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# **GLOBAL WAR STUDIES**

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and Weapons, 1919-1945**

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**Volume 8 / Number 2 / 2011**

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# The War Crisis and the Decolonization of India, December 1941 – September 1942: A Political and Military Dilemma

ANDREW N. BUCHANAN

## ABSTRACT

This article examines the relationship between the catastrophic collapse of the British Empire in Malaya and Burma in the face of the Japanese offensive in late 1941 and early 1942, and developments in the organization of British rule in India that would eventually lead to the independence of the subcontinent in 1947. In particular, rather than viewing the war as the backdrop against which the politics of the struggle for Indian independence were played out, the article argues that the war crisis itself cut new channels through which the relationship between London and the jewel in its imperial crown was reorganized. This crisis in British rule in India was the product not only of actual British defeats at the hands of the Japanese, but also of the perception of Japanese power the collapse of British arms produced in the minds of imperial military leaders. It led London to propose far-reaching reforms in its relationship with India that, even if made *in extremis*, could not be revoked once the perceived threat from Japan had receded, not least because of Washington's interest in encouraging the decolonization of the subcontinent. In this context, the article also examines the evolving relationship between the British colonial authorities in India, the fundamentally anti-Japanese leadership of the Indian National Congress (INC), and the independence-minded popular base of the INC, that resulted in the military suppression of the "Quit India" movement in the summer of 1942.

## KEYWORDS

Britain and India; Cripps, Sir Stafford; Cripps Mission; Franklin D. Roosevelt and India; Gandhi, Mahatma; India and World War II; Indian National Congress and World War II; Japanese offensive; "Quit India"; Singapore, surrender of; Winston Churchill and India

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## Introduction

Japan's assault on the British Empire in December 1941 unleashed a debacle characterized by military catastrophe and by the marked reluctance of the Empire's subject peoples to fight in its defense. With British forces facing defeat from Hong Kong to Singapore and Rangoon, advancing Japanese troops were frequently welcomed as liberators and as allies in the struggle to throw off the British yoke. In the spring of 1942, with Japanese forces apparently poised to move against India, popular opposition to British rule intensified across the subcontinent. In London, the combined threat of invasion and internal revolt suddenly made the loss of India seem a real and immediate possibility. The crisis demanded urgent action, and senior war cabinet member Sir Stafford Cripps was dispatched to Delhi in an effort to rally Indian support for the war effort.<sup>1</sup> This was no mean task. As C.R. Rajagopalachari, a leading nationalist and a proponent of cooperation with London noted, substantial and immediate concessions were necessary to overcome the "popular attitude of apathy" towards British rule.<sup>2</sup>

Political and military crises were intertwined. As Cripps arrived in India, *The Times* carried adjacent articles, one announcing, under the dramatic headline "First Bombs on India" – with its implication that more would follow – that a powerful Japanese flotilla was operating in the Bay of Bengal, the other reporting on the progress of British negotiations with the Indian National Congress (INC).<sup>3</sup> After raiding Ceylon and sinking two heavy cruisers, Japanese carrier-based aircraft bombed the Indian ports of Coanada and Vizagapatam.<sup>4</sup> The Royal Navy, long the lynchpin of imperial defense, was driven from Indian waters, leaving the Raj dangerously exposed before both its external and internal enemies.

To many contemporaries, the relationship between military and political aspects of the crisis was clear. In late December 1941, only weeks after the outbreak of war in the east, *The Times* demonstrated the profound impact of the war crisis on British ruling class opinion by proclaiming the need for a "fresh start" in India.<sup>5</sup> In March 1942, the paper returned to this theme, observing that the "furnace of war" was now threatening the entire fabric of imperial rule and urging a "radical revision [...] of the traditional notions and practices" of colonial governance in order to preserve the empire.<sup>6</sup> From the United States, *The New York Times* observed bluntly that the empire was

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1. Winston Churchill, statement to the House of Commons, 11 March 1942, quoted in telegram, L.S. Amery, Secretary of State for India to Marquess of Linlithgow, Viceroy of India, 11 March 1942, in Nicholas Mansergh and E.W.R. Lumby, eds., *The Transfer of Power 1942-7*, Vol. I, *The Cripps Mission, January – April 1942* (London: HMSO, 1970) (hereafter *TOP i*), p. 406.

2. "Crucial Stage Reached in Delhi," *The Times*, 6 April 1942.

3. "First Bombs on India," and "New Phase in Delhi," *The Times*, 7 April 1942.

4. See Arthur J. Marder, Mark Jacobsen, and John Horsfield, *Old Friends, New Enemies*, Vol. II, *The Pacific War, 1942-1945* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p. 131.

5. "Fresh Start in India," editorial article, *The Times*, 23 December 1941.

6. "The Colonial Future," editorial article, *The Times*, 14 March 1942.

being "rocked to its foundations" by the war.<sup>7</sup>

Historical distance has dimmed awareness of the intimate relationship between war, social crisis, and political change, and the significance of the war crisis has been underrated in much of the historiography of Indian independence.<sup>8</sup> The British military collapse features in most accounts of the period, but it tends to be presented as the backdrop against which events in India unfolded rather than as the channel through which they flowed. Recent scholarship, including major works by Ashley Jackson and Christopher Bayly and Tim Harper, goes some way towards correcting these problems, particularly with respect to Imperial decision-making.<sup>9</sup> These studies, however, continue to downplay the degree to which London's perception of impending disaster conditioned the making of an offer to Indian nationalists that, even if it was not immediately accepted, could not be revoked. Other recent accounts still focus primarily upon the minutiae of political developments at the expense of an appreciation of the military and social crisis that drove them.<sup>10</sup>

Historiographical concentration on the Cripps Mission in the spring of 1942 has also tended to overshadow consideration of the ways in which the war crisis influenced the general development of political consciousness in India and shaped the specific relationship between the essentially moderate and anti-Japanese leadership of the Indian National Congress and its more radical plebian base. An understanding of the changing strategic situation is critical to grasping the development, heightening, and resolution of tensions and contradictions both within the Congress movement and between the INC and the British. Without situating it in this broader context, the relationship between the political crisis surrounding the Cripps Mission and the eruption of the "Quit India" rebellion that followed it in August becomes blurred, truncating and distorting an appreciation of the impact of war on Indian politics. This study aims to correct this imbalance by moving the military crisis and its impact upon popular consciousness and politics in India to

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7. "New British Colonial Policy Forged by War," *The New York Times*, 22 March 1942, p. E3.

8. For a discussion on the historiography, see Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India, 1885-1947* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), esp. Chapter One, "Old and New Approaches"; John Roosa, "Passive Revolution meets Peasant Revolution: Indian Nationalism and the Telengana Revolt," *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 4 (July 2001), esp. pp. 58-60.

9. Ashley Jackson, *The British Empire and the Second World War* (London; New York: Hambledon Continuum, 2006), esp. chapters 10, 11, and 12; Christopher Bayly and Tim Harper, *Forgotten Armies: The Fall of British Asia, 1941-1945* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2005), esp. chapters 3 and 4.

10. See, for example, Nicholas Owen, "The Cripps Mission of 1942: A Reinterpretation," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. XXX (2002); Peter Clarke, *The Cripps Version: The Life of Sir Stafford Cripps* (London: Allen Lane, 2002), esp. pp. 276-370. In this light, Owen's claim (p. 88) to present a broader account of the Cripps Mission by adopting a "lower power of magnification" than previous authorities is somewhat misplaced.

center stage.

In the spring of 1942 India's colonial rulers in London and Delhi believed that they faced the imminent prospect of losing control of the subcontinent. Their fear, seeming exaggerated with hindsight but hardly unjustified in the light of the then-current events, was driven by the string of military defeats suffered in the face of Japan's advance across Southeast Asia and by the deepening social and political crisis within India itself. The military situation alone was devastating. Between December 1941 and April 1942, Tokyo executed a series of campaigns that brought the entire "southern resource area," stretching from Burma, through Malaya and the archipelago of the Dutch East Indies to the Philippines and Borneo, under its control. The Vichy government had already ceded Indo-China to Tokyo, and the establishment of Japanese bases there was key to unhinging British rule throughout the region. Convinced that Washington would intervene in support of the British, Japan's preemptive strike at Pearl Harbor aimed to buy the time necessary to dismember the European colonial empires and establish a defensive glacis across the Pacific. While the subsequent struggle between Japan and the United States has dominated much of the historiography of the war in the Pacific and Asia and even more of the popular perception, the liquidation of the European empires was, along with the conquest of China, at the heart of Japan's imperial project.

Three days after Pearl Harbor, Japanese aircraft based in Saigon sank the *Repulse* and the *Prince of Wales*, powerful British warships dispatched to Singapore in the quixotic hope that their presence might deter an assault on the empire. The loss of these big ships – the most "direct shock" Churchill felt during the entire war – was quickly followed by a cascading series of British defeats.<sup>11</sup> Hong Kong, Britain's gateway to China, and Borneo, with its vital oilfields, surrendered in late December. Malaya fell to a lightning campaign that culminated in the capture of Singapore on 15 February 1942. Java and Sumatra followed, after the destruction of a scratch Allied naval flotilla in the battle of the Java Sea at the end of February. Pressing into Burma, Japanese troops captured Rangoon on 7 March, established themselves on the shore of the Bay of Bengal, and drove British, American, and Chinese forces in a headlong flight. In four months, British imperial power east of India had been completely liquidated. It is difficult to overstate the profound impact of these events both on official thinking in London and Delhi and on popular consciousness in India.

Several strategic and military factors shaped the British collapse. While recognizing the likelihood of conflict with Japan, London had failed to grasp

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11. Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War*, Vol. III, *The Grand Alliance* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1950), p. 550. For discussion on Churchill's insistence on sending the *Repulse* and *Prince of Wales* to Singapore, see Arthur J. Marder, *Old Friends, New Enemies*, Vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), p. 231.



that war was imminent until late summer 1941.<sup>12</sup> Consequently, the Far East was at the bottom of London's strategic priorities, and the paucity of resources allocated to the region was compounded by a staggering degree of imperial complacency. General Alan Brooke, assuming the duties of chief of the imperial general staff in December 1941, noted that his predecessor had done "practically nothing" to prepare for war with Japan, while General Archibald Wavell, appointed commander of imperial forces in India in October 1941, found the atmosphere in Singapore "completely unwarlike."<sup>13</sup> General William Slim, posted to organize the defense of Burma, was similarly shocked to find that there were no defensive plans or preparations whatsoever.<sup>14</sup> Pre-war planning had assumed that India's eastern flank would be protected by naval units based in Singapore, and had assigned the Indian Army primarily to the maintenance of "internal security" and to meeting possible Russian threats to the North West Frontier.<sup>15</sup> Weak and unprepared imperial forces and their irresolute and unreliable local allies faced Japanese armies whose superior training, combat experience, morale, and leadership gave them a decisive edge. British weakness was compounded by a chronic and bigoted underestimation of Japanese military capabilities.<sup>16</sup>

These military factors contributed mightily to the British collapse, but they are insufficient to explain it entirely. Broader social factors were at work, manifest, for example, in the abject surrender of Singapore to weaker Japanese forces – a stunning defeat characterized by Churchill as the "worst disaster" in British military history.<sup>17</sup> Driven by military defeat, the British Empire suffered a profound political and moral collapse.<sup>18</sup> In Borneo, Burma, and Malaya, military reverses quickly eroded the social fabric of

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12. See, for example, Marder, *Old Friends*, p. 219.

13. Alex Danchev and Daniel Todman, eds., *War Diaries, 1939-1945: The Diaries of Field Marshal Lord Alanbrooke* (London: Phoenix Press, 2002), coda to diary entry 1 December 1941, p. 205; Wavell, quoted in Ronald Lewin, *The Chief: Field Marshal Lord Wavell, Commander-in-Chief and Viceroy, 1939-1947* (New York: Farrar, Staus, Giroux, 1980), p. 155.

