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the Whiff of Grapeshot

Andy Nunez

(Special Note: This will be John Burt's swan song, as he is moving on to *Paper Wars*. So, this issue gives you a double dose of his work, his last book review and a look at the battle of Imphal. All of us here at *Against the Odds* wish John the best of luck.)

Special forces have been in the news a lot lately with the recent passing of the anniversary of the death of Osama Bin Laden, arguably the most notorious man of the 21st century. Special forces as we know them today have deep roots. In the past, all leaders have had those men they count on for certain jobs. These are men prepared to take risks and leave a trail of corpses to achieve the ends of their command authority. While we don't associate these men with the military until more modern times, they are little different from those who sat in the wooden horse at Troy, or sneaked into a dry water channel during the feast of Belshazzar.

Special forces really came into their own in the 20th century. Commando teams were formed to carry out little raids, reconnaissance, etc. Underwater demolition teams blew up coastal installations and shipping on both sides in World War II. A number of branches had special units: British commandos, US Army Rangers, the OSS operatives; but it was in the stinking, hot jungles of Burma that true special forces were born, self-reliant (except for air supply) units that could melt into the green Hell of Burma and emerge to disrupt enemy activities.

The results were mixed, and in the end, they were used for what they were not, regular infantry; but here was a template for units who could suddenly appear where nobody expected and do more damage than a large conventional attack. The world's armed forces were seriously drawn down after the war, so by Korea, it

was necessary to rebuild units to provide that necessary stiletto attack. First, the US Army developed the Green Berets, elite special forces that harked back to the days of Merrill's Marauders. Up to that point, the only real movie to feature special forces in action was named after the WWII combat unit. Then came the Vietnam War.

Green Berets went in to instruct South Vietnamese troops and ended up fighting alongside them; as American armed forces increased their numbers in the war, so did the Green Berets, slipping in and out of the Vietnamese jungles in the hunt for Viet Cong insurgents. They managed to get a movie about their fictionalized exploits. It was probably the last movie made that ennobled the Vietnam War; banking on the star power of John Wayne and David Jansen.

Still, the US Special Forces were a tricky blade to wield. The Israeli commandos were assaulting terrorist strongholds and hijacked aircraft. The US made a bid to free the Iranian hostages using a helicopter assault by special forces, and it became a disaster and a wakeup call. All the problems with the Iranian hostage rescue effort led to better equipment and training, along with the formation of Navy SEALs (SEa, Air, Land Special forces). Tougher than tough, Navy SEALs went into action during the invasions of Grenada and Panama. Along with other US elite forces, they got the job done, in spite of other issues that arose in coordination with other arms. Elsewhere, British SAS and SBS commandos worked in remote areas of the planet like the Falklands.

Special forces appeared in every hotspot on the globe. Movies came out that regularly lionized their abilities. From the Gulf War to the Balkans, special forces performed dangerous rescue missions along with other classified activities. It was the period after the 9/11 attacks

that called for the rapid expansion of all special forces in the US military. Again and again they battled insurgents in the deserts and mountains of Afghanistan and Iraq, taking out the terror network's leaders and digging Saddam Hussein out of his bolthole.

When it seemed that the main villain in the 9/11 tragedy would never be caught, late word came a little over a year ago that SEAL Team Six had done the impossible. It flew undetected into a sovereign nation with fairly modern technology, landed in that nation and overwhelmed the bodyguard of Osama Bin Laden, dealing out frontier justice to America's most wanted and most hated fugitive.

Was too much reliance put on special forces in Afghanistan? Bin Laden's escape from Tora Bora has been chalked up to the special forces over-reliance on Northern Alliance troops to close the circle around Bin Laden's last stand in Afghanistan. Even with an expansion, it was ten years later before he was finally taken down.

But that's today. We aren't dealing with today. We are dealing with sixty years in the past, when an odd man named Orde Wingate put together a force that could pull off attacks deep in the enemy's rear. We are also looking up and down the chain of command at leaders on both sides, how one side went from victory into defeat, and the other side from defeat into victory.

What can you do? Can you make good use of the tools available to the participants and change history? The men and machines are waiting. Disease, hunger, thirst, and an implacable enemy await. There is a flash of movement deep in the jungle. Is it the lady or the tiger?

Andy

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

THE WHIFF OF GRAPESHOT 1
by Andy Nunez

ORDER OF APPEARANCE: Works in Progress 3
by Lembit Tohver

ON GUARDS: The Extraordinary Orde and his Chindits 5
by Andy Nunez

DEFEAT INTO VICTORY: The Final Campaigns in Burma . . 8
by Paul Rohrbaugh

DANJITE OKONOEBA KISHIN MO SAKUI
The Battle of Imphal/Kohima 19
by John D. Burt

DEFEAT INTO VICTORY - Rules of Play
by Paul Rohrbaugh

AND THE DATA SHOWS: All Hopes to Naught 28
by Ed Heinsman

SOME LESSONS FROM THE SENIOR GENRE 34
What Board Wargame Designers can Learn from Miniatures Rules
by Jim Werbaneth

THE RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN OF 1812 38
How can the wargame translate its extremes?
by Frédéric Bey

SIMULATION CORNER: The Coming Boardgame Renaissance? . . . 42
by John Prados

THE FIFTH COLUMNIST: The Russian Civil War Book Review . . . 44
by John D. Burt

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Cover Artwork: Detail from "Irrawaddy Ambush" by Stuart Brown



ORDER OF APPEARANCE WORKS IN PROGRESS LEMBIT TOHVER, STAFF DEVELOPER

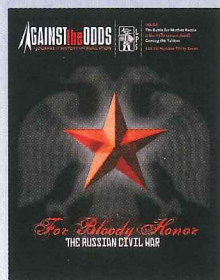
Issue #37 transports us back to Russia at the end of WWI. It is the time of the Russian Revolution. Mark Woloshen has designed *For Bloody Honor: The Russian Civil War*, a relatively easy game on this topic that handles two to seven players. If the Reds are defeated early in the game, the White players carry on to decide which one of them is the victor. The game captures the

interactions of political influence, railways, foreign intervention (the whole Western alliance: British, French, Canadian, Australian, Indian, Japanese, and

U.S. troops that fought in Russia), and the discord there was amongst the White factions. Each one of the 10 turns represents 4 months of real time from the end of 1918 to the end of 1921. The game uses a chit pull system which determines when players can move and when they can fight. Each area of the game has a value, which will influence their recruitment of forces and determine victory. If you lose a battle, defection of your troops can occur. Can you, as the Reds, repeat history and form a Union of Soviet Socialist Republics? Or can you, as the Whites, change the course of events in the 20th century?



FOR BLOODY HONOR MAP IN-PROGRESS



Issue #38 visits WWI in Africa with John Gorkowski's *Guns of the Askari*, and **Issue #39** puts us into the winter of 1805 (as Kutuzov launches his forces against Mortier at Durenstein) with Andy Nunez's *These Brave Fellows*.

GEORGE A. RAWLING

One of our most tireless supporters, George Arnold Rawling, passed away earlier this year. He was 90 and was in declining health.

Born in 1921, he was the only son of Dr. Francis Rawling, who immigrated to the United States from Yorkshire, England, in 1911, and Grace Lee Rawling, a schoolteacher from West Virginia. Dr. Rawling, a chemist at the Luke Pulp and Paper Company in western Maryland, was responsible for a number of patents relating to paper manufacture.

George graduated from the University of Maryland in 1943 with a degree in chemical engineering. He then joined the U.S. Navy and served aboard an LST in the Amphibious Corps, participating in the invasions of Saipan, the Philippines, Iwo Jima, and Okinawa. At Iwo Jima, he was in charge of a landing craft carrying Marines to the beach where Japanese gunfire sank it, but not before George and other survivors managed to wade ashore. Discharged a year after the war, he returned to his *alma mater* to earn a Master's degree in applied mathematics, followed by a research fellowship in industrial mathematics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

In 1949 he married the former Rosanne Gilfedder of Cambridge, Massachusetts. From 1954 to 1960, he worked at Johns Hopkins University's Applied Physics Lab, while living in College Park, Maryland.

In 1960, the family moved to Pennsylvania, where George joined General Electric as a consulting engineer, mostly in aerospace, but also in devising undersea technologies. He then moved to Philadelphia's Frankford Arsenal for a number of years before returning to G.E., retiring from there in 1986.



George enjoyed swimming, took fencing lessons, and participated in such sports as boxing and wrestling. He was an avid reader with a wide range of interests—including military history, science, historical whodunits, fiction, and fantasy—and studied Arabic and other foreign languages. He admired the caricaturist Al Hirschfeld and could draw his own amusing cartoons. On a personal note, late in his life I remember him showing me the matrices that he had worked out by hand decades before for determining the flight and orientation of bodies in flight—long before we had calculators and spreadsheets that could do the same thing in seconds. Creation is an unusual act and given who I am, I did, and still do, admire his insight and perseverance to create something from himself—fine gifts he passed along and nurtured in the next generation.

—Stephen Rawling



THE EXTRAORDINARY ORDE AND HIS CHINDITS

While American readers are more than familiar with Merrill's Marauders, Orde Wingate's Chindits were in fact the larger command, operating with Merrill to accomplish the same task. Who was Orde Wingate, and how did he rise from the cloud of official military disfavor to put together one of history's unique elite forces? Let's take a look at the man under the iconic pith helmet.

Orde Wingate was born in India in 1903. He was sent to England for education and had a spotty record. He did, however, graduate from the Royal Military Academy in Woolwich and was commissioned in 1926. He was posted to the Sudan, self-taught himself Arabic and became known for his ability to understand local customs. 1936 found him in Palestine, where his stint established his reputation as an expert at raising and training irregular forces. He arrived there in the midst of a bad situation.

Based on the Versailles treaty of 1919, Palestine had been designated as the Jewish homeland. The local Arabs vigorously opposed this and made life miserable for any Jews, whether native or emigrating to the new territory, which was based on the historical record going back to Biblical times. Wingate asked for and received permission to recruit local Jews for self-defense forces. The Special Night Squads, as they were called, fought Arab terror attacks. Squad members went on to help with the formation of the modern Israeli Defense Forces.

At some point, Wingate became an ardent Zionist and assisted the Zionist cause in London. While facing opposition from a number of officials, he gained the respect of Winston Churchill, a powerful politician, and he continued to work with irregular forces. September 1939 found him in the Horn of Africa at the head of "Gideon Force," composed of Ethiopian natives whose mission was to help rid the country of Italian occupation by interdicting supply and communication routes. Swift and hard-hitting, Gideon Force regularly punched above its weight, outmaneuvering and outfighting the Italians. Wingate was so successful that he personally returned Emperor Haile Selassie to his capitol in May 1942.

Again, he got in trouble by speaking out against the actions of superiors and politicians in the matter. He was reduced in rank as a result. Back in Cairo, he fell into depression and suffered from malaria in July 1942. He attempted to take his own life at this point, but failed and eventually recovered from his maladies. General Archibald Wavell, in command of the Indian Theater, tapped Wingate to head up his Bush Warfare School. Wingate took the lessons of Palestine and Ethiopia, and trained his recruits to act on an even larger stage, in the jumbled terrain along the border between India and Burma.

The Japanese had smashed their way across Asia, taking Singapore and Rangoon. Next, it was feared they would be knocking on the door to India, counting on a popular uprising of Indians sick of British rule. British inability to stop the Japanese advance had made some officers think that the Japanese could not be beaten in the tiger-infested jungles of Burma. Indians were flocking to the Japanese sponsored Indian National Army. The British Raj was in danger of being toppled. Something had to be done.

So, in order to counter sagging morale, Wavell ordered Wingate and his students to infiltrate Burma and cause havoc in the rear much he had done in Ethiopia. Officially, his force consisted of 3rd Battalion/2nd Regiment Gurkha Rifles, and the 142nd

Commando Company. Augmenting these regulars were a number of loyal Burmese, to provide scouts and translators, who also fought. Wingate, given Burma as his area of operations, decided to name his force *Chinthe*, the name of those stone lions you see outside Burmese temples, whose function is to ward off evil spirits.

Wavell augmented his force until it topped 3000 men. Officially, it was known as the 77th Indian Infantry Brigade.

His force was supplied by the Royal Air Force, but it was a learning process for Wingate and the RAF. The thick Burmese jungle, damp and infested with deadly creatures, including the Burmese python, was unlike the arid hills of Palestine or the mountains and forests of Ethiopia. Despite these handicaps, Wingate took his force into the morass and wrought havoc with the Japanese logistic system.

Forming his command into seven columns (an eighth column was broken up to fill out the other seven), each one having elements from his commando group and led by Burmese, Wingate marched into the green hell of Burma, counting on close air support as flying artillery.

His tactics spread more unease than actual damage, but it forced the Japanese to take men away from the front to guard supply depots. After several months in the bush, Wingate emerged to accolades for his work, though it was at the cost of nearly one-third his men. The columns were collected under a group command, two columns to a command, while the group commands answered to the brigade headquarters. Their heavy gear was loaded onto mules. The mules, in turn, could be used as food if things got desperate.

Cutting themselves off from any logistical tail or supply line, the men each packed 72 pounds of gear onto a metal rack called an Everest carrier. Favored weapons were Thompson submachine guns and long knives, either machetes or the bent-bladed Gurkha knife. Freed of his personal devils, Wingate had returned to his element. Every photo of him shows his intense expression, his stance animated and energetic. Thoughts of suicide were gone, though some might think such a desperate mission was pretty close to self-destruction.

On February 8, 1943, Operation Longcloth began. Originally part of a larger offensive, a deception plan covered the fact that the main attack had been cancelled. Wingate's Chindits were over the river Chindwin by February 13. Within a couple of days they were in action as the two southern columns gave the impression of being a larger attack, to the point of having one of their number dress up as a British general and having RAF strikes ahead of the fake attack, while Wingate's other columns headed east. The deception columns swung around and headed east also, but one of them was ambushed by the Japanese. The other did manage to cause several breaks on a vital railway.

Two columns managed to reach the main north-south rail line within days of each other, causing dozens of breaks. They were unable to stick around, though, and the Japanese quickly repaired the damage. Wingate depended on a single squadron of RAF transport planes for supply. His men had to hack their way through the dense jungle, and were forced to leave their wounded in hellish conditions.

In the field, Wingate's quirks reappeared. He became mercurial, changing plans without warning, and not always contacting all the columns. Column leaders got confused, and two of them were

ambushed by the Japanese while attempting to get back into India. Crossing the Irrawaddy, Wingate soon found himself in thick, maze-like terrain. The Japanese were able to tighten their pursuit, and the Chindits soon found themselves running out of places to hide. Wingate had no choice but to withdraw, since the enemy was closing in on him and he was reaching the limits of air support. Mysteriously, he ordered one column to keep moving east.

Each column was to find its way back to India on its own, and the Japanese hounded them the whole way. The columns eventually split into smaller groups and scattered, taking months to finally get out of Burma. One group ended up in China. By autumn, Wingate's 3000 could only count slightly more than 2100 survivors, of whom 600 were too bad off to continue active service. Wingate kept a hard core of survivors and turned the rest back to their regular units. While boosting morale, his actual accomplishments were limited, but he did tie down a lot of Japanese manpower that would otherwise have been used in the front line.

While riding a wave of good press, Wingate wrote a full report, polishing his accomplishments while making scathing comments about his subordinates. His self-inflicted dip into hot water didn't last long, and his ally (and now Prime Minister) Winston Churchill nabbed him to take along to the Quebec Conference to meet with US President Franklin Roosevelt. While Churchill did not get his wish to have a British general lead the Normandy invasion, Wingate came away with a box load of goodies. The Americans went all in, deciding to raise their own long range penetration group (soon to be known as Merrill's Marauders) and threw in a ton of logistical support, from K-rations to giving Wingate his own air force to call in for direct supply and support.

While he was in Burma and then off to Quebec, his boss, General Wavell, had not been idle. Seeing the value of the Chindits, he formed a second brigade group from the 111th Indian Brigade and put it under Brigadier General Joseph Lemaire. His idea was to rotate the two Chindit units in and out of Burma, but when Wingate found out, he was furious. Disdainful of Indian units, he insisted on regular British infantry to fill out his plans, bumping the number of brigades up to six on the authority of the high command. Overwhelmed by the news coming out of Quebec, Wavell had to back down, but Wingate's victory was not total, as he was stuck with the Indian brigade and two Gurkha battalions. Combined with his First Air Commando Group, consisting of Dakota transport aircraft and gliders, Wingate had big plans.



Planes of First Air Commando Group

First he wanted to engineer an uprising of the ethnic Kachin population of northern Burma. He ran into some friction there due to some rivalry with a group that was already trying to do that. Then, he wanted to push more columns into Burma on a massive scale, totally disrupting the Japanese support network and capturing all of northern Burma. The planned major offensive was again scrapped, and a new plan involved using the Chindits to help American General Joseph "Vinegar Joe" Stillwell drive his US and Chinese forces down the Ledo Road and link up with the Burma Road through northern Burma.

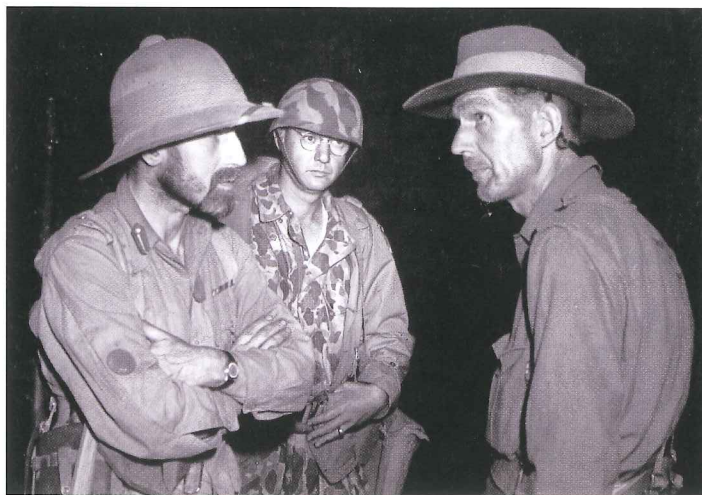
Slim, along with United States Army Air Force General George Stratemeier, who was in charge of the Eastern Air Command, gave



General Stratemeier

the final orders to the infiltrating forces, including Wingate's Chindits. They were to operate in the northern area of the theater to operate in the rear of the Japanese 18th Division, isolating it from resupply and reinforcement, help Chinese forces from Yunnan to get into Burma across the Salween Road, and harass the enemy in northern Burma to disrupt them as much as possible.

Each brigade had its own group name. First out, on foot, was Enterprise group, the 16th Infantry Brigade, marching over rough but lightly-defended terrain into Burma, beginning Operation Thursday on February 5, 1944. The other groups were to be dropped in by air to three designated zones that would be enhanced to become mini-fortified bases complete with airstrips. Of the three, named *Piccadilly*, *Broadway*, and *Chowringhee*, the first, by a twist of fate, was covered by logs, making some fear it was an ambush, but it was just some logging work. Dropping into the *Broadway* site, the gliders fared much worse, causing heavy casualties among Emphasis group, the old 77th Indian Infantry Brigade. The *Chowringhee* site fared much better. Once all 9000 men of the Chindit force landed, *Broadway* became the central base, fortified with artillery and anti-aircraft guns. Two other bases were set up, *Aberdeen* and *White City*. Javelin and Profound groups (14th Infantry and 111th Indian) were flown in using Dakotas, and during the month of March, the fighting between the Chindits and the Japanese increased steadily. The thick jungle made for close in fighting, with swords, knives, and fixed bayonets serving when the enemy got in too close. It was a nasty business of hide and seek, ambush, maul and retreat.



Wingate (now in his iconic helmet) speaks to the British Commander at Chowringhee.

Wingate wanted to attack Indaw and capture its airfields, but the commander of 16th Brigade deemed it impossible. Wingate thought about another target, then decided to go after Indaw over the objections of Brigadier Bernard Fergusson, the brigade leader. Exhausted from the march, without sufficient water, and unable to scout the position, Fergusson attacked piecemeal on March 24, hoping for reinforcement from the 14th Brigade, but they went elsewhere. The Japanese, being on a major railhead, got more troops in and Fergusson was repulsed. The ordeal of the 16th was so terrible that most of the survivors were flown out of Burma.

The same day as the Indaw disaster, Wingate was flown to Imphal in a USAAF B-25 Mitchell bomber to meet with Air Force staff. On the return trip, the plane flew into a thunderstorm and crashed against a mountain in the jungle. There were no survivors. There was

a brief scramble to replace Wingate, with Slim finally deciding on Brigadier Joe Lentaigne, based not only upon his experience, but the fact that he seemed to be the right balance of both training and field experience. He was opposed initially by the Chindit commanders due to his lack of familiarity with the Chindits in general, though he had done some brief work with the original brigade. Wingate adherents disdained him because they shared Wingate's prejudice against Gurkha units in general and Lentaigne in particular, because Wavell had foisted Lentaigne on Wingate without consultation.

The bottom line was that nobody could replace Wingate for his boundless energy and imagination. His confidence was so infectious that even his worst plans were backed by his subordinates. While Lentaigne seated himself, his command was being reorganized at a much more Olympian strata. Stillwell was given control of all Chindits still in Burma. The irascible American immediately changed their mission parameters. Instead of fleeting ghosts striking weak areas from several locations, he wanted them concentrated, ready to take on bigger targets. Stillwell needed them to block the Japanese supply lines maintaining the forces facing his command. Lentaigne obliged, moving 111th Brigade, and having it establish a new fortified area called *Blackpool*.

Now the *Blackpool* force was up against a homogenous Japanese force ready and willing to engage them. Instead of garrison troops, the Chindits were fighting experienced troops with artillery to back them up. Worse, moving to the new site allowed the Japanese 53rd Division to slip by to the north. Within 9 days of its establishment, *Blackpool* was under heavy assault and nearly taken. Due to it being the monsoon season, it was impossible for the other camps to support *Blackpool*, so it had to be abandoned on May 25 after 17 straight days of combat. Unable to move those who had no chance of surviving in the bush, orderlies mercifully shot them and hid the bodies in dense bamboo thickets.

By this time, Stillwell had taken control of all the Chindits. Believing them to be more powerful than they appeared, he ordered them to capture a number of heavily dug-in Japanese positions. Light troops with no support from heavy weapons are poor assault troops, and the Chindits suffered heavy losses in the attempt. They did manage to capture Mogaung in June. 111th Brigade, after its disastrous move to *Blackpool* and disheartening retreat, captured a strategic position known as Point 2171. Totally ruined by jungle diseases, only 119 of the 2200 men remaining were fit for duty, the rest flown out. Another part of the brigade harassed the Japanese around Myitkyina, but the stress of jungle combat kept them from having enough manpower to cut the town off completely.

By August 27, the last Chindits were gone from Burma, worn down by combat and disease. Total casualties for the Chindit force in 1944 were 1396 killed and 2434 wounded. Many more suffered from disease and had to be nursed back to health in order to be fit for duty. After months of training and reorganization, the Chindit force was turned into an airborne unit and eventually disbanded in February 1945. The memory of their glory days seemed to have been buried with Wingate, and it was not until 1990 that a memorial was raised to them.

So, what's the verdict on Orde's magnificent experiment to penetrate deep behind enemy lines and disrupt their vital supply network? The reviews, to be sure, are mixed. Quite a number of books by both adherents and detractors have surfaced over the years. In our modern world, where special forces types have ballooned recently in the age of terrorism and counterinsurgency, the Chindits seem logical, but it was not so clear at the time. Slim firmly believed that plucking the best from the armed forces lowered the overall quality of the regular troops and likened their existence to a cult. From this extreme we travel through autobiographies of various participants, and we come to the opposite extreme, such as Michael Calvert of the 77th Indian Infantry Brigade, who staunchly defended Wingate and the Chindit concept.

