Wedemeyer was honest with Marshall, but he was not the only one.⁵ Soon after his arrival Marshall met with Chiang, Mao, and Zhou Enlai, and using a deft mix of diplomacy and bluster he convinced the Nationalists and Communists to accept a cease fire and begin negotiations on a power-sharing agreement and a timeline for discussions about a new constitution. During ensuing discussions both sides agreed to many generalities but few specifics, and Marshall had to walk a continuous tightrope in his seemingly endless negotiations.⁶

⁴ Wedemeyer, *Wedemeyer Reports!*, 363.

⁵ Forrest Pogue, *George C. Marshall: Statesman, 1945-1949*, (New York: Viking Press, 1987): 75-76.

⁶ Memorandum for the President, "Report on the Marshall Mission," February 28th, 1946, George C. Marshall China Mission Papers, 1945-1947, Correspondence, Box 122, GCMRL.

In early February Marshall sent a message to President Truman saying that the cease fire was holding and that he was optimistic about future negotiations. A realistic coalition government seemed within reach.⁷ One of Marshall's biographers acknowledged that even at this stage his mission to China "was not an unalloyed success, but in little less than three months Marshall had fashioned the basis for agreements between the government and the Communists. They were tenuous pacts, shot through with suspicion, but they were more than a succession of negotiators had been able to accomplish."⁸

Wedemeyer was concerned that the end of the war in Europe and Japan's abrupt surrender had created a dangerous illusion among the American public. Deeply concerned about the enormous work ahead, Wedemeyer bitterly concluded in his memoirs that, "The trouble was that the American people did not realize the conditions existing in distant areas after the war. It did not occur to them that a vacuum had been created in Europe and Asia by the unconditional surrenders of Germany and Japan. All they knew was that the enemy had surrendered and that tumultuous celebrations had taken place in every city, town, and village square in America. Since victory had been won, they naturally thought that their boys should at once come home."⁹ With the rapid demobilization of U.S. forces in Asia, only the understrength Seventh Fleet and the 50,000 Marines of the III MEF remained in China to truly end the war.

⁷ Letter, Marshall to Truman, February 4th, 1946, RG 218, Box 2, NARA.

⁸ Edward Cray, *General of the Army: George C. Marshall, Soldier and Statesman* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1990): 552.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 357.

As the new commander of the Seventh Fleet, Admiral Charles Cooke faced a multitude of problems. By January 1946 his shrinking fleet consisted of only three heavy cruisers, a few dozen destroyers, and approximately one hundred minesweepers and amphibious landing craft. Perhaps the fleet's most urgent yet thankless task was clearing China's coast of Japanese-laid mines. In January more than 50 mines were swept or destroyed; one transport struck a mine that had escaped detection and sank resulting in the wounding and death of more than twenty Japanese civilians being transported back to Honshu. As significant as the minesweeping work was, it paled in political importance when compared to the herculean task of repatriating millions of Japanese to their homeland.¹⁰

Upon his relief of Rear Admiral Daniel Barbey, Charles Cooke assumed this important and pressing task. The once vast Japanese Empire that had briefly encompassed half the Pacific and much of East Asia had encouraged emigration to its conquered territories, and at the war's end nearly seven million Japanese citizens required transport back to their home islands. Manchuria contained the largest number (1.8 million), but China south of the Great Wall (1.3 million), Korea (625,000), the Philippines (142,000), and Formosa (224,000) also had substantial Japanese expatriates. The remainder were scattered throughout islands in the Pacific, Indonesia, Hong Kong, and Indochina. Most in East Asia (China/Manchuria/Korea) were transported to Japan onboard U.S. Navy amphibious landing craft at rate of 2500-3000 per day (see Table 1).

¹⁰ "Narrative History of the Seventh Fleet and Western Forces Pacific, 8 January 1946 – 24 February 1948," Charles M. Cooke Papers, Box 17, CHIS.

The ships then returned an equivalent number of Chinese or Korean laborers to their home countries.¹¹ By the close of 1946 the Japanese repatriation effort had been largely completed, with 2.9 million Japanese returned to the home islands from China and Manchuria (see Table 2).¹² For many Japanese soldiers in Manchuria, however, the wait was far longer. During Operation August Storm the Red Army captured more than 600,000 Japanese soldiers and civilians, most of whom were placed in labor camps in Siberia. Of this number, over 60,000 perished from deprivation and disease before most of the remainder were finally repatriated to Japan between 1947-1950.¹³

Table 2: Estimate of Japanese Repatriated during 1945

<u>Location</u>	<u>Original</u>	<u>Evacuated to Date</u>	<u>Remaining</u>
South Korea	625,000	476,150	148,850
Philippines	142,357	50,950	91,407
Ryuku Islands	67,059	37,265	44,772
Marianas Islands	65,000	61,280	3,720
Australia	211,563	0	211,563
New Zealand	807	0	807
China	1,630,302	42,384	1,587,918
Formosa	224,459	0	224,459

¹¹ Report on the Status of Repatriation of Japanese, December 5th, 1945, Dan Barbey Papers, Box 29, NHHC.

¹² “Memorandum Concerning Repatriation of Japanese,” *The China White Paper: August 1949*, Volume II (Stanford University Press, 1949): 632-33.

¹³ Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, *Racing the Enemy: Stalin, Truman, and the Surrender of Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005): 273-274. For a more complete retelling of the fate of the Kwantung Army in Siberia from 1945-1950, see the Papers of Isao Yamamoto, CHIS. A Japanese intelligence officer in Manchuria, he spent more than two years at a ragery (forest camp) in Siberia, cutting logs and struggling to survive the 40 degree below zero winters, terrible food and usual privations of a POW camp, even though the war was over. He was finally repatriated back to Japan in November 1947.

Indochina	41,102	0	41,102
Hong Kong	21,000	21,221	18,779
Manchuria	1,900,000	0	1,900,000
Russia	936,500	0	936,500
Southeast Asia	681,724	0	681,724
Miscellaneous	176,866	37,265	139,601
United States	16,260	843	15,417
Canada	10,500	0	10,500
Hawaii	6,448	0	6,448
Total	6,756,947	693,115	6,063,567

Source: Report and Study of Japanese Repatriation from China and Assistance to the Chinese Nationalist Government, 11 December 1945, Daniel Barbey Papers, Box 29, NHHC.

Moving the Nationalist Armies by Sea: 1945-1946

In his memoirs Admiral Dan Barbey recalled that transporting nearly three million Japanese men, women and children from China by sea was an easier task than moving armies of Nationalist Chinese less than a tenth the size. In contrast to the orderly movement of the Japanese, Barbey confessed that, “The transportation of the Chinese armies from the south to the north was not so simple a matter. With the Japanese we knew where they would be embarked and where disembarked. There were no disciplinary nor any health problems. But with the Chinese it was different.”¹⁴ From late October 1945 through May 1946 the U.S. Navy transported nearly 250,000 men, women, and children loyal to Chiang Kai-shek’s regime from southern Chinese ports to

¹⁴ Barbey, *MacArthur’s Amphibious Navy*, 338.

cities in the north. No other act so yoked the Seventh Fleet and the larger U.S. Navy to the direct support of the Nationalists, and none so angered Mao Zedong and his CCP cadres. This act of assistance changed the nature of the conflict between the Nationalists and Communists and helped exacerbate the tensions between the U.S. Navy and Army leadership over China.

The transport of Chiang's armies to the north had been anticipated and requested even before Japan's surrender. On August 13th, 1945 Wedemeyer had written to Marshall that approximately sixty days after the surrender it would be necessary to move occupation forces to North China and Manchuria. Acting on Chiang's behalf, Wedemeyer observed that given the lack of available transport aircraft only a handful of Nationalist Army divisions could be transported by air. Though not stated directly the message implied that U.S. Navy assets would be required to transport GMD armies to the north to both ensure the proper Japanese surrender and prevent the Communists from dominating Manchuria.¹⁵

Personally Wedemeyer had grave doubts concerning operations in Manchuria. He warned Chiang against overextending his fragile supply lines into the huge province. The general recommended that instead of occupying Manchuria Chiang should concentrate on building a defensive line along the Great Wall against a Communist advance from the north. Chiang's pride and his belief that his prestige were at stake made acceptance of this strategy unacceptable. Modern Chinese historian Jonathon Fenby concludes that, "if the Generalissimo was to live up to his claims to be the leader

¹⁵ Letter, Wedemeyer to Marshall, August 13th, 1945, Wedemeyer Papers, Box 83, CHIS.

of the nation, he had to regain Manchuria, its significance heightened by its fourteen years under foreign rule.”¹⁶ Much as Douglas MacArthur had vowed to return to the Philippines, Chiang saw the retaking of Manchuria as a matter of personal honor and a military necessity. A key difference was that Chiang lacked the overwhelming air and naval power MacArthur had at his command in October 1944. Mao had reached precisely the same conclusion on the coming war with the Nationalists. Even while meeting with Chiang in Chongqing, he had informed his subordinates that the battle for Manchuria would “determine the fate of the revolution.”¹⁷

At Chiang’s urging Wedemeyer sent another message to the Joint Chiefs of Staff one month later. Emphasizing the urgency of the situation, he wrote that the GMD government requested the earliest possible movement of the 13th Army from Kowloon and the 52nd Army from Haiphong to North China. Each army had roughly 30,000 men and would be ready for transport on October 10th.¹⁸ The Chinese public was told that the selection of those units was based on their readiness and level of training. But Chiang had another reason for sending them. They were viewed in the GMD as being especially loyal towards Chiang and his regime. For that they received priority, including the best weapons and treatment from the Americans.¹⁹ The Joint Chiefs soon responded that Wedemeyer’s plan had been approved and would be carried out according to the schedule already promulgated. The reply message also included this intriguing sentence:

¹⁶ Jonathon Fenby, *Chiang Kai Shek: China’s Generalissimo and the Nation He Lost* (New York: Carroll and Graf, 2004): 452.

¹⁷ Taylor, *The Generalissimo*, 321.

¹⁸ Memorandum, Wedemeyer to War Department, Joint Chiefs of Staff, 15 September 1945, RG 218, Box 3, NARA.

¹⁹ Dreyer, *China at War*, 314-315

“It is U.S. policy to assist the Chinese Government in the establishment of essential Chinese troops in liberated areas, particularly Manchuria, as rapidly as practicable.”²⁰

With Truman’s approval the United States moved forward with its support of Chiang and the GMD. This policy would end up entangling both the Seventh Fleet and the U.S. Navy more deeply in Chinese politics than anyone imagined at the time. Beyond the movement by sea, the U.S. Army Air Force would also fly upwards of 80,000 Chinese soldiers from bases in southwest China to cities in the east during September- October 1945.²¹

This combined air and sea campaign begs the question: why would the United States, which as early as August 1945 had stated on many occasions that it did not desire to become embroiled in the Nationalist-Communist conflict, provide such massive assistance to Chiang’s government? Part of the reason stemmed from a promise made at the Cairo Conference in November 1943. Soon after the Japanese surrender announcement Harry Truman was informed by Nationalist Foreign Minister T.V. Soong that during the conference Franklin Roosevelt had promised Chiang to equip 90 Nationalist Army divisions after the war.²² No written record of such a promise could be found, but Roosevelt aide Harry Hopkins informed Truman that privately such an agreement was indeed made at Cairo.²³ Partly as a result of this discovery, the Truman Administration chose to assist Chiang, and the transport mission seemed a compromise

²⁰ Memorandum, Joint Chiefs of Staff to Wedemeyer, 18 September 1945, RG 218, Box 3, NARA.

²¹ Bernstein, *China 1945*, 308-309.

²² Letter, T.V. Soong to Harry Truman, 30 August 1945, Truman Secretary Files, Box 151, TPL.

²³ Memorandum, George Esley to Commodore Vardaman, 3 September 1945, *Ibid.*

between reneging on a promise made to a wartime ally and providing such massive assistance promised when the U.S. needed China in the war more than ever.²⁴

From October 1945 through May 1946 the U.S. Navy transported ten Nationalist Chinese armies totaling 245,900 men (see Table 2). This total did not include 5,700 headquarters support staff, their weapons and equipment, and more than 5,000 horses. The final army transported, the 93rd, was picked up in Kowloon (Hong Kong) on April 28th, 1946, and offloaded in the Manchurian port of Hulutao (Huludao) on May 13th.²⁵ Moving the Nationalist Chinese armies was a cultural experience similar to the Marines' arrival in Qingdao and Tianjin. American sailors, accustomed to the strict and disciplined routine of shipboard life, were suddenly confronted with thousands of Chinese soldiers, most of whom had never been onboard a ship in their lives. Seasickness and crowded conditions were only the beginning of the many problems encountered. This sudden collision of cultures produced many comic and tragic stories alike.

²⁴ Note: Archival evidence reveals that Harry Truman was quite surprised to hear that Franklin Roosevelt had promised to equip 90 Chinese divisions after the war. Admiral William Leahy, Chief of Staff and right hand man to both Roosevelt and Truman, conducted a thorough search of all government records at the time and could find no written proof documenting Soong's claim that an agreement to equip up to 90 Chinese divisions had been made. With Roosevelt's death Harry Hopkins was the only witness on the American side who could attest to such an agreement. During a private meeting attended only by Roosevelt, Hopkins, Chiang and his wife Soo Mayling, Roosevelt had promised Chiang such a commitment after the war was over. Hopkins told investigators that Roosevelt had done so in order to keep China in the war and keep Chiang's government from collapsing, and apparently gave little thought to the ramifications of such an agreement postwar. See Memorandum, Leahy to Truman, 5 September 1945, Truman Secretary Files, Box 151, TPL; Memorandum for Commodore Vardaman on Harry Hopkins, 3 September 1945, Ibid.

²⁵ Unpublished Narrative History of the Seventh Fleet and Western Forces Pacific, Charles M. Cooke Papers, Box 17, CHIS, 5-6.

The initial movement of the first two armies went rather smoothly. The 70th Army, totaling 16,700 men, was picked up in Fuzhou (Foochow) and transported to the north Formosa (Taiwan) port of Keelung. Apart from the 70th all nine remaining armies sailed to ports in North China (see Table 1).²⁶ The 13th Army, considered perhaps Chiang's best ground force, was waiting in Kowloon when twenty-two U.S. Navy transports arrived on October 10th.²⁷ After only six hours they completed the loading operation and headed out to sea. Captain E.F. Sherman, commanding officer of the transport USS *Randall* (APA-224) reported that in addition to just over 1900 officers and enlisted men, his ship stowed 120 tons of ammunition and supplies. Sherman reported that transporting the 13th Army went surprisingly well, concluding that, "The operation was conducted, on the whole, far more smoothly and pleasantly than had been anticipated. The attitude of the Chinese was most cooperative and friendly, and any minor difficulties that arose were steadily surmounted by the exercise of patience and tact on both sides." He also praised the efficiency and leadership of the senior Chinese officer onboard, Major General Wan Sai San, for effectively controlling his troops.²⁸

During the first few months the overwhelming proportion of the armies transported was accomplished by Assault Transports (APA/AKA). The *Randall* was one of the 117 Haskell-class transports that first entered service in 1944. A subtype of a Victory ship, they were designed to be fast, long range troop transports, and were

²⁶ Ibid., 6-7.

²⁷ Memorandum, Commander 69th Transport Division to Commander, Seventh Fleet Amphibious Forces, 31 October 1945, Daniel Barbey Papers, Box 35, NHHC.

²⁸ Report, Commanding Officer USS *Randall* (APA-224) to Commanding Officer, Transport Division 69, 30 October 1945, Barbey Papers, Box 35, NHHC.

heavily used in World War II, carrying the bulk of U.S. Marines and Army units for duty against the Japanese. A little over 450 feet long and displacing 14,000 tons fully loaded, each could hold up to 1,500 personnel or 2,900 tons of cargo.²⁹ With skeleton Navy crews of around 200 men, most ships managed to squeeze up to 2,000 Chinese soldiers and hundreds of tons of supplies in their cargo holds. In the annals of maritime transportation it was truly one of the most remarkable operations ever conducted.

The experience of USS *Randall* notwithstanding, many of the American transports had great difficulties with the Chinese. One of the most obvious problems was their poor health. Most of the men taken onboard were in wretched physical condition. Cholera and malaria were common, and nearly all had lice and were prone to seasickness.³⁰ Yet the U.S. Navy crews often went to extraordinary lengths to make their Chinese passengers as comfortable as possible. On each transport the three primary cargo holds were washed down, cleaned, and all extraneous gear removed. Special 44-inch wooden access ladders to allow better mobility and access between decks were constructed. On the ship's fantail a large temporary head was built for soldiers billeted aft. Ship's carpenters also constructed a wooden bulkhead separating junior officers from the enlisted men.³¹ To prevent the men being transported from falling overboard embarkation nets were rigged over some bulkheads and the soldiers ordered to stay

²⁹ Norman Friedman, *U.S. Amphibious Ships and Craft* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2002): 190.

³⁰ Letter, C.H. McLaughlin, *USS Effingham* (APA-165) to Commander, Transport Division 69, October 30th, 1945, Barbey Papers, Box 35, NHHC.

³¹ Commanding Officer, *USS Caswell* (AKA-72) to Commander Amphibious Forces Seventh Fleet, October 30th, 1945, Barbey Papers, Box 35, NHHC.

inside the hull of ship. All ships conducted basic muster drills with all the Chinese donning life jackets and being trained in how to find and use them.³²

Despite these and other efforts this meeting of different cultures was not entirely positive. Many of the American sailors were shocked by the Chinese habit of spitting on the decks of their ships. Even worse, most of the Chinese had never seen indoor plumbing and had no idea how to use a toilet or even a modern sink. Nearly all had to be instructed that urinals were not wash basins and defecating in the corner of the ship's holds was neither good nor necessary. Despite this some continued to brush their teeth in the urinals.³³ During the first few days of the voyage most were successfully taught the proper use of western plumbing and sanitation.³⁴ As Daniel Barbey remarked in his memoirs, "The Chinese are great imitators and they did their best to conform to western standards, not only in regards to plumbing, but in other matters."³⁵

Providing food and water to the armies demonstrated some intriguing cultural differences. One of the transports reported that more than 700 pounds of rice supplied by the Chinese was cooked during the voyage, but after the first day complaints were raised as the method of preparation. The Navy mess stewards soon learned the Chinese preference for steamed white rice over boiled. After the appropriate changes were made in the galleys and with their steamed rice in hand no further complaints about the food

³² Report, USS *Randall* to Transport Division 69, October 30th, 1945, Barbey Papers, Ibid.

³³ Letter from Emmett Hightower, MD "Memoirs on Medical Condition of Chinese Soldiers" March 6, 1967, Barbey Papers, Ibid.

³⁴ Joseph F. Heart, "Disease Prevalent among 52nd Chinese Army," Barbey Papers, Ibid.

³⁵ Daniel Barbey, *MacArthur's Amphibious Navy*, 342.

were heard.³⁶ The American sailors also discovered that not all cultures shared their love of cold water. The report from the *Randall* bluntly detailed this issue: “Chinese dislike cold water. The cooling system was cut off from certain drinking fountains, and the Chinese were instructed which fountains would give them tepid water.” Much to the delight of the Chinese further assistance was provided with tea leaves and hot water both during and between meals.³⁷ To pass the time most of the Chinese played checkers or slept away the voyage. The handful that could read English were provided with comic books or magazines.³⁸

It was perhaps the health of the average Nationalist Chinese soldier that left the deepest impression on the U.S. Navy crews. After eight years of war it was understandable that many Chinese soldiers would be in poor health, and most succumbed to seasickness during the seven to fourteen-day voyage. Yet the level of disease, malnutrition, and abysmal hygiene among many of the Chinese shocked the American doctors onboard. Among one advance unit of the 52nd Army, almost 80% had chronic malaria, diarrhea, trachoma, or cholera.³⁹ One shipboard report described three sick soldiers as “walking skeletons” and they were refused permission to board.⁴⁰

Despite efforts by Navy doctors to screen the Chinese for obvious illnesses many boarded the transports who were too weak to make the voyage. Of the more than

³⁶ Report, USS *Geneva* to Commander Transport Division 69, Barbey Papers, Ibid.

³⁷ Report, USS *Randall*, October 30th, 1945, Barbey Papers, Ibid.

³⁸ Report, USS *Geneva* to Commander Transport Division 69, Barbey Papers, Ibid.

³⁹ Joseph F. Heart, “Disease Prevalent among 52nd Chinese Army,” Barbey Papers, Ibid.

⁴⁰ Report, Commanding Officer USS *Geneva* (APA-86) to Commander, Transport Division 69, October 30th, 1945, Barbey Papers, Ibid.

240,000 Chinese soldiers transported during the six-month operation around twenty-five died of disease.⁴¹ One such death took place onboard the USS *Effingham* (APA-165) while transporting the 13th Army. The report read simply: “Above named individual [Lee] expired on board this ship, 17:35 29 October 1945.” Malaria was listed as the cause of death, and Lee, like many others who died onboard ship, was quickly (less than an hour after being pronounced dead) buried at sea.⁴² Many Chinese had a superstitious fear of at sea burial and when some expired onboard their bodies were hidden in the cargo holds, and left behind when the Chinese finally disembarked in North China.⁴³

The U.S. Navy crews were also dismayed by the brutal discipline meted out by the Nationalist Chinese officers. Many of these officers had no compunction whatsoever about striking enlisted men. Even the sick and injured were not spared. In some cases when being carried to the beach on a stretcher, a sick soldier would be overturned on the sand and then beaten relentlessly with sticks. If he could stand afterwards he rejoined the ranks. If not, he was left behind on the sand.⁴⁴

The voyages did offer some humorous moments. Daniel Barbey recalled that of the Chinese taken onboard, “It was difficult for them to accept the fact that women should not accompany the troops, and a few were brought onboard surreptitiously.”⁴⁵ Even some small children were smuggled onboard. One of these, a skinny seven-year

⁴¹ Samuel J. Cox, *U.S. Naval Strategy and Foreign Policy in China, 1945-1950*, 36.

⁴² Report, Senior Medical Officer, USS *Effingham* (APA-165) to Commander, Transport Division 69, October 30th, 1945, Barbey Papers, Ibid.

⁴³ Letter from Emmett Hightower, March 6th, 1967, Barbey Papers, Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Barbey, *MacArthur's Amphibious Navy*, 342.

old boy, was unofficially adopted by his Navy crew. After two weeks of hearty eating he disembarked the ship to the cheers of his new American friends, several pounds heavier than when he first arrived, equipped with a U.S. knife and bayonet, and weighed down with a full pack of rations. Like many of the other disembarking Chinese soldiers he was likely killed in the ensuing civil war or deserted the Nationalist side to join the Communists.⁴⁶

Only with the transport of the 13th Chinese Army did the Seventh Fleet encounter any difficulties at the end of the voyage. Here the tricky status of Dalian raised its head once again. Originally after being loaded in Kowloon the 13th Army was expected to unload in Dalian, as that port offered the shortest overland transport into central Manchuria. The Sino-Soviet Treaty stated that the port was to be open to all traffic, including Nationalist Chinese military forces, but it said nothing concerning the movement of Chinese army units through the city to Manchuria. So there was considerable surprise and frustration when Soviet officials informed Chiang's government that it could not permit the offloading of the 13th Army into Dalian. The Soviets argued that as a free port Dalian could not be used for the movement of troops, and despite the peace treaty signed onboard the USS *Missouri* the Soviet Union still considered itself at war with Japan, as no separate treaty had yet been signed. Of course, the real motive behind the Soviet obfuscation was to limit the movement of Chiang's armies into Manchuria.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Joseph Hearst, "Diseases Present Among 52nd Chinese Army," Barbey Papers, Ibid.