14. Field Marshal the Viscount Slim, *Defeat into Victory* (New York: David McKay, 1965), p. 8.

15. See Philip Mason, *A Matter of Honour* (New York: Jonathan Cape, 1974), p. 468; Daniel P. Marston, *Phoenix from the Ashes: The Indian Army in the Burma Campaign* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003), pp. 27-29.

16. For military factors underpinning Japanese success and British collapse, see H.P. Willmott, *Empires in the Balance: Japanese and Allied Pacific Strategies to April 1942* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1982), p. 172. On British underestimation of Japan, see Marder, *Old Friends*, p. 341 ff; Richard J. Aldrich, *Intelligence and the War against Japan: Britain, America, and the Politics of Secret Service* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), esp. pp. 64-65; Douglas Ford, "British Intelligence on Japanese Army Morale During the Pacific War: Logical Analysis or Racial Stereotyping?," *Journal of Military History*, Vol. 69 (2005).

17. Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War*, Vol. IV, *The Hinge of Fate* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1950), p. 81.

18. Bayly and Harper, *Forgotten Armies*, p. 119.

British rule, with the colonial masters receiving little help, and often passive or active opposition, from their subject peoples. As the Japanese assault unfolded, Viceroy of India Lord Linlithgow reflected despondently that the Indian and Burmese people, "alien by race, history and religion" and lacking any "natural affection" for their colonial masters, would see in Britain's military debacle their opportunity to break free.<sup>19</sup> The viceroy's point was, perhaps, overstated with regard to India, where an indigenous elite and a substantial state bureaucracy buffered relations between the imperial rulers and their subjects. But it was fully applicable farther east where London's efforts to broaden the base of colonial rule rested largely on the promotion of Indian and Chinese merchants, landowners, and bankers who were often deeply unpopular with the native population.<sup>20</sup>

The outbreak of war with Japan intensified deep-seated opposition to British rule in Malaya and Burma, where the detention of Burmese prime minister U Saw on charges of holding secret discussions with the Japanese in January 1942 only accelerated moves to break from British rule that included the formation of the Burmese Independence Army.<sup>21</sup> Japanese forces were widely welcomed as liberators in both Burma and Malaya, and local defense forces established by the British experienced large-scale desertions.<sup>22</sup> In Burma, as General Slim observed, civil administration simply "crumbled" ahead of advancing Japanese troops as British officials fled the wrath of their Burmese subjects.<sup>23</sup> Tokyo wrapped its offensive in pan-Asian propaganda that stressed the benefits of its proposed "greater east Asia co-prosperity sphere." Tokyo's campaign to present itself as the champion of Asian independence fell on receptive ears, and Japanese efforts gained credibility as Britain's military collapse intertwined with the decomposition of imperial rule.<sup>24</sup> It is this broad social collapse that explains the rapidity and totality with which British rule east of India was upended. As British commander in Burma General Harold Alexander observed in a remarkably candid public admission, "the local population as a whole appears actively in

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19. Linlithgow to Amery, 21 January 1942, *TOP i*, p. 49.

20. See Christopher G. Thorne, *Allies of a Kind: The United States, Britain, and the War against Japan, 1941-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 58.

21. Announcement from 10 Downing Street, 18 January 1942, *TOP i*, p. 49; also Thorne, *Allies*, p. 60. President Roosevelt, acclaiming U Saw's arrest in a note to Churchill, noted that he had "never liked the Burmese." Prime Ministers Operational Papers, Microfilm (hereafter PREM) 3/152/1.

22. Slim's account of the Burma campaign contains numerous references to widespread desertion from 1 Burma Division, see *Defeat into Victory*, esp. pp. 10, 24, 65.

23. Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, pp. 10-11.

24. See, for example, "Tokyo Radio Tries To Win India's Aid," *The New York Times*, 4 May 1942, p. 2. For a comprehensive account of the attraction of Japan for Southeast Asian nationalists, see Bayly and Harper, *Forgotten Armies*; also Milan Hauner, *India in Axis Strategy: Germany, Japan, and Indian Nationalists in the Second World War* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1981), esp. 101 ff.

support of the enemy."<sup>25</sup>

After the fall of Rangoon at the beginning of March 1942, a sense of impending crisis gripped British officials in India. General Wavell informed London that he anticipated that a Japanese invasion of northeast India backed by "large scale" landings in Madras would follow hard on the heels of Tokyo's victory in Burma.<sup>26</sup> Reporting on plans to establish what he optimistically termed a "bastion" around Calcutta, Wavell explained that urgent measures were necessary to protect India's industrial areas from a blow that could have "incalculable physical, moral and political effects."<sup>27</sup> Wavell was a competent and level-headed imperial commander and, from his previous tenure as British commander in the Middle East, a man inured to difficult situations. But his reports to London during these critical weeks were marked by a remarkable tone of desperation verging on panic, and were laced with constant shrill pleas for reinforcement.

Buffered by distance, London was able to take a somewhat more nuanced view of the developing crisis. The War Office approved Wavell's plan to defend northeast India, but stressed that holding on to Ceylon, upon which command of the Indian Ocean rested, took priority.<sup>28</sup> Wavell's request for more aircraft was refused, and this denial was repeated frequently over the following weeks.<sup>29</sup> While London scrambled to organize the defense of Ceylon and to outfit tiny Addu Atoll as an emergency fleet base, Wavell complained that the Royal Navy did not keep him abreast of its plans. More importantly, he continued to insist that India be given priority over other imperial defense commitments.<sup>30</sup> In early April, Wavell went so far as to step outside of the British chain of command by appealing directly to Washington for more aircraft. American air force chief General Arnold noted curtly—and correctly, according to agreed Allied command arrangements—that the British had "full responsibility" for India, and passed the request on to London.<sup>31</sup>

As the British position in Burma worsened, Indian troops were re-deployed from the Northwest Frontier to Bengal to meet the threat of inva-

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25. "India Mounts Guard Against Invasion," *The New York Times*, 5 April 1942, p. E1.

26. Wavell to War Office, 7 March 1942, PREM 3/233/65.

27. Wavell to War Office, 11 March 1942, PREM 3/233/91.

28. War Office to Wavell, 13 March 1942, PREM 3/233/115. For an account of British efforts to organize an effective defense of Ceylon, see Jackson, *The British Empire and the Second World War*, pp. 307-25.

29. See, for example, Wavell to War Office, 25 March 1942, PREM 3/233/189, in which the request for reinforcement was supported by Cripps and Linlithgow, and War Office to Wavell, PREM 3/233/206, in which London refused to "denude" the Middle East in favor of India.

30. C-in-C India to War Office, 15 March 1942, PREM 3/233/124.

31. See telegram, Johnson to Secretary of State, 6 April 1942, enclosing memorandum of conversation with General Wavell; memorandum, Arnold to Roosevelt, 9 April 1942, Franklin Delano Roosevelt Library, President's Safe File, India (hereafter FDRL, PSF, India).

sion. But they were under-equipped and poorly trained for modern warfare. London's pre-war plans combined with long-standing opposition to providing Indian troops with modern weapons had delayed the launching of modernization plans for the Indian Army until 1939, with the result that there were no tanks or armored cars and very few anti-aircraft guns in India until late 1941.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, by the time the crisis with Japan broke, the best trained and equipped Indian units were serving in North Africa and the Middle East. Now, as the Japanese offensive in Burma unfolded and as London became uncomfortably aware of the parlous state of imperial defenses in India, the chiefs of staff increasingly came to share Wavell's fears. Bemoaning "deficiencies" in the equipment and training of imperial forces in India, they concluded that if the Japanese pushed "boldly" westward without pausing to consolidate their gains in Burma, the Raj would be in "grave danger."<sup>33</sup> So desperate was the situation that when the battered and defeated remnants of the British army in Burma crossed into Assam in May 1942 they found that, far from retiring to regroup, they were expected to hold the frontier against the anticipated Japanese offensive.<sup>34</sup>

Reviewing the collapse of empire in Malaya and Burma, British officials in London and in Delhi had a gnawing fear that their military reverses would now combine with what they coyly referred to as "internal security problems" within India.<sup>35</sup> Commanders in India echoed these concerns; Air Marshall Peirse, for example, warned darkly that Japanese bombing of Calcutta would encourage "hostile elements" with potentially "dire" consequences.<sup>36</sup> Communications between London and Delhi on operational matters were laced with references to the danger that India might "relapse into chaos" in the event of a Japanese attack.<sup>37</sup> British officials became convinced that Tokyo, too, would learn the lessons of experiences in Burma and Malaya and would plan its operations against India with an eye to stimulating the internal unrest that might render it ungovernable.<sup>38</sup> With an imperial blindness that illustrates their own difficulties assimilating the lessons of Burma, officials tended to point to the "panicky" nature of India's "non-martial races" and to "fifth column" agitation as the source of their problem, with the viceroy himself warning of the prospect of widespread "pro-enemy sympathy and activity" driven by "quisling activities."<sup>39</sup> Reports from Delhi to London were heavy with concerns for Indian "morale," noting the "universal" spread

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32. See Mason, *Matter of Honour*, pp. 466-69; Marston, *Phoenix*, pp. 23-29. Willmott, *Empires in the Balance*, p. 222.

33. Chiefs of Staff to C-in-C India, 23 April 1942, PREM 3/233/356.

34. Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, pp. 86-91.

35. For example, War Office to Wavell, 13 March 1942, PREM 3/233/115.

36. Peirse to Air Ministry, 12 March 1942, PREM 3/233/110.

37. See, for example, C-in-C East Indies to C-in-C Eastern Fleet, PREM 3/233/299, "weighing the threat of political chaos" amongst factors determining whether to base units of the Eastern Fleet in Bombay.

38. Chiefs of Staff to C-in-C India, 23 April 1942, PREM 3/233/356.

39. Linlithgow to Amery, 21 January 1942, *TOP i*, p. 48.

of "anti-war and defeatist rumours," widespread "unsettlement" verging on panic, and a general lack of "war-mindedness" and popular enthusiasm for the war effort.<sup>40</sup> Observers with more contact with ordinary Indians had a clearer view: one missionary noted bluntly that rapidly deepening "hatred and contempt" for British rule was leading to the accumulation of a "great store of violent emotion."<sup>41</sup> Indian enthusiasm for the Viceroy's National War Front, set up in February to combat the "defeatist mentality," was conspicuous by its absence.<sup>42</sup>

While their fears of a fifth column were largely the stuff of imagination, they nevertheless reflected a significant social reality. Popular opposition to British rule was indeed intensifying as the war unglued the social cohesion of Empire farther east. This sentiment was reinforced by a mounting refugee crisis as hundreds of thousands of Indians fled Burma and Malaya before the Japanese advance.<sup>43</sup> Refugees gave graphic accounts of their treatment at the hands of colonial officials who, caring only for their own survival, commandeered the available motor transport and left the Indians to shift for themselves.<sup>44</sup> The morale of Indian troops serving in Burma, who along with other Asians comprised over sixty percent of the imperial forces, also suffered as a result of racist treatment by British officers.<sup>45</sup> At the same time, the fact that an Asian power was humbling their colonial masters challenged deep-seated Indian social assumptions and irrevocably eroded British prestige. The defeats in Burma and Malaya had, as Secretary of State for India L.S. Amery later noted, profoundly "shaken" the Indian soldier's belief in the power of Britain.<sup>46</sup> On a number of levels, it is clear that the military crisis significantly deepened popular opposition to British rule: this fact would have major implications for the development of politics in India over the next several months.

As the military crisis intensified, it became apparent in London that a major political initiative was necessary if the rise of anti-British sentiment was to be stemmed and India rallied to the war effort. Discussion on such a step

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40. See Linlithgow to Amery, 26 February 1942, *TOP i*, p. 253; Sir H. Lewis, Governor of Orissa, to Linlithgow, 14 March 1942, *TOP i*, p. 418.

41. Letter, Rev. J. McKenzie to Linlithgow, 29 December 1941, enclosed in minute from Amery to Churchill, 15 February 1942, *TOP i*, p. 173.