The reality is somewhere in the middle. Their operations gave the Japanese pause, boosted morale, and did support the Allied cause by helping to blunt the last Japanese offensive. On the negative side, Wingate was a flighty leader who changed his plans in a mercurial fashion. High casualties did not help, but in the first case it was a lack of experience and support, while in the last offensive, it was misuse of the Chindits as unsupported light infantry trying to hold supported regular infantry. How do we categorize the Chindits? Assuredly as elite warriors; they were trained to be tougher than tough and able to endure almost unimaginable hardships. For that, if for nothing else, they should always be remembered.

Order of Battle for Operation Thursday

- HQ: 3rd Indian Infantry Division (Wingate then Lentaigne)
- 3rd West African Brigade
- 14th Infantry Brigade (English)
- 16th Infantry Brigade (English)
- 77th Indian Infantry Brigade
- 111th Indian Infantry Brigade
- 3 detachments: Morris Force, Dah Force, Galahad (included the US 5307 Composite Unit or Merrill's Marauders and 23rd British Infantry Brigade, several battalions and support units)
- 3 troops of artillery and 4 of anti-aircraft to defend fixed positions
- Various support units, including transport aircraft, engineers, and supply companies

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Andy Nunez played his first wargame in 1975 (Avalon Hill's Kriegspiel). A graduate of the University of Maryland, Andy has worked for the State of Maryland for 20 years. In his spare time he edits *Against the Odds* magazine, and has had numerous articles published along with seven books about life and lore on the Eastern Shore.



DEFEAT INTO VICTORY

THE FINAL CAMPAIGNS IN BURMA

by Paul Rohrbaugh
with maps by Terry Leeds

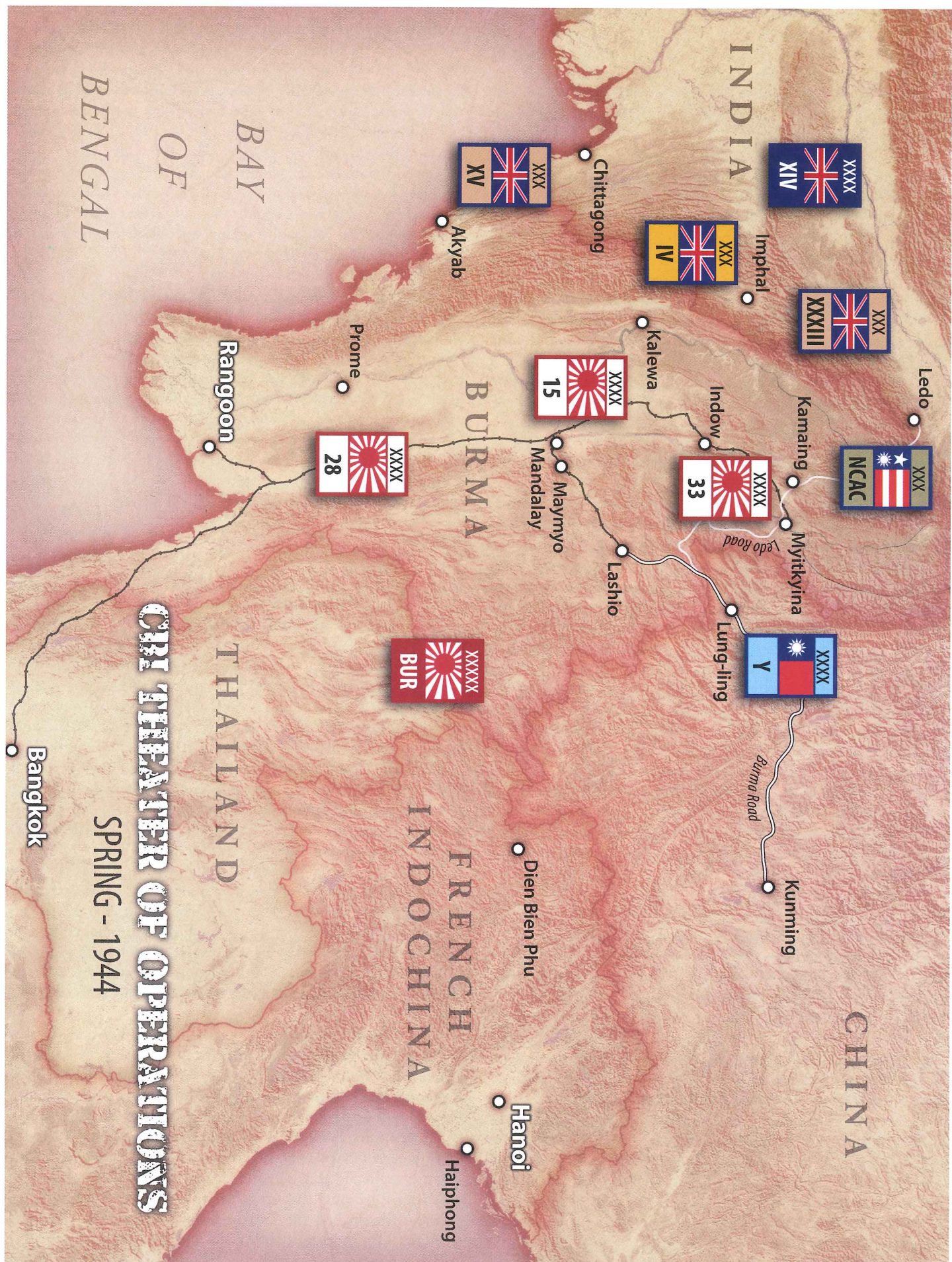
The 1942 Japanese invasion of Burma caught the British Commonwealth and Allied forces unprepared. While the Allied forces for the most part fought bravely, they were out-matched by the Japanese in numbers both on the ground and in the air, as well as in training, experience, and armaments. The result was a series of humiliating and costly retreats by the Allies in the face of the Japanese onslaught. The 1st Burmese Division, trained more for internal security duties, was savaged early in the fight, and the 17th Indian Division was ill-equipped and not at all trained for fighting in the jungles (it had been preparing to ship out to North Africa when the Japanese attacked). Although Allied air units experienced some noteworthy successes, particularly by Claire Chennault's Flying Tigers, even these forces were compelled to evacuate the theater as airbase after airbase fell to the Japanese (see issue 12 of *Against the Odds* for more about this campaign). By May 1942, the Japanese offensive in Burma was brought to an end by the hostile terrain along the Chinese and Indian frontiers, the onset of the monsoon season, as well as attrition and exhaustion among the attacking Japanese units. The Japanese attacks in Burma resulted in a lightning campaign that far exceeded their pre-war expectations.

A British and Indian offensive on the Arakan Peninsula from December 1942 through February 1943 was the first large-scale counter-offensive by the Allies in the Burma theater. However, naval support for the ground troops was not forthcoming as air superiority could not be established or guaranteed. A devastating Japanese counter-attack that started in April and continued through May drove the Allied forces back in ignominious defeat, further reinforcing the British high command's opinion of Japanese invincibility in jungle and overland fighting. By the end of 1943, both sides' forces were spent and ill prepared to make Burma a theater of sustained combat operations. General Noel Irwin, who had masterminded the Arakan offensive and repeatedly disagreed with General William Slim as to its conduct and reasons for its ultimate failure, was relieved of command, with General George Giffard put in his place. Orde Wingate arrived in India late in 1942 and was put in charge of forming commando groups, dubbed the Chindits. These raiders began conducting raids in the occupied Burmese territories and Japanese rear areas in early 1943. Although

of mixed success at best, the battles and skirmishes conducted by the Chindits comprised the bulk of the good news trumpeted by the Allies from the Burmese front in 1943 (see the "Dramatis Personae" sidebar).

Allied forces and command were divided between those in China under the leadership of American General Joseph Stillwell, who reported to both the US War Department under General George C. Marshall as well as Chinese Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek, while Allied forces in northeastern India were led by Generals Harold Alexander (in overall command of the theater) and Slim (who was placed in command of a resurrected Burmese Corps and later the XV Corps), both of whom had been transferred from commands in North Africa. As disagreements in war strategy and resources arose between the two Allied forces based in India and China, the British government repeatedly shuffled commanders, from Generals Irwin, to Alexander Wavell, then to Claude Auchinleck, leading to even more disarray, confusion, personality conflicts, and misunderstandings between the US and its Allies.

In addition to having their forces divided by geography and the Japanese, the Allies were operating at the ends of very tenuous supply lines. The Burma Road that was constructed before America's formal entry into the war, with much effort and cost, ran through northern Burma, linking northeastern India and southwestern China. The route provided Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek's Nationalist Chinese forces and government invaluable material aide, and significantly contributed to their continuing efforts to hold out against the Japanese. By early 1942, however, the Burma Road was firmly in control by the Japanese. All supplies and men for the region had to come through Calcutta and then be transported over a single line railroad to the front. The region was decidedly anti-colonial in sentiment, with Mahatma Ghandi's non-violent protests enjoying growing popularity that unfortunately also provided the backdrop for local insurrections as well as sabotage. These were constant threats that required extensive garrisons and resources, all of which had to be diverted from the Allies' war effort. Eventually 57 battalions (the equivalent of over 9 divisions!) occupied the region, while engineers and workers, many of them drafted and part of under-strength units



due to desertions, constructed numerous bridges, rail lines, roads, and airfields. Priority for much of the Allied war material was for other theaters in the world war, and that which did make it to India was primarily intended for China and not for operations in Burma. All of that material had to be flown over the Himalayan Mountains (the "Hump") in hazardous air transport missions to Nationalist Chinese airbases.

The Japanese were also more concerned during the latter half of 1942 and much of 1943 with matters elsewhere in the war, and concentrated their efforts in Burma to consolidating their hold on the region and also fomenting rebellion in India. Along those lines, the Japanese recruited an Indian National Army from disaffected Indian POWs, as well as from Burmese and Indian civilians caught up by the Japanese advances. Rail lines and roads were also constructed within Burma, but resources for even these modest efforts, when compared to the construction works then underway by the Allies, were constrained at the start, and only declined as the overall war situation worsened and the Allied submarine and naval blockade strengthened.

LORD MOUNTBATTEN AND A CHANGE OF PLANS

Even during the battles of Imphal and Kohima, the Allies realized that the opportunity for a counter-attack was presenting itself in Burma. How to make the best use of any opportunity to defeat the Japanese, however, became the focus of some of the bitterest high-level disagreements among the Allies of the war. British plans had always emphasized using naval and air power to support ground operations that worked their way along the western coast of Burma to retake Rangoon and then onto Malaya. This was the approach espoused by Generals Auchinleck and Slim in command of the Allied forces in India, as well as Lord Louis Mountbatten, who was appointed in October 1943 as supreme commander for the theater and charged with working with the American commander in China, General Joseph Stilwell. The British argued that such an approach would nullify the perceived Japanese superiority in jungle fighting, make the maximum use of growing Allied naval superiority, as well as bypassing and potentially isolating the bulk of the Japanese Burma Area Army, rendering it impotent and unable to affect Allied operations as they worked their way south to the eventual liberation of Singapore.

General Stilwell and his superiors in Washington, DC had much to object to regarding their allies' plan of action. Priority for the US from even before their entry into the war was for supporting the Nationalist Chinese government in their long war with the Japanese. Re-establishing an overland route to Chiang Kai-Shek's armies, as well as the establishment of long-range bomber bases from which the strategic bombing campaign against the Japanese home islands could be waged, were consistent top-priorities for the United States. Additionally, the shipping as well as amphibious landing and support vessels for their British allies' coastal offensives were bluntly and consistently refused. Any and all of these types of vessels were earmarked to support the US Navy's trans-Pacific island-hopping campaigns or the cross-channel invasion of Nazi-occupied Europe, as well as the anticipated invasion of Japan. This meant that none of these expensive and hard to produce weapons would be diverted to Burma and Malaya. Further, any coastal offensive would take Allied forces in the wrong direction and away from restoring an overland link to China, in the opinion of General Stilwell, as

well as potentially weakening the naval campaign in the central Pacific, meaning both aspects of the proposed British strategy in Burma were "deal breakers" for US political and military leaders. General Stilwell also argued the myth of Japanese superiority in jungle fighting was already broken, pointing to the raids by Allied and Burmese commandoes, particularly those by the US Merrill's Marauders and Orde Wingate's Chindits, in 1943 and early 1944 in northern Burma. Although costly in lives and weapons lost, Stilwell felt the raids indicated the potential for even greater Allied successes, exposed Japanese weaknesses, and that an overland offensive to and over the Irrawaddy River could not only restore an overland link between India and Nationalist China, but also defeat or destroy the largest Japanese field army in Southeast Asia.

The disagreements among the Allied commanders became so heated that eventually Churchill and Roosevelt met to decide the issues while at the top-secret "Quadrant" Conference held in Quebec from August 17-24, 1943. To Churchill's chagrin, it was the realization that US weaponry, supplies, and logistical support that would sustain any Allied course of action in Burma, and that Washington's unstinting support of Stilwell and the Nationalist Chinese trumped any counter arguments put forth by the British field commanders and Lord Mountbatten. If the Americans insisted upon an overland campaign through the heart of occupied Burma, and would not support a coastal offensive, an overland campaign it would have to be.

OPERATIONS CAPITAL, EXTENDED CAPITAL, AND DRAGON

The Allied drive from India into northern Burma and across the Chindwin River was dubbed "Operation Capital." The offensive began on November 19, 1944 with the Fourteenth Army leading off. The Japanese Fifteenth Army, now severely weakened and out of supply from their defeats at Imphal and Kohima, as well as having to deal with the large-scale raids and airborne landings by the Chindits and Merrill's Marauders who were bolstered by a Nationalist Army offensive against Myitkyina, fell back in the face of the Allied advance, essentially abandoning much of northern Burma. To supply the advancing Allied forces, the largest Bailey bridge ever made was constructed over the Chindwin River, all of its sections having to be laboriously transported across the Indian/Burmese mountains and through jungle terrain. Numerous engineering units also constructed roads out of the jungle trails, among them the Ledo Road that finally provided an overland link between India and Nationalist China (for more information on the Burma and Ledo Roads see "Roads to War" published in issue 33 of *Against the Odds*).

General Kimura Hyotaro, who replaced General Kawabe Mazakazu as commander of the Burma Area Army following the collapse of Operation "U-Go," decided to base the Japanese defenses on the Irrawaddy River. He hoped to retain control of the Yenangyuang oil fields as well as the Irrawaddy river delta's rice fields. The Japanese had three armies: Fifteenth (with the 15th, 31st, and 33rd Divisions), Twenty-eighth (54th and 55th Divisions, 72nd Composite Brigade, and one regiment from the 49th Division) and Thirty-third (18th and 56th Divisions) that stretched from Lashio to Mandalay. In reserve, Kimura had the 2nd Infantry Division, the rest of the 49th, the 24th Independent Brigade, and the army's sole remaining armored regiment. In November, Kimura was informed that he

JAPANESE "U-GO" OFFENSIVE

THE DRIVE ON IMPHAL

(March - April 1944)



would be on his own, as no reinforcements or replacements could be expected due to now overwhelming Allied naval superiority. With their forces consolidated and dug-in, it was a sound plan that allowed the Japanese to use interior lines of communication and to reduce the effectiveness of the Allied armor and air forces. Kimura hoped that his line could hold until the start of the monsoon season, whose rains would also bring him more options. The Japanese defenses along the river, however, were dependent upon road and rail lines that all converged at the town of Meiktila, roughly in the center of the Burmese plateau. Additionally, in many respects the Japanese defenses were a hard shell with a hollow center. After crossing the Irrawaddy River, the fighting would move onto open ground that would allow the Allied armored and mechanized units freedom to maneuver and fight in such a way that the Japanese would be unable to match.

To defeat the Japanese defenses along the Irrawaddy River, General Slim came up with a bold plan dubbed "Extended Capital." A broad front attack led by the XXXIII Corps (2nd, 19th, 20th Indian Infantry Divisions) and one of his two tank brigades (254th Indian) against almost the entire Japanese Irrawaddy Line, nearly 200 miles wide, would hold the enemy's attention. Meanwhile IV Corps (7th, 17th Indian Infantry Divisions, 28th East African Infantry and Lushai Infantry Brigades), supported by the other tank brigade (255th) would advance far to the west along the Myittha River, screened by the river and jungle, as well as supported by extensive deception efforts. A detachment of motorized troops from the 17th Indian Infantry Division and the tank brigade would then cross the river, break through the enemy's defenses to seize and hold Meiktila until relieved. The logistics alone for the offensive were daunting. Slim's plan entailed sending two divisions and thousands of vehicles along what was a dirt path through jungle terrain, with the bulk of IV Corps having to construct a roadway, at times during monsoon rains, as it went. Both Corps would have to make multiple opposed crossings into the Japanese fortifications to secure bridgeheads, out of which the IV Corp detachment would break out. Aerial supply, which had proven to be woefully inadequate throughout the war, would be vital in keeping the isolated force charged with taking and holding Meiktila as well as supplying the rest of IV Corps.

"Extended Capital" began in earnest on January 2, 1945, although IV Corps fought some battles, notably the Lushai Brigade's capture of Gangaw, in December. The Allies used highly effective combined air and artillery "earthquake" bombardments, including rocket-firing Hurricanes, to destroy Japanese bunkers and artillery emplacements.



A thousand-pound bomb explodes behind Japanese positions across the Irrawaddy

The Japanese were very alarmed by the extensive Allied offensive along the Irrawaddy River, and with General Taruachi's concurrence, General Kimura ordered a counter-offensive to eliminate the Allied lodgments over the Irrawaddy River that posed a direct threat to Mandalay. To this effect the Japanese reserves were ordered up to begin their deployments for attacking XXXIII Corps. The Japanese completely missed the move by IV Corps to their south and west, and that shoe dropped on February 14th when IV Corps crossed to the east side of the Irrawaddy River opposite Nyaungu. Again another earthquake bombardment, as well as feints by the East African Brigade, enabled the Allied forces to cross and secure a bridgehead. One of the final Japanese airstrikes of the war by the 64th Sentai attacked the Allied forces at Nyaungu, but it was too little, too late. On January 21st the 17th Division, followed by the 255th Tank Brigade, began their dash to Meiktila a little more than 80 miles away. The Allied force advanced in two columns, quickly overrunning Japanese airstrips and wiping out the two companies of the Japanese 2nd Infantry that garrisoned the town. The outnumbered Japanese fought tenaciously, however, with combined-arms detachments having to engage in house-to-house fighting to clear out the defenders, none of whom surrendered. By March 1st, Meiktila was firmly in Allied control, with the commander of the 17th Indian Infantry Division, General David "Punch" Cowan, overseeing its defense.



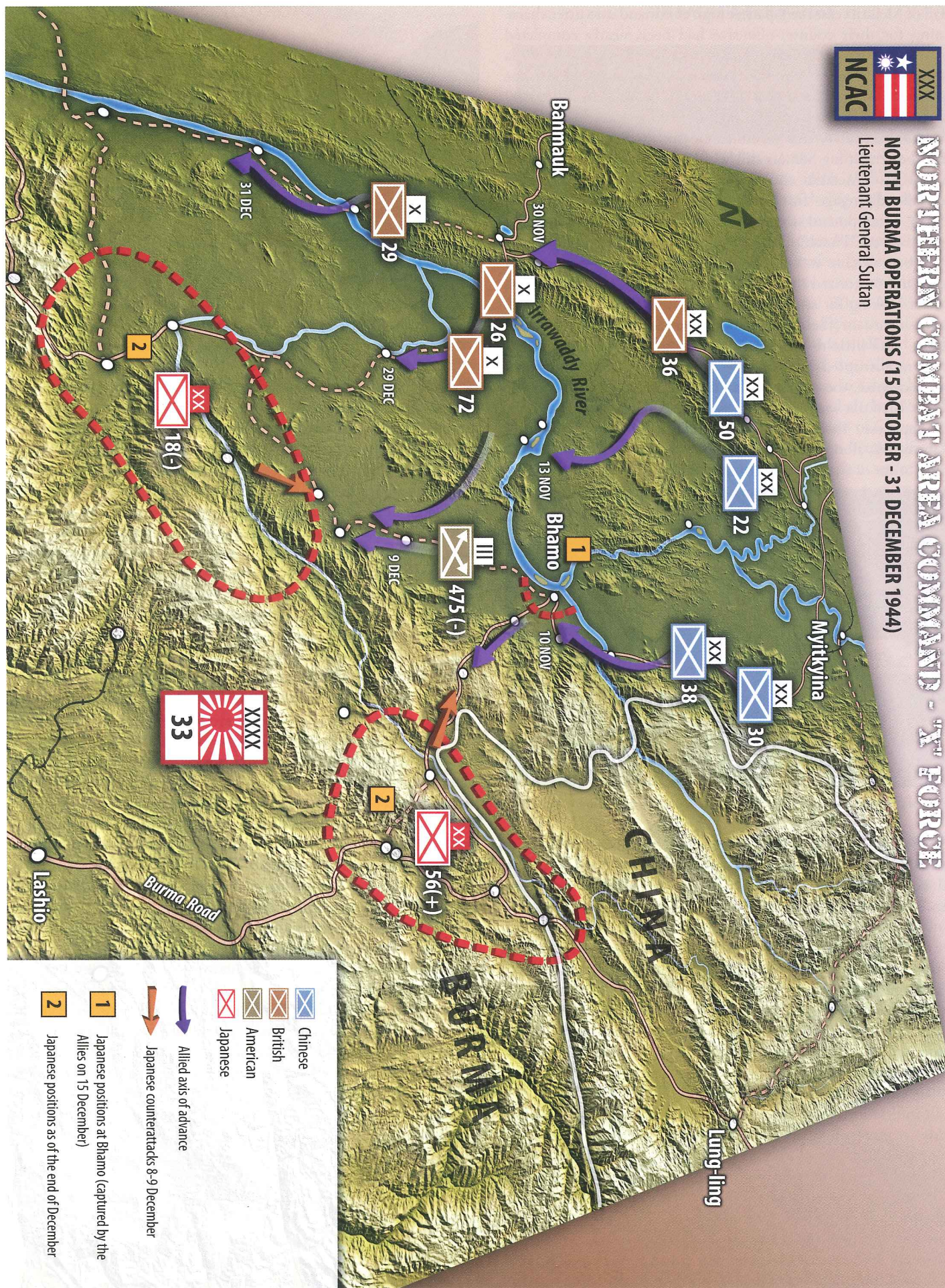
One of the first Shermans (reserves for 17 Division) en route across the Irrawaddy, Feb. 1945 (National Archives)



NORTHERN COMBAT AREA COMMAND - 'X' FORCE

NORTH BURMA OPERATIONS (15 OCTOBER - 31 DECEMBER 1944)

Lieutenant General Sultan



The fall of Meiktila cast the Japanese high command into utter chaos. Planning for their counter-offensive had been nearly completed when on the 23rd orders were received to instead recapture Meiktila at all costs. The only remaining division in reserve, the 49th, was immediately ordered to attack Meiktila as well as nearly 2,500 support personnel that were rounded up from the various Japanese depot, administrative, and grounded air units (there was little fuel left for the remaining Sentais still with serviceable aircraft). Other units north of Meiktila could only be dispatched if they could successfully disengage from the Allied offensive that was now escalating in tempo and strength seemingly all along the Irrawaddy River. However, "Punch" Cowan was one who apparently believed that the best defense was a good offense, as for three days groups of tanks and motorized infantry roamed the outskirts of the Allied perimeter looking for and defeating successive groups of Japanese. With so many of the Japanese forces attacking from scattered positions, with little-to-no coordination, and nearly always having their plans disrupted or defeated "out of the gate" by Cowan's offensive defense, the ten day fight (from March 14th through the 23rd) for Meiktila was a confused and increasingly desperate fight for the Japanese. The 18th and 55th Infantry Divisions, attacking from the north, along with the remnants of the 49th from the south, bore the brunt of the Japanese counter-attack efforts.



Captured photo of Japanese flamethrower attack on Allied tank, at Mandalay.

