

## For God & Country - The Spirit of Capt. John Birch, Christian Missionary And American Patriot

As we discovered in Parts 1 & 2 of this article, the Christian missionary named John Birch lived a short but incredibly dedicated and adventurous life. Back in the 1930's, hundreds of faithful Christians from many denominations devoted part or all of their lives to missionary work in the large and chaotic country of China. John's parents were part of that dedicated band, and as soon as he was trained and prepared, he also became one of them.

Last time we covered how Birch met Col. Jimmy Doolittle and several other flyers from the raid launched from USS Hornet on April 18, 1942. John accompanied Doolittle and the others and led them to safety in unoccupied China. He did the same (with the help of Chinese patriots and guerillas) for about 60 of the other Doolittle Raiders. It was only a short time before Col. Jimmy Doolittle informed **Maj. General Claire Chennault, Commander of the famed "Flying Tigers"** (the AVG, or American Volunteer Group), of Birch's heroics in leading his aircrews to safety. Chennault was already a legend among the Free Chinese for the great success achieved by his "Flying Tigers", the all-volunteer mercenary force who flew Curtiss P-40 Warhawks against superior Japanese aircraft and attacked enemy ground targets.

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General Claire Chennault (1890-1958) as he appeared when commanding the "1st American Volunteer Group (The Flying Tigers) in China, 1937-1942. His nickname was "Old Leatherface."  
By W.H. Lamb

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Soon after Chennault met Birch, he offered to commission him as a Second Lieutenant in the U.S. Army. After thinking it over for a time, and **being assured by Chennault that he could continue to preach and perform his missionary work**, John accepted the general's offer. He was commissioned on July 4, 1942 (the date that the Flying Tigers were incorporated into the U.S. Army Air Corps). Chennault appointed John as his official "intelligence department", with permission to preach whenever possible. It was during this time that Birch became aware that there were Americans in high positions in the U.S. Government and upper military echelons who were trying to "manipulate" events in China that would aid the Chinese communists and lead to the defeat of the legal but somewhat corrupt Nationalist Government under Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek.

Due to Birch's knowledge of the Chinese language, and because he had extensive experience moving throughout large portions of China, and because he was an acknowledged "master of disguise", had a great love for the Chinese people he had been working with since 1940, and with a newly discovered skill at gathering intelligence useful to the military, John became, for all intents, a spy for the U.S. Army in China. John began to serve with the China Air Task Force, which became the 14<sup>th</sup> Air Force on March 5, 1943. John was later "loaned" to the U.S. Office of Strategic Services (OSS), but he regularly criticized the OSS, declaring that he only wanted to work for General Chennault.

During these years, Birch built up an extensive network of intelligence operatives, Chinese patriots who were sympathetic to the U.S., and who supplied John, and ultimately Chennault, with intelligence of Japanese shipping and troop movements. John routinely accomplished dangerous assignments under the noses of the enemy, during which he would brazenly conduct Sunday services for military and Chinese Christians. Major Gustav Krause, Commander of the Air Base that John worked from, noted in his diary: *"Birch is a good officer, but I'm afraid is too brash and may run into trouble."* Often worn out and ill, Birch was urged to take a leave, but he kept refusing, telling Chennault he would not leave China, *"Until the last Jap did."* Many years after the war was over and John was dead, Claire Chennault, a true American hero in his own right and a tough warrior, would remark, with tears in his eyes, **"John Birch was like the son I never had."**

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Gen. Claire Chennault promotes John Birch to Captain in the U.S. Army - July 1944. Capt. Birch also was awarded the Legion of Merit Medal by Gen. Chennault that same month.

In July of 1944, Birch was promoted to the rank of Captain, and in that same month received The Legion of Merit medal from Gen. Chennault). He continued to serve honorably until the end of the war on Aug. 13, 1945. By this time, Gen. Chennault had already been transferred back to the States, leaving Birch with a new superior officer, Gen. Albert Wedemeyer, a tough patriot who had

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quickly replaced Gen. "Cigar" Joe Stibwer, one of the military people who despised the Nationalist Chinese President, Chiang Kai-shek, and did everything he could to assist the communists' takeover of the Chinese government (which they did in 1949). Gen. Wedemeyer was keenly aware of the extreme danger posed by the Chinese communist forces, and swiftly ordered all remaining Japanese Commanders to surrender only to the Americans before the communists could capture their bases.

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US Army Captian John Birch, as he appeared, C.1945, shortly before he was killed by the Chinese Communists.

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Gen. Wedemeyer eventually ordered Capt. John Birch to go to a large Japanese base in Suchow, several hundred miles away. John traveled with a group of eleven Chinese nationals, moving through areas infested with armed communists. His group's progress was halted several times en route to his destination by belligerent communists who threatened to kill them and confiscate their equipment and weapons. During John's final confrontation with one of these groups of communist insurgents, he was treated threateningly, which caused him to lose his temper and become somewhat bellicose with them. John was wearing his full U.S. Army uniform with his "Flying Tiger" patch emblazoned on it. Becoming more vexed and irritated (according to a surviving witness), Birch kept reminding his captors that the war was over and that they were not enemies. He also accused them of being "worse than bandits".

Suddenly one of the communist officers ordered his men to disarm Birch, who tried to resist. John's aide tried to help him but was shot in his thigh, beaten, bleeding and left for dead (he survived and was the witness who reported what had happened to Birch). One of the communists shot John in his leg, then they tied him up and forced him to kneel. The command was given to kill Birch, and he was shot in the back of his head, and his face was mutilated with bayonets until he was unrecognizable. **So it was that on August. 25, 1945, Capt. John Birch was murdered, supposedly the first casualty of "the Cold War"**. Local Catholic Chinese held a funeral service for John and two U.S. Army Air Corps pilots who had been killed in a nearby crash. Then the three deceased men were escorted through the city of Hsuchow, China, accompanied by the local Japanese military band. They were buried in a non-cemetery location on a hillside overlooking the town. A local Chinese Protestant Clergyman conducted a graveside service for the three, and Japanese soldiers from the nearby base, who had previously surrendered, fired a volley of rifle shots as John Birch and the two pilots were lowered into their graves. After Gen. Wedemeyer sent the report of Birch's death to our War Dept., it was stamped "Top Secret". John's parents were informed in an official letter from the War Department that, "***There was a clash between Chinese Central Government forces and irregular Chinese troops and your son was struck by a stray bullet...***". Which was, of course, a TOTAL LIE! Eventually Senator William Knowland (R-CA) discovered and honorably exposed the true purpose of this cover-up, which was to prevent Birch's parents and all Americans of that time from discovering the truth that we had purposely sacrificed our Nationalist Chinese friends and raised up our Chinese communist enemies, who assumed control of all of China in 1949. Oh, the betrayal! Oh, the **TREASON!**