42. See Linlithgow to Provincial Governors, 17 February 1942, *TOP i*, pp. 191-96; see also Bayly and Harper, *Forgotten Armies*, p. 194.

43. Bayly and Harper estimate that 600,000 people fled for India from Burma alone. Bayly and Harper, *Forgotten Armies*, p. 167.

44. Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India* (New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1985), p. 453; also Sir H. Lewis, Governor of Orissa, to Linlithgow, 14 March 1942, *TOP i*, p. 418. Orissa was the home province of many Indians living in Burma.

45. Willmott, *Empires in the Balance*, p. 220; Hauner, *India in Axis Strategy*, p. 425. For the recollections of a British soldier that graphically underscore this point, see Clive Branson, *British Soldier in India* (New York: International Publishers, 1945).

46. L.S. Amery, Report "subversive Attempts on the Loyalty of the Indian Army," 3 May 1943, PREM 3/232/9.

had begun in ruling circles by mid-December 1941, and was reinforced by a public appeal from leading Indian Liberal Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru in January 1942.<sup>47</sup> By February it seemed that the alternative to rallying India to the war effort was the crisis and possible overthrow of British rule. In parliament, former secretary of war Leslie Hoare-Belisha lamented the "distressing lack of enthusiastic cooperation on the part of the native populations" in Burma and Malaya. Hoare-Belisha noted that, while it was already "too late" for Burma, there might "still be time" for India if the government acted quickly.<sup>48</sup> Labour Party leader and deputy prime minister Clement Attlee voiced this concern within the war cabinet, calling for an urgent "act of statesmanship" to draw Indian political leaders behind London. "To mark time is to lose India," he concluded dramatically.<sup>49</sup> Attlee's initiative led to the establishment of a special India Committee of the war cabinet and to the 9 March decision to send the Lord Privy Seal Sir Stafford Cripps to India as the special representative of the British government. Churchill framed the Cripps Mission as a response to the "crisis in the affairs of India arising out of the advance of Japan," and one that aimed to "rally all the forces of Indian life" to the war effort and to the empire.<sup>50</sup> To secure the cooperation of the notoriously conservative Lord Linlithgow, Churchill emphasized that the initiative represented the "united policy" of the war cabinet and that he and Cripps, a committed radical, stood together for the "unflinching defence of India."<sup>51</sup>

Churchill's insistence on this point is significant. The declaration Cripps carried to Delhi promised India "dominion status" and a constituent assembly after the war, thereby implicitly recognizing India's right to quit the Commonwealth. It also laid the legal basis for partition by proposing that "provinces and regions" that did not accept the constitution of a newly independent India might remain outside of it.<sup>52</sup> On these key points Cripps' brief went significantly further than previous British policy and marked a break both from Churchill's long-standing opposition to any measure of Indian self-determination and from his recent refusal to "raise [the] constitutional issue" with the "enemy upon the frontier."<sup>53</sup> But there is no reason to doubt the sincerity of Churchill's *volte-face* or his support for the Cripps Mission;

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47. See, for example, G. Schuster and E. Thompson, "A Fresh Start in India," letter in *The Times*, 18 December 1941, and subsequent editorial, "'Fresh Start' in India," *The Times*, 23 December 1941.

48. "Total War Effort Spurred By Cripps," *The New York Times*, 26 February 1942, p. 10.

49. Attlee, "Memorandum on the Indian Political Situation," 2 February 1942, War Cabinet Paper W.P. (42) 59, *TOP i*, p. 111.

50. Churchill, statement to the House of Commons, 11 March 1942, quoted in telegram, Amery to Linlithgow, 11 March 1942, *TOP i*, p. 406.

51. Churchill to Linlithgow, 10 March 1942, *TOP i*, doc. 294, 395.

52. Abridged Draft Declaration, enclosed in letter, Amery to Cripps, 9 March 1942, *TOP i*, p. 391.

53. Churchill to Attlee, 7 January 1942, *TOP i*, p. 14.

the war crisis had fundamentally, if temporarily, changed his thinking.

Recent commentary on the decision to send Cripps to India has focused attention on developments within British politics. Nicholas Owen describes the mission (by way of misreading George Orwell) as a "bubble blown by popular discontent" in Britain.<sup>54</sup> While domestic criticism of the government's direction of the war undoubtedly exerted pressure on London and had led to Churchill's decision to bring Cripps into the war cabinet in February 1942, it was a derivative aspect of the broader war crisis. The collapse of the Empire in the east was the driving force, and criticism of the government was its reflection within British politics: the Cripps Mission was dispatched primarily to address the core problem, not its domestic derivative.

Tackling this problem demanded resolving the longstanding conflict at the heart of Britain's India policy between those who favored what would later be called a "neo-colonial" solution involving the substantial devolution of power to local politicians, and those who insisted on the maintenance of centralized colonial rule. This debate, with its ebbs, flows, and compromise solutions and with its dynamic connection to political developments within India had raged in ruling circles throughout the inter-war years.<sup>55</sup> Churchill and other "die-hards" had vigorously opposed the 1935 Government of India Act, whose guiding principle of "dyarchy" sought to meld the devolution of power at provincial level with centralized control from London and Delhi.<sup>56</sup> The issue now had to be settled under the guns of Japan. Clement Attlee led the charge. Attlee's 2 February memorandum took aim at Linlithgow's assertion that India lacked "natural affection" for the Empire and was only held in it by force, advancing instead a liberal vision of imperialism. He pictured India coming voluntarily into the imperial fold to escape "tyranny and anarchy," with "educated" Indians absorbing British principles of "justice and liberty." In this light the viceroy's – and, by implication, Churchill's – "crude imperialism" was not only wrong, but "suicidal": only an appeal to the democratic values of the Indian elite could now save the empire.<sup>57</sup>

This approach was reinforced by the United States.<sup>58</sup> Washington feared that a Japanese incursion into India would sever the Burma Road to China, blocking the supply of American war materiel and forcing the Chinese gov-

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54. Owen, "The Cripps Mission," p. 79. A careful reading of the Orwell article in question makes it clear that he regarded Cripps himself, and not his mission, as a "bubble blown by popular discontent," see George Orwell, "The British Crisis," *Partisan Review*, Vol. IX, No. 4, July-August 1942, p. 277.

55. On the broad course of post-World War One British policy, see John Darwin, *Britain and Decolonization: The Retreat from Empire in the Post-War World* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1988), pp. 81-86.

56. See John Gallagher and Anil Seal, "Britain and India between the Wars," *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. XV (1981), esp. pp. 395, 406-10.

57. Attlee, "Memorandum on the Indian Political Situation."

58. For a succinct summary of the view that Churchill initiated the Cripps Mission to "placate" Washington, see Warren F. Kimball, *Forged in War: Roosevelt, Churchill, and the Second World War* (New York: Morrow, 1997), p. 139.

ernment to capitulate. The war in China was central to American interests, and this threat prompted Washington to drop earlier verbal support for Indian independence and to swing behind the defense of the Raj. Wary of discussing India directly with Churchill after bruising earlier sparring on the question, President Roosevelt urged the American ambassador in London to find ways of discussing the fact that the defense of India lacked the "enthusiastic support of the people of India themselves" with the British government.<sup>59</sup> American concern mounted following Chinese leader Chiang Kai-shek's visit to India in February 1942, a trip that had been encouraged by Washington in the hope that it would stimulate Indian support for the war. Chiang Kai-shek noted the absence of any "determined spirit to fight," and concluded that India would be lost unless Britain granted self-determination.<sup>60</sup> The poor state of Chiang Kai-shek's relations with London – his offer of Chinese troops to help defend Burma had been initially snubbed by Wavell and the British government had attempted to prevent him meeting with Mahatma Gandhi – undoubtedly colored his observations. But there was clearly enough in them to substantiate American concerns.<sup>61</sup>

In early March, Roosevelt received an appreciation of the threat to India prepared by Field Marshal Sir John Dill, London's chief military representative in Washington. Dill's report offered a rather blunt assessment of the potential scope of a Japanese offensive against India, projecting a combined land and naval attack on Calcutta, and described Britain's overstretched defensive preparations. Adding a point that he must have known would carry weight with the president, Dill emphasized that a successful Japanese attack into Northeast India would cut China off from "outside assistance."<sup>62</sup> No doubt shocked by what he read, Roosevelt discussed the crisis directly with Churchill later the same day. Perhaps reflecting his reluctance to challenge London at this critical moment, the president advanced a convoluted and bizarre historical analogy with the American Revolution to show that the establishment of a temporary national government along the lines of the Constitutional Convention would induce India to become "more loyal to the British Empire."<sup>63</sup>

On a more practical level, President Roosevelt dispatched Colonel Louis Johnson to Delhi as his personal representative, instructing him to help push forward discussions between London and the Indian National Congress.<sup>64</sup> A

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59. Roosevelt to Winant, 25 February 1942, in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1942*, Vol. 1 (hereafter *FRUS 1942 i*), p. 604.

60. Soong (Chinese Minister for Foreign Affairs) to Roosevelt, 25 February 1942, *FRUS 1942 i*, p. 615.

61. On the initial rejection of Chinese military assistance in Burma, see Willmott, *Empires in the Balance*, p. 408.

62. Memorandum, Combined Chiefs of Staff to Roosevelt, including "Appreciation of the Japanese Threat to India," prepared by Field Marshall Dill, 10 March 1942, FDRL, PSF, India.

63. Roosevelt to Churchill, 10 March 1942, *FRUS 1942 i*, pp. 615-16.

64. Memorandum of a discussion between Assistant Secretary of State Shaw and Colonel



technical mission under Dr. Henry Grady was also sent to review the production of war materiel and to make proposals for utilizing American resources to boost output. Washington's approach was reflected in a series of editorials in *The New York Times*. Formerly a staunch supporter of Indian independence and an advocate for the Indian National Congress, *The New York Times* argued that, faced with the "appalling truth" of the Japanese threat, the INC should accept the "solemn promises" proffered by the war cabinet and lead India into alignment with the Allies.<sup>65</sup> Under the impact of the war crisis, Washington's long term interest in enhancing American economic and political standing in India was clearly, if temporarily, subordinated to the demands of strengthening the common front against Japanese expansionism.<sup>66</sup>

Stafford Cripps' arrival in India on 23 March 1942 coincided with a further sharp deterioration in the military situation, and one that led him to anticipate the possibility of "large-scale" Japanese landings taking place during his visit.<sup>67</sup> Japan's occupation of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands paved the way for the irruption of powerful naval forces led by Admiral Chuichi Nagumo's Carrier Strike Force into the Bay of Bengal in early April. With its operations timed with a view to disrupting the Cripps Mission, Nagumo's force, including five fleet carriers and four battleships, quickly made its presence felt. Carrier-based aircraft bombed the Ceylonese ports of Colombo and Trincomalee, sank two British cruisers and the small aircraft carrier *Hermes* together with over 200,000 tons of merchant shipping, and raided the Indian coast. The Royal Navy's new Eastern Fleet, hurried to the Indian Ocean following the loss of the *Repulse* and *Prince of Wales*, narrowly escaped a fleet action and almost-certain destruction at the hands of superior Japanese forces. Unwilling to chance his luck again, Admiral Sir James Somerville withdrew his aging battleships to Kilindini, Kenya, thereby ceding control of the Bay of Bengal and much of the Indian Ocean to the Imperial Japanese Navy.<sup>68</sup> The withdrawal of the Eastern Fleet further weakened the defense of India and Ceylon – Somerville noted that the "Japs can walk in any time they like" – and threatened the provisioning of imperial forces battling to defend Egypt and the flow of lend-lease material through Iran to the Soviet Union.<sup>69</sup> Moreover, the psychological shock of losing control of

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Louis Johnson, 11 March 1942, *FRUS 1942 i*, p. 616.

65. "India Juggles with Destiny," "Message to India," "India Talks; Japan Acts," *The New York Times*, 1, 2, and 3 April 1942.

66. For a discussion on this question, see Dennis Merrill, "The Ironies of History: The United States and the Decolonization of India," in David Ryan and Victor Pungong, eds., *The United States and Decolonization: Power and Freedom* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000).