⁴⁷ Memorandum, U.S. Military Mission Moscow to War Department, October 15th, 1945, RG 218, Box 3, NARA.

Though incensed at what he considered Soviet treachery Chiang could do nothing but protest, and requested through General Wedemeyer that the 13th Army instead be offloaded at the small port of Huludao, just north of Great Wall. The 52nd Army, awaiting transport at Haiphong, would be diverted to Yingkou, a port on the north edge of Liaodong Bay. Though denying entry to Dalian the Soviets assured both Wedemeyer and Chiang that they could safely unload the Nationalist troops at both ports, which were under Soviet control.⁴⁸ Once again Daniel Barbey was forced to play the role of diplomat. After anchoring his flagship approximately one thousand yards from the Huludao beach on October 27th, Barbey's admiral barge, prominently flying its American ensign, came under rifle fire roughly sixty yards from the pier. After the barge returned to the ship a lone Chinese man was seen waving both a Chinese flag and a white banner of truce. With great caution Barbey later arranged for the local Chinese Communist leader, Lieutenant General Lau Shok Hai to come onboard for discussions. The general apologized for the shooting incident, which he blamed on nervous and poorly trained soldiers, but also stated that any American landing of Nationalist army troops would be opposed by the Communists.⁴⁹ As at Yantai less than a month earlier Barbey chose to avoid bloodshed and ordered the 13th Army offloaded at the small port of Qingwangdao. This displeased Chiang, as Qingwangdao was located immediately south of the Great Wall, but again he could do nothing.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Barbey, *MacArthur's Amphibious Navy*, 339.

⁴⁹ Joseph Hearst, "Report on the Huludao Incident - USS *Catoctin*," Combat Intelligence Department, 27 October 1945, Barbey Papers, Box 29, NHHC.

⁵⁰ Barbey, *MacArthur's Amphibious Navy*, 339-340.

Barbey soon discovered that the Soviets had tricked both Chiang and the United States yet again. A few days after weighing anchor at Huludao, Barbey's flagship sailed to Yingkou to arrange for the arrival of the 52nd Nationalist Army. Although hundreds of Soviet troops effectively controlled the port, several thousand Communist troops were busy building beach defenses nearby against an anticipated Nationalist landing.⁵¹ Both the Seventh Fleet and the Nationalist government had been assured by the Soviets that any landing at Yingkou would be unopposed.⁵² Yet when pressed the Russian officers who controlled Yingkou claimed to know nothing about such an agreement and requested time to consult with their superiors. Overnight the Soviets mysteriously left the port city and were replaced with Communist Chinese, who again made clear that any Nationalist landing would be met with force. And again Barbey chose to err on the side of caution, and recommended that the 52nd Army be diverted to Qingwandao.⁵³ Despite these setbacks, however, the remaining Chinese Nationalist armies were transported without major incident.

The Seventh Fleet's assistance to Chiang and his armies can be analyzed in many different ways. From a naval perspective, the operation which Dan Barbey called "a discouraging business" was largely successful.⁵⁴ Despite the cultural conflicts and logistical difficulties in moving more than 240,000 Chinese soldiers, this seaborne lift was done professionally and smartly. Politically, however, it had two unintended

⁵¹ Ibid., 340-41.

⁵² Transcript of Conversation, Admiral Daniel Barbey and General Shih Chao, 1 November 1945, Barbey Papers, Box 29, NHHC.

⁵³ Barbey, *MacArthur's Amphibious Navy*, 340.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 342.

consequences. The operation gave Chiang the mobility and confidence he needed to push for a protracted invasion of Manchuria. Second, it angered Mao and the CCP, and lent credence to the Communist view that the Seventh Fleet was little more than an unofficial component of the Nationalist Chinese government. Because of this Communist animosity towards U.S. sailors and Marines in China only became worse in the years ahead.

By January 1946 the fiscal realities of demobilization began to limit the resources available to the relocation mission. From August through December 1945 King, Nimitz, and Navy Secretary James V. Forrestal attempted to develop a comprehensive plan to temper the effects of demobilization upon naval operations in Asia. While they planned U.S. Navy ships engaged in “Operation Magic Carpet.” i.e., the return of America’s enormous military forces stationed around the world back to the United States. More than three hundred transports, sixty-three aircraft carriers, seven battleships, and twenty-six cruisers were utilized, and by November 1945 more than three million men and women arrived home safely.⁵⁵

Of course, this meant that less shipping remained to transport the remaining Chinese armies. A December 1945 naval conference held in Tokyo brought together Barbey, commander of the 7th Fleet, Admiral Raymond Spruance, commander of the 5th Fleet which was assigned to Japan, and members of MacArthur’s Tokyo staff to discuss the situation in China and the Western Pacific. As part of an arrangement worked out between Barbey and Spruance, a new timetable for completing the transport of

⁵⁵ Isenberg, *Shield of the Republic*, 86-87.

Nationalist armies scheduled to move to northern China. With most attack transports needed elsewhere, 75 LST's (Landing Ship/Tank) were assigned to complete the operation, 45 to transport the Chinese armies from Shanghai to the north, the other thirty LSTs to move armies north from South China. The LST's, less comfortable and slower than the attack transports, required up to twenty-five days to move troops from South to North China, and around ten days to move troops to the north from Shanghai.⁵⁶ The final plan, approved by Truman, also authorized a schedule for turning over twenty-five surplus Liberty ships and twenty-five LST's to the Chinese Navy. This formed the nucleus of a new Nationalist Chinese Navy, a complex but little known chapter in U.S. Navy history.⁵⁷

Table 3: Movement of Nationalist Chinese Armies October 1945-May 1946

<u>Army</u>	<u>Size</u>	<u>Departure Port</u>	<u>Destination</u>	<u>Dates</u>
70 th	16,725	Fuzhou	Keelung, Taiwan	10/14 – 10/24
13 th	29,000	Kowloon	Qingwandao	10/24-11/1
52 nd	26,908	Haiphong	Qingwandao	10/30-11/13
8 th	23,745	Kowloon	Qingdao	11/8-11/16
62 nd	20,166	Haiphong	Dagu	11/5 – 12/6
HQ Staff	5,700	Haiphong	Huludao	12/8 – 12/22

⁵⁶ "Report and Study of Japanese Repatriation from China and Assistance to the Chinese Nationalist Government," 11 December 1945, Barbey Papers, Box 29, NHHC.

⁵⁷ Memorandum, Joint Chiefs of Staff to Pacific Fleet Commanders, 13 December 1945, RG 218, Box 3, NARA.

Table 3 Continued

6 th	34,352	Shanghai	Qingwandao	11/16-4/16
1 st	35,141	Kowloon	Qingwandao	2/11- 4/5
71 st	27,347	Shanghai	Qingwandao	3/7 – 4/4
60 th	16,449	Haiphong	Huludao	4/1 – 5/1
93 rd	16,443	Kowloon	Huludao	4/8 – 5/13

Source: Unpublished Narrative History of the Seventh Fleet and Western Forces, Pacific, 8 January 1946 – 24 February 1948, Cooke Papers, Box 17, CHIS.

The Republic of China Navy 1946-1947

With the transportation mission completed in May 1946, the Seventh Fleet turned its energies towards gunboat diplomacy and showing the flag, as its predecessor the Asiatic Fleet had done in previous decades. The fleet maintained an impressive but dwindling presence in Shanghai and Qingdao, but the days of dozens of American warships crowding Chinese ports were in the past. One of the newer missions was anti-smuggling patrols along the Korean coast, to aid in increasingly complex occupation of South Korea. A lesser known mission of the Seventh Fleet was the task of building and training a new navy for Chiang's Nationalist government. This effort had begun long before the war ended and reflected Franklin Roosevelt's desire to build China into a great power, as well as Milton Miles' interest in furthering Sino-American relations postwar. Although never heavily publicized due to concerns by the U.S. State Department and George Marshall, the training program was larger and more comprehensive than has been previously understood. From 1946 onwards Admiral

Cooke and other senior U.S. Navy leaders considered the program a small bright spot in the discouraging tempest that was the Chinese Civil War.⁵⁸

At the request of Admiral King, the Bureau of Naval Personnel (BUPERS) had – in February 1943 - begun to plan for training. Nationalist Chinese officers and enlisted men in the United States. An early report recommended that a small group of Chinese officers be brought to the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis for advanced English courses. The report also recommended that plans be put in place to train Chinese officers and enlisted sailors at the Submarine Chaser Training Center at Miami, Florida. In addition to English the new students would be taught the basics in engineering, seamanship, navigation, and mine warfare.⁵⁹

A school for training Chinese enlisted sailors was established during the spring of 1945. Over 1,000 Chinese sailors, most with little or no understanding of English, arrived at the Miami Naval Training Center in April 1945. Discouraged by the all but nonexistent English language skills of the Chinese recruits, Captain H. W. Howe, the commanding officer of the training center, turned to Dr. I. A. Richards of Harvard University. Richards had become well known for his development of Basic English, a system of teaching the language by emphasizing fewer than 1,000 key words. His

⁵⁸ Unpublished Narrative History of the Seventh Fleet and Western Forces, Pacific, 8 January 1946 – 24 February 1948, Cooke Papers, Box 17, CHIS, 13-15.

⁵⁹ "Instruction of Chinese Officers – Tentative Plans For," Bureau of Naval Personnel, 26 February 1943, RG 38, Box 40, NARA.

program was implemented in Miami and became a cornerstone of success, both for teaching naval skills and the English language.⁶⁰

The rapid conclusion of World War II ended efforts to train Chinese sailors in the United States, and the program was gradually incorporated into the creation of a postwar military assistance program. Patrick Hurley wrote to Harry Truman in September 1945, citing the “ever growing need for postwar military cooperation,” advocated the creation of a postwar military advisory board headed by an American commander, preferably Wedemeyer to advise Chiang’s government.⁶¹ Truman replied that he was in favor of the idea, in principle, and ordered that proposals be prepared by the Joint Chiefs on the matter.⁶² The creation of a permanent American-led training program for the new Chinese Navy would eventually coalesce in the closing weeks of 1945. During the busy last days of his command of the Seventh Fleet, Barbey convinced Admiral King to set up a naval training center in Qingdao to train Chinese sailors. King quickly agreed, and in early December the first class of two hundred recruits began training on three LST amphibious transports turned over to the new Chinese Navy. The American effort to create a Navy for Chiang had begun.⁶³

The same week that the Qingdao naval training center opened, Chiang presented Wedemeyer with a list of requests in addition to the 36 landing craft, four destroyers, and six patrol craft he sought earlier. Included were six light cruisers, sixteen destroyers

⁶⁰ William Bentnick-Smith, “Harvard and the Chinese Navy: How to Run a Ship with 850 Words,” *Harvard Alumni Bulletin*, Vol. 48, No. 5, November 17, 1945.

⁶¹ Memorandum, Patrick Hurley to Harry Truman, September 10th, 1945, Naval Aide Files, Box 7, TPL.

⁶² Memorandum, Truman to Hurley, 11 September, 1945, Ibid.

⁶³ Cox, “U.S. Naval Strategy and Policy in China, 1945-1949,” 48-49.

or destroyer escorts, twelve patrol craft, eight minesweepers, and an unspecified number of repair ships and other support vessels. He also strongly requested assistance in the construction of port facilities and dry docks. Daniel Barbey forwarded the list to Washington with a cover letter that ended with a direct quote from Chiang's written request, "The gradual transfer of the above mentioned ships over an extended period of time will be acceptable."⁶⁴ Apparently Chiang was under the impression that the creation of a new navy was as simple as being handed over surplus American warships, to say nothing of the complexities of crewing and operating them. After assuming command from Barbey in early January, Admiral Cooke sought to tamp down Chiang's delusions of grandeur.

Cooke's elevation to command of the Seventh Fleet meant that the responsibility of building this new navy fell to him. He approached the huge task enthusiastically but cautiously. A personal letter to Nimitz reveals his hopes and fears. Cooke pointed out to CNO Nimitz that at present the Nationalists had only a few small coastal craft, and no administrative organization to speak of. Cooke was scheduled to meet with Chiang in Chongqing shortly, and would lay out a modest but realistic set of proposals to build a limited but capable navy. He ended the message to Nimitz with a note of cautious optimism, writing, "I shall tell the Chinese Government that the way for them to build a Navy is to start out on a small scale with the view to building up later, as may seem

⁶⁴ Memorandum, Barbey to Chief of Naval Operations, December 16th, 1945, Naval Aide Files, Box 7, TPL.

desirable and practicable. It is my view that if they attempt the grandiose, they will defeat their own wishes and objectives.”⁶⁵

Cooke was accompanied on his trip to Chongqing by Rear Admiral Stuart S. Murray. The recently arrived Murray was a distinguished submarine officer who, in addition to several wartime exploits, was one of the senior submariners who fled the Philippines in January 1942 to begin unrestricted submarine warfare against the Japanese. He was later promoted to Chief of Staff to Admiral Charles Lockwood, the commander of U.S. Submarine-Forces in the Pacific. His last wartime post was an especially prestigious one, as commanding officer of the battleship USS *Missouri*. In that capacity he oversaw the endless complexities of hosting the Japanese surrender ceremonies on September 2nd, to say nothing of the presence of Douglas MacArthur, Nimitz, and countless other high ranking officers.⁶⁶

Murray had originally been slated to take over Naval Group China in December. Milton Miles’ chief of staff, Captain I. F. Beyerly, had run the group after Miles’ departure, and relations between him and Dan Barbey were problematic. Beyerly and the remaining SACO personnel objected to the potential shut down of their organization and its unique relationship with Chiang and his government. Barbey, however, saw SACO and NGC as an impediment to future negotiations with the Communists and helped draft the SACO termination agreement that was later approved by the JCS and the U.S.

⁶⁵ Letter, Cooke to Nimitz, 28 January 1946, Cooke Papers, Box 7, CHIS.

⁶⁶ Stuart S. Murray, oral interview by Etta-Belle Kitchen, May 1970-May 1971, transcript, U.S. Naval Academy, Nimitz Library, Special Collections and Archives, Manuscript Collections, 1-3. Hereafter abbreviated as USNANL.

Congress.⁶⁷ Cooke sought to utilize Murray's outstanding organizational skills in a different way. During a November 1945 meeting in Washington, D.C., Cooke informed Murray that Naval Group China would be shut down and he would instead take over the Qingdao naval training program and the newly created Naval Assistance Group to China. Murray thus had the dual responsibilities of training the new Chinese Navy and overseeing the transfer of U.S. Navy ships and resources. Although perhaps not the most prestigious posting, it required a deft combination of diplomacy and tact to succeed.⁶⁸

Murray's official Navy orders authorized him to establish a preliminary administrative Survey Board for the purposes of establishing a long term Naval Advisory Group and ascertaining the realistic requirements to build and train a Chinese Navy. He was also ordered to report to Cooke on his findings.⁶⁹ Although he had never served in China, Murray sought out Milton Miles, Hurley, and several other China experts before he departed for Asia. After touring Qingdao, Shanghai, and Chongqing, Murray met with most of the principal American and Chinese commanders, including Wedemeyer and Dai Li. To his surprise and gratitude the latter furnished an armored limousine for his personal use. Throughout December he continued gathering information, and when Cooke arrived in early January he felt prepared to provide his new boss and Chiang recommendations on his vision for the new Chinese Navy.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Cox, "U.S. Naval Strategy and Policy in China, 1945-1949," 48-49.

⁶⁸ Murray, Oral Interview, #7, USNANL, 531-33.

⁶⁹ Memorandum, Chief of Naval Operations to S. S. Murray, 23 November 1945, Record Group 334, Records of Intraservice Agencies, Joint Military U.S. Advisory Group, Naval Advisory Division, Tsingtao Unit, General Correspondence 1946-1949, Box S-31, National Archives, San Bruno, CA. Hereafter abbreviated as NARASB.

⁷⁰ Murray, Oral Interview, #7, USNANL, 526-530.

The February 3rd, 1946 conference with Chiang to discuss his new navy was a memorable one. Most of Chiang's positions on the size and strength of a future fleet remained unchanged. Following a sumptuous multi-course dinner at Chiang's guest cottage, Cooke and Murray laid out the problems with the generalissimo's vision. In their opinion the Nationalist government did not have enough trained and experienced personnel to come close to manning the more than forty warships requested by Chiang. Heavy or even light cruisers were out of the question. Cooke pointed out that all such warships had advanced high pressure steam propulsion plants, a technology few Chinese were familiar with. Only warships fitted with safer and less complex low pressure steam plants would be available. Both Cooke and Murray attempted to soothe the generalissimo's desires to have an instant, modern navy, but were firm that until sufficient personnel were trained only simple ships such as amphibious landing craft would be made available. Although he reluctantly accepted their conclusions, Chiang pressed for a minimum of twelve submarines to be included. Again Cooke and Murray said no, pointing out the profound complexities of modern submarine design. They did promise that within a few years destroyers and possibly even one or two submarines would be made available.⁷¹

As a result of the conference Murray prepared a thorough report for Cooke, which was later forwarded to Admiral Nimitz. Murray's report recommended that a larger, congressionally funded naval advisory group be established and emphasized that the new Chinese Navy would stress quality over size, and that several years would be

⁷¹ Ibid., 531-33.

needed to develop it to American standards of proficiency. The report relayed Chiang's desires for a "national" navy for China, something the country had never known in its long and ancient history. Cooke also recommended that two to three light cruisers be made available to Chiang's government within three years, provided that sufficient crewmen were available.⁷² As part of a series of additional reports, Murray also recommended that up to 271 surplus Navy ships, primarily amphibious landing craft and patrol boats, be turned over to the Chinese. A tentative accord on the number of ships was agreed to by both nations, and ratified by the U.S. Congress as Public Law 512 in July 1946.⁷³

After returning from a long visit to Washington, Murray set to work expanding and improving the naval training center at Qingdao. Despite the funding and support available, Murray had to walk a fine line between emphasizing the importance of the Qingdao naval center and downplaying it. The training center was a vital part of the Seventh Fleet's mission in China but publicity was kept to a minimum out of concern that its establishment would anger the Communists. In an interview years later Murray confided that the ambiguous status of their mission mattered very little to their hosts, recalling, "We were operating now as advisors to the Chinese Navy even though we were unofficial in that we were not officially established. As far as the Chinese were concerned, it made no difference to them. We were just there and whether we were

⁷² Memorandum, Commander Seventh Fleet to Chief of Naval Operations, 24 February 1946, RG 334 JUSMAG Tsingtao, Box S-31, NARASB.

⁷³ Memorandum on the Transfer of Naval Vessels to the Republic of China, December 8th, 1947, RG 334, Ibid.

officially established or not had no bearing as far they were concerned. They wanted assistance.”⁷⁴

During the spring of 1946 Murray oversaw the creation of a comprehensive curriculum, the organization of classes, and the building of new facilities to house the training program. He soon discovered that intra-service rivalry was not unique to the United States. As a land power for most of its history, including during the 20th century, ground forces received the highest priority. The Navy ranked a distant third behind the Chiang’s Nationalist Army and even the young Chinese Air Force. Many of the recruits who arrived for training had even less standing and education than those sent to the army. He thus had to make do with the least educated and poorest peasants, some of whom had never even seen the Pacific Ocean.⁷⁵

Murray and his subordinates nevertheless made the new training program work. Surplus U.S. Navy training equipment was brought to Qingdao throughout the spring of 1946, along with training manuals and firefighting gear. The center, located adjacent to the main Qingdao naval base, was rapidly expanded with the construction of new barracks and classrooms. Prefabricated Quonset huts that were used so successfully during the war soon outnumbered the permanent concrete structures.⁷⁶ Most training was conducted afloat, utilizing five amphibious landing craft: two LST’s (Landing Ship, Tank), one LCT (Landing Craft, Tank), one LCI (Landing Craft, Infantry), and one LSM

⁷⁴ Murray, Oral Interview, #7, USNANL, 580.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

(Landing Ship, Medium) to familiarize the Chinese crews with their operation.⁷⁷

Lessons were conducted in a combination of Chinese and English, and over several months many of the training manuals were translated into Chinese.⁷⁸ In addition to the afloat training, forty officers and over three hundred enlisted sailors took courses ashore in damage control, leadership, navigation, and basic seamanship. The specialized officer courses also featured broad lectures in Chinese on amphibious warfare, leadership, and medical training. Also prominent were classes on popular topics such as the Normandy invasion and the 1942 Doolittle Raid.⁷⁹ By November 1946 nearly two hundred Chinese officers and over 1,300 enlisted sailors had completed the afloat training and were qualified to operate the growing number of amphibious landing craft being turned over to China.⁸⁰

James V. Forrestal and the Growing Rift over China

In his history of the postwar Asian revolt against Western imperialism, diplomatic historian Lisle Rose blames Patrick Hurley for the failure of U.S policy in China. With his abrupt and public resignation Hurley gave voice to many nervous Americans who saw a worldwide Communist conspiracy directed from Moscow. Even greater, in Rose's view Hurley shares a considerable burden for helping start the Cold

⁷⁷ Description of Qingdao Naval Training Program, November 1946, RG 334, JUSMAG Tsingtao, Box S-31, NARASB.

⁷⁸ Murray, Oral Interview, #7, USNANL, 580.

⁷⁹ Lesson Plans, RG 334, JUSMAG Tsingtao, Box S-25, NARASB.

⁸⁰ Description of Qingdao Naval Training Program, November 1946, RG 334, JUSMAG Tsingtao, Box S-31, NARASB.

War in Asia. He concludes that, “The roots of virulent anti-Communism in America were thus firmly laid by Patrick Hurley and his supporters during the first uncertain months of the postwar era. And the initial source and focus of this dangerous public mood was China and the American foreign service, not the Soviet Union.”⁸¹

This analysis overstates the importance of Hurley, as the Cold War in Asia was already well underway before the ambassador’s resignation. As Rose wisely points out, however, a growing and influential group of statesmen, diplomats, and politicians agreed with Hurley’s views. One of these was James Forrestal, who served as Under Secretary of the Navy (1940-1944), Navy Secretary (1944-1947), and the first Secretary of Defense (1947-1949). Well before Japan’s surrender Forrestal had begun to view the Soviet Union with deep suspicion. Upon his accession to the post of Secretary of the Navy following the death of Frank Knox, opposition to containment of Soviet Communism would become a centerpiece of Forrestal’s worldview.

Born in Matteawan, New York, in 1892, Forrestal enlisted in the U.S. Navy in 1916 and became one of the first generation of naval aviators. During most of 1918 he served at the office of Chief of Naval Operations in Washington, D.C., time which undoubtedly aided him with a future career in politics. Gifted with an insightful, brilliant mind and an acumen for business, in the 1920s he joined the investment firm of Dillon, Read, and Company, eventually heading the company and earning a large fortune

⁸¹ Lisle A. Rose, *Roots of Tragedy: The United States and the Struggle for Asia, 1945-1953* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1976): 169.

of Wall Street.⁸² Forrestal was known as much for his restless energy as he was for unorthodox and clever ideas. It was a midnight call to Secretary of State James Byrnes from Forrestal that suggested the Japanese surrender ceremonies take place onboard the battleship USS *Missouri*, an idea that in Byrnes' view, "averted a great crisis in Army-Navy relations."⁸³ No matter how grand or illustrious its battle history, Douglas MacArthur had long objected to the ceremony taking place onboard a Navy warship, as it would create the impression that the Navy had won the war against the Japanese. Senior Navy leaders insisted that only an aircraft carrier such as the USS *Enterprise* could be an appropriate venue. A battleship named after his home state proved to be too much for Harry Truman to resist, and the president subsequently cut through any Army objections with his choice. Summarizing his best traits, Forrestal's most recent biography describes him as a "meld of great ability, noble ambition, innate patriotism, deep dedication, and selfless labor." He possessed an exceptionally complex personality and was haunted by personal demons.⁸⁴

Compared to many of his contemporaries in government service, such as Marshall, Dean Acheson, or even James Byrnes, Forrestal has received little attention from academic historians and biographers.⁸⁵ He remains an enigmatic and tragic figure.