By the 13th the fighting to the north had reached Mandalay and the Japanese defenses were in absolute crisis. Supplies and replacements could not reach the Japanese front line units, who were starting to run out of ammunition and increasingly unable to redeploy or retreat. On the 14th the Japanese launched a large-scale effort to retake Meiktila, with most of the attacks concentrated on taking back the airfields outside of the town that were sustaining the Allied forces there. At one point, Japanese tanks overran an airfield, but many of the supporting infantry from the "Mori Special Force" (of the 55th Infantry Division) were mowed down as they advanced over the tarmac. The light Japanese Ha-Go tanks were then hunted down and destroyed by "tank killer" teams or the heavier Allied Sherman tanks. After the failed offensive, the Japanese could only send in infiltration teams of snipers and suicide squads against the airfields in increasingly desperate missions to disrupt the Allied air supply efforts. On the 22nd, the Japanese launched another coordinated assault, this time with most of the effort coming from the southeast by the 49th Division. Once again, General Cowan launched a pre-emptive attack of his own that led to a four-day fight in which neither side asked or received any quarter. By the next day, the Japanese 49th Infantry Division was finished as a combat unit, losing nearly three quarters of its men and nearly all of its guns.



Among the first to enter Mandalay after its fall, March 1945
(National Archives)

With the fall of Mandalay on the 20th to the Indian 19th Infantry Division, and the failure to recapture Meiktila, came the realization that the Irrawaddy River defenses were now untenable. On the 21st, the Indian 20th Infantry Division captured the Burma Area Army's only other supply depot at Kyaukse, completely undoing any sort of viable defense in the region. On March 28th, General Kimura ordered all units able to do so to disengage and retreat to the south in the hopes of retaining control of at least Rangoon. Those units still capable of combat operations were ordered to conduct fighting withdrawals, sacrificing men and material for time. He hoped the onset of the monsoon season, which usually started in May, would bring the motorized Allied columns to a halt, ground the Allied air forces, as well as stop his enemy's logistical train in its tracks.

Lord Mountbatten also was concerned with the passage of time, and ordered General Slim to resurrect plans for an amphibious assault to retake Rangoon in order to take the vital port before the monsoons began and prevent a bloody and destructive fight in the city with dug-in fanatical defenders (as had happened in Manila). General Slim anticipated Lord Mountbatten's orders, and had already prepared plans for a general offensive to pursue the Japanese on March 18th, even before the battle of Meiktila was concluded. Dubbed "Operation Dracula," an amphibious landing was made part of the plan to take Rangoon. However, the Japanese surprisingly elected to not fight in the city, but instead continued their pell-mell retreat after losing repeated fights against the Indian divisions and tank brigades that allowed no let up. Those that weren't killed or captured in the fighting along the Irrawaddy River, at Meiktila, or the innumerable rear-guard fights out of Burma were lost and never seen again. The 64th Sentai, the most successful fighter unit in the Japanese Army Air Force in Burma, was able to evacuate only 8 aircraft to Indochina, and left behind nearly all of its ground service personnel and pilots who couldn't fly for lack of planes. On April 29th, the monsoons came early, and the Japanese blew up the bridges over the Pegu and Sittang Rivers, effectively conceding all of Burma to the Allies. Even then, the surviving Japanese ordeals did not end, as guerrilla bands continued to harass and kill off stragglers. The small "Dracula" amphibious force, and a parachute assault detachment that somehow managed to find a break in the weather to support it, landed to take control of an abandoned city on May 2nd. When the Japanese surrender finally arrived, fewer than 60,000 men survived. Rarely in history has an enemy been so completely and utterly defeated in the field of battle as the Japanese Burma Area Army.

CONCLUSION

The Allied campaign in Burma was, given the acrimony and divisiveness within the high command that presaged it and scarcity of resources committed while it was conducted, nothing less than remarkable. In the space of a year British field commanders, most notably General Slim and Lord Mountbatten, oversaw a fundamental shift in their nation's war strategy, defeated the largest Japanese ground offensive of the war at Imphal and Kohima, redeployed over a hundred thousand men along one of the most inhospitable areas of the Burmese frontier, and then conducted a series of offensives that utterly defeated and destroyed their enemy. Abandoning lines of supply to seize the crucial crossroads and rail junctions in Meiktila, and then successfully supporting the units that repulsed repeated Japanese attempts to retake the town, rank among the most daring and successful campaigns of WWII. The utter collapse of the Japanese Burma Army and their Indian National Army supporters put paid to the myth of any Japanese military superiority and Allied shortcomings. The Allied victories in early 1945 allowed for indigenous Southeast Asian resistance movements to grow elsewhere in Japanese occupied territories as the war ended, and that planted the seeds of several post-war nationalist movements in Burma, Malaya, and Indochina.

However, it was the very remoteness of the Burmese theatre of operations from the Pacific, as well as the disappointing performance of the Nationalist Chinese forces, that ultimately made the fighting in Burma inconclusive at best, or irrelevant at worst, in terms of ending the war with Japan. It would be the successful US drive across the Pacific, the devastating submarine blockade and isolation of the Japanese home islands from Burma and the rest of its "Co-Prosperity Sphere," and the island-based, not China-based, strategic bombing campaign that climaxed with the decisive atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki that ended WWII.

It is a tragic irony that so much of the treasure and resources transported to China from India through or over Burma went not to defeat Japan, but rather to wage a futile post-war fight against Communist forces under Mao Tse-Tung. The unquestioning support by the United States of a despotic and corrupt regime did little to aid the Allied cause in its war against Japan, and ironically fed the flames that led to another series of wars in Indochina and the end of colonial rule for America's allies. Great Britain may have overseen a series of tremendous military victories in Burma during 1944 and 1945, but ultimately lost an empire doing so. Rarely in history has so much been done by so many for so little. There are lessons to be learned from the campaign in Burma, but not all of them as to how to successfully conduct a war by an Allied coalition against a dangerous and common enemy.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE



General Joseph Stilwell (1883-1946). Four-Star General and Commander of the China-Burma-India (CBI) Theater of Operations, Stilwell was one of the most daring and controversial US leaders of World War II. Caustic and demanding, his nickname "Vinegar Joe" was one he relished. He began his career in the US Army at West Point. His application was late but family connections led to President McKinley personally intervening to allow young Stilwell to enter after the start of the term! When WWII began, General Stilwell was first tapped to lead Operation Torch, the invasion of North Africa, but both General Marshall and President Roosevelt felt he was better suited to lead the Allied forces in Nationalist China. He had served several tours in China before the war, was fluent in Chinese, and had also headed the US military delegation in Peking before the Japanese invasion of China. He had also overseen all of the Lend-Lease shipments to Nationalist China, so was the most experienced and knowledgeable senior military leader to send to the beleaguered Nationalist Government.

Stilwell arrived in India just as the Allied forces were retreating in disarray throughout all of Burma. He led his staff of 117 men and women overland through northern Burma to China, much of it on foot. The defeat led to his low opinions of the fighting prowess of the British-led Allied forces that would only increase as the war went on. Stilwell was adamant that an overland link from India to Nationalist China be paramount. He was not shy in describing his British counterparts war plans for the CBI as inadequate or even cowardly, and that as many resources sent to India be sent by whatever means to increase and support the Nationalist Chinese army, even if it meant those units in India were left wanting. Ultimately the CBI was split into two parts in August 1943, with Stilwell retaining control of Allied forces in China and the British, under Lord Mountbatten, those in India and Southeast Asia (Burma).

Stilwell also feuded with General Claire Chennault, leader of the famed Flying Tigers. Chennault wanted to use the resources sent over "the Hump" to establish bases from which fleets of long range bombers could be used to strike directly at Japan. Stilwell refused to authorize these operations, arguing instead that any and all air operations be conducted to support ground offensives to retake northern Burma and Koumintang units in their battles against the Japanese army in China. These arguments grew in intensity as the war went on, and at times were the subjects of newspaper reports that



did little to foster American understanding of the war in that part of the world, and were politically as well as militarily embarrassing.

Eventually Stilwell's dissatisfaction grew to include the Nationalist Chinese Government, whose increasing graft and corruption led to the General's demand that all Lend-Lease payments and materials be stopped at the end of 1944. It is estimated that nearly 70% of the Nationalist recruits did not make it through basic training by that time, and nearly 20% of the Koumintang's (Nationalist Army) soldiers were dying of starvation as their commanders stole or hoarded the supplies that had been sent to support and feed them. Stilwell even ordered the OSS (Office of Strategic Services, the precursor to the CIA) to draft plans for the assassination of Chiang Kai-Shek and a coup d'état that would overthrow the dictator's government! General Stilwell presented his ultimatum on October 19, 1944 to Chiang Kai-Shek that US Lend-Lease support would only continue if Stilwell were granted full control of the Koumintang. Chiang immediately contacted President Roosevelt, who promptly issued a recall of Stilwell back to the US. He was replaced by General Albert C. Wedemeyer, and returned to the US on October 27 with no official welcome. Stilwell was ordered by General Marshall personally to talk to no one about what was happening in China. He later served as commander of the Tenth Army in the Okinawa campaign.



Brigadier General Frank Merrill (1903-1955). Best known for his leadership of the 5307th Composite Unit (Provisional) that became forever known as "Merrill's Marauders." The unit of nearly 3,000 men was formed in 1943 to conduct "long range penetration" missions as their British allies had done, deep behind Japanese lines in occupied Burma. From February 1944 to March 1945 the unit was behind enemy lines for nearly 5 months and engaged the Japanese in five major engagements. The Marauders incurred horrendous losses during their year of fighting, with a tenth killed in action, nearly a third wounded, and another third evacuated from the effects of diseases such as malaria, beri-beri, jungle rot or worse. General Merrill himself had to relinquish command when on March 29, 1945 he suffered a heart attack brought on by disease and exhaustion. By the end of the war the unit was effectively destroyed, with only 130 men able to report for duty. Following the war, General Merrill retired from the military and became the commissioner of highways in New Hampshire.

Nationalist Chinese troops formed an integral part of the offensive that, along with the Merrill's Marauders, took control of Myitkyina and restored an overland link from India to China. The cost to the Nationalist Chinese forces in KIA, missing, and wounded was astoundingly high, putting paid to those who thought the Chinese would not fight. The construction of the Ledo Road, which replaced the Burma Road as the primary supply link between China and India, proved a disappointment. In July 1945, when the Ledo Road first opened, only 6,000 tons of material were sent to China along this route compared to over 71,000 still flown "over the hump" by air. This statistic serves as another example of the waste and tragedy of so much of the Allied war effort in Burma.

© Imperial War Museum (IND 4689. Detail.)



General David Tennant "Punch" Cowan (1896-1983). At first posted to Rangoon as a staff officer when the war with Japan began, General Tennant took over command of the Indian 17th Infantry Division when it became obvious its former commander was not up to the task. Among the more tragic actions taken by his predecessor were those that led to the premature demolition of a bridge over the Sittang River. This led to the loss of nearly half of 17th Indian Division's troops, as well as nearly all of those from a Burmese division trapped on the wrong side and unable to escape from the advancing Japanese. Tennant led a stiff defense with the 17th in the fighting around Imphal, and an even more masterful fight in the decisive battle of Meiktila. Tragically, it was during the battle of Meiktila that General Cowan lost his son who was killed in action while leading the 1/6th Gurkha Rifles, the unit his father had led in WWI. Following the Japanese surrender, General Cowan was in charge of the British forces occupying Japan before he retired from the military in 1947.



Louis Francis Albert Nicholas George Mountbatten, 1st Earl Mountbatten of Burma (1900-1979). One of the most notable personages of the war, Lord Mountbatten was a personal friend of Winston Churchill and son of a former First Sea Lord. At the start of WWII, Lord Mountbatten was in command of the 5th Destroyer Flotilla and distinguished himself during the Dunkirk evacuation. He then took command of the carrier *Illustrious*. While that ship was being repaired from damage sustained in operations supporting Malta, he was promoted yet again, to Chief of Combined Operations, supplanting Admiral Roger Keyes (WWI hero of the Zeebrugge raid). In that capacity he organized cross-channel raids against German occupied territories, including the raids on Dieppe and St. Nazaire, as well as overseeing the construction of specialized armored vehicles (funnies), a cross-channel fuel pipeline, and the artificial harbors (Mulberries) to support the Normandy invasion forces. In October 1943, Winston Churchill personally appointed Lord Mountbatten to command of the South East Asia Command, the largest operational theater in the British Army during WWII. The appointment was due not only to Mountbatten's organizational abilities, but his proven success in working with American generals and their staffs. It was hoped his personality and high-level connections in both countries would smooth over the growing tensions and disagreements among the Allies in Southeast Asia. Mountbatten personally favored a direct offensive to retake the Dutch East Indies and bypass all of Burma and Indochina. However, it would be US priorities, not Mountbatten's or his government's, that would prevail in Burma.



William Little

After the Japanese surrender and Churchill's ouster as Prime Minister, Clement Attlee appointed Lord Mountbatten as Viceroy of India, the last person to hold such a post until that country attained its independence in 1947. He oversaw the partitioning of the huge colony into the separate states of India and West and East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). After leaving India, Lord Mountbatten became Admiral of the Mediterranean Fleet and was in command during his country's abortive attempt to take over the Suez Canal during the 1956 Arab-Israeli conflict. In 1959, he left the Royal Navy and was involved in the United World Colleges organization, and rumored to be involved with those in opposition to the growing Labour party and its policies. In 1979 he was killed by IRA terrorists who blew up his fishing boat, *Shadow V*.



General William Slim (1891-1970). The only British General to serve in Burma from the start of the war there to its end, General Slim was one of the few British commanders who believed an overland offensive against the "invincible" Japanese was possible and the correct course of action. At the start of the war General Slim was in command of the "BurCorps" that was comprised of the 17th Indian and 1st Burmese Infantry Divisions. He then took over command of XV Corps and had frequent disputes with his superior, General Irwin, which grew in intensity and mutual dislike with each week. Following the collapse of the Arakan Peninsula offensive, it would be Irwin who was sacked and Slim awarded the Distinguished Service Order. In January 1944, Slim's defense against a Japanese offensive in the Arakan won him his first knighthood (Order of the Bath). When it became clear that an overland Allied offensive to restore links to Nationalist Chinese forces was to be carried out, it was General Slim who laid out the plans and oversaw the logistical efforts to carry the war into the Burmese interior and then to Rangoon. Among these efforts were the construction of the world's largest Bailey Bridge that spanned the Chindwin River, and the aerial supply flights that made for the successful seizure and defense of Meiktila, two efforts that largely determined the course of the Allied victory and utter defeat of the Japanese Burma Area Army.

Slim was promoted to full General and received his second knighthood (Order of Grand Cross, St. Michael and St. George) upon his retirement. In 1953 he received his third knighthood (Order of St. John) and was appointed Governor-General of Australia. In 1959 he retired for good and returned home to Great Britain where he wrote his memoirs, *Defeat Into Victory*.



General Orde Wingate (1903-1944). Before the war, Orde Wingate was a staff officer in British-ruled Palestine, and became deeply involved in the Zionist movement, despite his not being Jewish. He incurred the wrath of several of his superiors as well as Muslims in the area. During the pre-war Arab Revolt (1936-1939)

he developed the idea of forming Jewish commando groups, led by British officers, to conduct raids and attacks against the Arab militant groups. This course of action was approved by General Archibald Wavell and led to several successful, and at times brutal, battles, and the formation of the Haganah, the military wing of the Zionist movement. For his leadership, Wingate was awarded the Distinguished Service Order (DSO), but his increasingly outspoken remarks on the formation of an independent Jewish state in Palestine led to his reassignment back to Great Britain.

With the outbreak of WWII, Wingate was transferred to the Sudan, where he formed "Gideon Force," comprised of many veterans and volunteers from the Haganah. The unit, which never numbered more than about 1,700 men, began operations against Italian-controlled Ethiopia in February 1941, and by April had defeated and captured more than 20,000 Italian troops! This action garnered him his second DSO. However, he also contracted malaria, which he attempted to self-medicate by taking massive doses of atabrine. This, and his fear of being "kicked upstairs" once again to Great Britain, led to an attempted suicide. Fortunately, he survived, and friends used their contacts to have General Wavell, now in India, transfer Wingate to Burma. As the British-led forces fell back in defeat and disarray in Burma during 1942, Wavell ordered Lieutenant Colonel Wingate to form irregular forces along the lines of those used in pre-war Palestine. The "Chindits" began their first raids in February 1943, but were soundly trounced by Japanese forces that harried and fought the irregulars, who lost over a third of their numbers before returning to the Indian frontier in April and May. However, the raids by the Chindits were trumpeted back in England as great successes in a time of few Allied triumphs in Asia.

After returning to India, Wingate contracted typhoid fever, which prevented him from overseeing the training of replacements for the Chindits. He was, however, promoted to Major General, and his command expanded from roughly four battalions to six brigades. The Chindit raids planned for 1944 would be much more aggressive, reaching even deeper into Japanese-occupied northern Burma, and so would include the American Merrill's Marauders, relying on air transport to supply and support the raiders. This would require the construction of airstrips and parachute drop zones in areas dominated by jungle and rough terrain, much of this during the monsoon season. The strategy presaged that used 10 years later by the French in Indochina, and like Dien Bien Phu, was nearly as disastrous. The Chindit's raids began on March 6 1944, about the same time the Japanese launched their U-Go offensive. The air units and resources meant to support the raiders were often diverted to support the Allied forces in their increasingly desperate battles against the Japanese offensive, and Japanese rear area reserves also effectively battled the raiders. On March 24, General Wingate flew out on a B-25 to assess first-hand the fighting in Chindit-controlled northern Burma, but the plane crashed, killing him and the nine others aboard. All of the victims were burned beyond recognition and their remains buried in a common grave near the crash site. After the war all of the remains were exhumed and reburied first in Imphal (1947) and later at Arlington National Cemetery in 1950 (as 7 of the victims were American citizens). Although the Chindits and Marauders were able to severely disrupt the Japanese supply and support efforts for their U-Go offensive, as well as taking and holding Myitkyina, which eventually restored the overland link to Nationalist China, both raiding forces were destroyed as viable combat units (some formations losing over three quarters of their men), and conducted no other operations for the rest of the war.



Field Marshal Count Terauchi Hisaichi (1879-1946).

Commander of the Southern Army since it was activated in November 1941, Hisaichi commanded all Japanese forces in Burma, Southeast Asia, and the Southwest Pacific (roughly the same area as Lord Mountbatten). Politically well connected (he was the son of a former Prime Minister), Hisaichi was able to retain his command following the utter collapse of Operation U-Go, the only Japanese high-ranking commander to do so. Terauchi surrendered his command to Lord Mountbatten at the war's end on September 12 1945, in Saigon, handing over his family's ceremonial wakizashi sword (which dates from 1413) that is now housed at Windsor Castle. Terauchi died of a stroke in a Malaysian prisoner of war camp while awaiting his trial as a war criminal.



Lt. General Kimura Hyotaro (1888-1948). Considered one of the most intellectual and brilliant of Japan's generals, Hyotaro replaced General Kawabe Masakazu as commander of the Burma Area Army following the failure of Operation U-Go. He began his army career as an artillery officer, rising to the War Ministry in the early 1930s. He next served as Vice Minister of War from 1941-43, a post that reported directly to Hideki Tojo. Following Tojo's resignation, Hyotaro headed the Ordinance Department before being ordered to Burma for his first ever field command. He was charged with war crimes under somewhat dubious if not completely erroneous accusations. Among the allegations were those that charged him with neglect while planning his country's pre-war military planning that resulted in atrocities against prisoners of war, among them those that were perpetrated against Allied POWs forced into constructing the infamous Burmese "railway of death" (made famous in the movie *Bridge Over the River Kwai*) that was built before he arrived in Burma. Despite the lack of evidence Hyotaro was condemned as a war criminal and hanged.

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Danjite Okonoeba Kishin Mo Sakui

"Before a resolute will, even the gods give way"

The Battle of Imphal/Kohima, 1944

by John D. Burt

One hundred thousand troops of the Japanese Fifteenth Army crossed the Chindwin River in Burma and invaded India in March 1944. Their primary purpose: capture the Allied base at Imphal, disrupt Allied counterattack plans, and establish a solid defensive line to protect Burma from future Allied incursions. A division of the Indian National Army, an organization dedicated to freeing India from their British overlords, accompanied the Japanese; for them, this attack toward Imphal was the start of their long awaited "March on Delhi."

Lieutenant General Mutaguchi Renya, commanding general of the Fifteenth Army, had estimated it would take his troops only three weeks to rout the British and Indian troops from their base, using his 1942 experiences in Malaya and Burma. He provided his army with that much supply, planning on using captured supplies to continue any further operations.



Unfortunately, the British had other ideas, and used their newly established air superiority to keep their troops supplied and supported, even when encircled by the Japanese. The three-week campaign stretched into four months. Fifteenth Army, facing critical shortages of food and ammunition, and decimated by frontal

assaults in the face of enemy artillery, air, and armor superiority, was virtually destroyed. Mutaguchi had gone against the odds and failed.

THE SITUATION

In early 1944, the Japanese experienced serious troubles all around their recently acquired Co-Prosperity Sphere. U.S. submarines started to strangle the flow of critical raw materials from the Sphere to the home islands. Allied troops fought their way up the Solomon Island chain and on the coast of New Guinea, threatening the Japanese base at Rabaul. In November 1943, U.S. Marines invaded and took Tarawa in the Gilbert Islands. United States carrier groups raided all over the central Pacific and more invasions were expected. To the north, the Japanese foothold in the Aleutians had been eliminated. Finally, the morass of their China conflict continued to pin down the majority of existing Imperial divisions, and the U.S. 14th Air Force, operating from southern Chinese bases, started to wreak significant damage.

In Burma, the situation was somewhat better. Japanese occupation forces had defeated an offensive in the Arakan by the Indian 14th Division in early 1943, and had finally eliminated a more surprising assault in the middle of the country.



This latter attack, led by eccentric Brigadier General Orde Wingate and his 77th Indian Brigade, had cut the Mandalay–Mkitkyina railroad in several places, causing modest concern to the Japanese and a huge morale boost to victory-starved Allied civilians. More importantly, however, it convinced senior Japanese officers that central Burma lay open to significant military activity. This realization made them reconsider dormant strategic plans.

Shortly after the conquest of Burma, the Imperial General Headquarters planned *Operation 21*, a five-division offensive aimed at northern Burma, Imphal, and Chittagong. The operation never took place as staff members considered the terrain too difficult for large military units to traverse, much less supply. Wingate's operation showed them the possibilities. They brought the plans back under discussion again, but with a changed strategic focus.

Since June 1943, defense of the western border of Japan's Co-Prosperity Sphere had been the responsibility of the Burma Area Army, headquartered in Rangoon and commanded by General Kawabe Shozo. Southern Army set up the Burma Area Army as an intermediate headquarters to control three separate armies, the Fifteenth, Twenty-eighth and Thirty-third, as well as the Fifth Air Division. Kawabe's responsibility covered over 600 miles of border and, in 1943, appeared to be facing three separate Allied offensives: a sea-borne invasion of the Arakan, a U.S.-Chinese assault near the Salween River in the north, and a British-led invasion into central Burma from the Indian state of Assam. Thus, when the Japanese staff officers revisited *Operation 21* in June 1943, they focused on improving the defense of Burma.

One voice, however, pressed for the full scope of the original plan, with the final goal of overthrowing British rule in India. The voice belonged to Lieutenant General Mutaguchi, the commander of the Fifteenth Army. The 55-year-old Mutaguchi was one of the most aggressive (and ambitious) commanders in the Imperial Army. He had been at the forefront of Japanese actions since the start of the Chinese war in 1937, where he commanded the regiment that had sparked the Marco Polo Bridge incident, touching off Japan's invasion of China. Later he commanded the 18th Division on its march through Malaya and Burma in 1942. He hoped to add to that reputation by marching his army through India.

His optimism for the operation stemmed from two sources. The first: his own experience against British and Indian troops. He

held them in contempt, feeling they would panic if threatened with encirclement as they had in 1942. The second source: Subhas Chandra Bose, the leader of the nationalistic movement aimed at liberating the Indian people from their British colonial masters. Bose convinced Mutaguchi that Indians simply needed a spark to overthrow their hated masters. A full division of the Indian National Army, made up of former Indian prisoners of war and deserters, stood ready to accompany the Fifteenth Army into India and provide that spark.