67. Clarke, *Cripps Version*, p. 300.

68. On the decision to withdraw the Eastern Fleet to Kilindini, see Marder et al., *Old Friends*, Vol. II, p. 137 ff.

69. Letter, Admiral Somerville to Lady Somerville, 10 April 1942, quoted in Marder et al., *Old Friends*, Vol. II, p. 138.

the Indian Ocean, an area of undisputed British naval domination since the end of the Anglo-French struggle in the eighteenth century, reinforced what Churchill later described as a "wave of alarm" flooding through the British high command.<sup>70</sup>

Nagumo's operations raised the prospect of a strategic convergence between Japanese forces pushing into the Persian Gulf and German armies emerging from the Middle East and Russia. This startling vision had for some time been the subject of concern in Allied ruling circles. In December 1941, L.S. Amery pictured India's defensive frontier stretching from "Libya to the Caspian" in the northwest, to Singapore in the southeast.<sup>71</sup> By February 1942, this extended frontier had been breached in the east and was hard pressed before Suez in the west, and British leaders feared a German drive through Turkey into the oilfields of the Persian Gulf. Similar fears gripped Washington, where the decision to reinforce the British in Egypt was justified on the grounds that the defeat of imperial troops there would permit a junction between German and Japanese forces with "disastrous consequences for the United Nations."<sup>72</sup> The media highlighted this threat, with *The New York Times* concluding that India now offered a "vast war theatre for a two-power Axis offensive."<sup>73</sup>

In retrospect, and in the light of the failure of the Axis powers to achieve any significant degree of strategic coordination, such schemes appear pure fantasy. They did not seem so at the time. With the German army preparing to drive into the Caucasus, North Africa in the balance, and the Allies in disarray across the Pacific, the threat gained a fleeting semblance of reality.<sup>74</sup> There is no doubt that for a few critical weeks London considered the prospect of a Japanese invasion of India combining with a popular uprising driven by deepening hostility to British rule to be a distinct possibility. All the evidence seemed to confirm General Wavell's dire warning that "present resources are utterly inadequate for [the] defence of India".<sup>75</sup> The Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Alan Brooke, concluded that the prospects for "saving India from the Japs" were "gloomy."<sup>76</sup> "We are," he added, "hanging on

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70. Churchill, *Hinge of Fate*, p. 161.

71. "Direct Menace to India," *The Times*, 17 December 1941.

72. Danchev and Todman, eds., *War Diaries of Alanbrooke*, diary entry 11 December 1941, p. 211; Memorandum, Marshall to Roosevelt, 18 March 1942, FDRL, PSF, West Africa.

73. H.G. Quaritch Wales, "India Offers a Vast War Theater for a Two-Power Axis Offensive," *The New York Times*, Sunday, 5 April 1942.

74. See Gerhard Weinberg, *A World at Arms: A Global History of World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 324-27. Willmott considers that a drive west into India was Japan's best strategic option in spring 1942, Willmott, *Empires in the Balance*, pp. 435-60.

75. Wavell to War Office, 15 March 1942, PREM 3/233/124; War Office to Wavell, 19 March 1942, PREM 3/233/160.

76. Danchev and Todman, eds., *War Diaries of Alanbrooke*, diary entry 10 April 1942, p. 246.

by our eye-lids!"<sup>77</sup> In a striking inversion of the "victory disease" that was propelling Tokyo to seize territory that it could not realistically hope to defend, London's "defeat disease" peaked as Nagumo's Strike Force burst into the Bay of Bengal. Taking counsel of their "grievous anxieties," London prepared to loosen the bonds of empire in the hope of salvaging something of the substance.<sup>78</sup>

The British government hoped that the Cripps Mission would help to resolve the crisis by winning Indian National Congress support for the war effort. The cooperation of the INC, the largest and most authoritative Indian party and one with both strong links to Indian industrialists and administrators and deep roots in the working class and peasantry, appeared to London to be the key to mobilizing India for total war and to undercutting popular hostility to the British. Congress, it was hoped, could help to organize a massive expansion of the Indian Army, boost war production, and establish a credible civil defense organization. Initial wartime expansion of the Indian Army had drawn largely upon the predominantly Muslim "martial races," but, as these sources of manpower were depleted, the authorities were forced to broaden recruitment to include greater numbers of Hindus likely to have been exposed to Congress influence.<sup>79</sup>

By reaching out to the INC, London abruptly reversed the main thrust of its policy since 1939. At the outbreak of the war in Europe, colonial administrators saw no need to court Indian support for their distant war with Germany, but rather an opportunity to overturn recent nationalist advances marked by the formation of Congress administrations in seven of the eleven provinces of British India following elections held under the 1935 Act. While drawing grudging British admiration for their moderate policies and their pro-business response to labor unrest, these provincial administrations nevertheless aroused concern as they began to unravel colonial governance at local level.<sup>80</sup> Viceroy Linlithgow proclaimed Indian involvement in the war without any prior consultation with Indian leaders and, when the INC responded to this calculated snub by instructing its provincial administrations to resign, Delhi curtailed civil rights and prepared for a new round of civil disobedience. Linlithgow opposed taking any steps to draw Congress into the government, and planned instead to "lie back and not move" in the belief that concessions made to Congress could not be "retaken" after the war. Churchill, who likewise opposed "running after Gandhi," concurred.<sup>81</sup>

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77. Danchev and Todman, eds., *War Diaries of Alanbrooke*, p. 248.

78. Churchill, *Hinge of Fate*, p. 161.

79. See Marston, *Phoenix*, pp. 49-51.

80. On the development of "parallel government" at local level during the Congress ministries, see Ian A. Talbot, "The Second World War and Local Indian Politics: 1939-1947," *International History Review*, Vol. VI (1984), p. 597.

81. Linlithgow to Zetland, 27 February 1940, quoted in R.J. Moore, *Churchill, Cripps, and India, 1939-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 30; Linlithgow to Amery, 21 January 1942, *TOP i*, p. 48; Churchill to Chamberlain, 20 February 1940, PREM 1/414.

London's position hardened further with the formation of the Churchill government in May 1940. The defeat of those sections of the British elite who favored a negotiated peace in Europe encompassed the downfall of those, such as the Secretary of State for India Lord Zetland and Foreign Secretary Lord Halifax, who supported a liberal constitutional settlement in India.<sup>82</sup>

As well as pushing directly against Congress, London hoped to utilize the Muslim minority and the 600 Indian princes who ruled substantial areas of the subcontinent beyond the formal boundaries of British India as "trump cards" against the nationalist movement.<sup>83</sup> Delhi turned to the Muslim League to fill the posts vacated by the resignations of Congress administrators, deliberately and significantly enhancing the position of the League. Official policy statements in October 1939 and August 1940 effectively recognized the League as the spokesperson for India's Muslims for the first time. The British gave League leaders back-stage encouragement to formulate a secessionist program that challenged a central aspect of the INC's plan to establish a unitary nation, and the League duly adopted the goal of creating "autonomous and sovereign" Muslim-majority states at its Lahore congress in March 1940.<sup>84</sup> Churchill candidly admitted that these communal divisions were the "bulwark of British rule in India" and argued that political concessions to the Muslim minority were necessary to secure the loyalty of the "martial races" upon which the Indian Army was based.<sup>85</sup>

Despite the anti-Congress thrust of its policies in the early years of the war, however, London had grounds to hope that the proposals carried to India by Stafford Cripps would receive a favorable reception from the Congress "high command." The Congress leadership was, to say the least, deeply ambivalent about the war. Many leaders had campaigned against fascism and Japanese expansionism in the 1930s and tended to associate these causes with support for the British war effort. Mahatma Gandhi, the moving spirit of Congress, informed Linlithgow that he faced the war "with an English heart," while Jawaharal Nehru, representative of the "self-consciously modern" section of the leadership, hoped to "line up" in defense of the Empire against Nazi Germany.<sup>86</sup> These sentiments shaped Congress' 1939 War Aims Resolution which saw a "free, democratic India" standing alongside the Allied powers.<sup>87</sup> However, while many middle class Indians were in-

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82. On the debate in British ruling circles, see R.J. Moore, "British Policy and the Indian Problem," in C.H. Philips and Mary Doreen Wainwright, eds., *The Partition of India: Policies and Perspectives, 1935-1947* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1970), p. 86.

83. Partha Sarathi Gupta, *Power, Politics and the People: Studies in British Imperialism and Indian Nationalism* (London: Permanent Black, 2002), p. 235.

84. See Sarkar, *Modern India*, p. 379.

85. Churchill, quoted in Thorne, *Allies of a Kind*, p. 62.

86. Gandhi, quoted in John Hope Glendevon, *The Viceroy at Bay: Lord Linlithgow in India, 1936-1943* (London: Collins, 1971), p. 136; Nehru, *Discovery of India*, p. 422; "self-consciously modern," Bayly and Harper, *Forgotten Armies*, p. 145.

87. Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, p. 422. See also Michael Brecher, *Nehru: A Political Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 260.

clined, as Attlee argued, to a sense that they shared common values with the British despite their opposition to colonial rule, most workers and farmers did not. Their popular opposition to the war provided a countervailing pressure to the pro-British inclinations of the Congress leadership, forcing it to nuance its support for the war effort by making it conditional upon promises of post-war independence and the immediate establishment of an inclusive National Government in Delhi.

These divergent pressures shaped Congress policy during this critical period, giving it a confused and often contradictory character. Moreover, as Britain's military debacle unfolded, divisions with the nationalist movement became more pronounced. With London's face set against Congress, Gandhi reluctantly authorized a campaign of civil disobedience in October 1940 to protest Delhi's draconian clampdown on democratic rights. This was the weakest of the mass campaigns of civil disobedience that had made the INC a powerful force in Indian politics in the inter-war years, and was designed to offer some action to those who wanted to strike at London while avoiding measures that might actually "embarrass" the war effort.<sup>88</sup> In Bengal, Subhas Chandra Bose, recently deposed president of Congress and leader of the radical Forward Block, launched a campaign protesting a memorial to British dead in the 1857 "mutiny" that was seen as slighting the rebellion's Indian victims. Despite wartime regulations, tens of thousands rallied against British rule, leading to bloody clashes with the police and to Bose's imprisonment.<sup>89</sup> Delhi responded vigorously both to the Congress campaign and to Bose's agitation, jailing over 20,000 activists. Many only emerged from prison on the eve of Pearl Harbor.

The outbreak of war in the East intensified the contradictory pressures acting on the INC. On the one hand, the Japanese offensive reinforced attempts by Nehru, Chakravarti Rajagopalachari, and others to find the basis for an accommodation with London. Their efforts were backed by the Communist Party of India (CPI) which, following Moscow's lead, argued that the German invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941 had transformed the "imperialist war" into a "people's war" that deserved full-scale popular support.<sup>90</sup> At the same time however, as British concern over the lack of "war-mindedness" and potential fifth column activity indicates, the war crisis deepened anti-British sentiment both amongst the Indian masses and within sections of the Indian elite and Congress leadership. These conflicting reactions to the war were reflected in the Congress Working Committee resolution adopted at Bardoli in December 1941. After weighing the new international situation, this contradictory proclamation managed to combine anti-Japanese

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88. See Sarkar, *Modern India*, p. 381; also, Judith M. Brown, *Gandhi: Prisoner of Hope* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), p. 329.