⁸² Robert Albion and Robert Connery, *Forrestal and the Navy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962): 1-2.

⁸³ James F. Byrnes, *Speaking Frankly* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1947): 212.

⁸⁴ Townsend Hoopes and Douglas Brinkley, *Driven Patriot: The Life and Times of James Forrestal* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992): 478.

⁸⁵ Note: Of the few studies of the first Secretary of Defense, the most famous is the controversial psycho-biography by Arnold Rogow, *James Forrestal: A Study of Personality, Politics, and Policy* (New York: MacMillan Press, 1963). Albion and Connery, *Forrestal and the Navy* is a useful, but limited study. Townsend Hoopes and Douglas Brinkley, *Driven Patriot: The Life and Times of James Forrestal*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992, is the only truly comprehensive study available on Forrestal's life. More

Much of this is due to the circumstances of his passing. The tragedy of his death in May of 1949 has long been the subject of considerable controversy, and his hospitalization and suicide have led many to point towards insanity in the final months of his life. However, a study on his mental state during his final years concludes that no evidence exists the former Defense Secretary was psychotic or mentally incapacitated by overwork. In the author's view, the stigma of mental illness has unfairly blemished the record, and conclude that, "Forrestal seems to be remembered, not for his prescience and courage, but for his suicide and alleged insanity."⁸⁶ Given his lasting influence on not just the Navy but the Department of Defense this is unfortunate. Forrestal's role in the postwar U.S. Navy and the peripheral yet vital part that he played in the formation of American policy in China, deserve much greater attention than they have received.

Forrestal and King had little direct contact before April 1944. These two brilliant men developed a workable but unusually strained relationship. Forrestal greatly respected King for his strategic genius and profound love for the Navy, but viewed the Chief of Naval Operations as a sloppy administrator. For personal reasons King came to disagree with his civilian boss more and more as the war neared its end. As King's biographer concludes, "Whereas [Secretary of War] Stimson and Marshall had an open door between their offices, the one deck between the offices of King and Forrestal was

recently, an excellent analysis of Forrestal's views on national security can be found in Cecilia S. Cornell's unpublished "James V. Forrestal and American National Security Policy, 1940-1949" (PhD diss.), Vanderbilt University, 1987. Lastly, as a partial refutation of Rogow's psychological analysis, see Mary Akashah and Donald Tennant. "Madness and Politics: The Case of James Forrestal," *Proceedings of the Oklahoma Academy of Science*, 60 (1980): 89-92.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 91-92.

almost insurmountable barrier.”⁸⁷ Forrestal’s relations with King’s successor, Chester Nimitz, were more cordial but nevertheless challenging. Even the disarming and magisterial Nimitz could never quite understand Forrestal’s unique personality.⁸⁸

As World War II neared its end, Forrestal developed entrenched positions on both Communism and the future of China. On these matters Forrestal was influenced by William Bullitt, the unorthodox but brilliant diplomat and former ambassador to the Soviet Union. Bullitt believed that Communism was an atheistic religion and that the Soviets sought worldwide domination. Forrestal would come to share these views.⁸⁹ Averell Harriman, whom Forrestal would come to value as a friend and colleague, would also help to shape his anti-communist views. In his April 20th, 1945 diary entry Forrestal recorded that during a meeting the ambassador informed him that he feared the Soviets would stop at nothing to establish “friendly” states on their borders, and that “the outward thrust of Communism was not dead and that we might well have to face an ideological warfare just as vigorous and dangerous as Fascism or Nazism.”⁹⁰

This view would eventually bring him into conflict with George Marshall. Though Marshall demonstrated nothing but determined opposition to communism throughout his career, yet, during the war, he largely set this aside. His eyes on ultimate victory, the general chose to look past the cruelties of the Soviet regime. Marshall considered Stalin a strong and ruthless leader, and described him as a man “who made

⁸⁷ Thomas B. Buell, *Master of Sea Power: A Biography of Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1980): 450-452.

⁸⁸ E.B. Potter, *Nimitz* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1976): 421.

⁸⁹ Hoopes and Brinkley, *Driven Patriot*, 261.

⁹⁰ Walter Mills, ed., *The Forrestal Diaries* (New York: Viking Press, 1966): 47

his way by murder and everything else and should be talked to that way.”⁹¹ To Marshall the qualities that made Stalin so abhorrent to later generations of Americans were perhaps just the Russian way of doing things, ways that were needed to crush Hitler. Marshall appreciated Stalin’s obvious intelligence, command of global strategy, and determination, and the Soviet dictator reciprocated this admiration. In contrast, men like Forrestal, Charles Cooke, and Averell Harriman were less willing to overlook the Soviet Union’s growing trail of death and destruction.

The true difference between Forrestal and Marshall was the language each thought was appropriate for the nascent Cold War. According to his best known biographer, Forrest Pogue, Marshall was cautious when it came to relations with the Soviet Union. The general, “warned constantly against slapping an opponent in the face while one was virtually disarmed. He deplored the use of harsh rhetoric, insisting that one must permit one’s enemies room to maneuver.”⁹² In contrast Forrestal favored a blunter and stronger response centered around the new doctrine of containment. In early 1945 he foresaw that Eastern Europe would come under Soviet domination and the weak Soviet Navy would benefit from captured U-boat technology and would eventually become a major threat, predictions that came true in the years ahead. Although he shared Marshall’s vision for a Western Europe rebuilt through economic assistance,

⁹¹ Cray, *General of the Army*, 417.

⁹² Forrest C. Pogue. *George C. Marshall: Statesman*, vol. 4: 1945-1959 (New York: Viking Press, 1987): 520.

Forrestal was far more inclined to view Soviet actions as driven by Communist ideology rather than practical defensive concerns.⁹³

In the case of China, Forrestal agreed with the senior Navy leadership that American naval power in the country had been vital in the past and would continue to be so in the future. In Forrestal's view, basing the Seventh Fleet in East Asia, preferably in China, would bode well for future conflicts with the Soviet Union. Referring to the November 1945 discussions on removing the III MEF from North China, he wrote in his diary that, "There is strong pressure to bring Americans out of China, particularly the Marines. If we do, we invite a vacuum of anarchy in Manchuria, and it is obvious that into that vacuum ultimately either the Japanese or the Russians will flow."⁹⁴ Following the arrival of the III MEF, Forrestal became increasingly determined to keep Marines in China as long as possible. After one of several meetings with Charles Cooke in 1946, the secretary recorded in his diary that he shared the admiral's conviction that the Chinese had the makings of a great and democratic people, and that, "they [the Chinese] were very much like ourselves in the degree to which they prized personal liberty and the freedom of the individual. In Cooke's mind, the Chinese people only lacked the stable order and administration necessary for a modern, free society."⁹⁵

This was a naïve statement, written by an intelligent man, but one who had little direct experience with China and the complexities of its politics. Most of Forrestal's knowledge on China was anecdotal and incomplete. Yet Cooke, Forrestal, and to a lesser

⁹³ Cornell, "James V. Forrestal and American National Security Policy, 1940-1949," 454-455.

⁹⁴ Millis, ed., *The Forrestal Diaries*, 108.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 176.

extent Admiral William Leahy became the three U.S. Navy leaders who were most determined to keep China “on our side.” All three, like Averell Harriman, strongly opposed communism, were determined to keep Nationalist China within the fold, and appreciated the Navy’s longstanding role along the coasts and in the rivers of the vast country.⁹⁶

Unbending in his negative views of communism, Forrestal saw little point in continuing negotiations with Mao Zedong or his deputy, Zhou Enlai. He also was resolute in his determination to keep U.S. Navy and Marine personnel in China for as long as possible, viewing them as indispensable to the security of the region. He wanted more Marines in China, not fewer. But by the summer of 1946 Marshall was far more pessimistic about America’s future role in China. Due to the corruption of Chiang’s regime and the general hopelessness of the situation Marshall saw little that could be gained from a prolonged American presence.⁹⁷ He also confided to Forrestal that if the impending negotiations between the Nationalists and Communists broke down he would have no choice but to recommend the phased withdrawal of all Marines from China.⁹⁸

During the summer of 1946 Forrestal embarked on a whirlwind tour of the Pacific and East Asia. After witnessing the atomic bomb tests on Bikini Atoll on July 1st, he flew west and met with George Marshall and Chiang in Nanjing.⁹⁹ Despite their increasing differences over China the meetings with Marshall were cordial, and Forrestal

⁹⁶ Henry H. Adams, *Witness to Power: The Life of Fleet Admiral William D. Leahy* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1985): 310-311.

⁹⁷ Cornell, “James V. Forrestal and American National Security Policy, 1940-1949,” 241.

⁹⁸ Millis, ed., *The Forrestal Diaries*, 174.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 173.

later thanked the general for the use of his private plane and pilot while he was in China.¹⁰⁰ In addition to Marshall, the Navy Secretary met with several other important American officials in China, including Admiral Cooke who warned him of Russian subversion and espionage in Shanghai and of the need for a permanent, forward deployed Seventh Fleet. Yet perhaps his most illuminating conversation was with Walter Robinson, the charge d'affaires of the U.S. embassy in China. A banker by trade and later head of the U.S. Lend-Lease mission to Australia during the war, Robertson was the senior American diplomat in China since Hurley's resignation.¹⁰¹ On a stop in Beijing Robertson forcefully argued to the Forrestal that without the Marines China would have fallen into chaos the previous winter, and that to withdraw them would mean Communist domination of Manchuria and North China. Forrestal readily agreed.¹⁰²

The June 1946 trip to Asia was of great importance to Forrestal in the shaping of his views on communism and American grand strategy in Asia. Forrestal's views began to match Patrick Hurley's, in that Soviet style communism was on the march in Asia and only a determined U.S. response could block it. The tour solidified Forrestal's stance to a single axiom: U.S. Marines, supported by the Navy, were essential to a stable China. Upon leaving the Asian mainland for Japan and a conference with MacArthur, Forrestal wrote in his journal that, "One thing is clear – that the Marines were the balance of order in China during the last six months." This view, understandable in the summer of 1946,

¹⁰⁰ Letter, James V. Forrestal to George Marshall, 20 July 1946, James V. Forrestal Papers, Personal Correspondence, 1945-1949, PUL.

¹⁰¹ Pogue, *George C. Marshall: Statesman, 1945-1949*, 75-76.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 174-175.

became increasingly untenable as more and more of China fell under Communist control.¹⁰³

Forrestal's trip to Asia also solidified his strong concurrence with Cooke over the Navy's course in China. Throughout 1946 Cooke, partially supported by Forrestal, increasingly advocated a more assertive course for the Navy. By August the admiral had become convinced that a stronger American presence in China was needed, and recommended that extensive U.S. Navy facilities be built both in Qingdao and Shanghai for the Seventh Fleet. Cooke's stance was not a popular one, however, as even Nimitz declined to act upon his proposals.¹⁰⁴ In early 1947, Cooke's desire to increase the Navy's visibility in the region would lead to conflict with both the U.S. Army and State Department. By this time the American public was increasingly confused about why U.S. Marines were still ashore in China. Their presence, coupled with Cooke and Forrestal's continued desire for a more robust American military role in China, would soon collide with both the Army and the State Department's push to pursue an opposite course.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 179.

¹⁰⁴ Cox, "U.S. Naval Strategy and Policy in China, 1945-1949," 62.

CHAPTER V

TWILIGHT OF THE CHINA MARINES, 1946-1947

Happy crowds greeted the 1st Division Marines when they began landing at Dagu on September 30th 1945 followed by the 6th Marine Division at Qingdao on October 15th. The latter group included an eighteen-year-old Marine who fifty years later recalled the large and enthusiastic throngs of Chinese who welcomed them, remembering that “No ticker tape parade in New York City for a victorious returning army could have been more grand. The streets were one continuous mass of humanity, a carpet of happy, smiling waving people. Each and everyone [sic] there that day, without exception, babies included, held small American flags which they waved frantically.” It was a sight that the arriving 6th Division Marines would not soon forget.¹

Though most of the Marines may have preferred to be returning home to the United States, others welcomed the opportunity to visit exotic China. Yet by year’s end the spectacle and adventure of China had begun to wear thin. As the cold weather set in many of the 40,000 Marines still in the enormous and troubled country had seen enough of Beijing, Tianjin, and Qingdao. The crowds that had welcomed the Marines in September and October were a memory, replaced by a still grateful but increasingly uneasy population struggling to feed and warm itself yet also caught up in a growing and remorseless civil war.

¹ Harold Stevens, *Take China: The Last of the China Marines* (Miranda, CA: Wolfenden Publishers, 2002): 46.

American newspaper and magazines had heralded the Marines' return to China, but by early 1946, they had lost interest. The towering presence of General George Marshall dwarfed whatever visibility the Marines had left in China. He deliberately deemphasized their role and sought to steadily reduce their numbers during the long and tumultuous year. As Marshall attempted to broker an end to the war between Chiang's Nationalists and Mao's Communists—an all but impossible task—he paid increasingly less attention to Navy leaders' views of China as a strategic priority. For Seventh Fleet commander Admiral Charles Cooke and Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal, the Marines had become a symbol of the American strategy in the new Cold War in Asia.² In their eyes the Marines helped ensure stability and embodied a visible counterweight to Soviet expansion and influence. The two leaders believed that with the Soviets' fortification of Dalian—an act both considered illegal— and covert operations elsewhere, a complete withdrawal of the Marines was strategically unsound and politically unthinkable.

During the late winter and early spring of 1946 Soviet-American relations reached to a new nadir. The Cold War, no longer a new theory or pessimistic analysis of diplomacy, had become very real. In a February 9th speech to a group of local “voters” in Moscow, Joseph Stalin touted the unyielding strength of the Red Army and argued that the war had proven the viability of the Soviet state. Candid and bombastic to Western observers, the speech seemed to leave little room for compromise with the West.³ A few

² Following the ratification and implementation of the 1947 National Security Act, James Forrestal became the 1st Secretary of Defense on September 19th, 1947.

³ “Speech Delivered by Stalin at a Meeting of Voters of the Stalin Electoral District, Moscow,” February

weeks later George Kennan, U.S. Ambassador to the USSR since Averell Harriman's departure, released an even more influential document, one that would come to symbolize the Cold War. Kennan's "Long Telegram," as it came to be known, contained the seeds for the U.S. policy of containment and stark warnings for the future. Kennan argued that the Soviet Union both feared and envied the West and that Russian xenophobia and suspicion were major reasons for the leaders' hostile worldview. Kennan rejected ideology as the base motivation of Soviet leaders, writing that "At bottom of Kremlin's neurotic view of world affairs is traditional and instinctive sense of insecurity." He concluded that peaceful coexistence was unlikely, and that, "they [Russians] have learned to seek security only in patient but deadly struggle for total destruction of rival power, never in compacts or compromises with it."⁴

Since 1946 both Stalin's speech and Kennan's telegram have been criticized in various circles. Some Western scholars have argued the Truman Administration's response to Stalin's speech was excessive and misunderstood. Stalin, in their view, was speaking purely to a local audience and did not intend to antagonize the West. Kennan's telegram, in contrast, has been criticized for its harsh rhetoric and outsized influence on U.S. foreign policy. Kennan himself later likened the telegram to something akin to Thomas Paine's *Common Sense*, less for its immortal language but more for its

09, 1946, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Gospolitizdat, Moscow, 1946.
<http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/116179>

⁴ George Kennan's 'Long Telegram,' March 22, 1946, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, National Archives and Records Administration, Department of State Records (Record Group 59), Central Decimal File, 1945-1949, 861.00/2-2246; reprinted in US Department of State, ed., *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1946*, Volume VI, *Eastern Europe; The Soviet Union* (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1969): 696-709.
<http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/116178>.

provocative call to arms. Yet none can deny that both documents, especially Kennan's, played an enormous role in framing the early Cold War. As Truman biographer Robert J. Donovan summarizes, Kennan's words, "aroused Washington indeed and set a pattern then and for years to come for official American thinking about the Soviet problem." One of those most enthralled was James Forrestal, who pounced on Kennan's telegram with enormous satisfaction. The Navy Secretary made the telegram required reading for his department and touted its insight into the dangers of Soviet communism.⁵

The U.S. Marines and the Marshall Mission: January – June 1946

Against this grim backdrop General George Marshall continued to bring a measure of peace to China. A detailed analysis of the Marshall Mission is beyond the scope of this study, as the effort has come under the scrutiny of numerous scholars, several of whom have written excellent studies on the complex and nuanced diplomacy undertaken to achieve peace.⁶ One of the best recent analyses of Marshall's noble failure is Harold Tanner's study of the Chinese Civil War in Manchuria. As he argues that Marshall's efforts, noble and well-meaning as they were, "were most significant not for any success in achieving peace, but for establishing the framework within which the war

⁵ Robert J. Donovan, *Conflict and Crisis: The Presidency of Harry S. Truman, 1945-1948* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1977): 188-189.

⁶ See: John Robinson Beal, *Marshall in China*. Toronto: Doubleday Press, 1970. Larry I. Bland, Roger B. Jeans, and Mark Wilkinson, eds., *George C. Marshall's Meditation Mission to China, December 1945-January 1947*. Lexington, VA: George C. Marshall Foundation, 1998. Forrest C. Pogue, *George C. Marshall: Statesman*. Volume 4: *1945-1959*. New York: Viking Press, 1987.

would be fought.”⁷ Both sides used the negotiations to their advantage, playing for time at various stages and alternately attempting to win final victory on the battlefield.

Despite Marshall’s best efforts full scale war between the Nationalists and Communists resumed in the spring of 1946. The Chinese Civil War of 1946-1949, much like the painful and disastrous American intervention in Vietnam twenty years later, had no precise time or place of origin. In the months after the Japanese surrender fighting between the Nationalists and Communists resumed as it had before 1937. But unlike the war against Japan or many other civil wars of the past century, the Chinese Civil War did not visit death and destruction on the scale of the previous conflict. Although many lives were lost, the war involved only a fraction of China’s teeming millions. Most Chinese were not interested in ideology and merely tried to survive. In the words of Norwegian historian Odd Arne Westad, “The great majority of the population were passive onlookers, doing their best to stay out of harm’s way in the cataclysm that engulfed the country.”⁸

For a few short months, however, it seemed that the long feared and predicted civil war might not happen. February 1946 marked the high point of optimism for American policymakers dealing with China. For a few brief moments Marshall’s peace mission seem to have a chance at success. Shortly after Marshall arrived in China on December 20th 1945, officials of the Nationalist government suggested formation of a tripartite committee to serve as a forum for peace discussions. Marshall endorsed the

⁷ Tanner, *The Battle for Manchuria*, 85.

⁸ Westad, *Decisive Encounters*, 69.

idea and Mao accepted the proposal. On January 7th, 1946 the Committee of Three met for the first time. Composed of Zhou Enlai, and Nationalist General Zhang Qun, the governor of Sichuan Province and a close ally of Chiang, and Marshall as its chair, the committee agreed to a ceasefire on January 10th and an end to troop movements to take effect on January 18th. On January 11th the Nationalists and Communists jointly issued Cease Fire Order No. 1, the text of which was contained in the three hundred thousand leaflets dropped over the North China countryside by planes of the 1st Marine Air Wing. Despite minor skirmishes the cease fire proved remarkably durable for a few precious weeks.⁹

Marshall's other major success was the establishment of Executive Headquarters, the formal name for the team of American-led negotiators. With a bureaucracy that grew exponentially in a few months, the headquarters was housed in the sprawling Peking Union Medical College in Beijing and was designed to facilitate real discussion between the Nationalists and Communists.¹⁰ Despite the incalculable obstacles remaining these were a remarkable series of achievements. As China historian Jay Taylor rightly summarizes, "In only a few meetings in early January, the Committee of Three astonishingly reached an accord on military integration and a coalition government as well as a cease-fire, all with terms that favored the [Nationalist] government."¹¹

⁹ Larry I. Bland and Sharon Ritenour Stevens, eds., *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, vol. 5: "The Finest Soldier," January 1, 1945–January 7, 1947 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press): 409-410.

¹⁰ John Hersey, "Letter from Peiping," *New Yorker Magazine* (May 4, 1946): 89-90.

¹¹ Taylor, *The Generalissimo*, 339.

But the renewed optimism soon came crashing down. Marshall himself was a catalyst for this breakdown. In early March he conducted a 3,000-mile air tour of many of the contested areas of North China and Manchuria and met personally with Mao Zedong in Yanan. In a dispatch sent to President Truman he described the CCP leader as friendly and helpful, and reported that “my reception everywhere was enthusiastic and in the cities extreme.”¹² Flush with confidence and needing to update Truman personally as well as to visit his long separated family, Marshall then returned to the United States on March 14th. At a press conference in Washington he argued that considerable strides were being made in China, and that the support of the world community was essential to any lasting peace. Calling the Executive Headquarters, “the most important instrument we have in China,” Marshall outlined the progress made since December. In a message to the Soviet Union and other Asian nations he proclaimed, “I do not believe any nation can find justification for suspicion in our motives in China. We are asking for no special preferences of any kind whatsoever regarding economic or similar matters. We are placing no price on our friendship.”¹³

Marshall’s optimism was unfounded. Agreeing to a ceasefire did not stop Chiang from ordering his forces to continue their advance into southern Manchuria, as Communist forces withdrew northwards. The Nationalists entered Mukden on January 15th. Soon afterwards the cease fire effectively collapsed, and at heavy cost Communist general Lin Biao resisted the Nationalist advance north of the former territorial capital.¹⁴

¹² Marshall to Truman, 6 March 1946, RG 218, Box 2, NARA.

¹³ Bland and Stevens eds., *Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, 504-5.

¹⁴ Dreyer, *China at War*, 324-325.

In early April, the Communists shifted to launch a counter offensive and captured the lightly defended northern Manchurian city of Changchun, the capital of the Japanese puppet state Manchukuo. After months of alternating combat and diplomacy a true civil war had returned to China in unrelenting intensity.¹⁵

The long awaited Soviet withdrawal was another trigger for the collapse of the cease fire. As had been their practice ever since their forces had set foot in Manchuria, when pressed by Chiang or T.V. Soong on their planned February withdrawal the Soviets had delayed, and delayed. Marshall's frustration on the subject boiled over in a detailed letter to Truman on February 9th. Revealing that the Soviets had "informally" demanded half future ownership of Manchurian industry, Marshall argued that the longer Red Army troops remained in Manchuria the more the Soviet Union would be seen as in violation of the Sino-Soviet Treaty. International pressure was mounting against the Soviets' continued occupation of Manchuria, and Marshall recommended that Truman inform Stalin that the United States would substantially decrease the number of Marines in China (something Truman had already decided to do, but not yet made public), as soon as Russian troops left China.¹⁶

Chiang's decision to mount a rapid northern offensive against the Communists had cost the generalissimo much goodwill with his American allies. Of this action Jay Taylor concludes that the Nationalist leader was overcome by a form of victory fever, writing, "Chiang realized that the support of Truman and Marshall for his takeover of

¹⁵ Tanner, *The Battle for Manchuria*, 123-124.

¹⁶ Marshall to Truman, 9 February 1946, Marshall Mission Papers, Box 1, TPL.