After much debate, the staff approved an offensive. On August 7, 1943, Southern Army told Burma Area Army to prepare for a counteroffensive, now called *U-GO*, to offset large-scale enemy attacks. *U-GO* would destroy the enemy in the Imphal region and establish a strong defensive line to protect Burma. Interestingly, Southern Army's directive also told Kawabe that if the British attacked first, he was to destroy them close to his own bases while they were at the end of long supply lines, and then pursue the remnants to Imphal. Although final approval of the attack remained pending, Kawabe issued his orders to Fifteenth Army, specifying the goal of creating a defensive line. But he also added a secondary goal of providing a base for potential future actions, both operational and political.

Detailed planning started immediately, as did preparations. Kawabe slated Mutaguchi's Fifteenth Army to receive another infantry division, the 15th, and these troops started their long journey from China. Final approval from Imperial General Headquarters came with Army Directive 1776 on January 7, 1944. That approval came with the stipulation that they keep the operation under strict control, thus threatening Mutaguchi's own plans and basically rejecting the second goal Kawabe had added.

FORCES AND PLANS

The primary target of operation *U-GO*: the Imphal plain in the Indian state of Manipur, a fertile 700 square-mile region sandwiched between the Naga Hills to the north and the Chin Hills to the south, some 60 miles from the Burma-India border. The British had established a forward supply base at Imphal two years previously, connected by a 115-mile road to the railhead at Dimapur. In those two years, the base had become a large network of supply depots, airfields, and maintenance facilities. A formidable jumble of jungle-



covered ridges, valleys, and rivers surrounded the base. The British IV Corps—three divisions, a tank brigade and assorted troops—defended the base.

The terrain prompted much debate and controversy within the Japanese Army as to its ability to operate successfully in it. Fifteenth Army's own Chief of Staff rejected the possibility to such an extent that he was relieved of his position by Mutaguchi.

After approval by the Imperial General Headquarters, Kawabe and Mutaguchi set their plans for *U-GO*. The 33rd Division, commanded by Lieutenant General Yanagida Genzo, would initiate the operation, aiming to encircle and destroy the Indian 17th Division, then attack Imphal from the south. One column from the 33rd would move directly against Imphal, taking on the Indian 20th Division. The 15th Division, under Lieutenant General Yamauchi Masabumi, would infiltrate into the region northeast of Imphal and then coordinate with the 33rd against it. Finally, Lieutenant General Sato Kotoku's 31st Division would move north and cut the main British supply route at Kohima, isolating IV Corps from their railhead. The operation would start March 15, with the 33rd Division setting off a week early. To support the attack, Kawabe also planned to have the 55th Division from his Twenty-eighth Army attack the British XV Corps in the Arakan (Operation *HA-GO*) in February to destroy them and draw off British reserves.

The three divisions slated for the *U-GO* offensive were standard triangle Imperial Army Type B divisions, made up of three regiments of three battalions. Each regiment nominally had some 3,800 troops, with each battalion having four companies and over 1,100 men. By doctrine, each regiment had both anti-tank and gun companies, in addition to their divisional field artillery regiment, but *U-GO* saw significant changes in that makeup.

Sato's 31st Division, made up of the 58th, 124th, and 138th Infantry Regiments, would take its mortars and anti-tank guns, but only half its regimental mountain guns and none of its 105mm howitzers. Troops took ammunition and rations for three weeks. Nearly 3,000 horses and 5,000 oxen replaced the division's motor vehicles for the trek. Sato argued fiercely with Fifteenth Army staff about the logistic preparations for his mission and only acquiesced after receiving a written agreement on supply deliveries after his march rations had been consumed.

Yanagida's 33rd Division had its three infantry regiments, the 213th, 214th and 215th, augmented by the light and medium tanks of the 14th Tank Regiment and two artillery regiments. One, the 18th Heavy, was armed with 105mm howitzers; the other, the 3rd Heavy, had 150mm guns. Fifteenth Army allocated a one-month supply of artillery ammunition to the Division with the "understanding" that additional supply would be captured from the British. One of its infantry battalions, the I/213th, had been assigned to Operation *HA-GO* and another, the III/214th, posted as a flank guard on the southern edge of the advance. However, two battalions from the 15th Division replaced them in the main column.

The weakest component of Mutaguchi's assault turned out to be the 15th Division. Although it had been ordered to Burma in mid-1943, the division had been stalled in Thailand building roads for Southern Army. Its advance units from the 60th Infantry Regiment did not reach its start locations for *U-GO* until mid-January 1944. Only six of its nine infantry battalions (I/51, III/51, III/67, and all

of the 60th) made it for the start of the operation, which had to be delayed due to the 15th's late arrival. The strenuous journey left the battalions understrength. In addition, the division staff had been told that they would not need anti-tank weapons for their particular mission, so these were left behind. This particular intelligence failure impacted the 15th heavily.

Although on the surface unified in their goal of taking Imphal, an undercurrent throughout Fifteenth Army and beyond colored the coming operation. None of Mutaguchi's generals favored the operation. Their primary concern: supply. But there also existed doubt about Mutaguchi's true goals, driven by his insatiable ambition, as well. Mutaguchi thought their objections stemmed simply from lack of true *bushido*, the warrior's creed. Supply, he felt, would take care of itself when the enemy supply depots were captured. He returned their personal fears about his ambition with simple disdain.

Bose's Indian National Army became the final force at Mutaguchi's disposal. The Army formed in Malaya from some of the thousands of Indian prisoners taken during the Japanese victories in 1942. It achieved its primary goal when Bose established the provisional Government of Free India on July 1, 1943 in Singapore. In *U-GO* planning, Mutaguchi, whose ambitions went beyond Imphal, considered the INA a valuable asset. Despite lukewarm reception in the Burma Area Army, orders went out to the INA's 1st Division to move to the Chindwin.



Subhas inspecting his troops

The 1st Division consisted of four regiments: the Subhas, Gandhi, Azad, and Nehru. Each contained three battalions, similar to the Japanese regiments, but armed poorly. For example, the best battalion in the division, I/Subhas, had six anti-tank rifles, six light, and six medium machine guns. It had no signaling equipment and very little inherent medical supplies.

In all the divisional strength was about 9,000 troops, but few truly contributed. In the actual event, each regiment moved separately, and only the Subhas and Gandhi Regiments arrived in time to take part in the operation. The Azad Regiment arrived on the Chindwin in late May and stayed on the river. The Nehru Regiment never arrived at all. Thus of the twelve INA battalions, only five actually engaged in *U-GO*.

Of more importance to the Japanese were the Special Services groups, called the Bahadurs. These special groups trained to conduct sabotage, gather intelligence, and, most importantly, work on subverting the Indian sepoys opposing them.

THE OPPONENTS

Despite the personality problems that pervaded relations within Fifteenth Army and with Burma Area Army, the Japanese organization was a model of efficiency compared to the Allied command structure in Southeast Asia.

Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten acted as the Supreme Allied Command in Southeast Asia, with American Lieutenant General Joseph Stillwell as his deputy. However, Stillwell tended to act autonomously most of the time. Three service commanders worked under Mountbatten: Admiral Sir James Somerville, commander of the Eastern Fleet, Royal Navy, Lieutenant General Sir George Giffard, commander of 11th Army Group, and Air Chief Marshal Sir Richard Pierce, who supposedly commanded the combined air forces. Mountbatten feuded with all three, which complicated Allied plans and responses, and ultimately replaced all three. Lieutenant General Sir William Slim's Fourteenth Army, composed of three Corps, XV in the Arakan, IV at Imphal, and XXXIII in reserve, reported to Giffard. Wholly separate from the main command structure, the United States maintained full control over the most important force in the theater: the transport aircraft, exercised through Stillwell. This created a situation that forced the supreme commander to go to his deputy to gain permission to divert aircraft in emergencies, a wholly ridiculous position.

Command problems were only part of the problem for the Allies in the China-Burma-India Theater. The biggest problem: the overall low priority the area had in the scope of the world war. The United States made its Ledo Road project, which would open a land supply line to its Chinese allies, its highest priority. Aside from this, Burma and India were simply nuisance sideshows. Winston Churchill focused primarily on the Mediterranean as a theater where waning British influence could best be promoted. Although uninterested in China, he demanded a part in defeating the Japanese in the Pacific to regain some of the Empire's lost prestige. How to do that, however, kept Churchill, his Chiefs of Staff, War Cabinet, and the Foreign Office at odds with each other for nearly a year. About the only thing they agreed upon: land operations in central Burma would be slow and costly due to terrain and logistic restrictions.

By the end of 1943, Slim began to get intelligence about a Japanese offensive with fairly specific details: three columns, one against each of the forward divisions, and a brigade against Kohima to cut the road between Imphal and Dimapur. Much of the intelligence came from ULTRA-type intercepts, but other sources, particularly patrols, captured enemy soldiers and documents, and reports from agents behind enemy lines, supported the information. The same sources gave a good picture of the tenuous logistics situation in the Burma Area Army. With an attack imminent, the Fourteenth Army commander had to choose between three options: 1) attack first, 2) fight the Japanese defensively from his forward positions, or 3) fall back toward his base at Imphal and let the Japanese break themselves on his defenses at the end of their supply lines. Attacking first was out of the question; the British would have to fight at the end of a difficult supply line. He also ruled out defending the forward positions on the Chindwin; the positions of the forward divisions made them far too vulnerable to isolation and piecemeal destruction. Thus, Slim chose to let the Japanese come to him.

Lieutenant General Geoffrey Scoones' IV Corps, three divisions spread out over two hundred miles of frontier, stood on the front

line of Slim's defense. The 17th Indian Light Division, commanded by Major General D. T. "Punch" Cowan, was posted 130 miles south of Imphal at Tiddim, with its two brigades, the 48th and 63rd, covering the 40 miles between Tiddim and Tanzong. Nearly 100 miles to the north, the 20th Indian Division, under Major General Douglas Gracey, occupied the Kabaw Valley with its three brigades, the 32nd, 80th, and 100th, spread out even further. No lateral connection between the two divisions existed except back through Imphal, a march of about 250 miles. Thus both could be engaged and possibly defeated before the other could respond. Both divisions operated out of fortified localities with observation posts and patrols covering most of the Corps' 200-mile frontier. Each had set up large supply dumps—the 17th at Milepost 109 and the 20th at Moreh—in their area, mostly in anticipation of more forward movement.

At Imphal, Scoones had his reserve force, Major General Ouvry Robert's 23rd Division, with its three infantry brigades (1st, 37th, and 49th), plus the 254th Indian Tank Brigade and the 50th Indian Parachute Brigade.

The plan that Slim and Scoones put together in response to the impending Japanese attack did not make the Corps divisional commanders happy. The plan called for the 17th and 20th Divisions to fall back *as soon as they knew the main Japanese attack had commenced* (a critical condition). For both Cowan and Gracey that meant giving back the hard won territorial gains of the past year. However, both senior commanders felt that a concentration of IV Corps power could hold the Japanese at bay at the end of their impracticably long supply line, as long as Allied air superiority provided the proper logistic and reinforcement capability.

THE PRELUDE

The prelude to *U-GO* got underway in early February in the Arakan. Despite their excellent intelligence on the coming *U-GO* attack, the Japanese 55th Division's attack caught the Allies by surprise. The 55th's mission: destroy the 7th Division, do the same to the Indian 5th Division, and at the same time draw off the reserves from Imphal and India that would be unavailable to oppose Mutaguchi's attack, scheduled to start three weeks later.

The attack started very well, with the 7th being surrounded and pinned into a very small area. But the British didn't react the same way they had earlier in Malaya and Burma. This time the division stayed in place and fought, decimating Japanese infantry assaults with tank and artillery fire. Supply came from the air. By February 22, the attack had petered out; lack of supply, lack of supporting arms, and over 5,000 dead stopped *HA-GO*.

HA-GO had one major impact on the coming Imphal operation and should have had a second. The biggest impact: it ended too soon. British reserves remained available to meet the next Japanese thrust. This fact unfortunately dovetailed with the fact that Mutaguchi couldn't attack in early March as he had expected. His final division, the 15th, only arrived on scene as *HA-GO* ended. In hindsight, *HA-GO* should not have launched until the Fifteenth Army finalized their preparations to move.

A key lesson that the Japanese failed to learn from the *HA-GO* operation: they didn't face the same British Army they faced in

Malaya. The expectation that the British would withdraw blindly when faced with encirclement had been proven incorrect in the Arakan and should have led Mutaguchi (or his superior Kawabe) to rethink the tactical plans for *U-GO*. That did not occur.

THE ATTACK

Operation *U-GO* started with two surprises, one for each side.

The Allies surprised the Japanese first when Wingate's 77th Brigade landed behind their lines, soon followed by two other brigades. Operation *THURSDAY* intended to link up with a drive from Stillwell's command in northern Burma to take Myitkyina, removing the Japanese threat to the Ledo Road. Wingate's Chindits expected to stay in the field this time, supplied by air, disrupting Japanese plans and pinning their reserves, just as *HA-GO* had been intended to do for the British reserves.

Slim received the next surprise. Yanagida's 33rd Division began their *U-GO* mission a full week earlier than its sister divisions, just as planned. Since the 33rd had been in close contact with Cowan's 17th Division, fighting over the terrain of the Chin Hills for months, Slim's attention focused too much on the activities of the 31st and 15th Divisions on the Chindwin River. In addition, his intelligence kept telling him the attack would start on March 15. As such the 17th Division found itself in trouble before the British high command realized the attack had commenced. A small Gurkha patrol spotted large Japanese movements on March 8, but their report remained unconfirmed until March 11. By that time Yanagida's columns had penetrated around Cowan's men, positioned to cut the road back to Imphal.

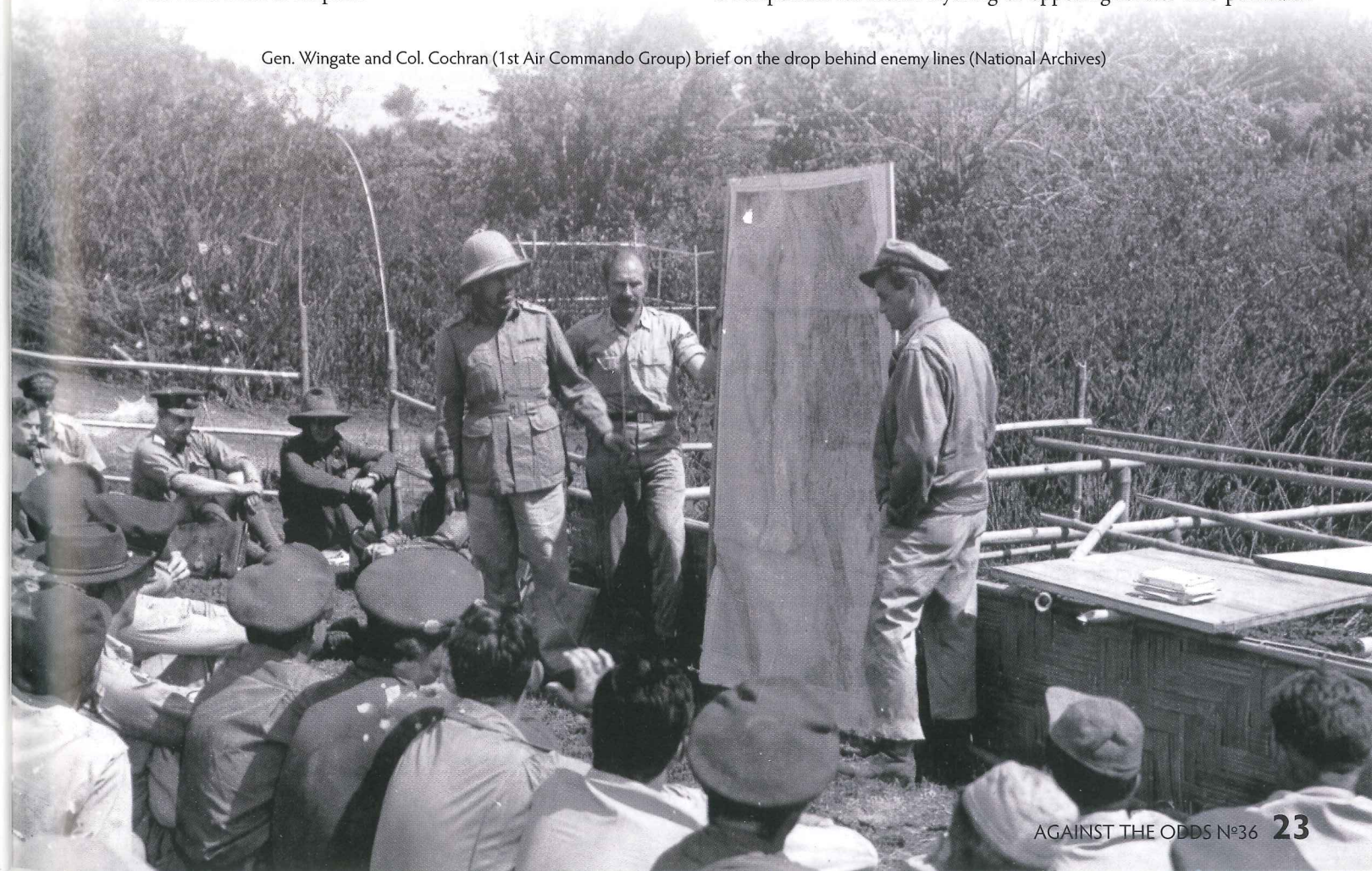
Yanagida had tasked two of his regiments with the destruction of the 17th Division. His 214th Regiment cut the road back to Imphal at the Tuitum Saddle, while the 215th made for the road at Singgel and Sakawng, closing in on the Indian's supply dump at Milestone (MS) 109. By March 13, Scoones and Slim agreed that the offensive was underway despite the lack of movement near the Chindwin. They sent orders to Cowan to start moving his division back toward the base.

Most histories chide Cowan for not responding immediately, waiting instead a full 24 hours before starting the division (and its 3,500 animals and 2,500 vehicles) back toward the IV Corps base. However, a recent book (Grant) notes that the surviving Cowan order for the withdrawal intended only the division's rear guard to delay their own withdrawal and that the rest of the 17th Division started pulling back as soon as Scoones' order came in.

By March 15, the full 17th Division moved north, but found the Japanese across their path in at least four places, cutting it off from the bridge over the Manipur River and from its supply base. However, Scoones dispatched both the 37th and 49th Brigades from his reserve 23rd Division south to break back through the blocks.

Air attacks pushed the I/214th battalion away from the Saddle, opening that portion of the road again. Its sister battalions had run into significant resistance from local defensive boxes and failed to close the road again before the 17th passed through. Further north, the 215th Regiment captured the supply dump at MS 109 on March 18, while holding a large roadblock at MS 100, and sending another force to cut the road three miles further along. Allied defensive boxes held at MS 98, 93, and 82, creating what Slim would later call a Neapolitan ice cream layering of opposing forces. This particular

Gen. Wingate and Col. Cochran (1st Air Commando Group) brief on the drop behind enemy lines (National Archives)



battle, however, keyed on the fact that the Allies massed their troops at either end of the blocks, while the 215th commander, Colonel Sasahara, kept splitting his force to encircle and force panic among the Allied soldiers. Some panic did occur, but generally only among rear area units, untrained in combat.

Then one of those famous battlefield SNAFUs occurred that had enormous impact on the battle. On March 25, Sasahara sent a two-part signal to Yanagida describing the battle status: he had casualties and little ammunition; he ended by stating his intention to fight to the last. Yanagida, reading the last part first, assumed the regiment was about to be overrun and destroyed. Based on that interpretation, he ordered Sasahara to withdraw from the road, opening the way for the 17th Division to escape. In reality, Sasahara had only included the last portion as a gesture of *bushido*.

Yanagida's two regiments would not have succeeded against Cowan's division on their own, especially with the tactics the Japanese were using. But the misread signal allowed the Indians to withdraw with minimum trouble. By 5 April, the 17th Division arrived at Imphal.

Yanagida followed his misplaced order with a message to Mutaguchi. He denounced the three-week timeframe set for Imphal's capture as impossible. He suggested calling off the offensive. The ensuing argument not only further alienated the two generals, but it caused a major rift between Yanagida and his Chief of Staff Colonel Tanaka Tetsujiro, an ardent Mutaguchi supporter. The rift impacted the 33rd's Division performance adversely.

Yanagida's signal infuriated Mutaguchi. However, in retrospect, the signal contained sound advice. By the time Yanagida sent his signal, Slim had started reinforcing IV Corps. The 5th Division airlifted into Imphal from 19-29 March, with the 7th Division set to follow. On 27 March, Slim also called on the 2nd Division to be brought into Dimapur. Thus within two weeks of the start of *U-GO*, the Allies had doubled the troops facing the Japanese advance.

While the 17th Division fought through roadblocks, *U-GO*'s other advances continued on three fronts.

The 33rd Division's center column, under Infantry Group commander Major General Yamamoto Tsunoru, crossed the Chindwin with two battalions of the 213th Regiment, plus armor and artillery, and moved against Gracey's 20th Division. On March 15, sensing the enemy withdrawing in front of him, Yamamoto dispatched the II/213th Battalion to support its sister regiments against the 17th Division, then sent the III/213th on a cross country trek to get behind Gracey and cut the road. The diversions left Yamamoto very weak in infantry to protect his armor and artillery, so he became necessarily conservative when finally making hard contact with Gracey's 32nd Brigade near Tamu on 21 March. For a week, the Japanese pushed against the 32nd, aided by the movement of the I/60th Battalion from the north, but made little progress. By the end of the month, Gracey's 80th and 100th Brigades had safely withdrawn to the Shenam Pass, so the 32nd destroyed its supply dump at Moreh and withdrew to Pelel. One company of the III/213th managed to capture what became known as Nippon Hill on 28 March, but the hill only overlooked the Tamu-Pelel road and did not cut it. Thus Gracey's division withdrew relatively unharmed, setting the stage for a month-long battle with Yamamoto for the Pass.

North of Yamamoto's column, the weak 15th Division crossed the Chindwin on March 15 and made its way northwest against very little opposition, except the terrain. On March 28, the III/67th Battalion cut the Imphal-Kohima road at Kangpokpi, while two battalions of the 51st cut it at Satarmaina on April 3. Yamauchi's other two battalions became involved in a battle that developed at Sangshak. The I and II/60th Battalions should have fought that battle. Instead, the 31st Division fought there.

Sato's 31st Division moved in three columns to the northwest with their target to cut the Imphal-Dimapur road at Kohima. The left wing column, consisting of the 58th Regiment under Infantry Group commander Major General Miyazaki Shigesaburo, captured Uhrul on March 21. Miyazaki should have continued northward to Kohima; instead he became sidetracked by an Allied force ten miles to the south.

Originally, the British 49th Brigade held the Sangshak area, but Scoones had sent it south to aid the 17th Division. In its place, the 50th Indian Parachute Brigade maintained the outposts. After the Japanese overran Uhrul and several of his forward positions, Brigadier General M. Hope-Thompson concentrated his brigade in a defensive box at Sangshak. Although he had his troops concentrated, the position was a poor one, with no internal water source. Miyazaki, having intercepted a signal indicating the 15th Division was behind schedule, chose not to leave an enemy brigade in his rear, and on the night of March 23 attacked Hope-Thompson's perimeter.

The initial attack failed and for the next several days, Miyazaki continued to attack, gradually strengthening each assault. The II/60th battalion arrived in the area on March 25 and volunteered to aid in the attack; Miyazaki reportedly refused, wanting the victory to go strictly to the men of the 58th Regiment who had been engaged. Scoones finally ordered Hope-Thompson to break out and fall back on March 26, after having lost over 600 troops and half his platoon and company commanders. Despite the losses, the British did gain a significant prize from the battle—they found a copy of the Japanese order of battle for *U-GO* on a corpse. Slims and Scoones now knew what they faced and where the blows were aimed. Miyazaki lost some 580 troops, about 16% of his effective force, but gained some thirty mortars, ammunition, and supply. More importantly, though, he lost valuable time.