89. See Bayly and Harper, *Forgotten Armies*, pp. 16-19.

90. P.C. Joshi, *The Indian Communist Party* (London: International Publishers, 1942), pp. 3, 26. This pamphlet, written by CPI Secretary P.C. Joshi and introduced by CPGB leader Harry Pollitt, was produced specifically to explain the CPI's pro-war line.

sentiment and support for the war with a vigorous denunciation of British policy.<sup>91</sup>

Popular hostility to British rule deepened as the Japanese advance continued, spurred by official defense measures that included the destruction of all fishing vessels in the Ganges delta. Heightened opposition to the Raj was by no means restricted to the workers and farmers; many Indian capitalists, particularly those whose interests were threatened by plans for a scorched earth defense, shared this view. Much of what is referred to as "panic" in both contemporary and historical accounts could be more accurately described as the expression of anti-British and pro-independence sentiment.<sup>92</sup> Impressed by the tide of imperial defeat and by popular anti-war sentiment, Gandhi drew the conclusion that a Japanese victory was imminent and that he might soon be negotiating Indian freedom with Tokyo.<sup>93</sup> Subhas Bose had already taken this line to its logical conclusion. Having escaped from prison, Bose left India in January 1941 to work directly with the Axis powers in Berlin. Although Bose represented a small minority of elite opinion, Gandhi's shifting outlook shows that continued Japanese successes could have prompted many more to follow in his footsteps. Tokyo was alert to this possibility, timing its naval foray into the Indian Ocean to coincide with the Cripps Mission and preparing a declaration of support for Indian independence.<sup>94</sup> Meeting under Japanese auspices in Singapore in March 1942, the Indian Independence League began the recruitment of Indian prisoners of war to the new Indian National Army.

In this situation, the proposals carried by Stafford Cripps were entirely insufficient to win the support of a majority of the Congress leadership. The obstacle to agreement was not one of principle but of practical politics: even though sections of the nationalist leadership from right-winger Rajagopalachari to the Communist Party of India advocated accepting the possible secession of Muslim-majority states, the heat of the war crisis made any such compromise impossible.<sup>95</sup> Popular opposition to British rule effectively blocked any INC leadership desire for negotiated agreement. By February 1942 Nehru was, according to British intelligence reports, deeply concerned that many Indians viewed a Japanese occupation as a necessary lever against

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91. Resolution issued by the Congress Working Committee at Bardoli, 30 December 1941, *TOP i*, Appendix III, p. 881.

92. See, for example, Bayly and Harper, *Forgotten Armies*, pp. 190-97.

93. Nehru, speech during Allahabad session of the Congress Working Committee, 27 April – 1 May 1942, quoted in Sumit Sarkar, "Popular Movements and National Leadership, 1945-47," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 17, Nos. 14-16 (April 1982), p. 688; also, Brown, *Gandhi*, p. 322.

94. On timing of Japanese operations, see record of discussion between Foreign Minister Togo and General Ott, German ambassador to Tokyo, 13 April 1942, cited in Marder et al., *Old Friends*, Vol. II, p. 87. For general discussion on coordination of Axis strategy, or lack of it, see Hauner, *India in Axis Strategy*, esp. p. 396. On formation of Indian National Army, see Hauner, *India in Axis Strategy*, esp. p. 436.

95. See Joshi, *Indian Communist Party*, p. 28.

British rule.<sup>96</sup> It proved, as he later reflected bitterly, "utterly beyond [the leadership's] capacity" to "carry our people" into support for the war effort.<sup>97</sup> Gandhi was more blunt. The British proposals, he declared, were a "post-dated check drawn on a failing bank."<sup>98</sup>

Negotiations between Cripps and Congress finally broke down over the question of defense. For the British, undisputed command of all imperial troops in India was non-negotiable, while for Congress London's insistence on exercising sole control of Indian units was a negation of self-determination that undermined every other promise, assurance, and concession that they had been offered. This was the point at which the imperatives of the imperial war effort collided irrevocably with popular hostility to British rule. The impasse quickly became evident. On 1 April, the *Times* noted that the nationalist press welcomed assurances of "absolute freedom after the war," but feared that British control of defense would reduce Indian leaders to becoming mere "recruiting agent[s]" for the Raj.<sup>99</sup> London's stance, Rajagopalachari complained, was making it impossible to overcome the "popular attitude of apathy" towards the war effort.<sup>100</sup>

In a series of meetings, telegrams, and phone calls, Cripps, aided by Roosevelt's emissary Colonel Johnson, tried to finesse the issue by proposing that a new Defence Co-ordination Department be set up under Indian leadership. Under this scheme, London would retain control of all operational decisions while public relations, post-war demobilization, canteen organization, and the provision of army stationery, amongst other entirely secondary matters, would be placed in Indian hands.<sup>101</sup> But fancy footwork could not get around the fundamental issues of power posed by the defense question, and the negotiations broke down. Cripps left India on 12 April 1942.

The Cripps Mission failed because popular hostility to British rule, raised to new heights by the war crisis, counterbalanced the Congress leadership's efforts to come to an accommodation with London. Without popular support, an agreement with London could have split and effectively destroyed the INC as it attempted to assume responsibility for the war effort. Gandhi understood the danger, and the accelerating rout of British rule in Malaya and Burma ensured that the Congress leaders most desirous of collaboration with London were unable to make progress. Their difficulty can be measured by Gandhi's wily and pragmatic decision to distance himself from the

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96. Nehru, speech at Delhi, 11 February 1942, reported in telegram, Linlithgow to Amery, 12 February 1942, *TOP i*, p. 108.

97. Nehru, *Discovery of India*, p. 422.

98. On the provenance of this memorable aphorism, see Clarke, *Cripps Version*, p. 305, n. 59.

99. "Indians and the Plan," *The Times*, 1 April 1942.

100. "Crucial Stage Reached in Delhi," *The Times*, 6 April 1942.

101. Proposed responsibilities of Defense Co-ordination Member as outlined in memorandum from Cripps to INC President Maulana Azad, 7 April 1942, *TOP i*, p. 684. The War Cabinet approved the outline of Cripps' proposal, see Amery to Cripps, 6 April 1942, *TOP i*, p. 663.

negotiations.

The Cripps Mission arose from the war crisis; the same crisis doomed it to failure. Cripps' efforts did not need to be "torpedoed" by Churchill, Linlithgow, or Wavell, as many commentators have suggested, nor were they "crushed" between "Churchillian conservatism" and Congress intransigence.<sup>102</sup> Colonel Johnson's lament that Cripps and Nehru could have "solve[d] it in 5 minutes" if freed from Churchillian interference was repudiated by President Roosevelt, who stressed that the Indian crisis was "largely military" and beyond immediate political resolution.<sup>103</sup> Cripps concurred, blaming the breakdown of the mission on the Congress leadership and on Gandhi in particular.<sup>104</sup> He went to great lengths, both in person and through the work of his assistant Graham Spry, to ensure that this version of events was popularized in the United States. This effort was largely successful. *The New York Times* editorialized in support of London's position, praising Cripps and ridiculing Indian demands to take responsibility for their own defense. A major article lauding British rule by Cripps himself drove home the point.<sup>105</sup>

As the war crisis clarified British policy towards India, forcing an irrevocable, if not immediately applicable, pledge of independence, so it resolved the divergence within the nationalist movement between the moderate, pro-war, and pro-capitalist inclinations of much of the leadership and the more radical, anti-British and activist impulse of its plebeian base. These tensions had marked the INC from its emergence as a mass organization after the First World War, and they intensified during the 1930s. The moderates were strengthened by the formation of Congress provincial governments in 1937 as, once safely in office, nationalists retreated from radical electoral promises and agreed to leave the basic structure of land ownership unchanged while moving to restrict trade union rights.<sup>106</sup>

Alongside this moderate parliamentarianism, the 1930s were also marked by popular radicalism reflected in the growth of trade unions, student organizations, and peasant leagues affiliated with the INC and by the first significant advances by the nationalist movement in the princely states. These developments propelled the organization of a strong left wing within Congress. In 1934 the Congress Socialist Party was formed, and in 1936 the Commu-

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102. "Torpedoed," see Sarkar, "Popular Movements," p. 677; "Churchillian conservatism," see Moore, *Churchill, Cripps and India*, p. 122. For a recent and comprehensive refutation of the thesis that the Cripps Mission was deliberately sabotaged by Churchill, see Clarke, *Cripps Version*, esp. pp. 325-30.

103. Johnson to Cordell Hull, 11 April 1942, *FRUS 1942 i*, p. 631; Roosevelt to Johnson, 8 May 1942, *FRUS 1942 i*, p. 650.

104. Cripps, "Report on Mission to India," 6 July 1942, in *TOP ii*, p. 227.

105. "Sleepwalking in India," editorial, *The New York Times*, 13 April 1942; Stafford Cripps, "Britain and India," *The New York Times*, 23 August 1942, p. SM3.

106. K.N. Chunduri, "Economic Problems and Indian Independence," in Philips and Wainwright, eds., *The Partition of India*, p. 307.



nist Party of India decided to center its activity within Congress. Operating, as its Trotskyist opponents pointed out, as a "loyal opposition," the CPI advocated a united front with Indian capital and a "two-stage" perspective – first national independence, then social reform – that echoed the views of Nehru and other Congress leaders as well as those of Moscow.<sup>107</sup> The failure of the CPI and other left-wing forces to offer a clear alternative program and their desire to avoid splitting the movement muddied political lines and allowed Gandhi and the right wing to defeat Subhas Bose's bid for re-election to the Congress presidency in 1937.

This resolution of these conflicting class impulses unfolded rapidly over the spring and summer of 1942, manifest first in the inability of the Congress leadership to forge an accord with London, and then in the "Quit India" rebellion of August. Between these two events, however, the strategic situation shifted decisively against Japan, and the military turn had decisive consequences for Indian politics. In May the Imperial Japanese Navy's rampage was checked in the Coral Sea, and a month later U.S. carrier-based aircraft destroyed Nagumo's Carrier Strike Force at the Battle of Midway. Meanwhile, in their first successful amphibious operation of the war in May 1942, the British seized Madagascar from Vichy France, thereby securing Allied lines of communication to Suez and Bombay. The occupation of Madagascar and the arrival of air force reinforcements, including the heavy bombers of the American Tenth Air Force, in Ceylon and India laid the basis for the rapid re-establishment of Allied control over the Indian Ocean.

It quickly became apparent to London that Tokyo's incursion into Indian waters marked the high point of Japanese expansion and not a stepping-stone to further conquests.<sup>108</sup> The sinking of the Japanese carriers, Churchill noted in the immediate aftermath of Midway, "sensibly improves our position in the Indian Ocean and Bay of Bengal."<sup>109</sup> With typical aggression, he was soon pressing for action against Japanese positions in the Andaman and Nicobar islands, ridiculing Wavell's ongoing fears of invasion, and berating Admiral Somerville for not moving back into the Bay of Bengal quickly enough.<sup>110</sup> The turn in the naval situation also stymied Japanese plans to push on through Burma towards Assam. Without naval support, beset by monsoon, and at the end of a long and difficult line of supply, the offensive ground to a halt, much to the dismay of Bose and the Indian National Army. Japanese troops stood at the gates of India, but, as one group of Indian revolutionaries put it, they were no longer "knocking on the door."<sup>111</sup> By late June the British felt sufficiently secure to send troops and aircraft from

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107. *The Revolution in India* (Edinburgh: T. Tait Memorial Committee, 1942), p. 21. Also Roosa, "Passive Revolution meets Peasant Revolution," pp. 59-60.

108. Churchill to First Sea Lord, 10 June 1942, PREM 3/163/8.

109. *Ibid.*

110. Churchill to Wavell, 19 April 1942, PREM 3/233/1/340; Marder et al., *Old Friends*, Vol. II, pp. 171-72.

111. "Trotskyism in India," *Fourth International*, October 1944.

India to meet General Erwin Rommel's drive towards Egypt, and the halting of the Axis offensive at the first battle of El Alamein in August finally closed any prospect of a strategic junction between German and Japanese forces.

London and Delhi quickly grasped the political implications of the military turn. As Linlithgow had predicted, a favorable political solution to the crisis in India rested primarily upon Allied military success.<sup>112</sup> Now, with the Japanese threat to India ebbing away, there was no longer any urgent necessity to draw Congress into the war effort. While Delhi continued to probe divisions within the nationalist movement with the aim of pulling moderate figures like Rajagopalachari into the government, it was back to the days of "stand firm" in relation to Congress as a whole.<sup>113</sup> Led by Churchill and Cripps, London placed the blame for the breakdown of negotiations firmly on Congress.<sup>114</sup> Their view was echoed in Washington where, despite Colonel Johnson's pro-Congress report, the Department of State concluded that further British concessions would have opened the door to an "irresponsible Congress-Hindu government" and a drastic weakening of the war effort.<sup>115</sup> Concern for the war in China overrode any lingering American impulse to chastise London for its denial of Indian self-determination.