Manchuria, once strong and clear, had evaporated, but military successes had blinded him to the reality that he had foreseen the previous July and then again at the end of the year.”¹⁷ And despite their early victories in Manchuria the Nationalists’ position was precarious. Li Zongren, one of Chiang’s top generals, felt that the early Nationalist victories would prove short lived. Morale among the enlisted ranks was generally low, and despite the presence of American trained generals, leadership was poor. A unified, grand strategy among the Nationalist military leadership was completely absent. Instead of coordinating amongst themselves the army commanders in Manchuria each reported directly to Chiang, often filling their reports with recriminations against their fellow generals. As Li and Marshall predicted, Nationalist victories would prove ephemeral.¹⁸

In the Spring of 1946 Soviet occupation of Manchuria had outlived its usefulness. With the winter over and their mass scavenging complete Red Army units withdrew to the north and west in March and early April, leaving behind a shattered, bereft province stripped of nearly all industry but littered with weapons and ammunition. The withdrawal had two primary consequences. It opened the door for the Nationalists to finally commence their long anticipated conquest of Manchuria, yet the delay had also given considerable time to the Communists. An ancient axiom in war is that space can be regained if lost, but not time. The Soviet occupation had given the CCP the time it needed to consolidate its position in Manchuria. As Ronald Spector has concluded, “For the Communists, Manchuria had become the keystone of their power. They had been

¹⁷ Taylor, *The Generalissimo*, 351.

¹⁸ Reminiscences of Tsung Jen-Li, Interviewed by Te-kong Tong, Chinese Oral History Project, East Asian Institute, Columbia University, Chapter 43:10-11, COCU.

forced to yield many areas in central and northern China to the Nationalists, but in Manchuria, the Russian occupation, which delayed and obstructed the arrival of the Nationalist forces, had given the Communists the opportunity to expand.”¹⁹

Aside from these twin results a secondary consequence was renewed political pressure on President Harry Truman to withdraw all Marines from China. The gradual drawdown of the China Marines in 1946 was the result of a compromise among Army and Navy leaders. The American public overwhelmingly wanted its fathers, sons, and brothers home from overseas, but time and time again both Admiral Cooke and James Forrestal emphasized their importance in stabilizing China and providing a buffer against Soviet expansion in the Cold War. Marshall himself recognized the importance of the Marines’ presence in China but for political reasons continued to minimize any public mention of the Marines, as their presence was viewed negatively by the Communists and the subject of increasingly vitriolic propaganda. He continued supporting to order a phased withdrawal throughout the year. Faced with overwhelming public demand and Marshall’s insistence both Cooke and James Forrestal took the drawdown in stride but quietly emphasized the symbolic importance of the Marines remaining in China whenever an opportunity arose.

The various agreements negotiated by George Marshall in China have received the lion’s share of attention from historians. Far less attention has been focused on just what the Marines were doing during the roughly year-long Marshall mission, a time during which the Marine Corps was significantly reduced in size. At its peak of 485,053

¹⁹ Spector, *In the Ruins of Empire*, 224.

in August 1945 the Corps was reduced to just over 155,000 officers and men a year later.²⁰ By June 1947 the Marines had been further reduced to total of 92,000 personnel.²¹

As American diplomatic efforts continued throughout the year the Marines found themselves in the middle of an expanding civil war. The 1st and 6th Marines had become increasingly vulnerable, not officially part of a war but not quite a peaceful occupation force. This was the paradox that confronted Major General Keller Rockey as he sought to fulfill his objectives yet keep his men safe.

As the new year opened, the mission of the China Marines changed. By the end of 1945 more than 90,000 Nationalist troops had reached North China, giving Chiang sufficient manpower for the repatriation of Japanese military and civilian personnel. On January 14 the GMD assumed responsibility for getting the remaining 300,000 Japanese prisoners of war and civilians to Qingdao where they would be turned over to the Americans for embarkation and transport to Japan. Thus by February of 1946 the objectives General Albert Wedemeyer had identified six months earlier—the movement of Nationalist armies by sea, the repatriation of Japanese soldiers and civilians, and the stabilization of order—had largely been accomplished.²² What remained for the Marines

²⁰ Allan R. Millett, *Semper Fidelis: The History of the United States Marine Corps* (New York: MacMillan Publishing, 1980): 447.

²¹ <http://www.history.army.mil/books/AMH/AMH-24.htm>. Accessed August 17th, 2016.

²² The U.S. Navy transported the 13th, 52nd, 8th, and 62nd Nationalist from the ports of Kowloon and Haiphong in South China and Indochina to North China between October 24th and December 6th. III MEF War Diary, February 1946, RG 127, Box 72, NARA.

to do? And what role did they continue to play in the increasingly difficult American effort to bring peace?

During January the 1st Marine Division remained billeted in Qingdao while the 6th Division was spread over locations in Beijing, Tianjin, Tangku, and Qingwandao. Marines from both divisions continued guarding railways, key roads and bridges. Small scale incidents such as sniper attacks by Chinese Communists continued. On January 5th a fire of suspicious origins destroyed a Marine barracks at Nan Yuan airfield near Beijing, while a week later a company of Marines guarding a railway station came under fire from an unidentified group of men. Neither incident resulted in any casualties, but they served as a reminder of the tenuous nature of the cease-fire agreement established in January.²³

1st Division Marines continued guarding of coal trains running from the Kailan mines around Tangshan to Tianjin where the fuel was transported by ship to Shanghai and Guangzhou. This had been a priority since October when Chiang had written to President Truman that the lack of coal in the southern cities would be disastrous during the coming winter, warning that, “No coal is available for domestic use. Unless coal can be supplied, tragic consequences will result.”²⁴ Since November the Kailan coal mines had been producing 5,000 tons of coal per day and four daily trains carrying the coal to Qingwandao had been guarded by Marine detachments. Commercial shipping had been

²³ III MEF War Diary, January 1946, RG 127, Box 72, NARA.

²⁴ Chiang Kai-shek to Harry Truman, 18 October 1945, Truman Naval Aide Files, Box 7, TPL.

allocated by General Wedemeyer to transport the coal to Shanghai, and this system continued throughout the long winter.²⁵

Despite their longing for home many of the Marines enjoyed their days and nights in China. Some gathered large caches of cheap wares after shopping in Beijing, while other brought back more persistent souvenirs. Numerous prostitutes, especially young Chinese girls who had been sold by their families due to their inability to feed them, plied their trade in Qingdao, and venereal diseases were rampant. A February 1946 health report listed the number of infected Marines in the Tianjin area (1st Marine Division), including the 5th and 7th Marine Regiments and the 1st Air Wing, as 308, for an annual rate of 225 per 1000. The reduced 6th Division in Qingdao fared somewhat better, with a rate of 116 per 1000. The report noted that rates had come down since a peak in December, due to a sustained “prophylaxis campaign.”²⁶

By the end of 1945, time in China had lost its appeal to many Marines and going home was foremost on their minds. The point system, a complex computation of service time, combat duty and awards, ensured that most of the III MEF Marines would be sent home within a few months. But for many of the veterans of Okinawa the day could not come soon enough. Eugene Sledge, who would finally ship home to Alabama in February 1946, recalled a rare moment when even the legendary discipline of the 1st Marine Division began to fray. In early January reports circulated in Sledge’s 5th Regiment that noncombat personnel were being shipped home before combat veterans.

²⁵ Report on Coal Supply, 3 November 1945, RG 127, Box 17, NARA.

²⁶ Health of Command III Amphibious Corps for the Month of February 1946, March 6, 1946, RG 127, Box 72, NARA.

To dispel such rumors, a Marine major briefed the men on the situation in North China and when they would be sent home. After explaining that their departure would be strictly according to the point system, some of the 5th Marines present asked about the rumors regarding non-combat personnel and angrily protested that this was unfair and that as combat veterans they should have priority. The major warned the young enlisted Marines that they were coming dangerously close to insubordination, but that they would also be sent home as soon as possible. The frustrated Marines left and as Sledge described it, “beat their gums elsewhere.”²⁷

Aside from their operational duties the III MEF Marines spent much of their energies during the first half of 1946 reorganizing. The 6th Marine Division sent most its personnel home by January 1946 and was deactivated on March 31. By early June the fewer than 25,000 personnel remaining in China became the newly established Marine Forces, China. Headquartered in Qingdao, the new command included the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing and the reinforced 1st Marine Division.²⁸ Fresh arrivals from the United States also complicated matters. By early 1946 most of the 1st Division Marines who had seen action in Okinawa had accumulated enough points to return home, and, with their departure, nearly one-quarter of all Marines in the division were fresh from boot camp or commissioning programs. The 6th Division also received a similar number of green recruits. General Keller Rockey and other senior Marines in China recognized the need for a thorough training plan for the new Marines. On February 1st a comprehensive,

²⁷ Sledge, *China Marine*, 112-113.

²⁸ Henry Shaw, “The United States Marines in North China, 1945-1949,” 10-11.

six-month training program was begun that included sessions on Chinese culture and customs, hygiene, and the standard drill and rifle practice.²⁹ Many of the veteran Marines resented the inexperienced but often arrogant new officers and NCO's who arrived in China, but hid their disgust until finally shipped home.³⁰

Although ground operations were the mainstay of the China Marines, the 1st Marine Air Wing played an important, if secondary role in China. Writing to General Alexander Vandegrift, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Rockey listed the wing's accomplishments: over 7,500 sorties and 14,000 hours flown, along with the transport of over 2 million pounds of mail and cargo and 17,000 passengers between October 1945 and June 1946.³¹ Most of these flights went by unnoticed by the Chinese population, but on other occasions this was not the case. A tragic incident took place in the spring of 1946 when a Marine TBF Avenger on patrol suffered engine failure, and was forced to crash land on an open field. To the pilot's horror he saw an elderly Chinese woman and her granddaughter directly in his path, and without engine power he was helpless to change course. At the last second the grandmother pushed the child out of the way, but for some reason she ran directly in front of the aircraft, and was decapitated by the aircraft's wing. The pilot's commanding officer paid for the funeral expenses out of his own pocket.³²

²⁹ Replacement Training, Training Order 1-46, 17 January 1946, RG 127, Box 72, NARA.

³⁰ Sledge, *China Marine*, 101-102.

³¹ Special Report on III Amphibious Corps by First Marine Aircraft Wing in North China, 7 June 1946, RG 127, Box 17, NARA.

³² Thomas G. Ennis Oral History, Marine Corps Oral History Project, Columbia University, 67.

When the Marines arrived in North China in the fall of 1945 they were greeted as liberating heroes. Yet less than a year later many Chinese no longer viewed them that way. Incidents such as the grandmother's death fueled a growing divide between the Chinese civilian population and the Marines. Patience with the Marines' drunkenness and habitual patronization of prostitutes had grown thin in Beijing and Tianjin, and by early 1947 some polls conducted by local newspapers indicated overwhelming support for withdrawal. The behavior of the Americans reminded many older Chinese of the days of extraterritoriality when foreigners could do as they pleased. As the United States would discover in the decades to come, a fuzzy, amorphous line exists between the perception of foreign troops as being an army of liberation and that of occupation.³³

The growing distrust of the Marines was mirrored by the worsening political and military situation. Many outside observers viewed the situation as spiraling downwards. One American reporter in China observed that the optimism felt in previous months had faded, writing, "Most of the high hopes for China's unity and peace that people here in Beijing felt in January and February have collapsed. Most of the really extraordinary agreements that were reached in the winter months have been undermined."³⁴ As inflation wrecked the Chinese economy, hardships among the Chinese population worsened. After weeks of increasingly difficult negotiations General Marshall paused on May 30th to pay respects at the small Foreign Cemetery at Nanjing. In an impassioned Memorial Day speech he recalled the sacrifice of so many Chinese and American lives

³³ Robert Shaffer, "A Rape in Beijing, December 1946: GI's, Nationalist Protest, and U.S. Foreign Policy," *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 69, No. 1 (February 2000): 36.

³⁴ Hersey, *Letter from Peiping*, 86.

in the victory over Japan. He also spoke of his increasingly difficult efforts to bring reconciliation to China. He made no mention of the Marines, but focused on America's broader effort with these words: "Here, today, in China we are trying to help, to be of genuine unselfish assistance, without price or promise. We are doing our best to halt the development of one of the tragic situations of history, to terminate violent civil strife among a people who have already endured eight long years of war, and on whose soil the great war started. It seems the irony of fate that the people who have endured the longest should see peace restored to the rest of the world while they themselves continue to suffer and starve in war-ridden surroundings and who now tremble on the verge of an even great calamity. This must not be."³⁵

June brought many changes to the U.S. diplomatic effort in China. During the first week of the month George Marshall had negotiated a new and fragile truce that went into effect on June 7th and would expire on the 29th.³⁶ Despite this development, however, matters had become worse. Negotiations had become all but impossible, and the general confided to Truman that, "at the present moment we have reached an impasse." The upswing of fighting in Jehol Province and the level of distrust between the Nationalists and Communists was higher than ever.³⁷ Still, Marshall hoped that a settlement was possible. The overworked general had long considered adding an experienced ambassador to assist in the conduct of negotiations. For several months

³⁵ George C. Marshall, Memorial Day Speech at Foreign Cemetery, Nanjing, May 30th, 1946, Marshall Papers, Box 123, GCMRL.

³⁶ Cox, "U.S. Naval Strategy and Foreign Policy in China," 59.

³⁷ Marshall to Truman, 17 June 1946, RG 218, Box 2, NARA.

General Albert Wedemeyer had been considered the top candidate for the position. Since December the younger general had overseen the drawdown of U.S. Army personnel in China and had assisted Marshall in his mediation efforts, but after Patrick Hurley's resignation back on November 27th, 1945 Wedemeyer's name was mentioned in Washington as a possible replacement. Despite being an unorthodox choice, Marshall trusted Wedemeyer's experience and judgment on China. Although he made it clear to Marshall that he preferred to stay in the Army, Wedemeyer agreed to the possibility of such a post as a matter of duty. As he was due for leave Marshall urged him to return home and discuss the matter with his family.³⁸

Although he publicly supported Marshall at the time, privately Wedemeyer had considerable doubts about Marshall's policies and plans for China. The general and protégé of Marshall would never admit it until later in life, but Wedemeyer had largely moved into the camp of Admiral Cooke and James Forrestal, that of fierce opposition to world communism and the belief that the CCP received its orders from Moscow. In his memoirs Wedemeyer states that by the middle of 1946 he had largely fallen out with George Marshall's view, recalling that, "Although General Marshall had recommended my appointment as Ambassador to China, I felt certain that his concept of what American policy should be was not mine. As with Pat Hurley the year before, I knew that there was no possibility of an accommodation between the Nationalists and the Chinese Communists controlled by the Kremlin."³⁹ But for the time being Wedemeyer

³⁸ Wedemeyer, *Wedemeyer Reports!*, 364-365.

³⁹ Wedemeyer, *Wedemeyer Reports!*, 365.

largely kept his concerns to himself, until he would be later called upon to give a frank and honest assessment of the situation in China, an assessment that when received the Truman Administration chose to hide from the public.

Wedemeyer returned to the United States in April, and after a few weeks recovering from sinus surgery was approached again about the possibility of resigning from the Army to become the new U.S. ambassador to China.⁴⁰ When the offer of the position to Wedemeyer became known, Mao and Zhou Enlai objected to someone so close to Chiang Kai-shek becoming the new American ambassador, and as a concession Marshall was forced to drop the idea. Publicly Wedemeyer had been more than happy to serve Marshall again, and only regretted that he had already purchased a large selection of expensive business suits for his potential new post.⁴¹ Privately, however, Wedemeyer was less concerned about his clothing expenses than that the CCP could exercise a veto over whom the United States chose as its next ambassador.⁴²

In his biography of Wedemeyer, John McLaughlin argues that whatever his disagreements with the younger general, “Marshall’s military training dictated that the mission was more important than any individual. It is unlikely it was based on any personal animosity towards Wedemeyer.”⁴³ Yet the political gulf between the two men remained. Withdrawal of the offer made clear that Marshall would abandon a man who had once worked for him and worn the same uniform, if it helped smooth over relations

⁴⁰ Wedemeyer to Marshall, 25 April 1946, Wedemeyer Papers, Box 1, GCMRL.

⁴¹ Wedemeyer to Marshall, 12 July 1946, Wedemeyer Papers, Box 1, GCMRL.

⁴² Wedemeyer, *Wedemeyer Reports!*, 366-367.

⁴³ John J. McLaughlin, *General Albert C. Wedemeyer: America’s Unsung Strategist in World War II* (Havertown, PA: Casemate Publishers, 2012): 154.

with the Communists. Marshall would later write to Wedemeyer that he regretted how things had turned out and expressed his sincere apologies. His letter closed, “Each day out there is a little more difficult than the last one, but we are still in the ring and hopeful.”⁴⁴ In his memoirs Wedemeyer had harsh words for Marshall on the matter. Angry at his superior caving into Communist pressure, Wedemeyer argued that in the course of his efforts in China Marshall believed too much in his own power, and consequently, “thought he could accomplish the impossible. Thus he became an easy prey to crypto-Communists, or Communist-sympathizing sycophants, who played on his vanity to accomplish their own ends.” As Wedemeyer had warned him back in December 1945, the Nationalists and Communists were a combination that simply would not mix.⁴⁵

In place of Wedemeyer, Marshall sought an individual who he believed would be accepted by both sides. On July 4th, 1946, Dr. John Leighton Stuart was announced as the new U.S. ambassador to China. The son of American missionaries, Stuart had spent most of his life in his beloved China and was a well-respected authority on Asia as well as a scholar and administrator. In 1919 he became president of Yenching University near Beijing, and spent most of the war under Japanese house arrest.⁴⁶ Due to his age (he was 70 in 1946) and health concerns Stuart initially expressed reservations about serving as ambassador, but on reflection agreed to a year’s service. In his memoirs Stuart explained

⁴⁴ Marshall to Wedemeyer July 24th, 1946, *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, 635-636. Note: General Wedemeyer was later placed in command of the Second Army, headquartered at Fort Meade, Maryland.

⁴⁵ Wedemeyer, *Wedemeyer Reports!*, 370.

⁴⁶ Bland and Stevens, eds., *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, 587.

that “I finally told [Marshall], however, that his task was so difficult and so significant that anyone he wanted to help him should be willing to do so and that I would leave it with him.” Stuart was unanimously approved by the U.S. Senate shortly thereafter.⁴⁷

Like Marshall, Stuart realized the thankless role he would play in an all but impossible task. Yet despite his age he took up his new post with powerful energy. Throughout the long summer of 1946 he felt reconciliation between the two parties might be possible, and that a lasting peace might be within reach. But then the optimism collapsed. In Stuart’s view both sides were to blame, writing that, “But in each the suspicions or fears of one side or the other as well as the conflicting aims or ideologies were the chief obstructions. Whatever their motives the evidence seemed to me convincing that the Communists wanted the coalition but only on their terms.”⁴⁸ Marshall and Stuart worked well together, but by early July they were faced with harsh obduracy on both sides, coupled with a vicious Communist propaganda campaign directed against the United States.

Combat, Drawdown, and Dishonor: July–December 1946

For the Marines in China the month of July became the deadliest of the year. Although sniper attacks and harassment from the Communists were commonplace throughout the first half of 1946, two major incidents in July were by far the most serious. The first was precipitated by a desire to stay cool in the midst of a long, hot

⁴⁷ John Leighton Stuart, *Fifty Years in China* (New York: Random House, 1954): 165-166

⁴⁸ Stuart, *Fifty Years in China*, 168.

summer. On July 13th, with daily temperatures often as high as 92 degrees Fahrenheit,⁴⁹ Sergeant John J. Herndon of the 1st Marine Division requested permission to assemble a working party to go to the nearby village of Hsi Ho Nan and purchase blocks of ice. Marines had done this in the past so his commanding officer, 2nd Lieutenant Daryl McKinney, approved the request, and Herndon gathered a squad of seven Marines for the work detail. Also accompanying them was a Chinese boy who acted as an interpreter.⁵⁰

The Marines were not especially concerned about encountering any Communists, as none had been reported in Hsi Ho Nan the entire summer. As a precaution they were armed with rifles and carbines and ordered to return well before sunset. Lieutenant McKinney also ordered Herndon to exercise caution and warned him to be wary of any Communist soldiers he might encounter. After a two-mile drive in the detachment jeep, the party arrived at the ice house without incident, paid for more than a hundred pounds of ice, and began loading it into their trailer. Two of the Marines were stationed as lookouts while the remainder worked loading the ice. Little to no trouble was expected.⁵¹

The situation quickly changed a few minutes later when four unidentified Chinese began walking towards the Marines. Upon being challenged the four were immediately joined by more than eighty other Chinese wearing dark blue uniforms and carrying Japanese Ariska rifles. The Chinese soon rushed toward the Marines firing

⁴⁹ G-2 Periodic Report, First Marine Division, 18-22 JUL 1946, Record Group 127, Records of the United States Marine Corps, 1775-1981, Box 17, NARA.

⁵⁰ "Report of Incident Involving Capture Seven (7) Marines, 13 July 1946," 22 July 1946, Seventh Fleet Papers, Post 1946 Command File, Seventh Fleet Command Narratives, 1946-1948, Box 713, NHHC.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 2

several warning shots over their heads. With no other option, Sergeant Herndon ordered the detail to surrender. Seven of the Marines were forced by their new captors to march four to five miles. A single Marine, Private First Class John Mahoney, avoided capture along with the Chinese boy interpreter by hiding inside the ice house, which the Communists failed to search. After the Communists departed fifteen minutes later Mahoney ran back to the Marine encampment at Liu Shiu Leng and informed Lieutenant McKinney of the situation.⁵² A twenty-man patrol immediately set out for the ice house where they found only the jeep and trailer. Further searches that included CNA (Chinese Nationalist Army) troops also failed to find any trace of the Marines.⁵³ Extensive ground and air patrols conducted over the next few days were also fruitless.⁵⁴

For the next ten days the location and condition of the seven Marines remained uncertain. U.S. intelligence reports indicated that the Marines were probably alive and well in Communist hands and being held in the vicinity of Tsun Hua, a city northwest of Beidaihe.⁵⁵ Other unconfirmed reports had them being moved south. General Rockey and Admiral Cooke concurred that the only way to get the men back was through negotiations, and a series of meetings were held during the next week between representatives from the Communists, Nationalists, and Marines. At a news conference held on July 20th, the CCP representative unleashed a diatribe of grievances against the Marines, most notably their support of the Nationalists and their guarding of key

⁵² "Statement of John Mahoney," 22 July 1946, Seventh Fleet Papers, Post 1946 Command File, Seventh Fleet Command Narratives, 1946-1948, Box 713, NHHC.

⁵³ Statement of 2nd Lt Daryl L. McKinney, Ibid.

⁵⁴ "Brief Outline of Patrol Operations by 7th Marines and Air Searches," Ibid.