Miyazaki's decision to attack rather than leave an enemy force in his rear makes sense militarily. However, with the 15th Division moving up, he could (and should) have continued his advance on Kohima. He probably could have overrun the village had he done so. Kohima Pass lay woefully underdefended at the start of the *U-GO* operation, with the garrison consisting mostly of the 1st Battalion Assam Regiment and a motley mix of rear area units, such as the 87th Field Bakery Section. Only 2,500 troops initially occupied the Pass, with fully 1,000 classified as non-combatants.

Sato's troops overran the outposts around Kohima and finally put in an attack on the garrison by April 4, with a stronger attack the following day. However the delay at Sangshak proved costly. Granted a chance to reinforce the area, Slim diverted the 161st Brigade of the 5th Division from Imphal to Dimapur. The 161st managed to get a full battalion, the 4th Royal West Kents, into the garrison just in time to blunt the Japanese attack. The remainder of the Brigade, including artillery, set up a defensive box two miles away at Jotsoma.

The last minute reinforcement saved Kohima, although the battle raged for several months. Had Miyazaki bypassed Sangshak after taking Uhrul, he would have reached Kohima by 31 March; it is doubtful the garrison could have held out against him.

But the 58th Infantry *had* been delayed at Sangshak, and now Sato had to fight for the Pass. Unfortunately, he did what every other Japanese divisional commander did—he split his force into battalion-sized units and sent them in various directions to encircle the defenders. In doing so, he diluted his combat power and—predictably—lost. The III/138th closed the road to Dimapur for a week, turning the battle into a siege. But the reinforcements from the British 2nd Division arrived and soon pushed tanks through to the defenders.

To the south of Kohima, Yanagida's 33rd Division pushed forward onto the Imphal Plain and began attacking toward Bishenpur, fifteen miles from the base. North of Imphal, the 15th Division's III/51st battalion took Hill 3833 on April 7. The hill, also known as Nungshigum, lay only 4-6 miles from IV Corps headquarters (depending on your source). Following airstrikes, the 3/9 Jat Battalion from 9th Brigade took it back the following day. Three days later, a stronger Japanese attack recaptured the hill. But on April 13, Scoones massed the 5th Division's artillery and airstrikes against the dug-in Japanese and then sent the Sherman medium tanks of B Squadron, 3rd Carabiniers, and the 1st Dogra Battalion, to retake it. The faulty intelligence given Yamauchi's troops prior to the operation hurt them now—they had no anti-tank weaponry. Although they caused significant casualties among the exposed tank commanders, the Allies captured Nungshigum. The hill represented the closest the Japanese ever got to their primary goal.

Starting in mid-April, *U-GO* degenerated into a series of small unit tactical battles for various hills on the road to Imphal. At Kohima, Sato's troops fought to gain Garrison Hill, Kuki Piquet, Field Supply Depot, Jail Hill, and the Pimple. Yamamoto's column fought for Nippon Hill, Gibraltar, Malta, Scraggy, Crete East, and Crete West. To the south, Wireless and Wooded (Forest) Hill and Three Pimple Hills became battlegrounds for the 33rd Division, as did the villages of Potsangbam and Ningthoukong.

Japanese tactics on all fronts followed a distressingly similar pattern: all of the divisional commanders split their forces into non-supporting groups with divergent goals. For example, while Sato struggled to take Kohima's hills and control the Pass, he had an unsupported battalion, the I/58th, attacking the 161st Brigade box at Jotsoma, and another trying to cut the Kohima-Dimapur road at Zubza. Virtually every time, the initial attacks contained too few troops. Larger and larger units made the follow-up attacks. These tactics led to severe casualties, especially among junior officers who led from the front. In addition, attacks went in generally unsupported—most of Sato's divisional artillery didn't arrive at Kohima until April 20—*after* the British 2nd Division had lifted the siege. Even then, artillery stayed at a premium with ammunition initially limited to 150 rounds per gun *for the entire operation* pending resupply from the rear or from captured British stocks.

Even with Imphal isolated from ground contact with Dimapur and Kohima, Slim felt confident enough with his increased strength to begin a general British counterattack on April 10. The basic plan: stay defensive in the south, encircle the 31st Division at Kohima, and retake Uhrul in the center to cut any Japanese supply line back to the Chindwin.

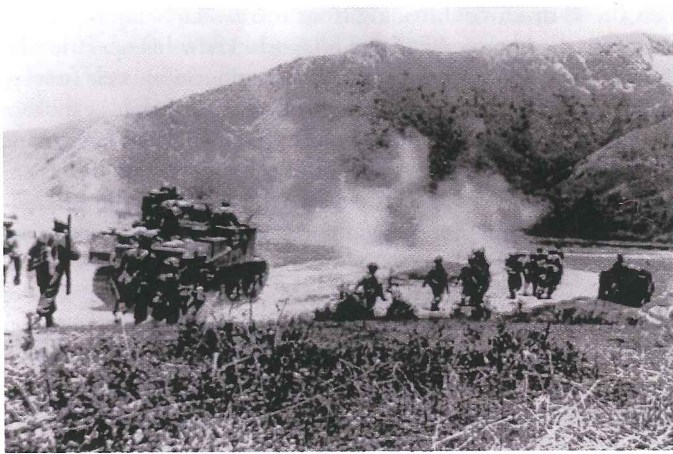
With the 15th Division reeling from the loss at Nungshigum and the 33rd stalled below Imphal, Mutaguchi knew his operation had reached a crisis. In order to strengthen Yamouchi's attack from the north, he ordered Sato to send a regiment south—while at the same time ordering him to complete the capture of Kohima by April 29, the Emperor's birthday. Typical of the higher-level orders sent by Fifteenth Army, it had no basis in the reality of the situation. Mutaguchi should never have ordered Sato to succeed with fewer troops than he was stalemated with.

Initially, Sato complied, sending word to three battalions to prepare to move south. But the Allies intercepted a courier with Mutaguchi's orders and launched a new series of attacks to pin Sato in place. It worked. In response to these new attacks, Sato chose to make a final effort to capture Garrison Hill and stabilize his defensive position before sending the troops south, but the attack on April 23 ended in disaster, with the II/138th battalion nearly wiped out; its four companies, numbered 4, 4, 16, and 0 men out of a nominal 180 after the attack. Following this defeat, Sato simply decided to ignore Fifteenth Army's orders—he needed all his strength just to hold the part of Kohima ridge that he occupied. Amazingly, the Japanese later blamed Sato's decision for the overall failure to take Imphal.

By the end of April, Mutaguchi's three divisions isolated Imphal on the ground, but were stalemated on four fronts, with the British on the attack against the 31st and 15th Divisions. Yamamoto's troops limited their attacks to commando-type raids on the Pelel airfield. The INA troops proved no real benefit; used mostly as laborers by their Japanese commanders, morale sank and combat capability sank lower. Two additional battalions (the II/51st and II/67th) had arrived, but resupply was non-existent, the three weeks of rations long gone, many oxen and mules needed for artillery transport eaten, ammunition low. To make supply matters worse, Wingate's Chindits attacked rear area transport companies, and May's monsoon season approached. Despite this, Southern Army continued to announce a 90% chance that Imphal could be captured.

Mutaguchi finally visited the front in late April and at 33rd Division further alienated Yanagida. The Army commander decided to reinforce the 33rd's drive on Imphal, and ordered the 14th Tank Regiment and the 2/18th Heavy Field Artillery battalion to leave the Yamamoto column in Shenan Pass and join the southern attack. In addition, he attached the I/67th, II/154th, and two battalions from the 151st Infantry Regiment as well. As the troops congregated, he relieved Yanagida of command on May 15, replacing him with Major General Tanaka Nobuo. He also relieved Yamauchi of command of the 15th Division, replacing him with Lieutenant General Shibata Uichi—who wouldn't arrive until mid-July.

The renewed Japanese attack never got off the ground, however, as the British 48th Brigade sent the 1/7 Gurkha and 2/5 Gurkha battalions, plus a mountain artillery regiment, into the Japanese rear and cut their supply line in the Torbung defile. The block held in place for a week, stopping supply and reinforcements from getting to the Japanese front line units. Mutaguchi's reinforcing battalions each suffered heavy casualties while trying to break the block. The British battalions withdrew on their own when their supplies ran low and another British attack to the north stalled. Despite the block, the Japanese still proved dangerous, as a battalion overran the 32nd Brigade's administrative box north of Bishenpur, and came close to doing the same to the 17th Division's headquarters. But this proved a valiant, wasted effort.



Gurkhas advancing with tanks to clear the Japanese from Imphal-Kohima road
(Library of Congress)

While Mutaguchi tried to restart the drive on Imphal, the situation at Kohima grew worse. Although successful in holding the 2nd Division's encircling attacks, Sato became increasingly bitter toward his superior. On May 16, he sent a blistering report straight to Mutaguchi's superior, General Kawabe. Kawabe responded by sending the message on to Mutaguchi and telling Sato not to bypass him again. Nine days later, Sato sent another signal that said if supplies weren't received, he'd retreat from Kohima to save his division. Mutaguchi's replied in typical fashion: he appealed to Sato's honor and the sacrifices his men had made, telling him to remain in place for ten days, by which time Imphal would be captured. The claim was pure fantasy, however, and on June 1, Sato put his surviving troops in motion away from Kohima, leaving Miyazaki and 600 men as a rear guard.

Sato's retreat against orders stunned an Imperial Japanese Army where superior orders were akin to orders from the Emperor himself. Kawabe met with Mutaguchi in early June to discuss the situation: Sato in retreat, the 15th Division being hard-pressed with its troops subsisting on roots and grass, and the 33rd's offensive exhausted. The two men chose to send additional reinforcements to the Shennan Pass; however this, too, was a pipe dream. The reinforcements identified would not reach Yamamoto until late June.

On June 22, British troops finally reopened the Imphal road and remained on the attack everywhere. Mutaguchi continued to send out attack orders that had no basis in reality, the last being to 15th Division to rebreak the Imphal road and move on the Allied base, despite the fact that the decimated division was wholly on the defensive. By July 10, even Mutaguchi had to accept facts, and he ordered *U-GO* halted. Within the week all remaining Japanese forces withdrew back toward the Chindwin; the starving soldiers called the retreat routes the "Human Remains Highway" for the dead and dying that littered the way.

By the time the Japanese recrossed the Chindwin, over 53,000 Japanese troops of the 84,000 that started *U-GO* were casualties, with the rest malnourished and unfit for duty. The INA's 1st Division lost nearly 75% of its strength to casualties and desertion, and failed completely to influence Indian troops they hoped to attract. During the battle, the British and Indian forces suffered some 17,000 casualties. Instead of improving the defense of Burma, *U-GO* destroyed an entire army and left Burma wide open to the Allies.

EPILOGUE

The battle over *U-GO* continued long after the last Japanese soldier staggered across the Chindwin. Mutaguchi blamed his two primary subordinates, Yanagida and Sato, for the failure of the operation: Yanagida for his slow approach to Imphal and Sato for disobeying a direct order not to retreat. The Fifteenth Army commander wanted to court-martial both men, but Kawabe deflected the request; he knew that both Yanagida and Sato could defend themselves adequately, armed with some of Mutaguchi's less discrete signals, and that any trial would shake public confidence more than the *U-GO* disaster had already. Sato's disobedience was ultimately blamed on "acute mental fatigue" and he retired into the Reserves for a brief period before being sent to Sixteenth Army in Java. The Sato-Mutaguchi feud continued until Sato's death in 1959.

Regardless of Mutaguchi's views, the real reasons for the Japanese defeat in their *U-GO* offensive are fairly clear-cut.

First: logistics. Mutaguchi's three-week assessment for *U-GO* was a pipe dream, pinning the logistics of the Army on a successful short-term capture of Imphal and enemy supplies. Although the Allied airlift never managed to provide all the supply IV Corps needed (averaging between 70-80%) during the time Imphal was cut off, Allied supply remained significantly better than their opponents. One example: a single reissue of artillery ammunition reached 31st Division during the operation—30 rounds per gun. Satos' troops endured up to 5,000 rounds *per day* from Allied guns.

Second: Japanese tactical intransigence. Despite the lessons of *HA-GO* in February, all the Japanese division and regimental leaders dispersed their forces in an attempt to encircle and panic the enemy despite the fact that *it didn't work!* They continued to attack with minimum forces initially and reinforce later. By diluting their combat strength in this way with multiple goals, they failed to achieve any of them. The contempt for their enemy underscored these tactical decisions.

The third and final reason for the defeat: the Allied reserves. The goal of February's *HA-GO* operation had been to pin or destroy those reserves. When that failed, the Allies massively reinforced IV Corps, as well as supported them with air power, armor, artillery, and supply. With the 5th Division in place, a mere two weeks after *U-GO* started, the plan became virtually out of reach.

This indictment takes nothing away from the personal bravery of the individual Japanese soldier. Their trek through hostile terrain to Kohima and elsewhere remains an epic of endurance. Slim admits in his memoirs to underestimating their ability. Battalions continuing attack when their strength dropped to less than a platoon became commonplace in May and June. In short, had the Japanese been better led, better supplied, and able to stop Allied reinforcements, they might have succeeded.

APPENDIX: ORDER OF BATTLE FOR OPERATION U-GO, MARCH-JULY 1944

Japanese Fifteenth Army - Lt-Gen Mutiguchi R.

15th Division - Lt-Gen Yamauchi M.

51st Infantry Regiment

60th Infantry Regiment

67th Infantry Regiment

31st Division - Lt-Gen Sato K.
 58th Infantry Regiment
 124th Infantry Regiment
 138th Infantry Regiment
 33rd Division - Lt Gen Yanagida G.
 213th Infantry Regiment
 214th Infantry Regiment
 215th Infantry Regiment
 14th Tank Regiment
 3rd Heavy Field Artillery Regiment
 18th Heavy Field Artillery Regiment
 1st Division, Indian National Army - Col. M Kiani
 1st "Subhas" Brigade
 2nd "Gandhi" Brigade
 3rd "Azad" Brigade

Reinforcements during battle:

II Bn/154th Infantry Regiment/54th Division
 II & III Bns/151st Infantry Regiment/53rd Division

Note: I & III Bns/61st Infantry Regiment/4th Division were also allotted to Fifteenth Army but did not arrive onsite until 23 July 1944.

British Fourteenth Army - Lt-Gen (soon Field Marshal) W. Slim

British IV Corps - Lt-Gen G. Scoones

254th Indian Tank Brigade
 50th Indian Parachute Brigade (2 Bns)
 three un-Brigaded infantry battalions
 17th Light Infantry Division - MGen D. Cowan
 48th Indian Infantry Brigade
 63rd Indian Infantry Brigade

20th Infantry Division - MGen D. Gracey
 32nd Indian Infantry Brigade
 80th Indian Infantry Brigade
 100th Indian Infantry Brigade
 23rd Infantry Division - MGen O. Roberts
 1st Indian Infantry Brigade
 37th Indian Infantry Brigade
 49th Indian Infantry Brigade

attached to IV Corps during battle:

5th Infantry Division - MGen H. Briggs
 9th Indian Infantry Brigade
 123rd Indian Infantry Brigade
 7th Infantry Division - MGen F. Messervy
 89th Indian Infantry Brigade

British Reinforcements

XXXIII Corps - Lt-Gen M. Stoddard

149th Regiment R.A.C. (armor)
 2nd Infantry Division - MGen J. Grover
 4th Brigade
 5th Brigade
 6th Brigade
 7th Infantry Division
 161st Indian Infantry Brigade (from 5th Division)
 23rd Indian Infantry Brigade (L.R.P.)
 268th Indian Infantry Brigade
 Lushai Brigade

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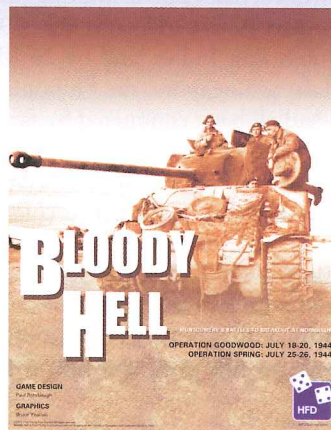
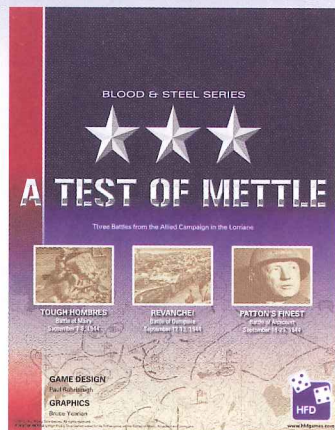


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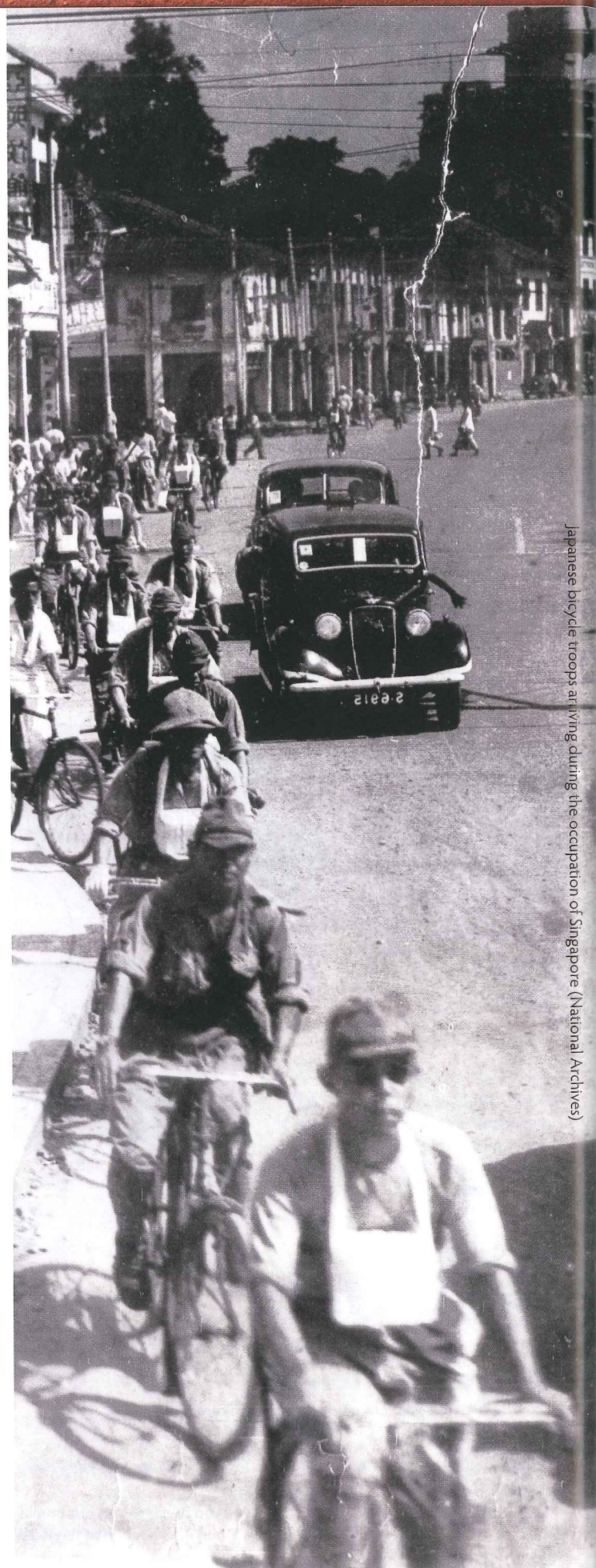
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ALL HOPES TO NAUGHT

On 29 June 1940, Japanese Foreign Minister Hachiro Arita mentioned Japan's development of a "Greater East Asian Co-prosperity Sphere" in passing during a radio address concerning "The International Situation and Japan's Position." Two months later, this policy was formally unveiled by Prime Minister Matsuoka Yosuke. This Japanese plan envisioned an Asia rid of Western colonialism and influences for the benefit of all Asians oppressed by Western imperialism—an Asia led by Japan, of course. The rationale for a "Greater Asia" led by Japan had deep roots, extending back to Fukuzawa Yukichi's *Japan's Mission in Asia* published in 1882, which in turn had been inspired by Japan's exposure to contemporary Western ideas of "Manifest Destiny" and imperialism. As Japan modernized over the 58 years following the publication of *Japan's Mission in Asia*, Fukuzawa's ideas percolated through Japan's intellectual, educational, and governmental systems, culminating in Matsuoka's August 1940 official pronouncement. This pronouncement hardly took the Western colonial powers in Asia by surprise. However, only the United States at that time was primarily concerned with Japan's ambitions. Throughout the post-WWI era the European powers had more immediate concerns: the Great Depression, the Communist threat, the rise of fascism in Italy and Germany, the latter's rearmament and expansion and, after 1 September 1940, war. By the time of Matsuoka's announcement, both the Netherlands and France had been conquered by Germany, and Britain appeared to be on its last legs. Only uncertainty about the intentions of the Soviet Union stayed the hand of Japan's military, but after 21 June 1941, it appeared to Japanese governmental and military leaders that a "Golden Opportunity" had fallen into their laps.

If Japan's public announcement of their ambitions did not surprise the Western colonial powers in Asia, the rapidity with which the Japanese acted to fulfill them after Pearl Harbor certainly did. On 8 December 1941, Japan invaded British Malaya, having already occupied French Indochina after the fall of France in 1940. The American Philippines were invaded on 10 December, British Burma the next day. One month later, Japan attacked the Dutch East Indies, and by 26 May 1942, it appeared to be all over. Malaya, Singapore, the Philippines, Burma, and the Dutch East Indies had all been conquered by Japan. But of course, it was not all over. This issue's "And the Data Shows" will begin with a brief examination of the efforts by the Western colonial powers in Asia to first defend, and then recover their colonial possessions. We will then turn to the issue of their efforts to hang on to their hard fought recoveries in the immediate post war years, exploring reasons why none of them were able to do so. Focus will be on the Philippines, French Indochina, the Dutch East Indies and, given this issue of *Against the Odds* magazine's game and lead article, British Burma.

Space does not allow a detailed look at the particulars of the Japanese campaigns to conquer the four above mentioned territories nor the Allies efforts to recapture them. Accounts of these campaigns are numerous and readily available to the interested reader. The tables below will give you an idea of the efforts expended and expense incurred by each of the four powers in their efforts to first defend, then retake their possessions.



Japanese bicycle troops arriving during the occupation of Singapore (National Archives)

TABLE 1: Defending the Colonies

COLONY	POWER	DEFENDING FORCE	CASUALTIES SUFFERED (killed and wounded unless otherwise noted)
Philippines	U.S.	c.152,000 (includes Filipino forces)	c.146,000 (includes prisoners)
Indochina (1)	France	c. 3,000	c. 900
Burma	Britain	c.102,000 (includes all Commonwealth forces)	c. 13,500 (Including 6,000+ British)
Dutch East Indies	Netherlands	c. 85,000 (includes Netherlands, U.S., and Commonwealth forces)	62,116 (includes prisoners)

Notes:

(1) The Japanese occupation of French Indo-China actually occurred in September 1940 and was briefly resisted by French forces now under nominal Vichy control. Figures are included for comparison.

TABLE 2: Retaking the Colonies

COLONY	POWER	FORCE COMMITTED	CASUALTIES	EXPENSE (1) [\$Millions] / [% of war effort]
Philippines	U.S.	c. 200,000	c. 62,000	\$8,176 / 3%
Indochina	France	0 (2)	0	\$67 / 5%
Burma	Britain	c. 200,000 (3)	22,262 (3)	\$2,092 / 4%
Dutch East Indies	Netherlands	0 (3)	0	\$285 / 3%

Notes:

(1) Figures are a highly subjective estimate of expense incurred based on average cost per service member deployed by each power. Intention is to give the reader a very rough idea of commitment of effort to regain colony. Note expense figure includes estimate of cost of preparing the defenses of each colony. Expense figures are given in millions of wartime U.S. dollars.