Buoyed by the belief that the outcome of the Cripps Mission allowed them to take the high ground, London and Delhi made thorough preparations to strike decisively against Congress in the event of a renewed campaign of civil disobedience. Linlithgow mooted the possibility of deporting Gandhi, and a circular sent to provincial officials detailed a plan of action that included rounding up nationalist leaders, banning local Congress committees, and seizing party offices and funds.<sup>116</sup> In July, London rewarded the Communist Party of India's support for the war effort by endorsing Delhi's proposal to legalize it, release its leaders from prison, and unban its publications.<sup>117</sup> The party utilized its standing in the trade union movement to campaign for the formation of a national government and to further the war effort by enforcing "no-strike" agreements in the factories.<sup>118</sup> Clive Branson, a

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112. Linlithgow to Amery, 1 May 1942, *TOP ii*, p. 11.

113. See *ibid.* on Linlithgow's hopes to persuade Rajagopalachari to form an administration in Madras.

114. Cripps, "Report on Mission to India," 6 July 1942, *TOP ii*, esp. p. 341.

115. Minutes of meeting between Colonel Johnson and senior Department of State officials, 26 May 1942, *FRUS 1942 i*, p. 662.

116. Circular letter from Government of India to Provincial Governments, 3 August 1942, *TOP ii*, pp. 534-35.

117. Telegram, Government of India to Amery, 7 July 1942, requesting London's agreement with decision to legalize the CPI, *TOP ii*, p. 345 and War Cabinet concurrence, 13 July 1942, *TOP ii*, p. 378. The War Cabinet decision was made despite the concern of Home Secretary and Labour Party leader Herbert Morrison that it would stimulate pressure to unban the Communist Party of Great Britain's newspaper, the *Daily Worker*.

118. Joshi, *Communist Party of India*, pp. 22-24. The British also received the support of prominent former communist and Radical Democratic Party leader M.N. Roy, who de-

member of the Communist Party of Great Britain serving in the British Army in India, observed bluntly that it was "obvious" that the CPI had been legalized in a "final effort to disrupt Congress."<sup>119</sup>

While Delhi prepared for action, the Congress leadership found itself squeezed ever more tightly between popular opposition to British rule on the one hand and London's resolve to make no further concessions on the other. Under mounting pressure, its policy statements became increasingly eclectic and contradictory. Meeting at Wardha in July, the Congress Working Committee demanded the immediate withdrawal of "British power," but simultaneously welcomed the presence of British troops in order to "ward off" Japanese attacks.<sup>120</sup> Lacking the global overview available to London, Congress leaders failed to grasp how decisively and how quickly the strategic situation was changing or to gauge how the shifting military balance would affect Indian politics. On 8 August the All-India Congress Committee (A-ICC) meeting in Bombay resolved to launch a mass campaign to demand that the British "Quit India." But, rather than initiating a sustained drive against British rule, the new civil disobedience campaign was designed to provide the necessary leverage to a re-opening of talks between Congress and the British. Gandhi anticipated a lull of several weeks before the first protest actions, during which he intended to "plead" with the viceroy to resume negotiations.<sup>121</sup>

The British allowed Congress no such breathing space. On the morning of 9 August they arrested the members of the A-ICC meeting in Bombay together with hundreds of provincial and local leaders. Leaders of the Communist Party of India, who had waged an isolated fight within the A-ICC against the campaign of civil disobedience, had been removed from Delhi's target list and escaped detention.<sup>122</sup> As planned, the arrests decapitated the movement. Moreover, despite weeks of debate, Congress leaders had no concrete plan of action for the upcoming campaign and no contingency plan in the event of the leadership being arrested.<sup>123</sup> They were undone by a dilemma of their own making, a compound of their essential support for the imperial war effort and of their view of popular protest as a lever to force ne-

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clared that London was on the "side of the people." See "The August 1942 Struggle," *Fourth International*, October 1944, p. 309.

119. C. Branson, letter to N. Branson, 12 August 1942, in C. Branson, *British Soldier in India*, p. 20. On the CPI's opposition to Congress, see, for example, Sir M. Hallet, Governor United Provinces, to Marquess of Linlithgow, 21 February 1942, *TOP i*, pp. 221-22.

120. Resolution of the Congress Working Committee, Wardha, 14 July 1942, *TOP ii*, p. 387.

121. Gandhi speech to AICC, 8 August 1942, *The Hindu*, 10 August 1942, quoted in Arun Chandra Bhuyan, *The Quit India Movement: The Second World War and Indian Nationalism* (New Delhi: Manas, 1975), p. 64.

122. See Sir T. Stewart, Governor of Bihar, to Linlithgow, 15 July 1942, *TOP ii*, p. 389.

123. See Francis G. Hutchins, *India's Revolution: Gandhi and the Quit India Movement* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), p. 202; Bhuyan, *Quit India*, p. 54.

gotiations with the British rather than as an instrument of social change in its own right. In the weeks following the crackdown, the Congress Socialist Party and other forces on the left wing of the movement stepped forward to offer some direction. But, lacking a clear political program and facing severe British repression, their efforts were effectively limited to the organization of local protests.

Despite the lack of leadership from Congress, and to the surprise of the British authorities, a broad and spontaneous popular revolt erupted across much of the country in the days following the arrests. Concentrated in the Congress strongholds of Bihar, Bombay, and the United Provinces, protests occurred in every province except the Punjab and Sind. In rural areas of Bihar and the United Provinces, peasant uprisings destroyed police stations and other government buildings, scattered the local representatives of British power, and established short-lived organs of self-government.<sup>124</sup> Railroads and roads were cut, forcing some British outposts to rely on aircraft to maintain contact with Delhi. Significantly, the revolt spread beyond British India into the princely states, giving it a genuinely national character.<sup>125</sup> In Bombay and other urban centers, student protests culminated in violent clashes with British troops.

Working class involvement in the rebellion was more limited. Particularly in the key industrial centers of Bombay and Calcutta where the Communist Party, which opposed the rising, enjoyed considerable influence in the labor movement, organized trade union activity was largely absent. Elsewhere there were some important protest strikes. The most significant was at the giant Tata steel mills where an official report noted that workers "openly stated that they will not return to work until a National Government has been formed."<sup>126</sup> Concerned that news of the Tata strike would disrupt war production, Linlithgow made strenuous efforts to keep it secret.<sup>127</sup> In the Ahmedabad textile mills, management-initiated lockouts took place as nationalist mill owners, acting with the agreement of union leaders, closed their plants.

The scope of the "Quit India" revolt, erupting as hostility to British rule quickened into active resistance, offers dramatic *post facto* evidence of the powerful popular sentiment that had prevented Congress leaders from striking a deal with London. But it was a rebellion without leadership, both in the narrow sense of having its leaders sequestered in prison and in the broader and more important one of lacking a clear direction and political program. In the absence of organized leadership, the rebellion devolved into a series of intense peasant *jacqueries* interlaced with student protests and backed by limited working class strikes and industrial protests carried out in conjunc-

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124. Hitchins, *India's Revolution*, p. 250.

125. Bhuyan, *Quit India*, p. 79.

126. Government of India, Supply Department, to Amery, 21 August 1942, *TOP ii*, p. 777.

127. Linlithgow to Amery, 22 August 1942, *TOP ii*, pp. 776-77.

tion with the nationalist *bourgeoisie*. Despite its limitations, the intensity of the revolt took Delhi by surprise. With typical imperial arrogance, the British thought that the arrest of the Congress leadership would stymie popular protest, discounting the potential initiative and resilience of working people: chastened by experience, Linlithgow considered the revolt the most serious challenge to British rule since the rebellion of 1857.<sup>128</sup> This was something of an exaggeration since British rule was never under direct threat. But the movement was undoubtedly more far-reaching than a civil disobedience campaign organized – and constrained – by Congress might have been.

Overcoming their surprise, the British rallied quickly and responded to the rebellion with vigorous military repression backed by further restrictions on political organization and increased press censorship. Fifty-seven British battalions were deployed against the rebels, supported by substantial air power.<sup>129</sup> Under the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Ordinance of 1942, soldiers were granted effective legal indemnity for their actions and, according to official British accounts, the police and army killed nearly 700 protesters. In all likelihood, the actual death toll was significantly higher.<sup>130</sup> Tens of thousands more were imprisoned and entire communities were held collectively responsible for damage done to government and railroad property. Given the disorganized and decentralized character of the revolt and the vigorous measures taken against it, there was never any real prospect of the British losing control. As the Delhi's daily reports to London show, British and Indian troops were deployed with grim determination and a willingness to use whatever force was necessary to restore order.<sup>131</sup> By early September 1942, the uprising had been quelled. Isolated rural revolts and small-scale guerrilla actions continued into 1943, but the popular rebellion was over.

In the aftermath of the defeat of the August rebellion, the relationship between the Congress leadership and the mass of its supporters was fundamentally recast. While the great majority of workers and peasants continued to give their allegiance to Congress, their role shifted from one of active participants in a movement to one of passive supporters. A protracted period of social and political quiescence succeeded the intense activism of the war crisis, resting on the one hand upon the exhaustion of the peasantry following the August rebellion and, on the other, on a working class buoyed by relative prosperity and constrained by a compliant trade union leadership.<sup>132</sup> The demobilization of working class and peasant militancy in northeast India was reinforced by the devastating impact of the Bengal famine – itself largely a product of the war crisis – that began in late 1942. For their part, many Congress leaders took advantage of their enforced removal to distance

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128. Linlithgow to Churchill, 31 August 1942, *TOP ii*, p. 853.

129. Linlithgow to Amery, 15 August 1942, *TOP ii*, p. 707.

130. Government of India, to Amery, 12 September 1942, *TOP ii*, p. 953.

131. A selection of the relevant reports are reprinted in *TOP ii*.

132. Indian revolutionaries spoke of British "appeasement" of the industrial working class. See "Trotskyism in India," *Fourth International*, October 1944.

themselves from the rebellion: writing from prison, Nehru dismissed it as a "foolish and inopportune challenge" to British rule.<sup>133</sup>

London consciously exacerbated the social and political divisions deepened by the defeat of the August revolt, cultivating relations with Indian capital and, prompted by the new Viceroy General Wavell, moving to re-open discussions with the Congress leadership. Wavell pressed London for a "change of spirit," and insisted on taking immediate steps to draw Indian leaders into government. Congress leaders, released from the pressure of popular anti-British sentiment, responded positively if hesitatingly to these overtures. While far from smooth, the subsequent negotiations hammered out much of the constitutional framework for Indian independence.<sup>134</sup> At the same time London took advantage of the imprisonment of Congress provincial legislators to install Muslim League administrations in Assam, the North West Frontier Province, Bengal, and Sind, thereby paving the way for the partition of India and the creation of Pakistan.<sup>135</sup> Communal violence, strikingly absent during the upswing of popular revolt, emerged with new vigor after its demise as the demoralizing effects of defeat created fertile ground for the growth of both the Hindu-chauvinist Hindu Maha Sabha and the Muslim League.

In the short term, British power appeared to emerge strengthened from the crisis. As the strategic balance shifted further in the Allies favor, India became the base from which much of the Empire was reconquered, a process in which the Indian Army, reorganized, re-equipped, and vastly expanded after its battering in Burma, played a decisive role. War industry boomed, and both British investors and Indian capitalists, recovered from their temporary doubt in the certainty of British victory, reaped super-profits.<sup>136</sup> But, as Linlithgow had warned, ground conceded could not easily be retaken. And much had been conceded. London's pledge to recognize India's right to self-determination was hedged around with proposals for an undemocratic constituent assembly and the threat of partition. But the direction was clear and it was irrevocable, not because of the words in a formal statement, but because it reflected both the reality of Indian nationhood and the actual decline of British power and prestige. Churchill held out, hoping, as Amery observed, to wriggle out of promises made *in extremis*. But the "die-hards" and all their hopes of maintaining direct British rule had been conclusively defeated during the war crisis. It would be left to the incoming Labour government to carry through the consequent attempt to finesse a neocolonial solution.