⁵⁵ G-2 Periodic Report, First Marine Division, 18-22 JUL 1946, RG 127, Box 17, NARA.

railways and bridges. He did reveal that the missing Marines were safe. After additional discussions with the Communists the Marines were finally freed on July 24th. They reported that other than being bombarded with constant Marxist-Leninist propaganda they were treated well.⁵⁶ The negotiations revealed that the capture of the Marines had been orchestrated by the local communist commander, and had not been sanctioned by senior CCP officials.⁵⁷

Far more lethal was the “Anping incident” that occurred on July 29th when a convoy of was attacked on the road from Tianjin to Beijing. Carrying United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) supplies, the convoy consisted of six supply trucks, five jeeps, and two Army staff cars manned by 42 enlisted Marines under the command of Lieutenant Douglas A. Cowin.⁵⁸ Near the village of Anping the convoy halted at a roadblock where it was attacked by approximately one hundred unidentified men wearing dark blue uniforms. Though caught by surprise the Marines responded with highly accurate rifle and mortar fire, and for the next four hours defended the convoy at the cost of three Marines, including the convoy commander, killed and eleven wounded. The unidentified Chinese eventually withdrew, leaving behind fifteen corpses.⁵⁹ The Marines then loaded their dead and wounded into the trucks and drove at top speed to Beijing, where another Marine later died of his wounds.⁶⁰ An air-supported relief

⁵⁶ “Conduct of Negotiations Leading to Release of Marines,” 31 July, 1946, Seventh Fleet Papers, Post 1946 Command File, Seventh Fleet Command Narratives, 1946-1948, Box 713, NHHHC.

⁵⁷ “Capture and Itinerary of Marines,” Ibid.

⁵⁸ “Deaths Rise in Marine Ambush,” July 31st, 1946, *New York Times*, 6.

⁵⁹ “Anping Incident,” date unknown, Cooke Papers, Box 17, CHIS.

⁶⁰ “Deaths Rise in Marine Ambush,” July 31st, 1946, *New York Times*, 6

column was quickly mustered and moved out from Tianjin to assist and hunt down the Communists but they arrived too late to be of any use.⁶¹

In contrast to the capture of the seven Marines and the sporadic sniper attacks the previous fall, the “Battle of Anping” was, from the American perspective, a deliberate and unprovoked ambush by Communist soldiers on a Marine force engaged in noncombatant humanitarian operations. The incident provoked considerable interest in the United States, including an article in *Time* magazine. The growing call for all Marines to be withdrawn from China intensified after Anping. Two U.S. Senators, Allen Ellender (D-LA) and Hugh Butler (R-NE) had just returned from a trip to Asia and saw the situation in darkly pessimistic tones. Ellender described China as “hopeless” and the nation a complex patchwork of warring factions unready for any form of stable democracy. Butler agreed, adding that, “we are not at war with China or any faction there and I wish someone could explain why our troops are there.”⁶²

In the controversial aftermath of the attack, Zhou Enlai told Marshall that the Marines themselves were largely to blame, as they should not have been on the road to Beijing in the first place. Admiral Cooke took the lead in defending the Marines from Zhou and other Communist leaders. At a press conference in Shanghai on August 5th, Cooke laid out his case: the Marines were operating lawfully to transport UNRRA supplies and were not provoking the Communists in any way. Instead they were deliberately attacked. Cooke described the incident in detail, providing maps and

⁶¹ Henry Shaw, “The United States Marines in North China,” 13.

⁶² “Marines to Remain on China Stations, Washington Says,” August 5th, 1946, *New York Times*.

diagrams of the tactical situation, the roadblock, and the ambush. Responding to the concerns from Ellender and Butler he dismissed any suggestions that the Marines be withdrawn from China, contending that they were in China at the authorization of both Congress and the president, and that their presence remained important for stability.⁶³

If possible, the Anping incident put Marshall in an even more difficult position and strained his relationship with Cooke. The dead Marines were under Seventh Fleet command, and though subordinate to Marshall by rank Cooke urged the general to press Zhou and the Communists for a formal apology. Consumed with frustration Marshall informed Cooke that he felt he had no choice but to defer any such demand, in light of his continuing efforts to negotiate. In an August 12th letter Marshall sympathized with Cooke's position but said that asking Zhou for an apology would lead the Communists to break off negotiations. Marshall wrote that, "Delicacy and embarrassment of situation for me is this: [Nationalist] government profits by delay and growing antagonism between Americans and Communists. Rupture would completely defeat my effort to secure government agreement for cessation of hostilities and action to terminate present suppression of freedom of press and speech and positive steps for reorganization of present arbitrary and concentrated authority of Guomindang Party." He also pointed out that, if provoked by a request for an apology, the Communists would likely withdraw from the Executive Headquarters. Demanding an apology could also complicate diplomacy with the Soviets. He did, however, authorize Cooke to speak with the press

⁶³ Tillman Durdin, "For Stable Conditions," *New York Times*, August 5, 1946.

on the Anping incident if he so choose.⁶⁴ Though not the final straw, the aftermath of American deaths at the hands of the Communists served to push Marshall further away from belief in the possibility of a negotiated settlement.

Further problems developed when on August 12th a small band of Communist Chinese attacked a key ammunition dump at Hsin Ho.⁶⁵ No deaths or casualties resulted, but, combined with the incident at Anping, nearly pushed Marshall into the same camp as Cooke and Forrestal. Writing to Truman on the admiral's strongly worded request for an apology, Marshall said that he was tempted to do so himself, but such an act would effectively end his mediation efforts and destroy the Executive Headquarters.⁶⁶ Marshall wrote to Truman again on August 30th that the situation continued to worsen, stating that, "The general situation is this: both sides claim the other side is leading and pressing the fighting. Both claim the negotiations are being utilized by the other side to gain time for favorable military operations." He continued by noting the marked increase in communist anti-Nationalist efforts, both direct and indirect: "The communists have practically reached the conclusion that the government does not intend to settle matters peaceably and is deliberately pursuing a policy of force. Therefore they are striking as heavy military blows as possible to discourage the government against a policy of force. Also they are seeking by intense propaganda and

⁶⁴ Marshall to Cooke, August 12th, 1946, Bland, ed. *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, vol. 5: *The Finest Soldier*, 653-654.

⁶⁵ Unpublished Narrative History of Seventh Fleet and Western Forces, Pacific 1946-1948, Seventh Fleet Papers, Box 713, NHHC, 11-12.

⁶⁶ Marshall to Truman, August 16th, 1946, Marshall Mission, Box 1, GCMRL

any other means available to terminate all American assistance to the Government which they claim is making possible the latter's military effort.”⁶⁷

After the Anping incident reductions in the number of Marines in China continued. What remained of the 4th Marines were ordered to return to the United States and Marine forces in Qingdao reduced to a reinforced infantry battalion. Between August and September the Nationalists assumed responsibility for guarding the coal fields at Tangshan and rail lines between Beijing and Qingwandao.⁶⁸ Nearly all 1st Division Marines were withdrawn from outlying areas until, by the end of September, all Marines were concentrated in Beijing, Tianjin, and Qingdao. General Keller Rockey, who had led the III MEF since its landing in September 1945, left China on September 18th. Although Forrestal made some protests about the manner of the withdrawals he largely acquiesced to Marshall's directives. Despite these withdrawals the Marines were still exposed to Communists attacks, as on the night of October 3rd when a small force of Communist soldiers attacked the Hsin Ho ammunition dump a second time to steal munitions. One Marine from the 5th Regiment, 1st Division was wounded, but the attack yielded little for the Communists, who lost one soldier killed and got away with very little ammunition.⁶⁹

The same month Marshall ran out of patience. Like so many others who went to China to achieve an objective, the country and its contradictions defeated him. After a series of discussions with Chiang on the current fighting in Manchuria and the failures of

⁶⁷ Marshall to Truman, August 30th, 1946, RG 218, Box 2, NARA.

⁶⁸ Henry Shaw, "The United States Marines in North China," 14.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 14-15.

the most recent round of negotiations within the Executive Headquarters, Marshall asked Truman to be recalled.⁷⁰ He remained in China until the end of the year, however, and at his final meeting with Chiang in late December the generalissimo praised Marshall's efforts and said that he hoped that in his future capacity Marshall would direct his efforts towards better relations with a China under his leadership. The departing general had a very different set of recommendations for Truman, however. Marshall informed Truman that he believed any further attempts to mediate an end to the civil war in China were doomed to fail and urged the President to withdraw all remaining Marines from Beijing and Tianjin. He also predicted that the Communists had no intention of restarting negotiations with the Nationalists and that the ultimate outcome of the civil war would be decided on the battlefield.⁷¹

Attempting to put an *annus horribilis* of foreign policy disasters in Europe, Asia, and at home behind him, Truman forced the overly independent Secretary of State James Byrnes to resign and appointed Marshall to replace him.⁷² A contemporary assessment of Marshall's mission to China concluded that, "For the year 1946, [Marshall was] the central figure of all Chinese politics. Parties, programs, proposals – all these centered around his name and personality. His fairness, judgment, and experience kept alive the illusion of hope long after the practical basis for settlement disappeared."⁷³

⁷⁰ Marshall to Truman, 10 October 1946, RG 218, Box 2, NARA.

⁷¹ Marshall to Truman, 28 December 1946, Marshall Mission Files, Box 1, GCMRL.

⁷² Robert J. Donovan, *Conflict and Crisis*, 266-267.

⁷³ Paul M. A. Linebarger, "The Post-War Politics of China," *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 9, No. 4 (November 1947): 532.

Almost a year to the day after he had issued his first statement on American policy in China, Harry Truman announced to the world that despite the great disappointment of the past year, the United States was not quite finished in China. After recounting the great difficulties of Japanese repatriation, the early successes of Marshall's mediation, and the repeated breakdowns of the cease fire in Manchuria, Truman spoke in measured but grateful tones about the Marines in China. Though never referring to the Marines by name, the president stated that the American military had performed vital tasks in China during the past fifteen months, and, their mission complete, that they would be withdrawn from China as quickly as logistically possible. Almost, but not quite washing his hands of the matter, Truman concluded, "It is a matter of deep regret that China has not yet been able to achieve unity by peaceful methods." Reiterating that China was a sovereign nation, Truman urged both Chiang and Mao to settle their differences peacefully

As the winter closed in the Marines received another hammer blow. This one, however, was self-inflicted. On Christmas Eve two U.S. Marines were arrested in Beijing for the rape of a Chinese girl. Nineteen-year old university student Shen Chong was walking alone through the diplomatic quarter at night when two Marines, Corporal William Pierson and Private Warren Pritchard, assaulted her. Apparently drunk, the Marines dragged the girl to a deserted polo field nearby where Pierson raped her. Afterwards Pierson was detained by a Sino-American police patrol and Shen taken in for

questioning and medical tests.⁷⁴ News of the assault spread rapidly through Beijing and by the morning of December 26th five local newspapers carried stories about the assault.⁷⁵

Although sexual assaults by U.S. military personnel in Asia were nothing new, this act aroused a fury of protest in North China. Thousands of students in Beijing demonstrated against the presence of the Marines and the Executive Headquarters. On January 2nd, 1947 over a thousand students demonstrated at the U.S. embassy. One student leader delivered a letter to Ambassador Stuart demanding that the Marines involved in the rape be punished immediately, an indemnity be paid to Shen Chong and her family, and all U.S. military personnel be withdrawn from China.⁷⁶ Although a court martial soon convicted Corporal Pierson and sentenced him to fifteen years in prison, the verdict was overturned by the Navy Judge Advocate General in July and quietly approved by James Forrestal in August. No explanation for this was ever provided. In his study of the rape case historian Robert Shaffer argues that, “The scheduling of the case before an American military court rather than a Chinese court, as well as U.S. efforts to limit the attendance of Chinese reporters at the court martial, revived painful memories of the ‘extraterritoriality’ that the imperialist powers had long imposed on China and that the United States had only recently renounced.”⁷⁷ The rape and

⁷⁴ Robert Shaffer, “A Rape in Beijing, December 1946: GI’s, Nationalist Protest, and U.S. Foreign Policy,” *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 69, No. 1 (February 2000): 36.

⁷⁵ Memorandum, Consul General at Peiping to the Secretary of State, 29 December 1946, *FRUS*, Vol. VII, *The Far East: China*, 1.

⁷⁶ Memorandum, Stuart to Marshall, 2 January 1947, Vol. VII, *The Far East: China*, *FRUS*.

⁷⁷ Shaffer, “A Rape in Beijing,” 39.

subsequent court martial undermined any goodwill the Chinese population had for the United States, and became a powerful propaganda weapon for the Communists in the new year.

1947: Drawdown and Deadlock

In the aftermath of the rape in Beijing the remaining Marines in China were largely forgotten by the outside world. The major American newspapers that had written about their mission since September of 1945 ignored their reduced role. Their growing isolation and dwindling numbers made them less of a story. Yet back in Washington the divide between U.S. Navy leadership and that of the Army and State Department was only growing wider. After Marshall's departure from China and elevation to Secretary of State his new department became the primary opponent to Forrestal and Cooke's efforts to keep the Navy and Marines in China.

Recognizing the need to improve relations with the Chinese, the 1st Marine Division published a "Welcome Aboard" pamphlet designed to introduce newly arriving Marines to basic information about Chinese culture and politics. First distributed in December 1946, the thirty-page pamphlet opened with a drily written history of China since 1900 that focused on the Boxer Rebellion, the Chinese Revolution, and the rise of Chiang Kai-shek. The pamphlet was very sympathetic towards the Nationalists and their struggles since the 1920s, but also remarkably frank in its treatment of the Communists. The section on the CCP pointed out the strengths of its ideology and warning readers

that, “Chinese communism has an attraction for the masses; if democracy is to win in China it must be more attractive.”⁷⁸

A typical Marine in Qingdao reading these words in early 1947 had to wonder why he and his fellow leathernecks were still in China. The military situation there was growing worse and the diplomatic efforts to heal the fractured country had failed. Only one year earlier more than 50,000 Marines had labored to complete a series of complex and pragmatic tasks made necessary by victory in history’s greatest war. Now reduced to about one-third of their previous number, few of the remaining Marines in China likely felt that their presence was not apt to have any effect on China. But despite the deteriorating situation the Marines were not finished yet. More than two years would pass before their eventual departure from China.

Perhaps because of the absence of George Marshall, Admiral Cooke became bolder in his efforts to emphasize the importance of the Navy and Marines’ role in China and save what was left of China from falling into the Soviet camp. Russian aggression in Greece and Turkey made Cooke even more strident in his anti-communist views. During a February 1947 visit to the new U.S. Embassy in Nanjing, Cooke informed Ambassador Stuart that he desired to increase the number of Marines in Qingdao from 1,900 to up to 4,800. He also expressed the need to “shine the spotlight” on the naval training center at Qingdao, largely as a way to emphasize the Navy’s role in China and improve the morale of Chinese recruits. Cooke also indicated that he hoped Chiang

⁷⁸ Intelligence Memorandum #54, Orientation Pamphlet for Intelligence Personnel, First Marine Division, Reinforced, 30 December 1946, RG 127, Box 21, NARA.

would be able to inspect the training center in the near future. Both proposals were met with cold apprehension by Stuart. In a letter to Marshall, Stuart wrote that Cooke's proposals would serve no useful purpose and emphasized that the naval training center should be kept in the background, writing, "Embassy regards as undesirable publicity for the activities of AAG [Army Advisory Group] and NAG [Navy Advisory Group] which operate on a limited, informal, and tenuous basis."⁷⁹ He feared that any increase in the size of the Marine force in Qingdao would only reinforce the Communist perception that the U.S. was building a permanent base on Chinese soil. Marshall agreed, and wrote to Forrestal of his concerns.⁸⁰ The new Secretary of State reminded Forrestal that the American people, in his words, "had been led to believe that, with the exception of a small detachment at Tsingtao, we are withdrawing our Marines from China."⁸¹

During the first half of 1947 an increasingly overworked James Forrestal focused his attention on defense unification. After extensive discussions, he and Secretary of War Robert Patterson issued a joint statement that contained eight basic principles. Known as the Forrestal-Patterson Agreement, the document laid the foundation for the National Security Act of 1947. Among other provisions, the act provided for an "independent" Air Force and made the service secretaries subordinate to the new cabinet-level Secretary of Defense. After a long debate the Navy retained control of Marine Corps as well as naval aviation.⁸² President Truman appointed Forrestal the first

⁷⁹ Telegram, Stuart to Marshall, 3 February 1947, *FRUS*, Vol. VII, *China 1947*, 944-945.

⁸⁰ Telegram, Marshall to Stuart, 5 February 1947, *Ibid*, 945.

⁸¹ Memorandum, Marshall to Forrestal, 5 February 1947, *Ibid*, 945.

⁸² Arnold A. Offner, *Another Such Victory: President Truman and the Cold War, 1945-1953* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002): 189-190.

Secretary of Defense by Truman and the former Secretary of the Navy assumed the office on September 17th, 1947.⁸³ Despite his increased workload, Forrestal maintained a keen interest in China, and continued to support Cooke's efforts to publicize the Navy and Marines' role.

In February a series of meetings held in Washington demonstrated that the Navy and State Department, though able to come to terms on some aspects of China policy, remained far apart on other issues. When unable to reach agreement on policy or how to deal with a specific problem, those in attendance often simply delayed making a decision. As the number of issues dealt with in this way piled up, tensions between the services and the State Department multiplied.

In a February 12th meeting with Forrestal and Patterson, Marshall outlined the State Department's new policy on China: the United States would continue to press for reconciliation between the Nationalists and Communists, maintain a "sympathetic" relationship with Chiang's government, and maintain the AAG and NAG [Army and Navy Advisory Groups], but withhold outright military aid.⁸⁴ Both service secretaries voiced strong concern over Marshall's proposals. Patterson concurred with most of what Marshall proposed but questioned providing economic aid to the Nationalists while withholding military assistance since he believed that the Communists would not distinguish between the two.⁸⁵ Forrestal disagreed even more stridently and requested

⁸³ Gordon Keiser, *The U.S. Marine Corps and Defense Unification, 1944-1947* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1982): 70-71.

⁸⁴ Memorandum on U.S. Policy to China, Marshall to Forrestal, 11 February 1947, Navy Secretary Files, Box 151, TPL.

⁸⁵ Robert Patterson to Marshall, February 12th, 1947, *Ibid.*

that Marshall at the very least should confer with Admiral Cooke and Rear Admiral Stuart Murray in person, to which the Secretary of State agreed.⁸⁶

A far larger conference on February 20th finally brought all the principal American policymakers on China together in one room. Defense Secretary Forrestal and State Department Secretary Marshall co-chaired the meeting. Admirals Cooke and Nimitz, and future Chief of Naval Operations Vice Admiral Forrest P. Sherman, and Captain Robert Dennison, the future naval aide to President Truman represented the Navy. Marshall and John Carter Vincent, the career diplomat and China expert whom Patrick Hurley had so excoriated upon his resignation, represented the State Department. After a series of heated discussions compromises were agreed to on several issues. Supported by Vincent, Marshall agreed to the transfer to the Nationalists of 271 surplus ships and to funding for an enlarged Naval Advisory Group to China. However much to Cooke's chagrin Marshall rejected the Navy's proposals for a larger Marine presence in China and the expansion of naval support services in Qingdao. The general also limited to 3,500 the number of Marines could be stationed in China and argued that any expansion of naval port facilities for the fleet would send the wrong message to all sides. Disappointed, both Cooke and Forrestal continued to look for other ways to emphasize the Navy and Marine Corps' presence in China.⁸⁷

The situation in China remained relatively calm for the next month. There were no major attacks on the Marines while their gradual withdrawal from Beijing and Tianjin

⁸⁶ Cox, "U.S. Naval Strategy and Policy in China," 68-69.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

continued. But the Nationalist military, though appearing strong on paper, was growing more fragile every week. By again trading space for time, including their capital at Yanan which was captured in March 1947, Mao's forces strained Nationalist resources to the breaking point.⁸⁸ Yet before the tide turned in the civil war, the 1st Division Marines again found themselves in combat. During the first week of April the Communists launched a third and final brazen attack on the 1st Division Marines, again targeting the large ammunition dump at Hsin Ho near Tangku. This attack revealed much about the Marine's vulnerabilities and the improved capabilities of the Chinese Communists.

After the previous two assaults on the Hsin Ho ammunition dump defenses were strengthened to include a triangle shaped perimeter and regular patrols. Despite these improvements, however the depot was not prepared for the major assault launched against it after midnight on April 5th. Fewer than thirty Marines guarded the depot when over three hundred Chinese Communists attacked all three sides of the ammunition dump. Five sentries were killed and sixteen wounded in the attack, the worst loss of life in the history of the Marines in China. Unlike the previous attacks this assault was well planned and organized, with the Communists planting mines in anticipation of the relief column from Tangku and using hand drawn carts to move artillery and mortar rounds.⁸⁹ When a column of 5th Marines rushed to the scene, a fourth group of Communists attacked it as well. Although well planned the Communists' attempt to overrun the entire

⁸⁸ Dreyer, *China at War*, 319.

⁸⁹ Ronald J. Brown, *A Few Good Men: The Story of the Fighting Fifth Marines* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 2001): 196-197.

compound was repelled by highly accurate rifle fire. Marine casualties totaled five killed and sixteen wounded, while the number of casualties sustained by the Communists is unknown, as any bodies were carried away before well before dawn. The brazen attack accelerated the effort already underway to transfer ownership of all ammunition dumps to the Nationalists.⁹⁰

Later that month U.S. Pacific Fleet commander Admiral Louis Denfeld completed a whirlwind tour of the Western Pacific and Far East. After visiting Kwajalein, Truk (Chuuk) Atoll, the Philippines, and Guam, he met with Cooke and Chiang Kai-shek in Nanjing. While en route from China to Japan, Denfeld wrote Admiral Leahy, then President Truman's chief of staff, that he was impressed by the results of the naval training program in Qingdao but deeply concerned about the worsening military situation.⁹¹ He was pleased to report to Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Nimitz that the Qingdao naval center had trained more than 500 officers and over 2500 enlisted men, but that he was concerned that most American businessmen had chosen to abandon Beijing and Tianjin as soon as the Marines withdrew.⁹² With the final withdrawal of the 1st Marine Division rear echelon on September 1st all Marines, except for the roughly 4,000 who would remain in Qingdao, had left China.⁹³

The simmering disagreements between the Navy and State Departments resumed in June. During the first half of the year Admiral Cooke had begun to regularly clash

⁹⁰ Memorandum, Stuart to Marshall, 5 April 1947, *FRUS*, Vol. VIII, *The Far East: China*, 954.

⁹¹ Denfeld to Leahy, 5 May 1947, Louis Denfeld Papers, Box, 1, NHHC.

⁹² Louis Denfeld to Chester Nimitz, 6 May 1947, Denfeld Papers, Box 1, NHHC.

⁹³ Shaw, "The United States Marines in North China," 17.

with Ambassador Stuart concerning China policy.⁹⁴ At a meeting on June 19th Chiang told Cooke that the military situation in Manchuria was worsening and asked the admiral to send a request for additional aid to Marshall. Cooke wrote to Marshall immediately, asking him to reconsider supporting the Nationalists.⁹⁵

The next day Forrestal reported to Marshall that U.S. Embassy officials in Nanjing had begun discussions on whether to recommend complete American military withdrawal from China. Soon to be Secretary of Defense Forrestal forcefully argued that any further withdrawal would embolden the Soviets and accelerate the already worsening political and military situation in China. Forrestal also brought up a long standing proposal for the Marines in Qingdao to begin training a small group of Chinese Nationalist marines. Overall his letter implied that he hoped a semi-permanent U.S. Navy presence could somehow be maintained for the foreseeable future.⁹⁶ In his response, Marshall stated that any expansion of the Navy's role beyond what had already been agreed to in China was unacceptable. But he urged patience, as an eagerly awaited report on the situation in China was expected in September.⁹⁷

This report, prepared by General Albert Wedemeyer, would become one of the most controversial and closely guarded secrets of the American post-World War II effort in China. During May of 1947 Marshall approached Wedemeyer about leading an American delegation back to China to prepare a detailed report on the state of affairs in

⁹⁴ Cox, "U.S. Naval Strategy and Policy in China," 71-72.