(2) The war ended before an Allied advance into Indochina from Burma could be undertaken. However the Japanese, fearing such an advance, attempted to disarm French forces and their colonial auxiliaries who had been allowed to police the colony under Japanese supervision. The French, who had recognized the Free French provisional government, refused to disarm and were attacked by the Japanese in March 1942, suffering over 2,000 military and civilian casualties.

(3) The Allied decision to advance on Japan from Australia via New Guinea and the Philippines meant that the Japanese forces in the Dutch East Indies were not attacked and left to "wither on the vine."

(4) Figures are for all Commonwealth forces.

Taken together, these two tables suggest that while defending and then recapturing the lost colonies was certainly not a top priority of the colonial powers, the Japanese were not allowed to simply walk in and take them, much less keep them without a fight. As noted above, both France and the Netherlands had been knocked out of the war by Germany in 1940. Therefore, recovery of their colonies in Asia essentially rested with the British and Americans, who for reasons mentioned in the Table 2 footnotes, opted to leave Indochina and the East Indies in Japanese hands until the end of the war.

With World War II over, a major divergence appeared in the post-war expectations of the major Asian colonial powers. The Dutch and the French assumed it would be a case of business as usual. They would reoccupy their possessions, reestablish their colonial governments, and everything would return to pre-war conditions. The British and the Americans, on the other hand, sensed that things would never again be as they had been in their colonies. The war and events leading up to it had created seismic changes requiring serious consideration about how to proceed in the colonies.

The first of these seismic shifts had been the Japanese pronouncement of their "Greater East Asian Co-prosperity Sphere." All of the colonial powers had been dealing with varying degrees of popular unrest in their possessions before the war. The Japanese plan appealed to many

of the leaders behind that unrest—Gandhi in India, Ho Chi Minh in French Indochina, Sukarno in the Dutch East Indies, Ba Maw in Burma to name a few—who saw the propaganda value of the “Asia for the Asians” slogan, even if they suspected the Japanese really wanted to merely replace the Western imperialists and might turn out to be as bad or worse. The spectacular early Japanese successes against the Americans and British was an even bigger propaganda prize, unleashing “Asian pride” and demonstrating that Asians could beat the Western “barbarians” at their own game, though the new Japanese masters now had to be resisted as well. Much like the ironic spread of the liberal ideals of the French Revolution throughout Europe by the soldiers of a French Emperor with total power, who at first defeated the old absolute rulers, the ideas of independence from foreign rule had been spread though out Asia by an initially successful Japan intent on imposing such foreign rule itself. Though the efforts of Japan, like those of Napoleon, failed, the mindset of the colonial populations had been irrevocably changed, a fact that the French and Dutch leaders back in Europe, having been sidelined for six years, seem to have missed.

A second major change was in the fighting capability of these now enthused colonial populations. Western colonial powers had always armed some of their colonial populations to help in the policing and defense of their colonies. Up until World War I, these native levies had usually not been allowed to handle the latest, heaviest, and most powerful weapons, to keep them from becoming a serious threat to their colonial masters. The insatiable manpower demands of the two world wars of the first half of the 20th century had changed that practice, but instructing colonials in the use of newer, more powerful weapons was thought safe, as they would of course be disarmed when mustered out. It would be difficult for a colonial soldier to take his cannon, heavy machine gun, or tank home with him. As early as the summer of 1945, however, it was clear that this was no longer the case. There was now an emerging super power perfectly willing, for ideological as well as strategic reasons, to place sophisticated weapons in the hands of angry colonials: the Soviet Union. By 1948, the Soviets were supplying modern weapons to the Chinese, North Koreans, and Vietnamese, and making it clear that they would do so for just about any other group oppressed by imperialist capitalists. Angry colonials demanding independence had suddenly become much more dangerous.

The third changed condition was economic: World War II had nearly bankrupted Britain, France, and the Netherlands (and much of the rest of the world). It quickly became clear that their efforts to restore their positions in their colonies might depend on the deep pockets of the United States, which was the other emergent super power from the war. Should the American government show an attitude of indifference or hostility to a power's efforts to restore control over their colonies, the colonial power in question might not be able to afford the effort.

Hovering behind these major shifts and changes was another factor that is often overlooked: the traditional colonial policies of each of the powers in question. Differences in basic policy were, in fact, the reason for the divergence in post-war expectations of and actions taken by each of the Western colonial powers in Asia. This divergence essentially divided the intentions of the French and the Dutch from that of the Americans and the British.

The traditional Dutch colonial policy is perhaps the easiest to explain. Called “*wingewest*” (“region for making profit”), its premise

was simple: the colony existed to enrich the “mother country.” In the Dutch East Indies, the goal was to force the predominantly rural population to produce valuable agricultural products not available in the Netherlands. In other colonies the “produce” might be natural resources such as minerals or forest products. While it is true that in the late 19th century Dutch public opinion forced the Dutch government to introduce reforms, culminating the “Ethical Policy” of 1901, which required some colonial profits be invested in social programs to benefit the colonial populations, in general the Dutch colonial policy saw colonies as money makers. This view was particularly attractive given the economic disaster World War II was for the Dutch.

The French also saw their colonies as existing for the good of France, but from an entirely different perspective. Most 19th century Frenchmen believed the ideals of the French Revolution—liberty, equality, and fraternity—should be extended to *all* human beings, regardless of race or religion. In the field of colonial administration this ideal was encapsulated in the concept of *Assimilation*. Simply put, the populations of the colonies would be assimilated into French society and enjoy all of the benefits thereof. They would in effect become *French* regardless of their color, religion, or place of birth. French colonialism emphasized identification and merging with French culture, early on including efforts in areas like education, language instruction, medical care and so forth. However, some French citizens, especially of the upper classes, were distinctly uncomfortable with programs of assimilation resulting in people who did not look or sound French being considered citizens of France. By the 1870s, the policy of *Assimilation* had officially evolved into a policy of *Association*, wherein the native cultures of the colonial peoples were to be respected, and they would not be coerced into becoming French. It was France's duty to help these peoples develop to their fullest potential; in return it was the colonial people's duty to gratefully help better France. Although *Association* was officially the French colonial policy before and after World War II, a strong streak of *Assimilation* attitudes could still be found among many of the officers of the French colonial service. With either of the policies, however, the French believed it was the duty of the colonial peoples to help France in times of emergency or trouble, like when bankrupted by war.



“The White Man's Burden” (*The Journal*, Detroit)

The colonial policy of England much more resembled the French policy of association, with one important difference. While nearly all Englishmen agreed with the sentiments expressed in imperialist literature like Kipling's *The White Man's Burden*, a goodly number of them actually believed in them. Today, Kipling's poem is usually

seen as a whitewashing of Britain's exploitation of their colonies and, with lines describing the colonial peoples like "half-devil and half child" to be downright racist. To be fair, those in Britain profiting handsomely from the colonies were often being hypocrites when they spoke of their good deeds and their devotion to "work for another's gain." Also, many Britons, like most Europeans and Americans of that time, were to varying degrees racists. But the poem also includes lines like, "The cry of hosts ye humour, (Ah, slowly) toward the light". Many Britons believed their policy of colonialism was intended to help the backward peoples of the colonies modernize so that at some point they would be able to govern themselves in a modern world (i.e., "the light"). As hypocritical as this may at times have seemed, the British did take care to introduce modern concepts of government and law (British, of course) in their colonies, training and relying on colonial assistants and auxiliaries to a far greater degree than any other Western colonial power. Although by the outbreak of World War II the move toward self-rule and independence was not progressing fast enough for most of Britain's colonial peoples, it was at least "on the books."

The American colonial policy, especially towards the Philippines, went even beyond Britain's as far as independence was concerned. Even before the smoke had cleared from the Spanish-American War, a divisive debate about what to do with captured Spanish territories was raging in the United States. Itself a former colony with a strong isolationist bent, many Americans wanted nothing to do with overseas imperialism or colonialism. As an emerging economic super power, however, it wanted everything to do with inexpensive raw materials and cheap labor. As an American victory appeared imminent, the debate reached a climax. In fact Kipling, who lived for a time in the United States, wrote *The White Man's Burden* (whose subtitle is *The United States and the Philippine Islands*) in an effort to encourage the Americans to do their Caucasian duty and take the islands as a colony. This the United States did in 1898, leading to a bloody insurrection by Filipino nationalists demanding independence. The insurrection was mostly put down by 1902 (sporadic incidents continued until 1913) and the United States settled in to govern its new colony in a somewhat surprising way. The *Philippines Organic Act* of 1902 established a Filipino government modeled on that of the United States, with the implied (but not stated) promise of eventual independence. That came with the *Jones Act* of 1916, which promised full independence when a stable Filipino government was established. Although the conditions of "stability" were not enumerated, it did put the United States on record as promising independence. The next step came in 1933 with the passage, over President Hoover's veto, of the *Hares-Hawes-Cuttings Act*, which promised independence in 10 years. Of course, the United States was not in position to carry out its obligation in 1943, and Filipinos anxiously awaited American action once the islands were liberated from the Japanese.

These then were the changes wrought by the Second World War and the policies of the various Western colonial powers in Asia that would deal with them. Table 3 summarizes the consequences of their actions in the first decade after the end of the war.

TABLE 3: Campaigns to Keep Colonies

COLONY	POWER	FORCE COMMITTED	CASUALTIES	EXPENSE	INDEPENDENCE
Philippines	U.S.	0			1946
Indochina	France	c. 190,000 (does not include Vietnamese fighting for French)	104,127 (includes wounded and POWs)	\$7.5 billion (80% of figure financed by the United States)	1954
Burma	Britain	0			1948
Dutch East Indies	Netherlands	150,000 (plus c. 30,000 Commonwealth troops and over 1,000 former Japanese POWs (!))	c. 7,257 (c. 5,000 Dutch, c.1,200 Commonwealth, and several hundred Japanese)	\$135 million	1949

The data in Table 3 clearly reflects the interaction between each power's pre-war colonial policy and its post war attitude toward colonialism. The United States, ambivalent about colonialism and imperialism, and concerned about the new post-war threat posed by the Soviet Union, was the first to act. On 4 July 1946, the United States recognized Philippine independence with the signing of the Treaty of Manila, though numerous strings were attached. The two most important strings gave the United States guaranteed favored trading partner status and long-term access to military bases in the new nation. While the former were important to those with investments in the Philippines, it was the latter that the Pentagon insisted upon. Even before Japan surrendered, the United States had decided that friendly self-governing nations would be less susceptible to the attractions of Communism than restless, angry peoples who were clamoring for independence. Soviet actions in Eastern Europe and East Asia clearly demonstrated their intentions to extend their control and influence as far as possible, taking advantage of post-war misery and unhappiness wherever they found it. It was this realization of Soviet intentions by the United States that led to the surprising decision to maintain Hirohito in Japan as Emperor. The outrage that his removal and trial for war crimes would have unleashed in Japan would be just the kind of unrest the Soviets were looking for. Better a Japan with a figurehead Emperor controlled by the United States (even if most Americans *did* consider him a war criminal) than a tumultuous Japan ripe for Soviet troublemaking. Better an independent, relatively satisfied Philippines giving the Americans access to trade and bases than an unhappy Philippines bound to attract Soviet attention.

The British situation after the war was somewhat different, although in India and Burma it led to the same result. Great Britain's economy had been severely damaged by the war, and some serious budgetary decisions had to be taken, especially about the "Crown Jewel" of the British Empire. Even before the war, unrest in India had been a growing problem, and Indian nationalist's anti-war rhetoric plus the impact of Japan's propaganda and early successes in the war mentioned above boded ill for the future. The mutiny in the Royal Indian Navy on 18 February 1946 quickly spread to the Army, then to widespread strikes and riots throughout India. Determining that the cost of maintaining peace in India would outweigh any benefits to Britain, and was anyway unaffordable, India was granted independence in August of 1947. This made retention of Burma, the "Eastern Door" to India that had been colonized primarily as a buffer between India and the French in Southeast Asia, unnecessary. Nationalistic turbulence in Burma existed before the war but was mild in comparison to that in India. Nonetheless, with various Burmese nationalist organizations agitating for independence, Britain granted their demands on 4 January 1948.

The experiences of the Dutch and the French, as Table 3 shows, were quite different. Both powers were, like the British, suffering the economic aftershocks of World War II. Unlike the British or Americans, both viewed their colonies as essential economic assets, which would be critical to their economic recovery. Neither had America's ambivalent attitude toward colonialism nor as vast a colonial empire as the British, who might lose even India and still survive. Thus the Netherlands and France were determined not to give in to colonial demands for independence. Although their efforts to retain their colonies had similar tragic results, the roads traveled to reach them were quite different.

When Japan surrendered, the Netherlands was hardly in any condition to exert its will in the Dutch East Indies. Fortunately for them, the British were concerned about any unrest in the East Indies spreading to Singapore or Malaya and agreed to deploy some 30,000 troops to help police the colony. The Dutch themselves managed to scrape together some 20,000 men (a figure that would eventually swell to 150,000) and accepted an offer of assistance from over 1,000 former Japanese soldiers who opted to remain in the East Indies rather than be repatriated home. Although these forces were able to re-establish a tenuous Dutch hold over the colony, without American aid any Dutch effort to effectively control the colony was doomed. In this case, except for some diplomatic efforts, the United States was not interested in aiding the Dutch. The American reasoning for this decision was twofold. First, the Dutch had only briefly been allies of the United States, having been officially neutral in World War I, with extremely limited participation in World War II, and historically trade between America and Holland was relatively limited. Second, despite intensive efforts by the Dutch and some similar fears from the British, no one was able to prove any serious Communist involvement in the Indonesian independence movement. Soviet moves in Eastern Europe, China, and Korea, plus definite proof of Communist involvement in Indochina, monopolized the American's attention. Without American financial and material support it soon became clear that the Dutch cause was hopeless. When the United States threatened to withhold some Marshall Plan funds earmarked for the Netherlands unless the Dutch ended their military campaign in the East Indies, the government of the Netherlands, in desperate need of the aid, had no choice but to give in to the inevitable. Indonesia gained its independence on 27 December 1949.

The story of France's struggle to maintain control of Indochina is much better known. Despite frequent periods of disagreement and cultural hostility, France was an American ally of longstanding. Unlike the case of the Netherlands, the United States had strong commercial ties with France and had loaned the French significant amounts of money during both world wars.

American investors were nervous about doing anything that might interfere with French economic recovery. When it became obvious Ho Chi Minh was a communist and his Viet Minh were receiving Soviet (and later Chinese) aid, the French skillfully played on America's fear of Communism to induce the United States to provide massive amounts of aid to their effort to reclaim and defend Indochina. Only when questions about France's ability and will to get the job done grew in the early 1950s did some Americans question that aid, but France's defeat at Dien Bien Phu and subsequent withdrawal from Indochina, coming as it did at the height of the McCarthy era, convinced most Americans that their country had to pick up the reins and finish the task. By then, however, they would be dealing with *independent* Vietnams.

Like the fawning, annoying courtiers who caused English King Canute to order the incoming tide to stop in order to demonstrate that he was not all-powerful, those who would try to stop change should know better. The world wars of the first half of the 20th century were of such a magnitude as to make change inevitable. To expect that conditions throughout the 1945 world could be returned to those of some past time, even the recent past as the French and Dutch did, were entirely unrealistic. Yet change is something most of us are uncomfortable with, especially if change threatens to upset familiar routines or, even worse, threaten our comforts and possessions. Perhaps the best one can do is attempt to influence and direct inevitable changes to do the least harm as Britain and the United States tried to do. It is probably still too early to judge the merits of their actions.

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Ed Heinsman is a retired high school history teacher who was introduced to history simulation gaming at age 12 with a Christmas gift of Avalon Hill's Afrika Korps. He majored in European history and secondary education at State University College at New Paltz, New York – then taught for 33 years in the Hudson Valley, using games extensively in the classroom (as well as running a popular history games club after school). Ed and his wife Pat now divide their time between Connecticut and Georgia, when not visiting their children in Virginia or western New York.

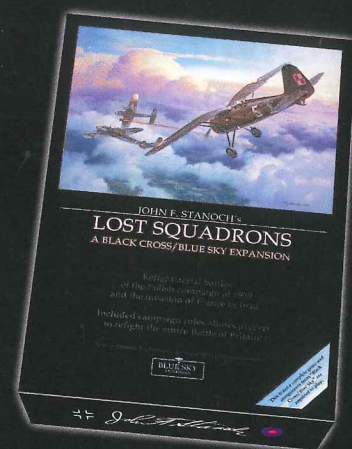


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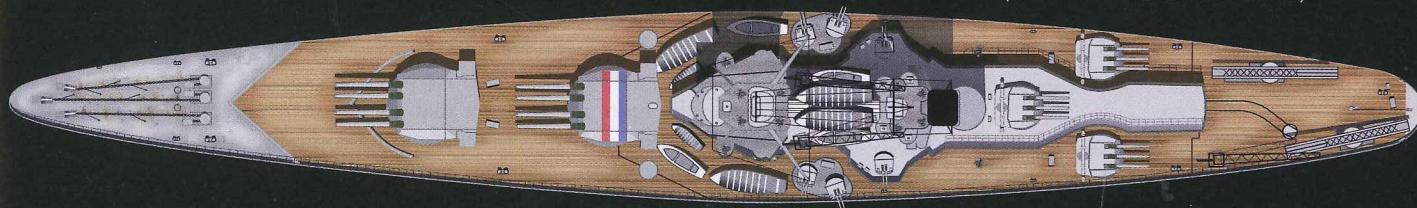
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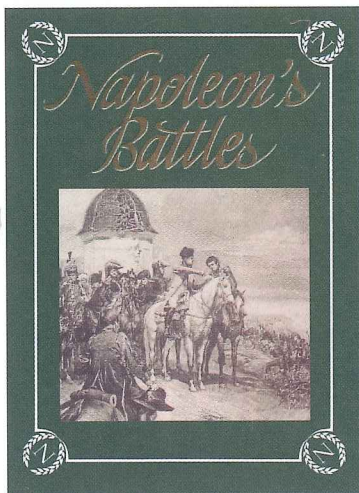
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SOME LESSONS FROM THE SENIOR GENRE

What Board Wargame Designers Can Learn From Miniatures Rules

I am not a miniatures gamer, nor do I pretend to be one. I own no little metal armies, and the last miniatures game in which I can recall participating was at least fifteen years ago, an *ad hoc* pick-up game of *Napoleon's Battles* (Avalon Hill). Board wargames are my drug of choice, and in fact I design and develop them, followed by a wide range of computer games. Owing to my lack of programming skills, I am content to just play and enjoy those.



This is not to say that I have anything against miniatures gaming. It is the oldest form of modern military gaming, pioneered by the likes of the immortal H.G. Wells, and without it there would be no boardgames, and substantially fewer military-themed computer games for that matter.

My respect for miniatures wargaming is not just that of a modern looking back at a quaint predecessor, not by any means. I own miniatures rules and occasionally pick up new ones. It is not for play, but to learn.

There is a great deal of common ground between the miniatures and cardboard forms of gaming. Both are, with very few exceptions, turn-based, and use similar means of resolving combat. Miniatures systems have to rely on rulers and tape measures for the most part to measure and regulate distance, whereas almost all boardgames use a hexagonal grid overlaid on a map. Though this is the definitive characteristic of the boardgame genre (it *is* a board after all), the functional differences are seldom very significant. There is no conceptual distinction between a movement rate of three hexes and one of three inches.

The armored tactical games designed by Jim Day constitute an excellent example of how the two are not only similar, but can be so close that a system can be easily converted from one genre to another, and then back again.

In the beginning, he designed a set of World War II miniatures rules, and then converted them to boardgames, published in 1979 and 1980 by Yaquinto as *Panzer*, *Armor* and *88*. Then Avalon Hill published his modern titles using the same game system, *MBT* and *IDF*, in 1989 and 1993 respectively. In both cases, the rules include instructions on how to play the games with miniatures, on miniatures terrain, instead of as standard boardgames.

Finally, in the new century, the system returned to its origins with a new edition of *Panzer*, published by Lost Battalion Games. This current version is a set of miniatures rules.

With these forms of wargaming converging, it is well worth examining one from the perspective of another. The principles of good game design are the same regardless of the medium, and the means of implementing them are strikingly similar in metal or cardboard. However, there are at least three elements that are especially prominent in miniatures rules, and thus well worth the attention of the boardgame community.

INTUITIVENESS

Most of the time, this concept is interpreted as meaning that the components and mechanics of a game seem to make sense. In the negative sense, it means that players do not scratch their heads and wonder what the designer was thinking, or if he researched the same war that they did. It is definitely a laudable goal in any form of game design.

There is a second definition to the word too, and one tends to find it more in miniatures gaming than in the board side. That kind of intuitiveness gives the players, or any observer for that matter, the ability to look at the game and size up the situation, without looking at any charts or rules.

For example, if the concept is present in full flower, the sight of a massive column of Napoleon's infantry, backed by a grand battery of artillery, closing in on a thin line of Austrian *landwehr*, should be recognizable as big trouble for the Austrians. Likewise a Civil War situation similar to Fredericksburg, putting one side charging the other in a superb defensive position, should be like the suicidal proposition that it was in real history.

This sort of intuitiveness is deceptively easy to lose in a boardgame design. Counters have room for much more information, which can be good, but it also creates both the need and opportunity for players to check that information as a matter of course. Even if a game situation looks perfectly obvious, the call to look at the data on the counters, or possibly on the charts or other cards, will make the players wonder if appearances might be deceiving.

The more information that a game incorporates into components, especially the pieces representing combat units, the more that both need an opportunity to look at something besides the battlefield increase, and the greater the danger that the game will move away from being intuitive.

Miniatures seldom incorporate any more data than their unit type and identification. Thus that kind of game has an inherently greater chance of being intuitive than a boardgame of the same subject and scale.

Yet with the influx of data comes a benefit: a greater potential for simulation. It does not always mean that the simulation value is directly proportional to the level of information and number of variables assigned to the units, only that the data can aid simulation, if it is integrated well. But the inverse is almost never true; take away the data, and the game declines as a simulation.

Jim Werbaneth

With miniatures systems, a different approach is needed, and designers do not have the luxury of informational complexity, as is the case with board and computer games. Some do put concentrated information in elaborate charts on reference cards; Jim Day's designs are among the best examples of that approach. More typically, systems have to be concise, but incisive. In place of increasing the number of variables and modifiers, it is better for designers to craft clean mechanics that simulate events, and possible events, with as little systemic overhead as possible, so that gamers can play the game and not the system.

That is one of the most laudable objectives for a boardgame too, and yet one that many designs fail to embrace, particularly in combat resolution. Throwing every variable, every die roll modifier, every imaginable factor into the game, can be tempting, but it works only for computer games. Where humans have to do the work, simplicity of execution is a virtue, and sometimes boardgame designers need miniatures rules to remind them of it.

Miniatures have a second advantage that most boardgames are unable to share, and ironically it is based on a limitation of the miniatures themselves. They are unable to stack. Therefore when a player looks down on the table, he can see all the units and leaders, and does not have to go through stacks to learn more.

Most boardgames not only allow stacking, but mandate it, if not in the rules, then in the strategic realities. Ratings on counters make combat information dense; stacking then hides a lot of it. Some games even integrate this into limited intelligence by prohibiting players from examining the other side's stacks.

Stacking, like information-rich counters, is certainly not bad in most boardgame contexts, but it does undermine the intuitiveness more common in miniatures gaming. Some boardgames do eschew stacking, except maybe for leaders; indeed, it is the norm among air and naval tactical games. In recent years the *Great Battles of History* series from GMT is the outstanding example of it in tactical land games.