The war, as Nehru put it, was the "releasing factor" that unglued existing social and political relations and cut new channels through which pre-exist-

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133. Nehru, *Discovery of India*, pp. 487, 491.

134. See Anita Inder Singh, *The Origins of the Partition of India, 1936-1947* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 112.

135. Singh, *The Origins of the Partition of India, 1936-1947*, p. 91.

136. See Sarkar, "Popular Movements," p. 678.

ing contradictions could be resolved.<sup>137</sup> Without it, London would have continued to grope towards a neocolonial solution as it had done since the end of the First World War. But it would have been a hesitant and half-hearted journey, with the British facing a nationalist movement whose increasingly radical base they feared and distrusted. It took the relentless advance of Japan and the resulting conviction that the loss of India was imminent for London to reach out to Congress with a serious promise of self-determination. The sheer incongruity of the imperial power sending forth a mission to secure the support of its ostensibly subservient colonial subjects offers ample proof that the war crisis served notice that the days of direct colonial rule were numbered. As it drove a resolution in British policy, the war crisis simultaneously forced a clarification of long-standing contradictions within the nationalist movement. As Attlee had predicted, "educated" Indian opinion, including that of much of the Congress leadership, was inclined to support the imperial war effort. But popular opposition to British rule, fueled by the imperial collapse in Malaya and Burma and maligned as "fifth column" activity by the authorities, made it impossible for Congress to strike a deal with Cripps in April. The subsequent defeat of the "Quit India" revolt, unfolding after the decisive turn in the military situation, allowed the relationship between the leadership of Congress and the movement's mass base to be recast in a way that permitted the long process of negotiation that culminated in the "transfer of power." The outcome of Churchill's "crisis in Indian affairs produced by the Japanese advance" thus set the framework for the ending of British rule in the sub-continent.

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137. Nehru, *Discovery of India*, p. 480.

# High Command, Irregular Forces, and Defending Malaya, 1941-1942

BRIAN P. FARRELL

## ABSTRACT

Japanese strategy for the conquest of Malaya and Singapore in December 1941 provided the defending British Empire forces a good opportunity to use small forces to disproportionate effect to delay the Japanese advance. Racing south towards Singapore without pause, the Japanese stretched their supply lines to breaking point. Irregular "stay behind" parties of local volunteers, trained in sabotage and guerrilla warfare, had the chance to use their intimate local knowledge to impose a sorely needed delay on the Japanese advance. Unfortunately, the army defending Malaya and Singapore, and the civil government administering them, could not organize and prepare such forces in a timely manner. The opportunity passed as the Japanese advance outpaced Malayan capability to pull together to defend effectively. This article explains the nature of the opportunity, the reasons it could not be seized, and the consequences for all concerned. By doing so, it sheds new light on an important dimension of the Malayan campaign and the fall of Singapore.

## KEYWORDS

British Army; guerrilla forces; irregular operations; Japan; Malaya; Second World War; Singapore; Thailand

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## Introduction

The British Empire armies defending Malaya against a Japanese invasion in December 1941 complained so many times they were being undermined, from within, that many survivors of the campaign went to their graves believing this was a major reason they were defeated. Reports of so-called "fifth column" activity were so chronic that General Headquarters (GHQ) Malaya Command, the British Army formation responsible for defending Malaya, referred the problem to the Inspector-General of the Straits Settlements Police, Arthur Dickinson, for investigation. Inspector-General Dickinson found that nearly all the "hundreds" of reports were hysterical false



alarms, apart from a handful "in which there might have been evidence of enemy influence."<sup>1</sup> This indicates something important about the wartime defense of Malaya: the military high command responsible for protecting the country against external invasion did not know nearly enough about the civilian population they were defending. The British had been the paramount power in Malaya since 1874. They directly governed the Straits Settlements as a Crown Colony, administered by a Governor, answering to the Colonial Office (CO). The colony comprised Singapore and the mainland enclaves of Penang, Malacca, and the Dindings. The remaining Malay states on the peninsula were protectorates, allied to the British through defense treaties. Five comprised the Federated States of Malaya; the remaining four were unfederated. The Governor acted as High Commissioner to them all, represented in the states by Residents whose advice on many matters the ruling Sultans were obliged to accept; Sultans were left alone to preside over matters involving Malay religion, culture, and customs. The police Special Branch, responsible for internal security, operated all over the country, dating back to at least 1915. Malaya Command, as a standing headquarters, was twenty years old by 1941. It had its own intelligence and security branches; some regular units of the garrison had been in country since 1936, and one was native: the Malay Regiment, with one fully formed battalion and a second being established. Despite these long associations, the army forced to defend Malaya in December 1941 felt itself to be what it was: a stranger in a strange land.

This sense of being alien to Malaya unsettled the regular army fighting to defend it. This was not a minor problem. In fact, it made a material contribution to defeat in Malaya, in a campaign which ended, after seventy days, with a capitulation on Singapore island that was so humiliating Prime Minister Winston Churchill declared it to be "the worst disaster in British military history."<sup>2</sup> In military terms, this was a bit exaggerated. Defeat in Singapore

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1. Abbreviations used in footnotes:

AWM	Australian War Memorial
BL(OIOC)	British Library (Oriental and India Office Collection)
CAC	Churchill Archives Centre (Churchill College, University of Cambridge)
IWM	Imperial War Museum (United Kingdom)
JM	Japanese Monograph Series (held by U.S. Army Center of Military History)
NA	National Archives (United Kingdom)
SCSC	Singapore Command and Staff College Library

NA, WO32/15539, Governor Shenton Thomas written comments on "Percival Despatch," [see note 14] and related correspondence, spring 1947; WO106/2250A, West-all report; IWM, Percival Papers, File 43, "The Organization for the Control of Political Intelligence," n/d [written by Inspector General A.G. Dickinson in January 1946].

2. CAC, Churchill Papers, CHAR2/71A/44, Churchill to Roosevelt, 5 March 1942; Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War*, Vol. IV, *The Hinge of Fate* (London: Cassell, 1951), p. 81.

did not cost the Allies either the Second World War or the Pacific War. Nor did it prevent the British from returning to Malaya and Singapore in 1945, and remaining there for another generation. But it was humiliating, and it did have serious military and dire political consequences – for both the course of the war and postwar British influence in Asia. The real problem was not the mere fact of defeat in Malaya. Wider strategic circumstances, and the correlation of forces, were both so heavily weighted against the British Empire by late 1941 that defeat in Malaya was predictable, and over-determined. The real problem was the manner of that defeat. The Japanese won so fast and so easily in Malaya that they turned defeat into humiliation and disaster for the British. This sense of being an alien army points us towards an important reason: the interplay between the military problems of defending Malaya and political characteristics that complicated those problems.

The defenders of Malaya simply had no margin for error in December 1941. Unfortunately, they made too many errors. Some stemmed directly from this interplay between military strategy and the political nature of British Malaya. Nothing revealed that more starkly than the army high command's efforts to rally the civilian population of Malaya to help defend the country. Strategic geography, and the campaign strategy of the enemy, provided a real opportunity to use the civilian population of Malaya as a force multiplier, to help resist the Japanese invasion. The Japanese campaign plan was based on a boldly calculated risk, and connected to a larger grand strategy that also rested on finely calculated margins. Malaya Command had a real chance to exploit those margins, and punish that risk, at little risk to itself, by using irregular forces to attack the weakest link in Japanese plans: the lines of communication, for supplies and reinforcements, on which Japanese strategy was bound to rest precariously. It failed almost completely to do so, for two reasons. First, it was not prepared to commit irregular forces to battle when war broke out. Second, after the Japanese seized the initiative and subjected Malaya Command to unrelenting pressure, it could not mobilize them effectively. There was a common factor in both failures: the relationship between British Malaya and the regular army it relied on for protection.

This is a story best examined from the vantage point of those who held the levers of power and responsibility. This was a problem of high command and campaign strategy. From that perspective, this article will address three questions: what possibilities were there for using irregular forces to help defend Malaya? How well did the army high command exploit those possibilities? And in the end, what difference did this make to the outcome of the campaign?

### **The Singapore Strategy**

The problem began after the Great War, when the British government adopted a dubious grand strategy to defend the British Empire in Asia against any future attack by Japan. That strategy never envisaged the army playing the lead role to defend Malaya against a Japanese invasion. Unfortunately, this

in the end is what happened. The problem can be evaluated by evaluating the interplay between three factors: circumstances, intentions, and capabilities. Bear in mind how asymmetrical they always are; circumstances and intentions can change with bewildering speed, but capabilities take much longer to bolster, so you must maintain them in the first place. This did not happen in British Malaya.

The Royal Navy (RN) was supposed to play the leading role to defend the empire in what the British called the Far East. The "Singapore strategy," adopted in 1921, envisaged sending the battle fleet from Home and Mediterranean waters to Asia, to respond to any threat or attack from Japan. The fleet would steam out to a modern main base built in Singapore, from which it would operate to defeat whatever Japanese attack materialized. Malaya Command's role was simply to hold this naval base in Singapore, particularly during the "period before relief": the time that must elapse between the start of a crisis and the arrival of the fleet. This would enable the fleet to use the facilities it required to fight a major enemy in Asian waters. The stipulation was clear from the start. It would not be enough to deny the base, or hold Singapore under siege in order to pin down an enemy force. The base must be preserved intact, so the fleet could use it to go on the offensive. But this concept rested on a dangerous assumption: Europe would be quiet enough to allow the British to send the main fleet to the rescue. This did not seem so serious at first, given that the "period before relief" was set at forty-two days.<sup>3</sup> But the dire turn of world affairs during the 1930s, and the fact the British could not rearm fast enough to match expanding danger, changed everything.

Malaya Command was responsible for defending the group of protectorates and colonies at the heart of the Malay world, in Southeast Asia, the British Empire acquired during its global expansion in the nineteenth century. They included territories on the island of Borneo, but the problem we are investigating revolved around defending the island of Singapore and the Malayan peninsula. The adoption of the "Singapore strategy" gave the army mission a much sharper focus: hold the naval base on Singapore island. Before the outbreak of war in Europe, Malaya Command had only four regular infantry battalions, plus local Volunteer Force units, under command; it was however reinforced on Singapore island by a powerful array of coastal artillery, designed to protect the naval base on the island's north shore, at Sembawang, from direct attack from the sea. But that array was compromised over time by advances in technology. The range and striking power of combat aircraft greatly increased. This allowed a putative enemy to threaten the naval base from much greater distances. The base could now be neutralized by attackers striking from far beyond the range of the coastal artillery. On the other hand, the Royal Air Force (RAF) could now also counterattack any

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3. Brian P. Farrell, *The Defence and Fall of Singapore 1940-1942* (Stroud: Tempus, 2005), ch. 1; W. David McIntyre, *The Rise and Fall of the Singapore Naval Base 1919-1942* (London: Macmillan, 1979).

invading force well beyond the range of Singapore's big guns. Singapore island lay barely a kilometer south of the Malayan peninsula, separated from it by the Straits of Johore. The naval base could not be used if a hostile power was established across the Straits. The RAF decided in 1936 to build airbases on the peninsula, especially on the east coast and in the north, near the border between Malaya and Thailand. This would allow it to deploy striking forces with the range to intercept any invasion fleet well out into the South China Sea, far northeast of Singapore. Japan had both a powerful battle fleet and strong, well equipped amphibious assault forces. Both gained battle experience in the war in China that broke out in 1937. And in 1939 Japanese forces occupied the island of Hainan, off the south coast of China, giving them a base on the edge of Southeast Asia. All these developments persuaded the British high command to make some important adjustments in defense plans for Malaya and Singapore.<sup>4</sup>

In 1938 Malaya Command concluded that the only way to carry out its mission – to hold, not deny, the naval base in Singapore – was to keep any enemy invading force as far away from the base as possible, for as long as possible. RAF bases on the mainland were being constructed, but the air force was not yet strong enough to equip them properly. The army decided this gave it no choice but to try to defend all of Malaya. Should a Japanese invasion force seize control of new British airbases in the north, and on the east coast, they would move strong air forces forward, to operate much closer to Singapore. This would allow them to either neutralize the naval base by direct attack or isolate it from reinforcement by air or sea.<sup>5</sup>

When war broke out again in Europe in September 1939, this made the problem even more difficult. The European war forced the British to concentrate on the enemy in front of them. The Chiefs of Staff (COS) increased the "period before relief" to a daunting 180 days. War in Europe did trigger a plan to reinforce Malaya Command with an Indian Army regular brigade; Emu Force duly arrived, but Japan, the putative enemy, sat still, waiting to see what happened in Europe. The war in Europe expanded, while relations with Japan remained fraught. This prompted the British to withdraw their small isolated garrisons from British enclaves in China. This added two more regular battalions to Malaya Command. By mid-1940, Malaya Command could field roughly the combat power of an infantry division.<sup>6</sup> But this reinforcement did not keep pace with a greatly expanded threat.