⁹⁵ Cooke to Marshall, 19 June 1947, Cooke Papers, Box 17, CHIS.

⁹⁶ Forrestal to Marshall, 20 June 1947, RG 334, JUSMAG, Box S-31, NARASB.

⁹⁷ Marshall to Forrestal, 23 July 1947, Ibid.

the country. Wedemeyer agreed to go, and, in July, President Truman dispatched him to China “for the purpose of making an appraisal of the political, economic, psychological and military situations-current and projected.”⁹⁸ Marshall hoped that Wedemeyer could convince Chiang to make reforms in return for renewed American assistance while Wedemeyer believed that it was an opportunity to correct some of the mistakes of the past two years. As could be expected the Nationalists were ecstatic upon the announcement of the mission, while the Communists were incensed that Chiang’s wartime friend and ally was once again being used to spread imperialist propaganda.⁹⁹ Upon his arrival in Nanjing on July 16th with a team of eight assistants and aides, Wedemeyer wrote to Marshall that the expectations for his task were overwhelming, explaining that, “My mission unfortunately is considered among the Chinese at large as a panacea of all Chinese ills. We are expected to solve, practically overnight, all the major critical and long existing problems of this complex area.” President Chiang and the Nationalists were living in a dream world, he argued, and his first impressions were of a government mired in apathy and fear. Yet he ended the long letter with a note of optimism, concluding, “Though the mission appears depressing at the moment, I am determined that this mission will produce some positive and affirmative recommendations for your consideration.”¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Directive to General Wedemeyer, 9 July 1947. U.S. Department of State, *FRUS, 1947. The Far East: China* (1947): 639-640.

⁹⁹ McLaughlin, *General Albert C. Wedemeyer*, 156-157.

¹⁰⁰ Wedemeyer to Marshall, 29 July 1947, Truman Secretary’s Files, Box 151, TPL.

Wedemeyer and his team spent more than a month in China, visiting most of the major urban centers, meeting with Nationalist leaders and visiting the vulnerable cities in the North, including Beijing, Tianjin, and Tsinan.¹⁰¹ After several weeks spent reviewing his team's reports he presented his report. It was a summary of the enormous social, economic, and military problems confronting China. He also pointed out the problems that resulted directly and indirectly from the Yalta agreements. Yet it was not these aspects of the report that raised alarms in the eyes of the Truman administration.

In the report the general argued that China could be saved only by a significant American intervention through the United Nations. Expanding on some of his earlier recommendations, he recommended that Manchuria be placed under a U.N. trusteeship accompanied by a five year U.S. aid program and that the Nationalist government must implement wide ranging reforms in order to make this possible. Appealing to Truman and what he believed was his desire to oppose worldwide communism, Wedemeyer concluded that, "The bulk of the Chinese are not disposed to Communism and they are not concerned with ideologies. They desire food, shelter, and the opportunity to live in peace."¹⁰²

Wedemeyer's optimism ran directly counter to the prevailing attitudes of both Marshall and Truman. After his return to the United States he was informed by Marshall that neither he nor anyone on his team should speak about the report. Soon afterwards the China report was buried, on orders from Marshall, and not publicly released until the

¹⁰¹ McLaughlin, *General Albert C. Wedemeyer*, 157.

¹⁰² Wedemeyer Report on China, 19 September 1947, Truman Secretary Files, Box 151, TPL.

summer of 1949. Angry and disillusioned, Wedemeyer felt that he had been personally repudiated by Marshall for not providing a report the administration wanted to hear. This and other disappointments resulted in Wedemeyer retiring from the Army in 1951.¹⁰³ Thus by the close of 1947 the U.S. State Department, in profound contrast to most senior U.S. Navy leaders, had abandoned any hope that the United States could broker an end to the civil war in China. The United States would not intervene any further.

For the Marines remaining in China, life went on much as before with the exception of a single incident. On August 27th a Marine Corps fighter ran out of gas and was forced to crash land on the beach near Yantai. A naval rescue mission recovered one aviator, but the other was captured by the Communists.¹⁰⁴ Only after more than a week of intensive negotiations undertaken personally by Admiral Cooke was the pilot returned.¹⁰⁵ Over the next few months the number of Marines in China continued to dwindle. On September 1st the rear echelon of the 1st Marine Division left Tianjin, leaving only the approximately three thousand Marines of the Fleet Marine Force, Western Pacific, in Qingdao as the last element in China.¹⁰⁶ For the sailors and Marines who remained in Qingdao the fall passed quietly.

For the last China Marines, the men of the 1st and 6th Marine Divisions, their two years in China after the Japanese surrender was a mixed bag of success, false hopes, and confusion. Some of the terms that would come to be applied to many post-WWII

¹⁰³ McLaughlin, *General Albert C. Wedemeyer*, 160-161.

¹⁰⁴ "Report on Goose Point Incident," 31 August 1947, Box 3, RG 84, NARA.

¹⁰⁵ "Capture of Goose Point Pilot," 4 September 1947, Box 3, RG 84, NARA.

¹⁰⁶ Shaw, "The United States Marines in North China," 18.

American military deployments, such as mission creep, unclear objectives, and even the domino theory, could be used to describe their time in China, as they took on roles not quite envisioned when they were first deployed. And though some historians may not characterize it as such, after June 1946 the Marines were at war with the Chinese Communists. For the United States the toll was twelve Marines killed and thirty-seven wounded in this undeclared war (see Table 4). To a generation that followed these deaths would be the forgotten precursors of many others that would follow in the United States' efforts to stem the tide of communism in East Asia.

Table 4: List of USMC Combat Casualties in China 1945-1947

<u>Date</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Dead</u>	<u>Wounded</u>
October 6 th , 1945	Tianjin, Hebei Province	0	3
October 19 th , 1945	Tangshan, Hebei Province	0	2
October 23 rd , 1945	Near Beijing, Hebei Province	0	1
December 4 th , 1945	Anshan, Liaoning Province	1	1
December 9 th , 1945	Tianjin, Hebei Province	1	0
January 15 th , 1946	Near Tangshan, Hebei Province	0	2
April 7 th , 1946	Near Lutai, Hebei Province	1	0
May 5 th , 1946	Tangshan, Hebei Province	0	1
May 7 th , 1946	Lutai, Hebei Province	0	1
May 21 st , 1946	Tianjin, Hebei Province	1	1
July 2 nd , 1946	Tangku, Hebei Province	0	1
July 29 th , 1946	Anping, Hebei Province	4	11
October 3 rd , 1946	Hsin Ho, Hebei Province	0	1
April 4-5 th , 1947	Hsin Ho, Hebei Province	5	17
December 25 th , 1947	near Tianjin, Hebei Province	1	0
			<u>Total</u>
		13	43

Source: www.history.navy.mil/research/online-reading-room/title_list-alphabetically/c/casualties/.html. Retrieved April 13th, 2016; George B. Clark, *Treading Softly: U.S. Marines in China, 1819-1949* (New York: Praeger Press, 2001); Shaw, Jr., Henry I. Shaw, Jr., *The United States Marines in North China, 1945-1949, 2nd Revised Edition* (Washington, D.C.: United States Marine Corps Press, 1962).

CHAPTER VI

FINAL STAND IN QINGDAO, 1948-1949

On Christmas Day 1947, the U.S. Marines suffered their last combat related death in China. Seeking a break from the monotony of life in Qingdao, five Marines were thirty-five miles north of the city heading for an area where they could hunt wild birds. Driving through a small village in a jeep the Marines came across a group of armed men they assumed were Nationalists loyal to Chiang Kai-shek, given the American and British weapons they carried. To their surprise, the unknown men soon opened fire.¹ With only three shotguns and a carbine, the Marines were unable to defend themselves from the heavily armed Communists, and a brief firefight soon left PFC Charles Brayton dead. The four remaining Marines had no choice but to accept surrender and capture. The incident sparked an intensive series of negotiations to obtain their release, and after nearly three months in captivity, the four Marines were handed over to U.S. Navy personnel on April 1st, 1948.²

At a press conference organized by General G. C. Thomas, the commander of Fleet Marine Forces, Pacific, the four men told their side of the story. The Marines had mistakenly driven more than eighteen miles north of the limits set by the U.S. Navy and State Department for hunting expeditions. Yet they had no idea they were in Communist held territory until the shooting began. After their capture, the men were moved repeatedly to different locations, and interrogated endlessly about the American mission

¹ Report on Captured Marines, 2 January 1948, U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1948: The Far East, China*, (1948): 8:346.

² "Chinese Reds Used U.S. Weapons in Capture, Say 4 Freed Marines," *New York Times*, April 3rd, 1948.

in China. Their captors demanded that the Marines apologize for American conduct in the Chinese Civil War, and forced them to listen to a never-ending diatribe of Communist ideology. Perhaps to their surprise, however, other than the endless Marxist propaganda they were well fed on beans and steamed bread and provided fresh clothes by their captors.³ Upon their return to the Marines, the men were quickly court-martialed for their errors, restricted to barracks, and docked three months' pay.⁴

By the spring of 1948, it had become apparent to nearly all observers that the Nationalists no longer had a realistic chance of winning the civil war. As the saga of the Marines played out, the Nationalists were steadily losing their grip on Manchuria. Throughout the spring and summer of 1948 a series of Communist offensives, led by one of Mao's top lieutenants, General Lin Biao, had decimated or routed most of the Nationalist armies in the north. Even when fighting some of Chiang Kai-shek's best troops the Communist armies regularly defeated them through innovative use of captured munitions and supplies. Over the summer more and more Manchurian cities would fall to the communists, leaving the Nationalist (and American) stronghold of Qingdao on the Shandong Peninsula vulnerable.⁵ On the Liaodong Peninsula, the port of Dalian remained a point of enormous contention between the Soviet Union and the United States. After seizing control of the port in August 1945, the Russians placed severe restrictions on the movement of commerce and shipping and appointed only pro-

³ *North China Marine*, 1:36 (1948): Special Archival Collections, USMCA.

⁴ "Four Marines Punished: Men Freed by Chinese Communists Freed in Tsingtao," *New York Times*, April 4th, 1948.

⁵ Edward L. Dreyer, *China at War, 1901-1949* (New York: Longman Press, 1995): 333-34.

Soviet Chinese officials to important positions in local government. Subsequently Dalian had become a de facto part of the Soviet Union and remained one long after Russian armies had withdrawn from Manchuria.⁶

Senior U.S. Navy officers and administrators, especially Cooke and Forrestal, had long pointed to Dalian as an example of Soviet duplicity. They viewed keeping U.S. military forces in Qingdao to be an important counterweight to Soviet control of Dalian. Legally Dalian was under Nationalist Chinese control, but practically the Soviets controlled the civic leadership, the port, and the economy. U.S. State Department diplomat Paul Paddock, a veteran Foreign Service officer, became the new American consul at Dalian in June 1948, the only American diplomatic presence the Soviets permitted in the city. Upon his arrival, Paddock described the impact of Soviet rule, writing, “Dairen (Dalian) was as dead as a town could get. The streets were nearly devoid of traffic. Automobiles were a rarity, and there were only occasional streetcars, a few pedicabs, and horse-drawn droshkies. It was like looking up the main street of a middle-sized American city at high noon and seeing one car and fifty pedestrians.” Paddock also pointed out that with little or no trade flowing in or out of the port, Dalian had little or no strategic value left to the Soviets, and “had lost its reason for existence.” Whatever the economics, however, to many Americans Dalian remained a potent symbol of the Cold War in East Asia.⁷

⁶ Memorandum, Charles Stuart to George Marshall, 7 February 1947, U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, 1948: *The Far East, China* (1948): 8:490-91.

⁷ Paul Paddock, *China Diary: Crisis Diplomacy in Dairen* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1977): 37.

Another change had occurred in early 1948. After two years of energetic support for the Nationalists and vigorous opposition to communism in East Asia, Admiral Cooke stepped down as commander of Western Forces, Pacific in February 1948. He had been the Navy's strongest and most vocal advocate for retaining a strong presence in China long after George Marshall and others in the Truman administration had advocated withdrawal. Like Forrestal, Cooke viewed the presence of both the Marines and U.S. Navy as a stabilizing force and a deterrent to the Soviet Union.⁸ Even in the face of total collapse of the Nationalists, he remained unapologetic in his views on communism and the importance of East Asia. Angry with Harry Truman and his Cold War policies Cooke chose to retire in May of 1948. Calling East Asia the region most threatened by Soviet communism, he pointed out that because of decisions made since 1945 their strength had grown exponentially in the years since. He made little to no distinction between the Soviet and Chinese Communists, saying that, "No one should be fooled by statements that Chinese Communists are not in the Communist fold. Chinese Red leaders have repeatedly asserted loyalty to Moscow-guided Lenin-Marxists principles." He urged the Truman administration to rethink its policies towards China, lest the USSR grow even stronger in East Asia and the Pacific.⁹

After the final victory of Mao Zedong in 1949, the retired Cooke continued to argue for greater support and resources directed towards East Asia and China. During the Korean War, he advocated expansion of the conflict to decisively defeat the North

⁸ Memorandum, Cooke Papers, date unknown, Box 7, CHIS.

⁹ "Admiral Fears Western Pacific Passing Over to Communism," *United Press*, November 22, 1948, Charles M Cooke Papers, Box 11, CHIS.

Koreans, and thus deny the Soviets control of another country in the region. He also recommended far greater support for Chiang Kai-shek on Taiwan. Under the proper circumstances, Cooke argued that the Seventh Fleet could blockade the Chinese coast thereby giving time for the Nationalists to gather strength and strike back against the “Red China” he detested. The Seventh Fleet would play a decisive role in the Taiwan Straits crises a few years later, but Cooke’s recommendations were ignored by an administration he considered far too pusillanimous and tepid on China.¹⁰

Cooke’s replacement as commander of Western Forces, Pacific was Vice Admiral Oscar Badger. The grandson of a commodore and the son of an admiral, Badger, a 1911 Annapolis graduate, had been awarded the Medal of Honor during the U.S. Navy’s 1914 occupation of Veracruz, Mexico. Like Cooke, he became one of the most strident, if less publicly vocal voices for maintaining a U.S Navy and Marine Corps presence in China. A short, wiry man who had served in several important commands during the war, most notably as Assistant Chief of Naval Operations for Logistics Plans, Badger had to juggle an increasingly fragile partnership with an ally whose country was steadily collapsing around him, while walking a narrow line between war and peace with the Communists.¹¹

Badger knew full well the difficulty of the situation confronting him in China. In a letter to his friend and newly promoted Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Louis

¹⁰ John Osborne, Oral History Interview with Charles M. Cooke, June 4, 1952, Sonoma, California, Cooke Papers, Box 11, CHIS.

¹¹ Biography of Admiral Oscar O. Badger, <http://www.history.navy.mil/our-collections/photography/us-people/b/badger-oscar-c.html>. Accessed September 30th, 2015.

Denfeld, Badger described his new command as one “loaded with dynamite.”

Anticipating great challenges in China, he sought the advice of both George Marshall and Chester Nimitz before departing for Asia in February 1948.¹² In the closing to a second letter to Denfeld, Badger expressed gratitude for his appointment to succeed Cooke and along with naked determination, writing, “All of this only adds to my anticipation for taking over my new assignment, and my appreciation for your having given me such a fine opportunity to carry on for the Navy and the National Government.”¹³

If Badger had known the full extent of his future difficulties in East Asia he might not have been so optimistic. The next eighteen months would be filled with all but insurmountable challenges both for himself and the sailors and Marines under his command. Due to a turning of the tide of the Chinese Civil War and the bitter realities of the new Cold War, Badger would oversee what became the final chapter of the nearly fifty-year American presence in this part of the world. He would thus occupy the sad but pragmatic role of the U.S. Navy’s last admiral in China.

Throughout these difficult months, Qingdao continued to serve as a bastion of American naval power in Asia. As the homeport for the Seventh Fleet and later the downsized Western Forces, Pacific, the city and its harbor offered excellent port facilities that had been largely unscathed during the war. The departing Cooke and other naval officers would also point to the limited, but important work of the Naval Advisory

¹² Letter, Oscar Badger to Louis Denfeld, February 5, 1948, Louis Denfeld Papers, Box 2, NHHC.

¹³ Badger to Denfeld, January 27, 1948, Denfeld Papers, Box 2, NHHC.

Group (NAG). In their eyes, the NAG, in very difficult financial and logistical conditions, had overseen the transfer of surplus warships, established a naval training program, and built the core of what would become the new Republic of China Navy.¹⁴ Over the course of the next few years, the NAG supervised the expenditure of the more than \$5 million dollars authorized by the U.S Congress to improve naval and shore facilities not only in Qingdao but also in Chongqing and Shanghai. By the spring of 1948 the Qingdao naval training center had schooled thousands of Chinese officers and enlisted recruits and overseen the transfer of more than one hundred vessels and small craft to the young Chinese fleet.¹⁵ The eventual fate of these vessels and their crews would become one of the most contentious aspects of the America's role in postwar China.

Yet even to ardent supports of the Nationalists such as James Forrestal, it became obvious that Mao Zedong's communists would probably win the civil war. By the spring of 1948, the situation had become increasingly hopeless for the Nationalists. Month by month their strength in both numbers and morale decreased, while the Communists, all but certain of the final victory, grew more organized and emboldened. Even before the tide had turned many Americans who served as administrators or diplomats in China watched with dismay, as the Communists grew steadily stronger. One of the most senior American diplomats in China, Richard M. Service, revealed his misgivings about the

¹⁴ Memorandum on Establishment of Naval Advisory Group China," November 23, 1945, RG 334 JUSMAG, Box S-31, NARASB.

¹⁵ Memorandum to Albert Wedemeyer on U.S. Naval Advisory Group Survey Board to China, July 24, 1947, RG 334 JUSMAG, Box-31, NARASB.

situation as early as June of 1946, in a letter to the American embassy in Nanjing. Fearful of a Communist encroachment of Qingdao and worried that U.S. naval leadership was not taking the threat seriously enough, he questioned the prevailing belief that the U.S. military presence in Qingdao would be enough to deter the Communists. Fearing that the U.S. forces in China would be drawn into the fighting eventually, he worried that it would soon “blow up in the face” of the United States.¹⁶

Admiral Louis Denfeld, who would eventually be compelled to resign as Chief of Naval Operations due to his principled stand in the 1949 “Revolt of the Admirals,” was understandably preoccupied with events in Washington. Intense intra-service rivalry over such divisive issues as control of nuclear weapons, the role and ownership of airpower, and the future of the Marine Corps reverberated throughout Washington during these tense months.¹⁷ With his attention focused on larger and more strategic issues Denfeld allowed Badger considerable autonomy in dealings with China. The correspondence between the two men reveals a casual friendship not often seen at the senior ranks of the U.S. Navy. Denfeld had total confidence in his subordinate. Thus it fell to Badger, who unlike his predecessor had limited experience in diplomacy, to deal with China debacle.¹⁸

¹⁶ John M. Service to Richard M. Smyth, Esquire, June 3rd, 1946, Record Group 84, Records of the Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State: China, Tsingtao Consulate, Classified General Records, 1946-49, Box 2, NARA.

¹⁷ Jeffrey G. Barlow, *Revolt of the Admirals: The Fight for Naval Aviation, 1945-1950* (Washington, DC: Naval Historical Center, 1994).

¹⁸ Louis Denfeld to Oscar Badger, October 19, 1948, Oscar Badger Papers, Box 1, NHHC; Letter, Denfeld to Badger, November 1, 1948, Badger Papers, Box 1, NHHC; Letter, Badger to Denfeld, January 27, 1948, Louis Denfeld, Papers, Box 2, NHHC; Letter, Badger to Denfeld, February 15, 1948, Louis Denfeld Papers, Box 2, NHHC.

By the close of 1947, approximately five thousand American military personnel remained in China, primarily in Qingdao. Among the Americans present in the strategic port city the atmosphere was one of tense boredom. Disdain for the lingering mission was rampant, as many U.S. Navy sailors no longer saw any point to remaining in China. Most junior sailors saw the Chinese as unworthy of their assistance, and for a people about to be overrun by Communists the overwhelming majority seemed singularly disinterested in their fate. Officers who thought in terms of policy and strategy felt that the mission in Qingdao was all but hopeless. One American observer poetically observed that, “For this once prosperous German colony in which we have based our naval strength in the Far East is a city without soul or spirit. It is noisily waiting to die, and all its skeletons are out of the closet and lying in the streets for all to see.”¹⁹

For the Nationalists the military situation grew worse each month, and, by the spring of 1948 the Chinese Communists controlled nearly all of Manchuria and were encroaching on the Shandong Peninsula. On May 4th 1948 Admiral Badger, increasingly concerned about the Communist threat, outlined four options to CNO Denfeld concerning the future of Qingdao, two of which involved open warfare against Mao’s forces. Option A was for the Seventh Fleet and deployed Marines to remain in the port and fight the Communists alongside the Nationalists. Option B was for U.S. forces to defend Qingdao without Nationalist support. Option C suggested a phased evacuation of the port, while Option D called for an immediate withdrawal. Despite the potential casualties, Badger advocated the first option, arguing that American interests in Asia

¹⁹ Darrell Berrigan, “Is Our Navy Trapped in China?” *Saturday Evening Post*, September 25th, 1948: 145.

were at stake and that to withdraw would be a disaster. This advice reflected the admiral's rather fanciful belief that the Nationalist position was not hopeless, an assessment based in part on the recent election of Li Zongren to become the new vice-president in Chiang's government, a move he believed would improve morale among the Nationalists. Though ruthless, Li was seen by many Americans as a more competent leader than most of his colleagues in the GMD, and his election instilled a strong but short-lived sense of optimism among its supporters.²⁰

Badger's recommendations on Qingdao received strong support from the Navy's top leadership, but caused grave concern elsewhere. After considerable discussion the Joint Chiefs voted to support Admiral Badger's conclusions, and were soon joined in this view by James Forrestal. The new Secretary of Defense argued that Qingdao offered the best port facilities in East China, and that to withdraw would be a tremendous blow to American interests in the Cold War. He did, however, recommend that the National Security Council study the options for remaining or withdrawing from Qingdao.²¹ State Department officials strongly opposed the option of Americans fighting for Chiang's government. Marshall spoke plainly in his response to a memo on the subject from Forrestal, writing: "If Admiral Badger were to follow course A, I have no confidence, given the nature of Chinese military tradition and psychology, that course A would not

²⁰ Memorandum, Oscar Badger to Louis Denfeld, May 3, 1948, Oscar Badger Papers, NHHC.

²¹ Memorandum, James Forrestal to National Security Council, "Action by U.S. Forces in Tsingtao in Defense of U.S. Lives and Property," May 21, U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, 1948: *The Far East, China* (1948): 314.

quickly degenerate into course B, thus placing us in an intolerable military and political situation.”²²

As secretary of state, Marshall continued to work tirelessly to extract the United States from what he considered the China trap. He viewed Chiang’s government as hopelessly corrupt, fragile, and incompetent, and held out little or no hope that the Nationalists could prevail. He resisted calls from supporters of Chiang such as Forrestal to provide more support for the Nationalist cause. As historian Ernest R. May has concluded, “it is not hard to argue that the chief reason why the United States did not extend this support was General Marshall’s conclusion that such a course of action would be imprudent. Nor is it hard to argue that the whole course of the subsequent Cold War would have proceeded differently, abroad and at home, if Marshall had not personally acted to bar involvement in the Chinese Civil War.”²³ Marshall instead proposed that Badger meet with Chiang directly to determine his plans for Qingdao. If Chiang was not willing to devote the military resources necessary to defend the port, then Badger should implement an orderly withdrawal.²⁴ Faced with such measured opposition from arguably the most influential leader in government, the Joint Chiefs and Forrestal reconsidered their options. Forrestal directed the NSC to prepare a report on

²² Memorandum, Secretary of State to Secretary of Defense, May 28, 1948, U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, The Far East, China (1948): 263.