STRIVING FOR THE UNIVERSAL

With a boardgame, one usually gets just that: a game. Multiple games can share a common system, but each has its own identity, and if the series covers a number of related subjects, each game can deviate from the core principles as needed to address the specific needs of its subject. The *Great Battles of History* series is again an excellent example; there are seven games covering land battles in the ancient world, another focusing on the Mongols of the medieval era, one with a naval focus, and two on gunpowder battles, in the Thirty Years War and feudal Japan. Except for *War Galley*, which is a necessarily separate kind of game sharing a franchise name, all have common roots in how they handle command and control, unit activation and combat, then adapt the basic approach to the times, places and armies at hand.

With miniatures rules, the designer has to work much harder to devise a system that works across the spectrum of what he wants to simulate, with as little deviation as possible. There can be scenario

INTUITIVENESS, AS VIEWED BY MILLIONS

Intuitiveness, as an ideal, is known by sight if not by name by millions. That is because it is vital to the most popular form of wargaming, the kind that sometimes actually gets television advertising dollars: computer games.

In real-time strategy games, one sees units in much the same way that one sees miniatures, as figures on the screen, albeit usually animated ones. Computer software enables designers to incorporate many variables into their units, and they usually do, but for the player the unit's state of health is normally something like a simple line. If it shortens, then the unit is taking damage, and sometimes if the color goes from green to red, then it is in critical condition. That is simple enough.

The *Total War* series (*Shogun*, *Medieval* and *Rome*) uses a real-time approach to combat, in which the player deploys his units, and then issues orders somewhat like an historical commander, that is, without the luxury of deliberation that a distinct sequence of play gives him. He also has limited visibility like a real general.

Combat resolution in these games can be an adventure. However, determining the progress of a battle is almost always much easier than in a boardgame. The game gives messages about what is going on, frequently about things that the player cannot see for himself, such as an enemy commander becoming demoralized and running for his life. Usually though, what he sees tells him pretty clearly what is occurring on the battlefield.

The game shows the ebb and flow of the battle, and he can see breakthroughs on either side. When a flank gets turned, he can see that just as easily. As far as casualties go, they are emphasized vividly the most graphic and obvious of devices: dead soldiers and horses on the battlefield. The color of their finery tells him what side they were on before death came.

In the computer gaming world, this makes for one of the most popular franchises, and one that has an unusual claim on simulation value for games intended for a more general audience. I dare say that they can also be quite addictive, a trait discovered through personal experience.

But for all of their achievements, the games' tactical systems are not especially innovative when it comes to intuitiveness. In some ways, they are real-time, limited-view miniatures games. Even the bodies on the field are reminiscent of miniatures; that form of game does the same thing by removing stands of figures from units, to represent losses. The *Total War* series lays its miniatures down on the ground for an eternal sleep, but the principle remains much the same.

special rules, and there can be supplements too. What there cannot be are situations in which scenarios are so heavily modified from the core rules that they amount to separate games.

Therefore the designer has to look toward the universal in his subject, and pay greater attention to the underlying principles than a board wargame designer must. He simulates how a type of warfare works, across the board, and not just in a particular situation. For example, in a World War II miniatures rules set, the designer cannot model Stalingrad, the Bulge or Crusader so much as tactics in general, regardless of who fights and where they do it.

From that core of the general, he can serve the particular by adding rules for different combat environments, and the character of different armies, so that battles in the desert are not the same as those on the steppe, and British do not act like Japanese and Soviets are not the same as Americans, for example. Underneath it though, there will be common approaches to movement, terrain effects, combat resolution, sequencing, and as many fundamental mechanics as possible. The rules stay the same, but their implementation can be adjusted on a situational basis.

Boardgaming has seen very little of this through its history. The Gamers came closest with the company's method of crafting a common set of rules for each of its game series, and making it applicable to all the others. Ideally, a player could learn the rules to one game, and immediately pick up another in the series, playing it with no more than reference to the scenario information and a few special rules. Indeed, one could look at each series not so much as a family of games, but the same game, with each title being a separately-packaged set of scenarios.

In the boardgame world, this is a striking exception to the normal way of doing things. In the world of miniatures rules, it is perfectly normal.

The board wargame designer can learn more from this than just the fact that there is one more difference between the two genres. The miniatures approach presents an example of analytical rigor that one rarely finds in boardgame design; it is much harder to find the fundamental themes across a form of conflict, then simulate them effectively, than it is to deal with each situation individually.

Miniatures rules teach the value of finding these patterns. Something of that goes right to the benefit of the designer, not the players, and makes later work easier; with a better vision of the general principles of his subject, and how to simulate them, he should not have to invent a new system each time he designs a new game on a similar topic. Rather, he can concentrate on terrain analysis, order of battle research, and the elements that really distinguish the game's subject from that of his previous design.

In short, he does not have to reinvent the wheel.

HISTORICAL DATA

A good set of miniatures rules can be as worthwhile for the specifics of a battle or campaign as it is about the generalities. The best are invaluable research tools.

Napoleon's Battles is the system that alerted me to this fact. Soon after its publication, I saw an open copy in a local game store, and was amazed at the wealth of information that it contained on the orders of battle, organization, and general capabilities of all the combatants during the wars of the French Revolution and Empire. I was not sure that I would ever play it, but I was absolutely certain of its value as an informational resource. I left that store with a heavy paper bag and a slightly lighter wallet. Subsequently, I bought both of Avalon Hill's supplements, with no more regrets.

The same applied to *Over the Top*, the World War I rules published by GDW, and which I purchased in the very same store (at one time I might as well have had my pay direct deposited in their account, and eliminated the middle man, I spent so much there). That volume chronicled the evolution of unit organization throughout the war, and contained much data on the artillery pieces of the time.

Now, with order of battle and unit organization information widely available on the Internet, this might seem less important than it was when the web was young. Miniatures rules are superior to most books and web sites in one, easily overlooked way: the data is already quantified, and into game-applicable terms at that.

Some of that can be directly inserted into a boardgame designer's own work, such as artillery and machinegun ranges, and the

armor penetration of guns and missiles. For naval or air rules, the data on weapons systems can be even more valuable; *Harpoon* (GDW/Clash of Arms) is justly famous for its wealth of data on modern ships, submarines, aircraft, and all of the weapons and sensors that they carry.

In most cases though, the real value comes through examining the relative ratings. The miniatures rules designer might give one unit or weapon an attack rating of six and another a rating of ten. This teaches the reader that the designer considered the first to be sixty percent as effective as the second. If that reader is a game designer, he can and should consider it the educated estimate of one informed analyst, hopefully among a number whose work he consults.

The same goes for estimates of leadership ability. *Napoleon's Battles* and its supplements contain ratings for hundreds of officers from its period, and they are worth consulting. Nothing should be taken at face value, especially when it comes to such subjective estimates, but if nothing else a boardgame designer might be alerted to the names of the lesser-known commanders present, and research them further.

CONCLUSIONS

Before his life took its turn toward treason and madness, the poet Ezra Pound would advise others that the best route toward excellence in their own writing was to read as much poetry as possible, in as many languages as they could. Likewise, the best musicians listen to music other than what they usually play, and pay attention to instruments other than their own. A rock guitarist who listens only to rock and roll, and only to other guitarists at that, is going to be severely limited in his own playing compared to the guitarist whose horizons extend to jazz and keyboards.

The same principle applies to game designers. It is very easy for someone in the hobby to concentrate on one era, one subject, and one scale. If he is a player only, that is perfectly fine, as players are consumers and are perfectly free to spend their time and money as they see fit.

Matters are different for designers. There are a few who are specialists in the best sense of the word, and bring deep expertise and intellectual rigor to a particular subject; as wargaming's premier designer on the Battle

of the Bulge, and one who designs on nothing else, Danny Parker is the best example.

For most of the rest, it pays to look further. It means developing a broader knowledge of military history and science, even broader than one might like or consider appropriate to likely design tasks. Knowledge has never been dangerous to anything besides ignorance, and too much is never enough.

Furthermore, one should pay attention, if not play, a corresponding variety of games. One cannot play every type of wargame, but there is no harm in trying, and there is always that possibility of learning something in the process. It can be a new area of history, or even a realization that a previously unknown area happens to be interesting and worth further study. One might also learn new design concepts and mechanics, applicable to future designs.

Nor should such explorations stop at the edge of the board. Other platforms have something to teach.

Since miniatures rules are almost invariably tactical in scale, their lessons are most directly applicable to new board wargame

designs. Yet they are just as valid to the operational and strategic levels too.

Intuitiveness does not change with scale; a game with divisions on the map serves the player just as well as one of platoons if it can present the strategic picture immediately. A boardgame designer who looks for the most fundamental elements at work in his subject, just as a miniatures designer does for multiple battles, takes an important step toward a clean and elegant design. It is definitely preferable to trying to simulate everything through picky, special rules for all occasions.

Even the tactical intelligence provided through many miniatures systems is equally important to board wargames above the tactical level. To start with, smaller-unit tables of organization and equipment can be valuable in determining the relative combat and movement factors of the larger units that they comprise.

Additionally, many miniatures rules sets contain higher-level order of battle information. One should not expect to find much strategic-level data in a tactical-level product, but it does exist, often as historical

background. Even if it does not, the designer is still left with crucial building blocks of the higher organizations.

These should be considered the only things that a designer can learn from miniatures gaming. It might be just the start.

Ultimately it pays for a board wargame designer to at least look at as many games as he can, in as many forms. Specialization can be good, but even specialization on a subject can be better served by drawing on ideas from outside of it. That means peering beyond the world of boardgames, as rich in ideas as it is, for inspiration beyond from it.

Jim Werbaneth is the developer for Turning Point Simulations. A multiple Charles S. Roberts Award winner, he also designed Inchon for Command magazine, and Britain Stands Alone for GMT. For the last twenty years he has published the Line of Departure wargaming quarterly. He teaches political science for American Public University System, and political science and history at La Roche College. There, he also develops courses that combine military history with political science.

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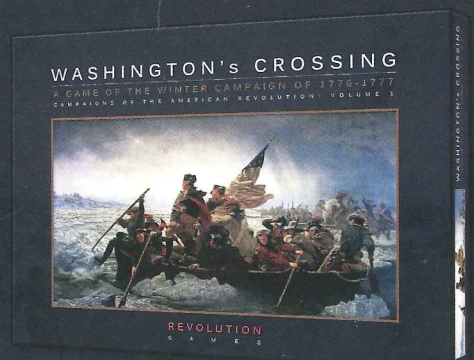
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The Russian Campaign of 1812 — Frédéric Bey

How can the wargame translate its extremes?

"Of all my fifty battles, the most terrible was the one I fought at Borodino. The British defeated me at Waterloo, however it was the Russians who won the War."
—Napoleon Bonaparte

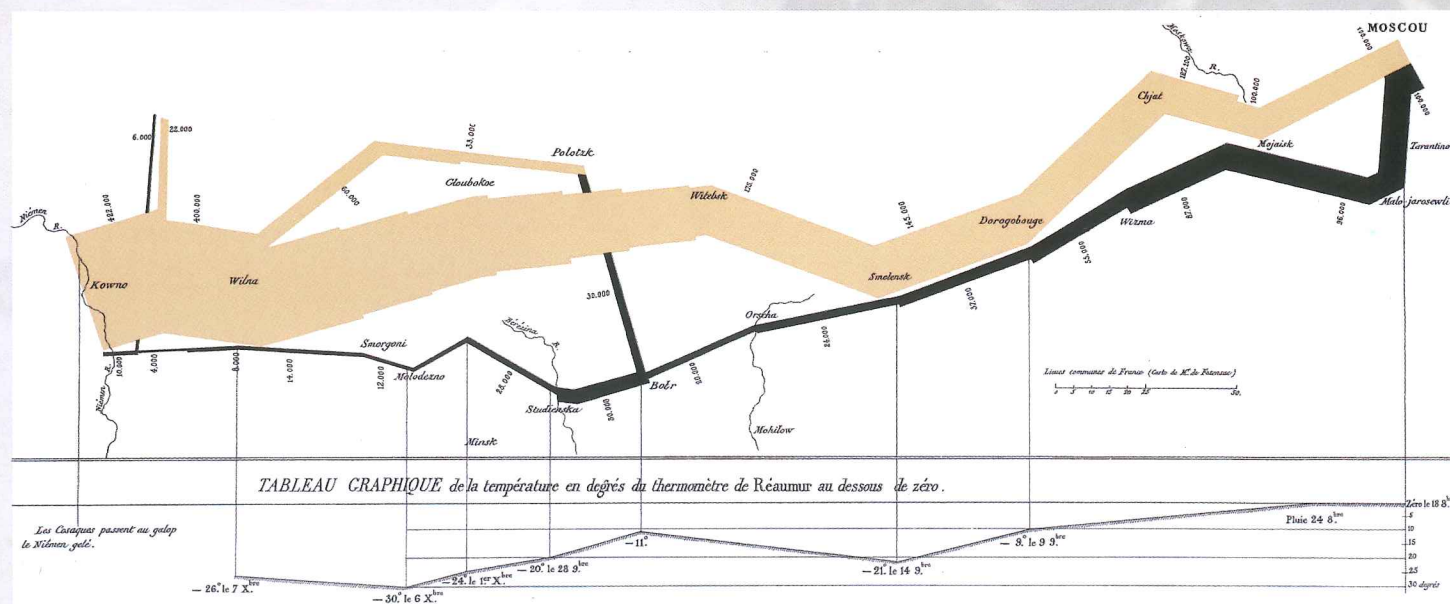
After an uninterrupted series of victories against Austria, Prussia, and Russia, France finds itself, for the first time, in the role of aggressor with its military intervention in the affairs of Spain. In 1812, the war with Russia is launched while "The Spanish Ulcer" has not yet found a cure. Now engaged on two fronts, at the extreme ends of Europe, Napoleon confronts two enemies who are now animated by three potent energies of nationalism.

When the Grande Armée crosses the Niemen (or Neman) River in June 1812, Napoleon is at the height of his power. He reigns, directly or indirectly, over half of Europe, while England's economy seems to be on the ropes. Aware of the advantages of the alliance concluded with Saint Petersburg in 1807 to counteract the plans of the "hereditary" enemies of France, the United Kingdom and Austria, the Emperor knows by 1811 that a rupture with the Tsar is inevitable. Alexander I, pushed by his nobility, which sees Napoleon as the Antichrist, finally takes the initiative in declaring the alliance null and void, principally to free his country and its economy from the constraints of the Continental Blockade.

THE RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN PUSHES THE LIMITS OF NAPOLEONIC WAR

Occurring twenty years after the first battles of the wars of the Revolution and the Empire, the Russian Campaign, due to its scale, transcends the nature of these earlier battles. The size of the engaged armies is colossal. Napoleon is in direct command of more than 600,000 men at the beginning of the hostilities, twelve times greater than the number he had in Italy in his first campaign and three times greater

than the numbers under his command during the Austerlitz campaign in 1805. Within the Grande Armée, soldiers from over twenty countries fight side by side, whereas in 1805, with few exceptions, all the regiments were composed of Frenchmen. The size of the theater of operations, and the distances involved, bear no relationship to the previous campaigns conducted by the Emperor. Paris, from which departs the Imperial Guard, is 2500 kilometers from Moscow; some units, recalled from Spain, must march an additional 1000 km to participate in the operation. From the Niemen to Moscow, round trip, the Napoleonic army will march an additional 2000 km. This will be done on foot or at best partially on horseback. Despite this handicap, the Grande Armée will go from Poland to Moscow (June 22 to September 14, 1812) faster than the German Army in 1941 (Operation *Barbarossa*, also begun on June 22nd, to October 2, 1941, the beginning of the offensive that will fail to take Moscow). It will also withdraw more quickly (October 18 to December 26, 1812) despite the terrible weather. The weather in Russia also exceeds the normal conditions of Napoleonic wars. During the summer of 1812, temperatures are in the 35C (90F) range. The temperature on December 6, 1812, falls to -30 C (-22F). In this context of extremes, the loss of men and equipment is also unequaled for this period of history: more than 200,000 dead on each side, losses to which must be added 350,000 prisoners or deserters on the French side. None other than the French engineer Charles Joseph Minard (1781-1870) realized the effects of these conditions better, in the construction of his Figurative Chart "Overview of the Losses of the French army during the Russian campaign" which is considered the best summation of the subject and which made him famous:



FIRST ATTEMPTS

Historical games about the Russian campaign have always been rare, especially in comparison to the campaign of Waterloo, and to a lesser extent those covering the campaigns of 1805, 1807, 1809, 1813, or 1814. Personally, my first contact with the great steppes of Russia, where Napoleon lost his Grande Armée, involved two very different games. The first is French, *The Russian Campaign* of Jean-Jacques Petit, published with map in the defunct magazine *Jeux et Stratégie* (*Games and Strategy*) (number 21, 1983). This small and simple game (5 pages of rules) attempts to render the entire campaign on a hex map and on the operational, corps, level. Like many games on 1812, as we will see, Jean-Jacques Petit's game accents attrition and supply line problems with losses noted by hand on a tally sheet. Without establishing and securing a line of supply depots, represented by markers, the French player cannot win. The game determines victory by the total points gained by the taking of towns at the end of the 13 turns of play. As an introduction to and discovery of an enormous subject, *The Russian Campaign* is worthwhile for its scholarly approach to the campaign of 1812. The game has a quick playing time but is, without a doubt, too simple. The second game, devoted to the major event of the Emperor's offensive, the battle of Borodino (commonly referred to by the French as *la Bataille de La Moskowa*), has been covered by a game which has entered the pantheon of historical gaming: *The Great Redoubt* by the late S. Craig Taylor Jr. (Yaquinto Publications, 1979). This game, with mechanics that now seem overly involved and archaic, is still one of the best on the subject. More than a pleasant memory, it is an excellent example of Napoleonic warfare at the tactical level. It comes with a large hex map and counters in varied shapes, small squares for artillery batteries, rectangles for infantry and cavalry brigades or regiments (line or column formations according to orientation), and large squares for units in defensive squares. As in Jean-Jacques Petit's game, losses are tracked manually, by crossing out squares on game aids provided for that purpose. Counter graphics are certainly not state of the art, but the fact remains that *The Great Redoubt*, with its narrow focus limited to the historic battlefield, demonstrates perfectly the battle of attrition that was Borodino. The Great Redoubt and the "Fleches" that were occupied by the Russians at the beginning of the battle are at the heart of the confrontation. The rules cover separately the effects of fire, melees, and charges, while accounting for the orientation of the units. The command mechanics are doubtless the weak point of this very fine game; the leaders influence movement, combat, morale, and rallying, but there is no question, for example, of transmitting orders. Let us note, finally, that Yaquinto's game has multi-player variants for 5 or more players.

Having covered the "Ancient Greats," let us now cover the specifics of games on the Russian Campaign by reviewing a selection of more recent games. My purpose is not to be exhaustive, but to highlight the difficulties and imperatives inherent in the simulation of the events of 1812 using the most pertinent or popular games.

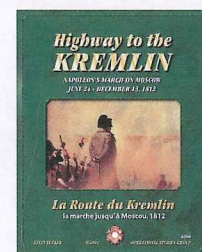


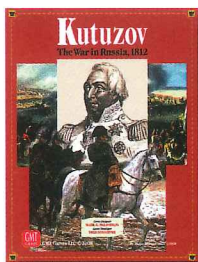
Odwrot spod Moskwy [Retreat from Moscow]

(Franciszek Kostrzewski, 1854)

THE 1812 CAMPAIGN IN OPERATIONAL SCALE

Passing by *War and Peace* (Avalon Hill, 1980), Napoleon's Russian campaign finally found, in *Highway to the Kremlin* (OSG 2001), a game worthy of it. The map (2 pieces 22"x 24") by Joe Youst is simply magnificent. The graphics, somber and varied, express perfectly the immensity of the Russian steppes, and the forests and swamps that punctuate them. The almost total absence of relief is very striking. The principal obstacles are the innumerable creeks and rivers barring Napoleon's road to Moscow. The only minor problem is that the map's rendering in summer colors makes it difficult to imagine retreating across the snow. In addition, *Highway to the Kremlin* was developed on a scale multiplied by 5 (series 5x) compared to the scale of Kevin Zucker's previous games (series 1x). Thus strength points represent 5000 men instead of 1000, which translates, in terms of the game, into the following changes: an army corps, in *Napoleon at Bay*, for instance, becomes an army, a division is now a corps, etc. For the time scale, the equation is a bit different, as it passes from turns representing two days of real time to turns that represent five days. Since the movement values remain unchanged (in absolute terms), this adjustment incorporates the effect of forced marches into normal movement in *Highway to the Kremlin* and repeats itself in attrition tables that are much more "violent." Zucker explains this approach as an attempt to recreate the incredible speed of the marches by both armies, especially the Grande Armée, during the campaign. Tolstoy, in *War and Peace*, compares the French invasion and retreat to a gigantic torrent of irresistible force, although braked at Borodino, then halted at Moscow (with a month of standing in place), which was then loosed with equal force at the time of the retreat. Is inertia the master key to this campaign? The players, leading a plethora of effective forces, must nonetheless attempt to break free of it. This OSG game is, in any case, a real success; thanks to the large maps and the deployment of a limited number of counters, the logistical problems are perfectly represented.





Kutuzov (GMT Games, 2008) shines a new light on the Russian Campaign. It is card driven, which introduces a greater emphasis on the events, major and minor, of the campaign that cannot be simulated comprehensively by a classic game on the operational scale. If it makes too much of the questions of

the scorched earth policy, supply lines, and morale, *Kutuzov* nevertheless offers great entertainment value, without imprisoning the players in too stiff an historical frame. Many opening moves are possible and the campaign may take an original turn. The event cards permit the taking of liberties with history, for instance, sending the Old Guard into battle, which Napoleon refused to do “2500 km from Paris,” or pillaging the Moscow region to allow for a longer stay. Other cards, without an appreciable effect in game terms, add a touch of color, such as General Malet’s conspiracy in Paris, or Dr. Larrey’s work among the wounded.

The other great characteristic of the game is its multi-player capability: *Kutuzov* may be played by four, two per side. Each player takes charge of either the northern or southern front of their team. If on the Russian side this makes sense, given the historical opposition between Barclay de Tolly and Kutuzov, it is much more artificial on the French side, where Napoleon kept a firm hand on his entire army despite the quasi independent commands of certain marshals left to protect the rear. *Kutuzov* may also be played by two, in three different ways: one French player (north and south fronts) and one Russian player (north and south fronts), each player using two card decks; the second option, one French player (north and south fronts) and one Russian player (north and south fronts) each using one card deck; finally, for adepts of schizophrenia, one player handling the French south front and the Russian north front while the other handles the French north front and the Russian south, each using two card decks.



Kutuzov deciding to surrender Moscow to Napoleon (A.D. Kivshenko, 1880)

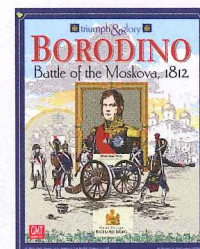
The game, with its numerous cards, offers a certain interaction between players. The rulebook, on the other hand, can be hard to understand. Reading the playbook is essential; without it, numerous situations would be difficult

to play out. The victory conditions are complicated, and how to integrate them into your strategy at the beginning of the game is not obvious. Additionally, after turn two the game can be stopped on the roll of a die (Peace Roll).

THE BATTLES AND TACTICAL GAMES

There are two major battles in the Russian Campaign that have inspired independent tactical level games: Borodino and the Battle of the Berezina. Of these, three are particularly interesting. *Borodino, Battle of the Moskova* (GMT Games, 2004) is the second game of the *Triumph and Glory* series and uses the 2.2 version of the rules.

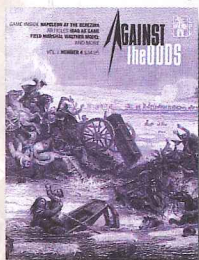
There are only two scenarios, the battle for the Schevardino Redoubt (September 5, 1812) and the Battle of the Moskova (September 7, 1812). The map is large enough to permit interesting variants in battle plans (flanking attacks, for instance). Among the rules specific to these scenarios, one must mention that concerning the limits on activation of Russian corps and the one governing the use of the Grande Armée’s reserve cavalry units. Like *Triumph and Glory*, *Borodino* is a game sufficiently simple to be pleasing and fast playing, despite the large scale and numbers of units. One of the interesting points raised by the game is if a flanking maneuver was possible. On September 7th, 1812, Napoleon opted for a frontal attack of the entrenched Russian positions. He sent his soldiers to attack the Fleches and the Great Redoubt without trying the slightest outflanking. The Emperor, conscious of having ventured very far into Russian territory, did not wish to risk allowing his adversaries to evade combat by retreating during overly lengthy approach maneuvers. By choosing a battle of attrition, also desired by the Russians, Napoleon persuaded his opponents to stay on the battlefield in their reassuring defensive position. Marshal Davout, indeed, had proposed a plan of enveloping the Russians along their left flank, but this was refused by Napoleon. The Emperor pointed out as justification the difficulties of the wooded and impracticable terrain. Had this maneuver been attempted, what would the result have been? *Borodino* has a page of special rules to simulate this alternative plan. Without it being the object of a particular rule, since only Napoleon can give the order to activate the Imperial Guard, the question of using, or not, these elite infantry regiments is equally fascinating.



We clearly change categories with the very recent *La Bataille de la Moskova* (Clash of Arms, 2011). This is the reissue, largely reworked, of Franck Chadwick’s game previously published by GDW (and its original Martial Enterprises version). The game unquestionably belongs to the *monster game* category, with its four maps and over 1000 counters. Attention to detail is



pushed to extremes, with very precise management of unit facing, the management of charges and countercharges, and even addressing the ricochets of cannon balls. The game comes with a simplified version (in a manner of speaking) of the rules of the series *The Battles of the Age of Napoleon I*. With 24 pages, the rulebook *Marie Louise* is a little less than half of the 52 pages of the complete rulebook (*Rules of the Year XXX*). In any case, with this system, playing through the whole battle of Borodino will take at least 80 hours. The players will probably choose, at least to start, one of the 4 scenarios, which cover only part of the battle, in a more reasonable format. Unlike GMT's *Borodino*, *La Bataille de la Moscowa* stays in a strictly historical mode, keeping to a frontal battle and leaving little place for maneuver. The characteristics of the game proceed essentially and paradoxically from its materials. The magnificent map is no doubt the finest rendition of the battlefield existing in today's wargaming world. The "uniformed" counters give a very good idea of the composition of the Grande Armée, which then included multiple nationalities. The principal novelty in the game, as opposed to the *La Bataille* series, lies in the rules governing the leaders, and brings the complexity of the command structure of both armies into play, especially the problems in identifying formations. Let us note briefly the existence of a game that features a map cut into geomorphic zones: *Eagles of the Empire: Borodino* (Game USA, 1994). The scale trends toward large tactical and the game loses a great deal of its interest.



Napoleon at the Berezina (ATO Magazine No. 4, 2003), designed by Robert Markham, is in the category of the complex game, for the experienced player. It covers the Berezina operation, from the 25th to the 29th of November 1812, with all the feints and maneuvers that Napoleon had to undertake in order to gain time to build the pontoon

bridges at the Studienka while the larger part of the Russian army was guarding Borissov. The map, in bluish and icy tints in the very image of the Russian winter, is divided in the center by the inevitable river Berezina, flowing between Borissov and Weslowo. The terrain is two-thirds forest. Incredibly, *Napoleon at the Berezina* is designed to be played *solitaire*! In the words of the designer, the solitary player, in charge of the destiny of the Grande Armée, must imagine himself struggling against a blind and mechanical colossus. He must also deal in an intellectually honest manner with the small choices left to him by the automatic mechanisms of the game system, to ensure that the Russian troops are as effective as possible. Turns are two hours, with a game day lasting 8 hours. Night is divided into two turns. Morale has a determining role in the rules, particularly in the management of masses of lagging French troops. Two phases per turn are devoted to the construction of the bridges across the Berezina, one for construction and the other for testing their solidity and stability. The movements of the

Russian forces, deployed in three independent armies, are governed by a priority table. The same applies to their fire and combat. It is possible to play *Napoleon at the Berezina* with two players, even if Robert Markham's vision expresses itself more fully in the solitaire version. Some optional rules can lead to interesting variants: Ney does not rejoin the army, the Borissov bridge is intact, etc. These demonstrate a high level of historical research and a great attention to detail in the game design. *Napoleon at the Berezina* is a solid, original and successful game. Since true solitaire games are very rare, this gives it a greater value, in my opinion.

Quite logically, Russian publishers are now also working on 1812 campaign games, with, for example, *The Battle of Borodino* (Status Belli, 2011). This wargame is currently only available in Russian, but the rules translation into English is ongoing. It includes the two days of maneuvers before the battle and allows players to investigate alternate set-ups for the great clash. Let us note in ending that a new version of the Battle of the Berezina will come out in 2012 in the French series *Jours de Gloire* (the 24th module and 35th battle in the series) and will be featured at the 16th Trophée du Bicentenaire, the yearly Paris convention with competitive game playing in honor of the Napoleonic epoch.



Austrian infantry combat troops (auxiliary corps in the service of Napoleon) against Russian dragoons, 1812 (Friedrich L'Allemand, 1846)

Frédéric Bey is a French gamer, designer, and author living in Paris. He has designed some 50 wargames over the last 20 years, and is also the organizer of the Trophée du Bicentenaire, an annual international Napoleonic wargaming competition. As a specialist in Napoleonic and Roman history, Frédéric is the author of numerous articles on those worlds.

THE COMING BOARDGAME RENAISSANCE?

Reading tea leaves is always hard. For CIA analysts making projections for the National Intelligence Estimates, it involves making predictions about foreign leaders' decisions which have yet even to be made. For archeologists holding one or a few bones of a new dinosaur, the challenge is imagining what the entire animal looked like and how it behaved. Political pundits preoccupy themselves with talk about today's news, but they too are making guesses about the future—pretty important this election year. And what about the economists gazing at their crystal balls and telling us whether in six months or a year we'll be going up or down?

That last example actually bears some direct importance for us gamers. There is a direct connection between the health of the economy and the strength of the game industry—and not just the big-ticket corporations that roll out the computer games. Wargame companies constitute but a tiny fraction of the industry and have long been on the famine side of the economic cycle. Is there any hope at all? Maybe, yes! There are scattered indications of recovery in the boardgame universe. My sense from simply looking at the field is that the publication of wargames is increasing. And at talks that I give on many subjects—ranging from games to history subjects, to arcane matters of international security or intelligence operations—the number of encounters I regularly have with audience members who share their love of gaming has been growing. The web-based fundraising entity known as Kickstarter, I recently noticed, has accepted designers' proposals for underwriting a game project.

Now comes the *Boston Globe*, which in mid-March devoted a fulsome article in their Sunday supplement section to boardgames. While its focus was on the Eurogames as an archetype, and—as so often when major media wakes up and looks at games—the piece exhibited something of a gee-whiz aspect in discussing the designers and players of the games, the mere appearance of that article in this venue suggests an element of larger societal interest.

Tea leaves are notoriously difficult to read, of course, and the exercise is probably more often misleading than not. Wargamers cannot afford to depend on the vagaries of prediction to set our sights on new titles for our playing delight. Instead we rely upon the tried and true, which brings me to today's subject: game publishers who have been with us through the thin and the thick, ones who have read the tea leaves well enough to stay in business for the long haul. That group naturally includes *Against the Odds* and LPS, but I cover their products quite frequently. Today let's look at a different outfit, Columbia Games. They've been around since the early 1970s, which puts Columbia among the Old Guard of game companies and

gives them some bragging rights. How do they read the tea leaves and ride on the storm?

Tom Dalglish remains the sole survivor among the principals in the original company and continues to run Columbia today. Grant Dalglish, Tom's son, now also occupies a principal position. Dalglish, when interviewed, did not gush with enthusiasm over the future of gaming. From the position of a small publisher he felt this "a bit of a horse and buggy business," but Tom concedes he has kept it going, has an excellent team, and manages to meet the payroll plus make a small profit. Dalglish doesn't perceive a particular trend or period of games that are up and coming, but he does think that fantasy games seem to be weakening. This year, 2012, will be a good year for anniversaries—and here Columbia is well-placed, for one of Tom's very first games, *War of 1812*, is available for the bicentennial of the conflict (and the near-40th anniversary of the game itself, which was first published in 1973).

Though Dalglish does not believe in formulas, the corpus of Columbia's titles illustrates what works through the lean years and furnishes a platform on which to build once the fat ones come. His central innovation came at the very beginning—the use of wood blocks in place of cardboard counters for his game pieces. The wood blocks enabled game designs to feature several things at once. Set up facing the player, the identities of pieces were unknown to the opponent, hence a natural way to infuse a design with "fog of war." The blocks were also naturally suited to recording incremental losses for units, which could have a side for each strength level and then simply be rotated to provide for partial losses. These features were revealed to gamers in the company's initial release, *Quebec 1759*, designed by Steve Brewster, Dalglish, and Lance Gutteridge, the folks behind Gamma Two Games.

Constant attention to cost factors helped Gamma Two, then Columbia, to survive lean years. For example, the very first games had unit identities embossed on the wood blocks. Those pieces were beautiful, invoking the style of the old Milton-Bradley *Stratego*. Later the company adopted self-adhesive stickers instead. While this disappointed some gamers, who loved the look, it also meant the blocks could be procured en masse and the pieces for each game did not have to be separately produced. That also reduced the cost of any printing errors which did occur. Only the sticker sheets needed to be changed. Applied to the blocks to give pieces their identities, gamers accepted the change, and that became the Columbia standard. Similarly, the company kept mapboard costs low by printing on card stock—again except for their very first games. By not producing hard-backed, wrapped maps, that outlay was considerably reduced. Much later Columbia began to create the fancy boards as accessories for its most popular games, a logical approach which other companies have also

adopted. Even administrative costs can be drivers: in 1994, Columbia moved from Vancouver, British Columbia, to Blaine, Washington, at least in part because high Canadian postal rates and customs duties bedeviled its shipping.

Though Dalglish may not credit industry trends, Columbia has always paid healthy attention to emerging opportunities. In its Gamma Two incarnation, the company was happy to have Avalon Hill pick up its Waterloo game *Napoleon*, designed by Dalglish and Gutteridge with an assist from Ron Gibson. The company was alert to that opportunity even as it pursued other designs. Steve Brewster left Gamma Two even as AH was putting its edition of his game together, leaving Dalglish and Lance Gutteridge to innovate *War of 1812*. Gamma Two morphed into Columbia in 1982, not long before Gutteridge left the company, with Tom Dalglish carrying on. Tom has revived each of those early games, bringing them graphically and artistically up to date—and illustrating another basic survival mechanism: a popular game can be updated at reduced cost.

With the popularity of the fantasy genre during the 80s, Columbia joined forces with Kelestia Productions to provide high-quality play aids and accessories for the late N. Robin Crossby's fantasy role-playing game system *Härn*, which became a major series featuring many titles and associated products. Then in the 1990s, card games had their time in the sun, and Dalglish entered that field with *Eagles* and *Dixie*, respectively Napoleonic and American Civil War designs. In retrospect, Dalglish believes he may have erred here, by not anticipating the economics of card production. Because art had to be commissioned for a full set of cards at a time, and large print-runs were necessary to achieve any economy of scale, this meant that Columbia had to stock many sets. When gamers became disillusioned with cards as a result of the "collectible" card games of other publishers, that genre quickly lost its luster, and Columbia was left with considerable inventory. Since then Tom and Grant Dalglish have restored their strength by standing upon the basics: a focus on simple designs relying upon their innovative block system, controlling costs, producing a range of material in different historical periods—their World War II "Front" series, a strong Medieval and Ancients line (*Hammer of the Scots*, *Richard III*, and *Julius Caesar* have been especially notable entries here), and a major commitment to the Civil War, with assorted titles going back to the early 1990s. The latter have evolved "Great Battles" and "Great Campaigns" series. Tom and Grant have done well enough to be able to introduce product improvements in these Civil War titles—most especially hard-backed mapboards in the recent titles *Shiloh* (2010) and *Shenandoah* (2011).

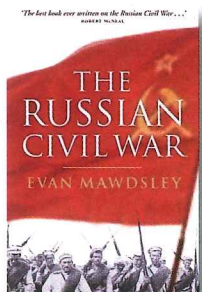
Tom's trajectory demonstrates very well what works in gaming. Much as with his origin story with Gamma Two, most game companies come together as one or a few enthusiasts with a hot game design who get together to put out their title. The companies are undercapitalized, shoestring operations, quite vulnerable to the vagaries of

the economy—and the market. The crunch comes when hobbyists ask "what's next?" Making the transition from "game" to "line" is the first critical challenge. Gamma Two surmounted that threshold because its designers had several games clearly in mind, and with the assist of a pick-up from a "major," at that time Avalon Hill. Then it became a matter of dedication to the hobby, slowly expanding the line with new titles using recognized mechanics, cautiously trying out novel genres or taking a chance on currently-popular themes. Tom calls that the "purple cow"—something so off the wall it might actually succeed. Meanwhile, all along Columbia steadily brings back its bestsellers. Tom Dalglish may not think he is capable of reading the tea leaves but he's done the next-best thing, keep his bases covered, with the guns loaded and powder dry.

So, what's next? Dalglish adverts that he's not put much thought into modern-era games and says he has been kicking around an idea for something like "Send in the Marines," a tactical simulation of interventionary operations. To hear this it sounds like Tom's not too serious about the Marines—the proposal did not do so well in feedback—but he's definitely headed for tactical. Columbia has brainstormed "Kiss"—"keep it simple stupid" is the joke and what title the final design may have remains uncertain, but the game is World War II tactical. The wood blocks are a natural for depicting squad-level strength. Numerous scenarios would feature company-strength forces on the opposing sides, and there would be some battalion-level support units, some extra capability pieces, and some leaders. Big scenarios could go up to a battalion. The scale would be 100 meters to the hex. The essential idea for this game, apparently, was suggested by Leonard Coufal around the millennium, and it's been floating in the background for a very long time. A tactical game would be a new departure for Columbia—and perhaps the time has come. In any case Tom and Grant sound like they're quite serious about this project.

Tom Dalglish and company have given us some great gaming. My personal favorites have long been *Quebec 1759* and *Rommel in the Desert* (not mentioned so far but it is one of the "greats;" long ago I reviewed that game and said it drove like a Maserati). More recently I had great fun with *Richard III*. Now I am doing a lot of *Shenandoah* (by Tom with Gary Selkirk)—maybe it's because of my weakness for Stonewall Jackson, but the Valley Campaign is fast, with hard punching, and some really strategic terrain at issue. It was a good choice for a subject and Columbia Games has done well with it. Tom, Grant, keep them coming! And if the tea leaves break your way this time, it will be well-deserved.

John Prados is an award-winning designer and author. He made wargaming history with Rise and Decline of the Third Reich and has written numerous books on modern warfare and the intelligence services. John holds a Ph.D. in International Relations from Columbia, and has thrice been nominated for the Pulitzer Prize.



The Russian Civil War
Evan Mawdsley
(Birlinn Limited, 2000, 2009)

You have to admire an author who revisits his books and updates them. Evan Mawdsley's first shot at the Russian Civil War was published in 1987, with new editions in 2000 and 2009, including admittance of mistakes (like calling Soviet power "enduring" in the 1987 book, only to see it fall two years later!).

Mawdsley covers the breadth of the Russian Civil War a bit earlier than many books, as he begins his discussion in the earliest stages of the Russian Revolution ending their World War I participation and putting down the initial revolts against Soviet power. The key point Mawdsley makes here is quite applicable to current events. There were a lot of groups who didn't like the Tsarist rule in Russia and all contributed to that overthrow. But the power went to the group that had the most organization early on, and that was the Bolsheviks led by Lenin and company. Even when outnumbered by social revolutionaries (SR), the Bolsheviks maintained power and various sects within the SR battled—with words and occasionally guns as well. We hear some of the same discussions coming out of the Arab Spring countries, where the Muslim Brotherhood holds a decided edge in organization (and thus power) over the other splintered pro-democracy groups.

The author then moves through the tumultuous years of 1918-1919, from the revolt of the Czechoslovakia Corps in May 1918 and the Cossacks, to the Russian Navy under Admiral Kolchak in Siberia. One nice feature that Mawdsley does to put the breadth of Russia into perspective when discussing the distances between various White counterrevolutionary groups is putting it in terms of United States distances: one group was 200 miles east of New York, the other 1000 miles west of San Francisco. Russia is a big country; communication and travel times were disadvantages to the Whites as they combated a more centrally located Red power.

Another key disadvantage was the conglomerate of groups making up the counterrevolutionary "White" movement. Governments that successfully overthrew Bolshevik leaders were themselves overthrown by internal

bickering. A good example was the Provisional All-Russian Government, declared in Siberia in September 1918 and lasting exactly eight weeks.

One point you can't help but see is the effect of personalities, especially on the White forces. Charismatic leaders led much of the counterrevolution, and the movements faltered when those leaders were lost. Case in point: early on Mikhail Muraviev was a top Red commander, who revolted against Lenin on the Volga River. His followers fell apart after he "committed suicide"—with five bullet holes and two bayonet wounds (pg.57)! Another major figure was the most successful White commander, V. I. Denikin, who led the Volunteer army against Moscow after taking the Ukraine. Some of his success, despite defeats of groups who could have supported him, was due to significant aid from the British, who provided 1100 field guns and tons of ammunition. He was also aided initially by the poor performance of the Red Army units, still undergoing Trotsky's reorganization.

However, he and other White leaders had a third major weakness of the counterrevolutionary movement—their inability to coordinate actions. For example, Admiral Kolchak in Siberia led a successful attack from the east that caught the Reds by surprise. But with no coordination with anyone else, he allowed the Reds to concentrate against him to recapture the Urals industry he had captured (and needed badly), by exploiting his weak southern flank, which Denikin could have shielded had they communicated. Ultimately, non-cooperation also led to the defeat of General Denikin, who saw his southern successes fall apart as he expanded his attack toward Moscow in too many directions, dispersing his strength (makes you think of the Germans in 1941, doesn't it?).

I learned a lot more about the Western intervention forces than I had before. Like most people I assumed they were there to combat the Bolshevik international revolution—something that the Soviets certainly thought! But the initial interventions were simply trying to keep the Russians in World War I fighting, rather than have Germany force a separate peace (which they did in March 1918) and turn their full attention on the Triple Entente. Only afterwards did they try and support the Whites when the Reds declared their goal to be world domination of the workers (under their leadership, of

course). The Entente provided a lot of material support for the White factions – along with the aid to Denikin, Admiral Kolchak in Siberia got 600,000 rifles and equipment for 200,000 men from the British.

A final weakness of the Whites that Mawdsley points out was their inability to both move militarily *and* build politically. Using Kolchak again as the example, he failed to provide anything near a solid government behind him, assuming that if he hit the Reds hard they'd collapse (shades of Hitler's views on the Soviets in 1941!). His conscription requirements, without positive government support, created partisans in his rear that stymied his plans and supply even further. The Reds were initially not supported politically either, but they tried to do something about it, and changing policies meant increasing support. They had their moments of error, as their mass terror and extermination policies against the southern Cossack hosts led to many uprisings and support for the Whites.

One idea I did disagree with was his inclusion of the Russo-Polish War of 1920 as a part of the Russian Civil War. It was, in my opinion, more a function of Poland trying to grab territory against what they saw as a preoccupied enemy. But their support from Ukrainian nationalists was too weak to hold onto the gains they made initially. It also created the motivation for the Soviets to grab half the country in 1939. You know what they say about payback!

Mawdsley's book is interesting and incisively written; he provides facts and analysis that brings the strategies, both good and bad, to light, and I learned a lot. It is not a particularly easy read, especially the political aspects, and having the maps at the back of the book is a weakness; I mitigated that by copying them and blowing them up for reference as I read. But if you have any interest in the Russian Civil War, this is the book to start with.

WARNING! If you have ever tried to read Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, with all its Russian names, and found it far too confusing, you probably don't want to read about the Russian Revolution for the same reason. Add in the various factions making up one side of this Civil War and the effect can be multiplied.

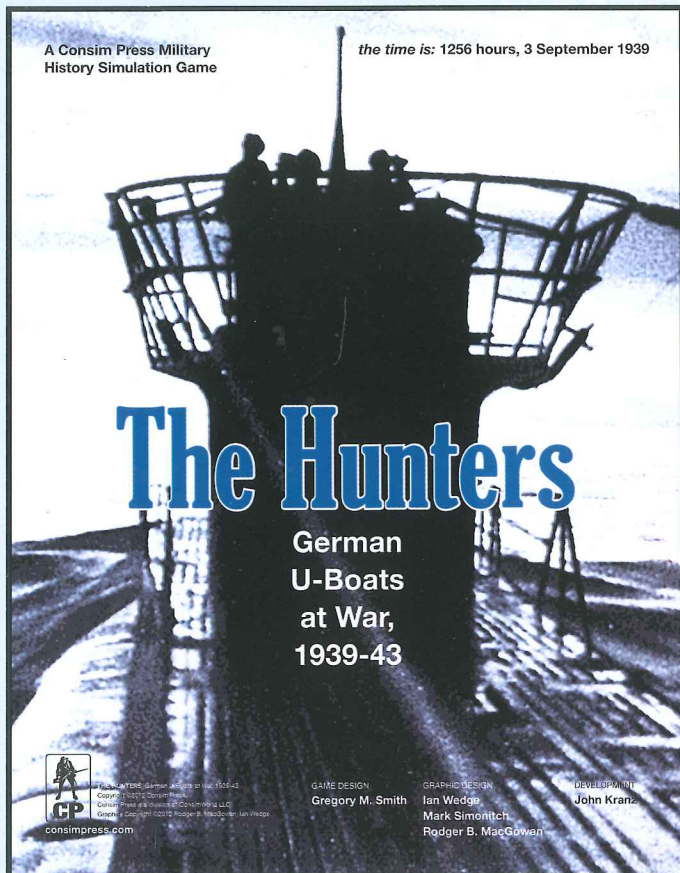
John has been the editor of Paper Wars and Counterattack magazines, as well as a regular contributor to Against the Odds, Strategy & Tactics, and World at War magazines. A former marine sergeant and Vietnam veteran, he holds a degree in military history and currently works as a advisory engineer for the U.S. Navy.

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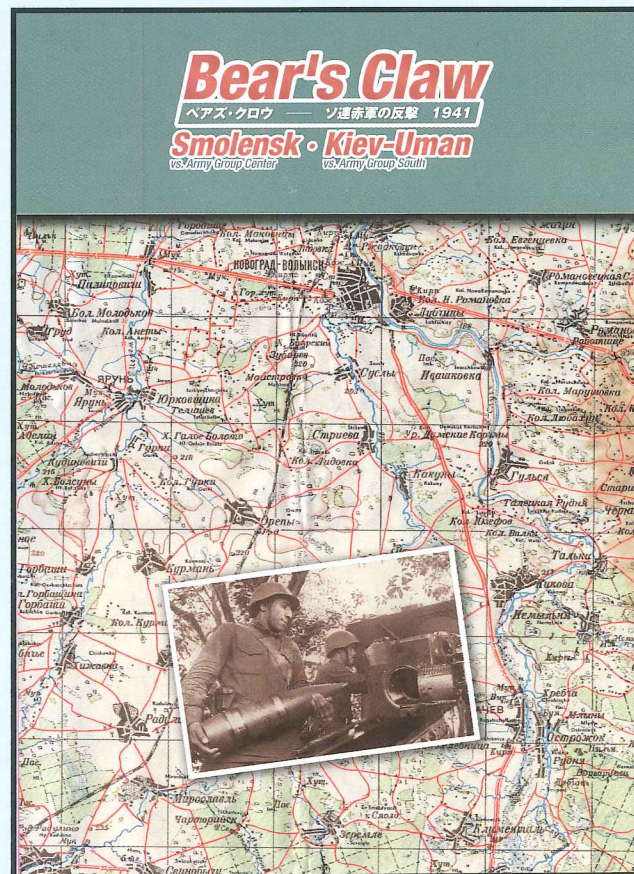
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