²³ Ernest R. May, “1947-48: When Marshall Kept the U.S. Out of War in China,” *Journal of Military History*, Vol. 66, No. 4 (October 2002): 1003.

²⁴ Memorandum, Secretary of State to Secretary of Defense, May 28, 1948, *FRUS*, *Far East, China*, 8:316.

options for Qingdao, while Badger was ordered not to engage the Communists but instead to plan for evacuation if the city was threatened in the near term.²⁵

The question on many Americans' minds was, what would Mao do? Would he order his soldiers to advance on Qingdao, regardless of the consequences? By early 1948 the inner circle of the Secretariat of the CCP Central Committee, including Mao, Zhou, and Liu Shaoqi, felt increasingly certain of victory and that the United States had been gradually withdrawing its support for the Nationalists. The Central Committee also considered a last minute American intervention to rescue the GMD unlikely, but after the departure of the U.S. Marines from Beijing and Tianjin in 1947 Mao kept a wary eye on the American forces in Qingdao. A CCP policy directive drafted by Zhou in March 1948 stated that, "the essence of our anti-American imperialism is to prevent American imperialists from colonizing China and to overthrow American imperialist rule in China."²⁶ Not willing to directly provoke the United States, however, for the remainder of 1948 Mao's armies kept their distance from Qingdao.

By the summer of 1948 discussions on whether or not to evacuate Qingdao became more pressing. In June, the Central Intelligence Agency released a highly classified report on China, whose key words of "withdrawal" and "prestige" would be used time and time again during the coming decades of the Cold War. The report concluded that the Communists could overrun both the city of Qingdao and the

²⁵ Steven L. Rearden, *The Formative Years, 1947-1950* (Washington, DC: Historical Office, Office of the Secretary of Defense, 1984): 221-222.

²⁶ Shu Guang Zhang, *Deterrence and Strategic Culture: Chinese-American Confrontations, 1949-1958* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992): 16-19.

American naval base within six months. Concurrently a withdrawal of American forces would embolden both Mao and the Soviet Union, and would lead to the conclusion that, “the force of communist expansion in Asia was irresistible.” The report laid bare the impossible choice for the Truman Administration: stay in place and risk Qingdao being overrun, or withdraw and lose considerable prestige while granting the Chinese Communists a huge propaganda victory, and abandon the Nationalists to certain defeat and death.²⁷

By this time two key groups of consensus had emerged. The familiar fault lines of the Navy on one side and the Army and State Department on the other remained the same. Forrestal, supported by Badger, advocated for a strong response to the communist encroachment on Qingdao. Their argument revolved around the increasingly shaky premise that if the United States withdrew from China the move would embolden both the Chinese communists and the Soviet Union and damage American credibility abroad, a nascent “domino” theory. Although the basic concept of the domino theory formed much of the basis of the 1947 Truman Doctrine, the phrase itself did not enter American diplomatic jargon officially until a 1954 speech by President Dwight Eisenhower, in which he spoke of “a row of dominoes” being knocked over and the inevitable consequences.²⁸ On the other side of the Qingdao debate stood George Marshall, Ambassador Charles Stuart, and much of the State Department. In their view, withdrawing from Qingdao was the only pragmatic solution. The U.S. Navy had no

²⁷ CIA Report on Tsingtao, June 25th, 1948, Oscar Badger Papers, Box 1, NHHC.

²⁸ <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/pentagon/ps11.htm>. Accessed August 17th, 2016.

established legal authority to remain in China, and to do so would mean intervening in a war the Truman administration had long sought to avoid.

For American servicemen and women in Qingdao, life continued much as it had the previous three years. Liberty was granted liberally and the daily routine of maintenance and training went on. One major recent change in the spring of 1948 was the presence of more than a thousand American dependent wives and children. This new policy and the steady work being done on the base implied that the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps would remain for quite some time, or at the very least that Badger wanted it to appear that way.²⁹ On June 7th Francis Cardinal Spellman, the Military Vicar of the Armed Forces, visited Qingdao and conducted mass in St. Michael's Cathedral.³⁰ Visits by such senior churchmen were rare, so observers in both China and America could only have seen the visit of the vehemently anti-Communist Spellman as a sign of the importance U.S. leaders placed on Qingdao.

One unusual bright spot was the successful return of four Marine Corps airmen who due to mechanical failure had been forced to land in Communist territory on April 2nd and were subsequently captured. Unlike the Christmas Day incident, no lives were lost this time, and the four Marines were returned unharmed on July 2nd, just in time to take part in the baseball games and fireworks planned for the Fourth of July celebrations. For the remainder of the summer Qingdao witnessed the usual routine of sports, training, and standard discipline in this increasingly isolated base. Although probably discussed in

²⁹ Berrigan, "Is Our Navy Trapped in China?" *Saturday Evening Post*, 26.

³⁰ *North China Marine*, June 5th, 1948, USMCA.

mess rooms and in the officer's clubs, plans for the evacuation of the one thousand U.S Navy and Marine Corps dependents remained only plans.³¹

Meanwhile, the Nationalists' position on the Shandong Peninsula weakened until, at the end of the summer Chiang Kai-shek's forces suffered a catastrophic defeat. On September 23rd the fortified city of Tsinan, fell to the Communists. The Nationalists had invested heavily in the defense of the city, only to suffer more than 22,000 casualties. Even more serious, during the attack a full Nationalist division had defected to the Communist side.³² The fall of Tsinan left the whole of the Shandong Peninsula in Communist hands, with only the cities of Linyi and Qingdao remaining under Nationalist control.³³ Policy makers in Washington now confronted far more than just the theoretical possibility of U.S. Marines being forced to defend the base from Chinese communists.³⁴

Badger grew increasingly gloomy about the operational situation. Six days after the loss of Tsinan, he wrote to Admiral Denfeld that the situation on the peninsula had become perilous for the Nationalists and very worrisome for the Americans in Qingdao. The more than 180,000 Communist troops who now occupied Tsinan were well supplied with captured Nationalist weapons and equipment. The Nationalist garrison at Qingdao now numbered fewer than 30,000 men, many of whom were poorly equipped. Morale could not get much lower. Badger told Denfeld that, "It is now my opinion that [if

³¹ Ibid., July 2nd, 1948, USMCA.

³² Richard Yuping Wang, "The Joint Chiefs of Staff and United States Policy on China," Unpublished PhD diss, Mississippi State University, 1987: 162.

³³ Dreyer, *China at War*, 336.

³⁴ "Chinese Red Gain Felt by Tsingtao," *New York Times*, September 29th, 1948.

attacked by the Communists the] present garrison would only offer feeble resistance and [that] there would not be time for an orderly withdrawal.” He recommended that the Marine garrison in Qingdao be doubled in size and that a large transport be made available within five days, to help prepare for evacuation.³⁵

Although the situation in Qingdao went largely unnoticed by most Americans back home, one important weekly magazine provided remarkable insight into what was happening in the beleaguered city. In an article entitled, “Is Our Navy Trapped in China?” *Saturday Evening Post* correspondent Darrell Berrigan described the bleak living conditions in the city—starvation, lack of shelter, bitter cold, the black market, and wild inflation. Desperate residents cut down trees and stole coal to burn to stay warm. Others turned to theft—youth became expert pickpockets, often stealing valuables from U.S. sailors and Marines. As Berrigan made clear, American morale in Qingdao was low and the mission to aid the Nationalist Chinese was in danger of failing. Many of the Americans in Qingdao felt that the Chinese in the city had little if any concern about their fate if the Communist won the war. Berrigan explained that, “It is easy to understand why the men of the American Navy feel that way about the people of Qingdao and why they feel they have been sent out on a hopeless mission to a hopeless county.”³⁶

After describing Badger as a “lean, neat, energetic officer of fifty-eight, with bushy white eyebrows to set him apart from mere mortals,” Berrigan listed several of the

³⁵ Memorandum, Badger to Denfeld, 29 September 1948, RG 218, Box 2, NARA.

³⁶ Darrell Berrigan, “Is Our Navy Trapped in China?” *Saturday Evening Post*: 26-27.

difficulties faced by the admiral. Qingdao's proximity to the Soviet Union made the city especially vulnerable, and by September more than 300,000 Chinese refugees had clogged the now crowded streets. An overwhelming sense of apathy and even hopelessness rippled through the ranks of both American and Chinese sailors stationed in the port. One American bluejacket, angered by the repeated theft of his belongings by homeless Chinese children, exclaimed that "They steal us blind and complain that we're not giving them enough!" Other than provide moral support there was little the U.S. Navy could do would alter the situation, and the article predicted that soon Badger would be forced to make the choice between staying and fighting or packing up and leaving China for good. For now, however, the Navy was "trapped" in China.³⁷

Observers in the United States were not the only ones who read the *Post* article with interest. An article on the Berrigan piece also appeared in the *People's Herald*, one of the oldest and most widely read Chinese Communist party newspapers. Focusing on the perceived threat to Qingdao, the article highlighted the fact that Badger would not comment on the *Post* article and pointed out the fact that he had recently ordered his house painted implied that the U.S. Navy had no intention of pulling out anytime soon.³⁸ Nevertheless, Badger received criticism from State Department officials in China for his comments that implied American citizens had already been evacuated from Qingdao, and for not clearing his remarks on the *Post* article beforehand.³⁹

³⁷ Ibid, 26-28.

³⁸ "Post' Article Say U.S. Navy Here 'Trapped'," *People's Herald*, September 26th, 1948.

³⁹ Memorandum, William Turner to J. Leighton Stuart, September 28th, 1948, RG 84, Box 5, NARA.

Badger was depicted in the *Post* article as projecting a sense of frustrated determination, his strong personality seemingly held captive by contradictory orders and the impossible political and military situation in China.⁴⁰ Within a few weeks of the articles' publication, however, Badger's limited optimism had begun to dim. Though he projected outward support for the Nationalists, privately he was dismayed by the fall of Tsinan and begun to have serious doubts about the Nationalists' ability to survive. A lengthy letter to Forrestal written on October 9th expressed his concerns, and in a memo to Admiral Denfeld that was enclosed in the letter, he confided that, "The situation here is not too good. It might have been better if we had used other methods and procedures." Badger listed his extensive litany of concerns regarding China, highlighting the deteriorating military situation for the Nationalists, and urged the Defense Secretary to provide greater assistance. He described several recent trips to areas in China still under Nationalist control, the mood of several Nationalist leaders, and his frustrations over the lack of strategic coordination or planning between Chiang's government and Washington. Badger considered the situation to be growing worse by the day, but nevertheless held out hope - provided the U.S. acted quickly.⁴¹

Badger's pessimism was echoed by another American in Qingdao. William Turner, the Consul General for the U.S. State Department in the city, was on friendly terms with Badger, and the two discussed the military situation often. This friendship did not stop Turner from speaking his mind to his superiors. In a series of diplomatic cables

⁴⁰ Berrigan, *Saturday Evening Post*, 26-27.

⁴¹ Badger to Forrestal, Badger Papers, Box 1, October 9, 1948, NHHC.

that one can only describe as brutally honest and cold, Turner laid out his concerns or fears about the U.S. Navy's future in China. The U.S. Navy in Qingdao now found itself in an impossible situation, he argued, and wrote that, "Now that Tsinan has fallen and the shadow of the victorious communists falls across Eastern Shandong, it becomes more and more difficult for the Navy to extricate itself without serious loss of prestige for itself and for the United States. But the longer we wait the more difficult the problem will be – until perhaps the Communists march into the city and decide the answer for us."⁴²

A week later one of the final issues of *North China Marine* was published. The contrast between this military publication and the *Saturday Evening Post* could not have been more striking. The October 2nd issue of the weekly newspaper differed very little from previous issues. Typical military news such as promotions, award ceremonies, and the results of the many sports organizations dominated the pages. Of particular note was the victory of the Third Marines football team over that of an opposing Navy squad. The Marines won the game 32-6. Boxing matches, opportunities for liberty in beautiful Lao Shan, and the arrival of a new Catholic bishop were also noteworthy. There was no mention of the ongoing discussions in Washington concerning Qingdao and U.S. China policy. Perhaps only the impending arrival of a task force from San Diego presaged any of what was to come. Two *Essex*-class aircraft carriers, the USS *Tarawa* and USS *Princeton*, and their accompanying escorts of cruisers and destroyers were expected to

⁴² Turner to Clark, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1948: The Far East, China*, 8:323-325. Hereafter abbreviated as *FRUS*.

arrive in Qingdao in the coming months. The Navy described the cruise as completely routine.⁴³

Berrigan's *Saturday Evening Post* article on the situation in Qingdao may have also reached the desk of the Oval Office. 1948 was a presidential election year, and the prevailing wisdom was that Harry Truman would lose to Republican challenger Thomas Dewey. The president was down in the polls and had long been preoccupied with domestic concerns and events in Europe. Faced with a struggling economy, the growing Cold War in Europe, and a resurgent Republican Party, Truman can be forgiven for not devoting much time to the Navy's concerns over Qingdao. Nevertheless, the *Post* article as well as others from newspapers such as the *New York Times* often reported the deteriorating situation on the Shandong Peninsula, highlighting the dilemma the administration faced and creating the impression that the president might pull out at any moment.⁴⁴

The predominant historical narrative is that domestic politics and economic concerns dominated the 1948 presidential election, and that Harry Truman ultimately triumphed by retaining the New Deal coalition of his predecessor as well as cleverly castigating the Republicans for much of the nation's ills. This is a false analysis, however. Global events such as the Berlin airlift, the closely watched elections in Italy, and the Soviet takeover in Czechoslovakia meant that both Truman and Dewey had to take the great challenges of the Cold War into consideration. As historian Robert Divine

⁴³ *North China Marine*, October 2nd, 1948, USMCA, 3-4.

⁴⁴ "Deeper Pessimism Observed in China," *New York Times*, July 27th, 1948; "Chinese Red Gain Felt By Tsingtao," *New York Times*, September 29, 1948;

concludes, “The Cold War cast a long shadow over the election of 1948, influencing the campaign strategies of the rival candidates and shaping in subtle but vital way the final outcome.” Though less a priority than Europe, China and the remaining Americans in Qingdao would play a small but important role in the political maneuverings of both parties.⁴⁵

Truman had long grown weary of Chiang and his corrupt regime, and by early 1948 had begun to consider him a liability. The president even entertained the possibility of engineering his departure. However, Ambassador Stuart and George Marshall both scuttled this idea, based on their belief that a change in Chinese leaders would be both unworkable and unwise. But what to do about China? According to diplomatic historian Odd Arne Westad, by the summer of 1948 the Truman Administration faced opposition from three powerful opponents. The first was posed by the “China lobby.” Led by magazine magnate Henry Luce, this influential group of politicians and media figures argued fiercely for the unwavering support of Chiang and his regime. Second was the reputation both Chiang and his wife, Soong Meiling, enjoyed during the war with Japan, unwavering in both their determination and Christian faith. Lastly was timing. With the 1948 presidential election fast approaching Truman felt he had no choice to but so stick with Chiang and the GMD.⁴⁶ Faced with Republicans angry that he might abandon the most important American base in China to the

⁴⁵ Robert A. Divine, “The Cold War and the Election of 1948,” *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 59, No. 1 (June 1972): 90-91.

⁴⁶ Odd Arne Westad, *Decisive Encounters: The Chinese Civil War, 1946-1950* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003): 185-187.

Communists, Truman, on October 15th, issued a directive to the State Department that no withdrawal from Qingdao take place at this time.⁴⁷ Anticipating what was to come, however, Admiral Denfeld soon informed Badger that he should begin making preparations for withdrawal, but to do so in a way as to avoid attracting too much attention prior to the November 2nd election.⁴⁸

During October Forrestal made his last strong push to hold Qingdao. Despite the writing on the wall he refused to let go of the base without a fight. On October 5th he met with Captain (future Admiral) Robert Dennison, the president's naval aide. Dennison repeated to Forrestal many of the arguments laid out in the *Post* article, specifically that the Navy, once departed from Qingdao, would "probably never get back in."⁴⁹ For the rest of the month of Forrestal became an increasingly lonely voice in the Truman Administration as he became one of a handful of senior civilian leaders in government who still advocated keeping the Navy and Marines in Qingdao. Even when faced with the inevitable reality of Mao's victory, Forrestal became more and more obsessed about holding on to some solid ground in China. In their recent study of the troubled Defense Secretary, Townsend Hoopes and Douglas Brinkley conclude that, "Forrestal, tenacious and emotional, continued to resist the idea of an inevitable Chinese Communist victory and to seek ways to maintain an American military presence." For Forrestal the presence of American sailors and Marines in Qingdao was the only thing

⁴⁷ Memorandum by the Acting Assistant Secretary of State to the Director of the Joint Staff of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, October 19th, 1948, U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, 1948: The Far East, China (1948): 314.

⁴⁸ Denfeld to Badger, November 1, 1948, Badger Papers, Box 1, NHHHC.

⁴⁹ Millis, ed., *The Forrestal Diaries*, 496-97.

holding back the Communist tidal wave in Asia. That this force numbered only a few thousand against the millions available to Mao Zedong made no difference. Forrestal consistently pushed back against Marshall and others in the State Department who advocated withdrawal.⁵⁰

Amid this flurry of military and diplomatic communications a tense situation emerged at the American embassy in Nanjing. Sounding the alarm Ambassador Stuart wrote to Marshall that despite all the previous discussions that had occurred on the status of American forces, Admiral Badger was unilaterally making plans to defend Qingdao. Stuart reported that Badger had begun perimeter exercises and had free authority to act as he saw fit. Absent any overriding orders Badger was on the verge of declaring war on the CCP. Fearful of provoking the Communists Stuart exaggerated Badger's plans to defend the city and asked that a higher authority issue orders to ensure that the admiral would not act independently and possibly bring the United States into war with the Chinese Communists.⁵¹ Badger's exact intentions are difficult to determine with certainty. It seems doubtful that if Qingdao fell under attack he would have actually ordered the Marines to fight back against the Communists. But Stuart's message to the State Department had the desired effect. Marshall strongly cautioned Forrestal that Badger was not adhering to official U.S. State Department policy. He recommended the immediate evacuation of all remaining dependents and that withdrawal plans be sped up,

⁵⁰ Townsend Hoopes and Douglas Brinkley, *Driven Patriot: The Life and Times of James Forrestal* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2012 [1992]): 309.

⁵¹ Memorandum, Charles Leighton Stuart to George Marshall, 27 October 1948, RG 218, Box 2, NARA.

but under no circumstances was he to engage in a perimeter defense of Qingdao.⁵² There the matter stood for the few days remaining until the November 2nd election. On his own authority Forrestal granted Badger the right to defend the perimeter of the city, but this window did not last long.⁵³

To the astonishment of many political observers on November 2nd Truman won an upset victory over Republican candidate Thomas Dewey. On China, the re-elected Truman acted quickly. The president wanted to avoid the impression that he was abandoning Chiang and suggested a compromise be found to the delicate political and military situation. At a National Security Council meeting, held the same day as the election, opinions coalesced once again into two camps, with the State Department and Army on one side, and the Navy and Defense Department on the other. As usual, Forrestal argued the most strenuously for holding on to Qingdao. After difficult discussions the council recommended that civilians and military dependents be evacuated but also that the Marine garrison be reinforced. These steps limited the threat to American civilians but also provided a sliver of hope to bolster collapsing Nationalist morale.⁵⁴ Six weeks later, on December 20th the NSC voted to accept the State Department proposal that Qingdao be completely evacuated, and on Christmas Eve Truman approved the recommendation. The Navy's long struggle to keep a foothold in China was finally over.⁵⁵

⁵² Memorandum, Marshall to Forrestal, 28 October 1948, RG 218, Box 2, NARA.

⁵³ Cox, "U.S. Naval Strategy and Policy in China," 95.

⁵⁴ Memorandum, Sidney Souers to Harry Truman, 3 November 1948, RG 218, Box 2, NARA.

⁵⁵ Wang, "The Joint Chiefs of Staff and United States Policy on China, 1945-1949," 176.

For Chiang and the GMD, Truman's reelection was a grave disappointment. The beleaguered Nationalist leader viewed a Republican victory as perhaps his last, best chance to secure continued American aid and money for his regime.⁵⁶ Yet the generalissimo made one last attempt to salvage support from his American ally. Despite Marshall's muted objection and Chiang's own lukewarm support, Chiang's wife flew to Washington on a Navy aircraft for the purposes of consulting with both Marshall and President Truman.⁵⁷ Meeting with Marshall over the course of several hours on December 3rd, she pleaded for a public statement of support by the U.S. government and the appointment of a U.S. Army envoy, a "spark plug" in her words, to energize the Nationalist military effort. Marshall politely declined her requests. With diplomatic but firm language, he made it clear that any statement from the United States would do more harm than good, and that any envoy sent would likely become directly involved in the civil war.⁵⁸ Unlike his previous hospitality to Madame Chiang, the president was also courteous but wasted little time on his foreign visitor. By this point Truman felt that he had little choice. A CIA report he had received a week earlier conservatively estimated that nearly all of North China would fall to Mao's armies within thirty days. Despite pleas from the China Lobby the president had no intention of expending any more time and effort on what he considered a lost cause.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Westad, *Decisive Encounters*, 198.

⁵⁷ Millis, ed., *The Forrestal Diaries*, 533.

⁵⁸ Memorandum of Conversation with Madame Chiang, December 3, 1948, Papers of Harry S. Truman, President's Secretary's Files, Box 151, TPL.

⁵⁹ Central Intelligence Agency, Memorandum for the President, November 24, 1948, Papers of Harry S. Truman, President's Secretary's Files, Box 151, TPL.

Within a week of the election, Badger had at last accepted the inevitable: regardless of what happened in Washington, Nationalist China was doomed. In a private letter to a friend at the State Department, he conceded that Chiang's armies had lost the will to fight. He speculated that the Nationalist government would not last long, and bitterly concluded that China would be Communist in the near term, writing, "With the emergence of a Communist dominated national government, we will have, in a very real sense, lost the cold war in this part of the world." For him the only positive aspect in the situation was that a newly Communist China would face nearly insurmountable economic and political difficulties, problems that would take years or even decades to overcome.⁶⁰

By early December the evacuation of civilians and dependents from Qingdao was all but complete, and two days after Christmas an unusual and rather strained meeting took place onboard Admiral Badger's flagship, the amphibious command ship USS *Estes* (AGC-12). There the admiral met with a group of Qingdao city leaders, led by Li Tai-Fang, Chairman of the Qingdao Municipal Council. Though at all times courteous, the Chinese businessmen repeatedly attempted to get a clear answer to one simple question: was the United States going to completely withdraw from Qingdao? Unwilling to convey the president's decision, Badger deflected the question with considerable skill and informed the group that the redeployment of forces was a common

⁶⁰ Badger to W. Walton Butterworth, November 8, 1948, Badger Papers, Box 1, NHHC.

military practice, and did not automatically imply withdrawal. He then reminded Mr. Li that the Navy would prefer to stay in Qingdao as long as they were welcome.⁶¹

Despite Badger's obfuscation nearly everyone could see that the decision for withdrawal had been made. Even before the first day of 1949 most Navy and Marine Corps personnel had boarded the warships and transports anchored in the harbor. The American consul in Nanjing wrote to the soon retiring Marshall that little secrecy remained on American intentions, writing, "As a result almost open discussion of withdrawal by some Naval and Marine officers, withdrawal is now open secret Qingdao, only the date a matter of speculation."⁶² On January 10th the last remaining military personnel were withdrawn to the warships and transports at anchor in Qingdao harbor.⁶³

The Americans were not the only ones pulling out. In early December, Chiang had ordered all Nationalist personnel to withdraw from the Shandong Peninsula.⁶⁴ The Chinese Naval Training Center at Qingdao had been relocated almost a year earlier. Long the pride of Admiral Cooke's efforts to build a new navy for the Nationalists, the decision to move the center to Taiwan had been made back in October 1947. Rear Admiral Stuart Murray oversaw the transfer of equipment and personnel, and by September 1948 more than three-quarters of the training center facilities' and equipment

⁶¹ Memorandum on Tsingtao Municipal Council, December 27, 1948, Box 5, RG 84, NARA.

⁶² *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1949: Far East, China*, 9: 1191.

⁶³ "Chronological Record of Events, NAVWESPAC, 9 April 1948 to 28 August 1949," History of the Seventh Fleet, Post-1946 Operations Plans, 1946-1950, Box 187, Seventh Fleet Papers, NHHC.

⁶⁴ Wang, "The Joint Chiefs of Staff and United States Policy on China, 1945-1949," Mississippi State University PhD diss, 175.

had been moved to Amoy and Taiwan.⁶⁵ Amoy, another Nationalist stronghold located across the straits from Taiwan, would also fall to the Communists during their takeover of southeastern China. Yet despite the departure of his own forces, Chiang somehow held out hope that the U.S. Navy's presence in Qingdao would continue. During a brief meeting with Badger on January 17th, 1949 Chiang asked the admiral if the Navy was about to fully withdraw from Qingdao. With the utmost caution, Badger remained noncommittal, declaring that the movement of American aircraft and supplies from land bases to ships was primarily for weather related reasons. A haggard and frustrated Chiang did not press the issue. Yet it was apparent to nearly everyone that once Truman had triumphed in the 1948 election American days in Qingdao were numbered.⁶⁶

Afterwards the pace of withdrawal grew even more rapid as the Communists continued their advance. A last minute plea from Nationalist General Yen His Shen to remain in the city was brushed off.⁶⁷ On January 31st the last American military flight landed in Qingdao, and within a few days all aircraft were transferred to the remaining aircraft carriers. One week later 1,600 Marines were redeployed from the city, departing onboard the troop transports USS *Henrico* and *Renfield* as a Marine Corps band played "California, Here I Come." With their departure only seventy Americans remained in the

⁶⁵ Stuart S. Murray, oral interview by Etta-Belle Kitchen, May 1970-May 1971, transcript, United States Naval Academy, Nimitz Library, Special Collections and Archives, Manuscript Collections, USNANL, 623-624.

⁶⁶ Memorandum, Ambassador Stuart to Secretary of State, January 17th, 1949, U.S. Department of State, *FRUS, 1948: The Far East, China*: 1194.

⁶⁷ Memorandum on Tsingtao," February 14th, 1949, Oscar Badger Papers, Box 1, NHHC.

city, organizing the remaining logistical supplies and preparing for the inevitable complete evacuation.⁶⁸

In the midst of the withdrawal, in February, American politics again intervened. A month earlier Mao Zedong and the CCP had begun entertaining the notion of a negotiated settlement to the war, and had listed a series of conditions for such talks to proceed. As Chiang's biographer succinctly puts it, Mao's conditions, which included the surrender of Chiang and his family for war crimes, amounted to "unconditional surrender."⁶⁹ Mindful of the potential for such talks, however, Truman and the State Department ordered that any further evacuations from Qingdao be delayed for a few weeks, as it was believed that such action would strengthen the Nationalist position during negotiations. Both Truman and Ambassador Stuart felt that a "more deliberate withdrawal" would encourage the peace talks.⁷⁰ Such hopes proved futile, however, as the preliminary negotiations failed and the loading of men and material in Qingdao resumed. On February 23rd Admiral Badger transferred his flag to USS *El Dorado* (AGC-11), a replacement for the USS *Estes* that had been sent to San Francisco for decommissioning and took his new flagship underway for a month long cruise, visiting the Nationalist strongholds of Amoy, Takao, and Shanghai.⁷¹ After returning to Qingdao in late March, Badger began to accelerate the phased withdrawal. On May 7th the admiral telegraphed Ambassador Stuart that he recommended the American naval

⁶⁸ "1,600 Marines Quit Tsingtao," *New York Times*, February 10th, 1949.

⁶⁹ Taylor, *The Generalissimo*, 400.

⁷⁰ Memorandum, Ambassador Stuart to Secretary of State, February 14th, 1949, U.S. Department of State, *FRUS, 1949: The Far East, China*: 1200.

⁷¹ "Ship's History of USS *Estes* (AGC-12)," Ship's Histories, *Essex to Estes*, Box 273, NHHC.

presence in Qingdao be reduced to one cruiser, two destroyers, and four naval auxiliaries, a far cry from the dozens of warships that crowded the beautiful harbor just three years earlier.⁷²

During the months of April and May Badger's small fleet also assisted with the evacuation of American and British personnel from South China. The hospital ship USS *Repose* (AH-16), long stationed at Qingdao, became a temporary home to hundreds of Americans fleeing Shanghai.⁷³ The finale for North China came on May 25th, when all remaining U.S. Navy ships and personnel were withdrawn from Qingdao. The final diplomatic cable from the State Department in the city concludes as follows: "The Commander of U.S. Naval Forces, Western Pacific, has reported that all remaining U.S. Naval units were withdrawn from Qingdao on May 25th, 1949. With this action the phased withdrawal of naval forces from Qingdao has been completed."⁷⁴ The U.S. Navy had closed its last chapter on China. As Cooke, Dennison and Forrestal had feared, the grey hulls of the U.S. Navy would no longer have a place in the teeming ports of mainland China.

A few weeks later another departure occurred. Mentally and physically exhausted, James Forrestal resigned as Secretary of Defense in March 1949. Forrestal had long been a trusted member of Truman's administration, but his refusal to campaign for the president in the 1948 election coupled with disagreements over defense

⁷² Memorandum, Badger to Stuart, May 10th, 1949, Badger Papers, Box 1, NHHC.

⁷³ "Ship to Accommodate American Evacuees," *South China Morning Post*, May 28th, 1949, Badger Papers, Box 1, NHHC.

⁷⁴ Memorandum, Acting Secretary of State to Executive Secretary of the National Security Council, June 6th, 1949, U.S. Department of State, *FRUS, 1948: The Far East, China*: 1209.

unification, the new state of Israel, and several other issues soured their relationship. Truman had also been receiving disquieting reports about Forrestal's mental health for some time but had delayed acting on them out of respect for his longtime aide.⁷⁵ Responding to his letter of resignation the president praised the first Secretary of Defense, declaring that, "Your service to your country covering a period of almost nine years during this administration and that of my predecessor has been as varied as it has been distinguished." Forrestal was to officially leave office on March 31st, though Truman expected him to be available for consultations and advice.⁷⁶ Before his departure Truman awarded the first Secretary of Defense the Distinguished Service Medal, America's highest civilian honor.⁷⁷

The remaining ships that made up Western Forces, Pacific were now without a homeport. Not wanting to place them under the command of General MacArthur in Japan, Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Denfeld chose to base them temporarily at newly rebuilt facilities at Subic Bay, in the Philippines. Those Marines not sent to the States found a new home in Okinawa. And as a fitting postscript the ship most identified with the American naval presence in Qingdao was soon retired. USS *Estes*, the much beloved flagship to both Admiral Cooke and Badger, was decommissioned at the Hunter's Point San Francisco Naval Shipyard on June 30th, 1949.⁷⁸ Her decommissioning seemed both ironic and appropriate. As the final flagship for the last

⁷⁵ Cornell, "James V. Forrestal and American National Security Policy," 442-443.

⁷⁶ Letter, Harry Truman to Forrestal, March 2, 1949; Truman, Harry S 1943-1949; James Forrestal Papers, PUL.

⁷⁷ Cornell, "James V. Forrestal and American National Security Policy," 445.

⁷⁸ Ship's History of USS *Estes* (AGC-12)," Ship's Histories, *Essex to Estes*, Box 273, NHHC.

American admirals in China, her role, like the fabled China Marines and gunboats of the Yangtze, all belonged to the past now. More than a half century of American military presence in China had come to an end.⁷⁹

⁷⁹ “Chronological Record of Events, NAVWESPAC, 9 April 1948 to 28 August 1949,” History of the Seventh Fleet, Post-1946 Operations Plans, 1946-1950, Box 187, Seventh Fleet Papers, NHHC.

CONCLUSION

On May 22nd, 1949 James Forrestal fell to his death from the 16th floor of the Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland. His death was labeled a suicide, but decades later doubts and conspiracies still lingered about his end. Further calamities soon followed. Just three days later Shanghai would fall to Mao Zedong's armies. Beijing and the rest of North China had long since been overrun. Chiang Kai-shek, having spent the summer in desperate attempts to stave off the collapse of his regime, made preparations to depart Chongqing for Taiwan.¹ On October 1st, having demolished all opposition Mao Zedong proclaimed the new People's Republic of China in Beijing. The following day the Soviet Union recognized the new nation. The worst fears of Forrestal and Charles Cooke seemed to have been realized. The Nationalists had been destroyed and Mao Zedong's Chinese Communist Party, in lockstep with Moscow, was now in control in Beijing.

Meanwhile the administration of Harry Truman attempted to absolve itself of responsibility for the outcome of the Chinese Civil War. In January of 1949, as the Nationalist collapse seemed imminent Truman ordered the newly elevated Secretary of State Dean Acheson to prepare an official report on the matter. Released to the public in August and entitled *United States Relations with China, With Special Reference to the Period 1944-1949*, the report provided a lengthy and overstuffed defense of both Roosevelt and Truman's policies in China. Over a thousand pages in length, the China

¹ Chongqing fell to the Communists on December 1st 1949, and Chiang flew to Taiwan on the 10th. Jonathan Fenby, *China's Generalissimo and the Nation He Lost* (New York: Carroll and Graf Publishers, 2003): 496-497.

White Paper, as it was informally known, was a detailed narrative of U.S. military, economic, and diplomatic relations with China and Chiang's GMD. Acheson, who had succeeded George Marshall as Secretary of State in January 1949, offered this *mea culpa* early in the paper, writing, "The unfortunate but inescapable fact is that the ominous result of the civil war in China was beyond the control of the government of the United States. Nothing that this country did or could have done within the reasonable limits of its capabilities could have changed that result."²

Months before the release of the China White Paper Congressional Republicans had held hearings on Truman's China policy. Claire Chennault, who testified before Congress on May 3rd, 1949 predicted that China's collapse would lead to the fall of Indochina, Indonesia, and much of the rest of Asia to communism.³ The release of the White Paper had been intended to offer a reasonable account of American policy in China and quiet the growing controversy about America's perceived failure. Yet it had the opposite effect. Truman's critics assailed the report. Congressional Republicans, supported by the influential China Lobby, called it a whitewash of the facts. Energized by a presidential administration on the defensive, they demanded action long before the final collapse of the Nationalists. Pro-Nationalist congressmen repeated the long standing belief that Mao Zedong and the CCP took their orders from Moscow.

² *The China White Paper*: August 1949, Vol. 1 (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press): xvi.

³ William P. Head, "The China Policy of the Truman Administration and the Debate Over Recognition of the People's Republic of China, 1949" in *Harry S. Truman: The Man from Independence*, William F. Levantrosser, ed. (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986): 93.

In his scathing attack on the presidency of Harry Truman, historian Arnold Offner admits that Truman inherited a frustrating and confusing policy on China, but places blame on both Truman and Marshall for their inability to work with Mao and the CCP, and continually showing preference for the Nationalists and starting the mediation effort with closed minds, writing, “In fact, from the start Truman and his chief aides viewed the CCP as agents of Soviet power, not as Chinese or Marxists bent on pursuing their own political and national interests that historically were often at odds with Russian/Soviet interests.”⁴ The Truman administration made many miscalculations in China, perhaps the most prominent being the naïve belief that throwing George Marshall at the problem would provide a quick solution. Yet as this study shows, Stalin continually pressed his hard won Yalta concessions on China and offered more assistance to the CCP than acknowledged by Offner.

As for the U.S. Navy, its hopes for a permanent place in China’s future vanished with the final departure from Qingdao. Time and time again the Navy’s leaders in both Washington and China, most notably Chief of Staff Admiral William Leahy, Forrestal, and Charles Cooke, pushed back against Marshall and both the U.S. Army and State Department on China policy. To make sense of this one must first look backwards a few years. Much of the Navy’s determination to stay in China can be traced back to the wartime decisions of Franklin Roosevelt. The decision to bring the Soviet Union into the war against Japan, the agreements made regarding China at Yalta, and the lofty place the

⁴ Arnold A. Offner, *Another Such Victory: President Truman and the Cold War, 1945-1953* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002): 344-45.

president envisioned for China in the postwar world directly and indirectly influenced the Navy leadership's posture. Sizing up the comparative postwar predictions of Winston Churchill and Roosevelt, historian Max Hastings offers this revealing analysis, writing, "The president's world vision was more enlightened, yet even less realistic. He pinned his faith for the future upon the new United Nations organization, the rise of Chiang Kai-shek's China, and a working partnership between America and the Soviet Union."⁵

Of course, Roosevelt's vision for the future was not only wrong, it was hopelessly idealistic and naïve. Stalin was not the partner he had hoped for, nor was Chiang Kai-shek. Yet Roosevelt's predictions, in the Navy's eyes, became intertwined with the Cold War. Nationalist China, whatever its battlefield record, had been a staunch ally of the United States, and was a nation that had endured eight years of brutal war and millions of casualties at the hands of the Japanese. Preventing this huge population from falling to communism became a priority. The Navy's senior leaders were unwilling to abandon this ally and country so easily.

For the Soviet invasion of Manchuria, long a goal of Roosevelt, the United States and China both paid a heavy price. Although it almost certainly ended the war more rapidly, Soviet control of the huge province permitted the Russians to gain a semi-permanent stronghold in Dalian and fed into the narrative of the Cold War. Although the precise level of support remains unclear, the Soviet Union provided aid and comfort, and certainly gave captured weaponry to the Chinese Communist Party during the period of

⁵ Max Hastings, *Winston's War: Churchill, 1940-1945* (New York: Vintage Books, 2009): 419

its greatest vulnerability. Without Soviet control of Manchuria and even the minimal support that went along with it, the CCP may not have survived the fall of 1945 to emerge capable of winning the civil war three years later.

Another aspect of this attitude was the Navy's experience in China during the war. In stark contrast to U.S. Army the Navy had a productive and largely positive relationship with the GMD, especially the controversial Dai Li. The centerpiece of this was the also much debated Sino-American Cooperative Organization (SACO). Milton Miles and SACO were able to forge a remarkably effective organization in China, a fact that incensed both General Albert Wedemeyer and the China-Burma-India Army staff. Wedemeyer's relationship with Chiang was an improvement over the disaster that was Joseph Stilwell, but considerable friction existed between the two as Wedemeyer consistently argued that the Nationalists' corrupt and inflexible nature would lead to their downfall. Furthermore, many Navy leaders, most notably Admiral Ernest J. King, were eager to move in and reclaim China from the Army's control at the war's end. A force of nature in his own way, King's longstanding desire to return the Navy to China ensured that his protégé, Charles Cooke, pushed continuously for the Navy to remain in Qingdao.

The second reason for the Navy and Marine's attitudes on China can be found in the realities of the postwar U.S. military establishment. For the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps, the years following Japan's surrender in 1945 were uncertain times mired in defensiveness. The very existence of both the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps hung in the balance, as the power of the atomic bomb and new ideas about warfare seemed to

presage their demise. Air Force leaders, strongly supported by the Army, argued that strategic bombing should become first line of defense for the United States, not the grey fleets of the past. The Marines faced an even more existential test in the postwar years, as senior Army leaders such as General Omar Bradley expressed a prophetic certainty that amphibious landings could never be a part of any future war.⁶ As historian Allan R. Millet concludes, “the Marine Corps found itself pitted against a strong War Department-executive branch-Congressional coalition that wanted to strip the Corps of its wartime amphibious assault mission, transfer Marine aviation to the newly independent Air Force, and so constrain Marine combat functions that the Corps could have been a force in readiness only if its opponents had been Pacific islanders.”⁷

Both services suffered overwhelming postwar reductions. The Marine Corps was shrunk from a high of more than 450,000 on V-J Day to 155,00 a year later.⁸ The vast grey fleets that had triumphed in both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans were steadily being mothballed or sold for scrap, as the Navy went from over 1,200 major warships to less than 240 five years later.⁹ The usefulness of a modern fleet was being called into question by both air and land strategists who argued that the atomic bomb made all but a coastal naval force obsolete. Future wars, they said, would be won by land armies supported by heavy bombers capable of delivering nuclear payloads deep into enemy

⁶ Merrill Bartlett, ed., *Assault from the Sea: Essays on the History of Amphibious Warfare* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1983): ix.

⁷ Allan R. Millet, *Semper Fidelis: The History of the United States Marine Corps* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Co, 1980): 456-457.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 447.

⁹ <http://www.history.navy.mil/research/histories/ship-histories/us-ship-force-levels.html#1945>. Accessed August 21, 2016.

territory. Navies would no longer be needed. As the military establishment embarked upon the complex and difficult process of both demobilization and unification, Navy and Marine Corps leaders feared their unique capabilities and prestige were in danger of being lost forever. In the postwar world the U.S. Army was in control of the occupation of Germany and Japan. The new Air Force positioned itself at the guardian of nuclear warfare. And U.S. Navy leaders argued safeguarding China was its role. The top leadership of the USMC agreed.

The views of the Army and Air Force ignored thousands of years of military history and relied on unproven and ephemeral opinions regarding airpower and nuclear weapons. Yet as ridiculous as these arguments seem today many civilian and military leaders of the time believed them. To combat these prevailing views advocated by their rival services the Navy's leadership struggled to find a role to justify its existence. A strong defense of China and the prevention of a Communist takeover became one of those missions the Navy leadership considered essential. Men like Forrestal, Leahy, and Cooke seized upon the growing Cold War as evidence that the Navy and Marines were urgently needed in China. Even after the military necessity or even logic of keeping the Seventh Fleet/Western Forces, Pacific in Qingdao had passed they felt the symbolic presence of U.S. warships and fighting men was an important part of resisting Soviet expansion.

The rivalry between the Army and Navy leadership in China ebbed and flowed over the five years covered in this study, but the tension was very real. For the Army leadership, especially George Marshall, China was a task to be overcome. But once his

mediation mission failed he turned his back on the GMD. The Navy's relationship with China was far more complex. The Navy's arguments for retaining a presence and a working base in China were based both on strategy and nostalgia. Keeping China from falling into communism was certainly part of its strategic logic, as was providing a buffer against the Soviet Union. The Navy, and to a lesser extent the Marine Corps, had a longstanding proprietary relationship with China. For over a quarter century Navy gunboats patrolled Chinese rivers to enforce the Open Door. Duty in the vast country was considered the highlight of one's career. Nostalgia for the China from decades past crept into the Navy's arguments, long after it made strategic or political sense.

A discerning reader might conclude from this study that the Army/Navy differences over China were more a clash of personalities than sound disagreements over strategy and policy. And there is some truth to this. The idiosyncratic and brilliant minds of Forrestal, Cooke, Marshall, and Wedemeyer are a large part of this study. But what was World War II but often a clash of larger than life personalities? Men like George Patton and Douglas MacArthur have become legends for their unique bombast and ego on the battlefield. In China, the personality clashes between Joseph Stilwell and Chiang Kai-shek are an ineluctable aspect of history. And this only includes the top military leaders. An understanding of personality in conflict, but especially World War II, is essential.

Forrestal, Leahy, and Cooke agreed on the need to safeguard China from Communist expansion. Although all three recognized the endemic corruption and disorganized nature of the GMD, they also agreed that the alternative was much worse.

Of the two Forrestal and Cooke were the most staunchly anti-communist. For them the admonitions of George Kennan on the dangers of worldwide Soviet expansion were very real. Neither felt that Harry Truman was doing enough to repel the communist threat in Asia, and so they did what they could with what they had. Admiral Oscar Badger, though in lockstep with much of his predecessors' views, had little more than a year as head of Western Forces, Pacific, and by the time he assumed command the communists were almost at his doorstep on the Shandong Peninsula.

Qingdao, that former German colony that became synonymous with the U.S. Seventh Fleet and the China Marines, was retained by the Navy as a forward base for three major reasons. The complex political situation in the Philippines made the use of former naval bases in that country uncertain. In Japan the dominance of Douglas MacArthur, the "American Caesar" made unattractive the locating of bases. Perhaps the most important reason for maintaining an American military presence in Qingdao was to provide an important counterweight to Soviet control of nearby Dalian.

After 1946, the Navy played a more important role in China than did the Marines. In truth, after the spring of 1946 the Marines' presence in China proved an impediment to any hope of settlement between the GMD and the CCP. The 1st and 6th Marines were extremely useful in keeping trains running and moving coal to cold and hungry people in China's teeming cities in the fall and winter of 1945, but the sight of Marine chevrons in the country fueled the perception among the CCP that the United States was supporting its enemy as an imperialist power. The movement of the Nationalist armies by the Seventh Fleet seemed to confirm this. Perhaps if the Marines

had been withdrawn at the same time as the Soviet departure from Manchuria or by June of 1946, this image could have been avoided. However, the steady drawdown had the unfortunate effect of still angering the communists and making the Marines vulnerable, as was proved with lethality at Anping and Hsin Ho.

Despite the final outcome of the Chinese Civil War, which saw Nationalist China all but extinguished and the banner of communism spread from Shanghai to Urumqi, the 1944-1949 U.S. Navy and Marine operations were not a failure. Nor were they a thinly disguised attempt to reintroduce imperialism or colonialism to East Asia. Historians who argue this ignore a basic fact of many military operations: they were very pragmatic.¹⁰ Setting aside concerns over the Soviet Union, the U.S. Navy and Marines were sent to China in an attempt to stabilize a catastrophic situation, prevent greater bloodshed, and get the Japanese out of the country they had brutalized for more than eight years. And thanks to the American sailors and Marines these goals were largely met. The repatriation effort stands out as the best example of this campaign. Now all but forgotten, this was a massive logistical operation moving millions of former enemies, and undoubtedly contributed to healing of relations between the United States and Japan.

Were Cooke, Leahy, and Forrestal wrong to advocate so strongly for a continued U.S. military presence in China? Certainly they exaggerated even the symbolic importance of the Seventh Fleet and China Marines. After 1946 their presence was almost superfluous, and for the Marines especially dangerous. And they were wrong

¹⁰ See David Wilson, "Leathernecks in North China, 1945," *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* (Summer 1972, Vol. 4): 22-27.

about Chiang Kai-shek, his corrupt government, and the staying power of the Nationalists. Yet if they were wrong about China, they were in many ways correct about Asia, as the great continent would become the primary battleground in the Cold War, instead of Europe. For all the failures often attributed to their mission, the military tasks performed by the Seventh Fleet and III Marine Expeditionary Force proved far more successful than the diplomatic effort undertaken by Marshall. As the guns fell silent in Asia, American sailors and Marines brought a measure of security and confidence to a nation that had known only war for decades. They ended up staying too long, but for a short period their presence made a difference to many and saved countless lives. That, not the Marshall Mission, was perhaps the greatest gift the United States gave to China.

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