In May and June 1940 the German armed forces overran the Netherlands and Belgium, defeated the French Army, and forced France to surrender, and

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4. Ong Chit Chung, *Operation Matador: Britain's War Plans against the Japanese, 1918-1941* (Singapore: Times Academic Press, 1997), chs. 1-3; Farrell, *Defence and Fall of Singapore*, ch. 2; James Neidpath, *The Singapore Naval Base and the Defence of Britain's Eastern Empire, 1919-1941* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981).

5. Farrell, *Defence and Fall of Singapore*, ch. 2; Clifford Kinvig, *Scapagoat: General Percival of Singapore* (London: Brassey's, 1996), ch. 10.

6. Farrell, *Defence and Fall of Singapore*, chs. 2-3.

drove the British Army off the continent; minus most of its heavy weapons and equipment, the army was evacuated from Dunkirk back to the British Isles. This forced the United Kingdom to fight for its very survival, without any great power allies, against a stronger enemy, poised to invade. No pre-war contingency plan was prepared to meet this scenario. This pinned down both the RN and RAF, defending the home islands. The situation was so dire the British were forced in June to warn the Australian government that for the "foreseeable future ... we see no hope of being able to dispatch a fleet to Singapore." Shortly thereafter they were obliged to admit this meant Malaya's ground and air defenses badly needed further reinforcement.<sup>7</sup> There was no escaping the consequences. The mainland airbases in Malaya would remain a liability rather than an asset until the UK was secure. Most were widely spread out from each other; several lay directly in the path of any invasion. All must be denied to any invader, in order to hold the naval base in Singapore. Yet despite the fact the "Singapore strategy" now utterly depended on the course of a war in Europe the British were losing, Churchill and the COS did not make any amendments to plans for imperial defense against Japan. In August, the COS formally confirmed existing plans. They declared the "Singapore strategy" must remain the basis for imperial defense in the Far East, which meant Malaya Command's mission remained unchanged: to hold the naval base, for as much as six months. The COS acknowledged that until the fleet could be spared, the RAF must lead the defense of Malaya, but also admitted that until the RAF could in fact do so, Malaya Command must step forward to hold the naval base – and agreed it could only do so by defending all of Malaya.<sup>8</sup>

This can be partly explained by the fact the very existence of the mainland airbases limited the choices the army could make, whether its mission changed or not. But it can also be explained as a decision of high policy. Australian and New Zealand forces were already committed to the war in Europe. This made London authorities very reluctant to give their commanders in the Far East a free hand to do what they could with what they had, should they be attacked before things improved in Europe. The British insisted the Japanese would not attack the southern Dominions so long as the naval base in Singapore remained available for the RN to use for a counter-offensive. That meant holding the naval base must remain British official policy; that meant plans to defend Malaya must conform.<sup>9</sup> This all changed

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7. NA, WO106/5158, DMO & P to DP, 17 June 1940; CAB66/11, WP(40)362, 4 September 1940; Farrell, *Defence and Fall of Singapore*, ch. 3; David M. Horner, *High Command: Australia and Allied Strategy 1939-1945* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1982), pp. 37-41.

8. NA, CAB80/15, COS(40)592(Revise), "The Situation in the Far East in the Event of Japanese Intervention Against Us," 15 August 1940.

9. NA, CAB66/11, WP(40)362, 4 September 1940; Farrell, *Defence and Fall of Singapore*, ch. 3; Ian Hamill, *The Strategic Illusion: The Singapore Strategy and the Defence of Australia and New Zealand, 1919-1942* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1981).

Malaya Command's position from difficult to dire. With the combat power of roughly an infantry division, it had to defend a territory the size of England, and overextend itself in order to do so. It had to protect the bases of an air force which could not stipulate when it would be ready to use them effectively, and it had to hold a base for a fleet that could no longer promise to come to the rescue.

Any investigation of the defense of Malaya in 1941 confronts this fundamental fact: the British defensive position in the Far East did not really recover from the collapse of France, a real turning point for the Second World War as a whole. By spring 1941, the British won their battle to ward off invasion; but they remained very much on the strategic defensive in Europe, leaving too little to spare for the Far East. German victories in Europe also prompted the Japanese to take stock of their own situation. Japan's national objective was to establish hegemony in East Asia, and they could only do this by winning definitive victory in their war in China. But by 1940 that war strained their national power to a dangerous degree, with no end in sight. Japan could not wage war without importing nearly every raw material essential to the purpose, most from sources controlled by Western powers. Japanese leaders also believed Western support for Chinese resistance prolonged the war in China. They decided that Axis victories in Europe opened up a window of opportunity in Southeast Asia they must try to exploit.<sup>10</sup>

### **Strike South**

Western powers dominated Southeast Asia before 1940, physically controlling every territory other than Thailand. But the fall of France compromised this ascendancy. The Dutch East Indies were now cut off from a homeland under German occupation. French Indochina accepted the orders of a government in France forced to bow to German pressure. British forces in India and Southeast Asia could not be sufficiently reinforced while the UK faced possible invasion. Southeast Asia seemed ripe for the taking, and it contained the vital raw materials, especially oil, the Japanese war economy required to prevail in China.

As a first step, the Japanese bullied French colonial authorities in Indochina to allow their forces to occupy bases in northern Vietnam. The declared objective was to tighten the blockade of China; but this also moved Japanese power much closer to Singapore and the Dutch East Indies. The American government responded by embargoing the export of scrap iron to Japan. The Japanese answered by concluding a Tripartite Pact with Germany and Italy. Their policy seemed vindicated in November when an Axis intelligence coup procured copies of the British COS papers outlining grand strategy in

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10. Japanese Monograph Series [hereafter JM], U.S. Army Center of Military History, Number 146, *Political Strategy Prior to the Outbreak of War*, Part II. Several parts of this series can be accessed online: see <<http://www.ibiblio.org/pha/monos/index.html>> and <<http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/Japan/Monos/index.html>>. The introduction to the former site explains the project and its provenance.

the Far East, which confirmed that the British military position in the region would remain precarious until at least the end of 1941. The strategic initiative lay in Japanese hands, and they knew it.<sup>11</sup>

The course of the war in Europe in 1941 determined how the Japanese decided to exploit that initiative, and the situation they faced. The British tried, with mixed results, to take the war to the Axis in the Mediterranean, but strategically they remained pinned down defending the home islands against a still much stronger enemy. And British mobilization still struggled to keep pace with an expanding war. This did not change even when the Germans invaded the Soviet Union in June. In retrospect, this was the decisive event of what soon became a global war. But at the time the British were not confident the Soviet Red Army could survive a ruthless German onslaught. So they decided to treat this new situation mainly as a chance to build up their own strength. On the other hand, when Soviet resistance continued into the autumn they did agree, along with the Americans, to ship war materiel to the Soviets to try to keep them fighting. Meanwhile, the Roosevelt administration moved steadily towards solidarity with the Allied cause, including secret talks to concert grand strategy with the British; but it would not run ahead of American public opinion. These developments limited what London could do to strengthen the defensive position in the Far East.<sup>12</sup>

Nevertheless, the British did try to strengthen air and ground forces in Malaya and Singapore, from various quarters. By autumn 1941 RAF Far East grew to a force of eleven squadrons, which allowed it to activate five of the vulnerable mainland airbases. Malaya Command more than trebled, growing in size to the strength of a small field army: fielding ten infantry brigades, reinforced by engineer, coastal artillery, anti-aircraft, anti-tank, and field artillery units, plus volunteer forces, as well as second-line infantry units for static airbase defense. The army was reorganized. III Indian Corps had two Indian divisions with two brigades each under command, and held a brigade in reserve; it was assigned to defend northern Malaya. The 8th Aus-

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11. JM, Number 146, *Political Strategy Prior to the Outbreak of War*, Part II; NA, CAB106/180, "Report on discussions held in Tokyo in September 1966 between Col. Wards, Historical Section, Cabinet Office, and Japanese official historians, War History Institute [hereafter "Wards report"], September 1966." For the seizure of the document CAB80/15, COS(40)592(Revise), "The Situation in the Far East in the Event of Japanese Intervention Against Us," 15 August 1940, taken from the vessel SS *Automedon*, see: Richard J. Aldrich, *Intelligence and the War against Japan: Britain, America and the Politics of Secret Service* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 46-49; Peter Elphick, *Far Eastern File: The Intelligence War in the Far East, 1930-1945* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1997), pp. 255-65; and J.W.M. Chapman, "Britain, Japan and the 'Higher Realms of Intelligence,' 1918-1945," in Ian Gow and Yoichi Hiram, eds., *The History of Anglo-Japanese Relations, 1600-2000*, Vol. III, *The Military Dimension* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2003).

12. Brian P. Farrell, *The Basis and Making of British Grand Strategy, 1940-1943: Was There a Plan?* (Lewiston, NY: Mellen, 1998), chs. 3-4; Brian P. Farrell, "1941: An Overview," in Brian P. Farrell and Sandy Hunter, eds., *Sixty Years On: The Fall of Singapore Revisited* (Singapore: Eastern Universities Press, 2002).

tralian Division, with two brigades, was tasked to defend the southern state of Johore. Singapore Fortress Command was garrisoned by two brigades; GHQ Malaya Command held another brigade in army reserve. Malaya Command could now put thirty-two regular infantry battalions into the field, plus Volunteer Force units. The British government even made a controversial decision to send not the main fleet, but a "flying squadron"; Force Z – two fast capital ships, plus escorts – arrived at Singapore in early December. This all indicated British determination to do the best they could to hold Singapore.<sup>13</sup> Unfortunately, supply did not catch up with demand.

Many of the reinforcement units only arrived in the second half of 1941; few came with any previous combat experience, or familiarity with the climate and terrain. Malaya Command in particular faced a tough challenge: to mold a multi-national imperial force into a cohesive field army. And the strength of all three services remained well below what the COS agreed they required. Japan posed a growing threat, but the war in Europe remained the priority. Rather than an authorized 336 first-rate combat aircraft, RAF Far East had at most 181, very few of which were first-rate types. Everyone agreed Malaya Command required forty-eight battalions plus tank support to hold the naval base before the air force could take the lead, but it fell well short in both categories. And Force Z was no substitute for the main fleet. Nevertheless, by drawing from the UK, India, local resources, Australia, and New Zealand, the British built up a field army in Malaya in 1941, supported by air and naval forces, which remained under orders to hold the naval base in Singapore against any Japanese invasion.<sup>14</sup>

Meanwhile, the war in Europe persuaded Japan to strike south. Anticipating this possibility, the IJA began in December 1940 to prepare for war in Southeast Asia. The German invasion of the Soviet Union was the decisive event. It prompted Japanese leaders to agree in July 1941 that rather than combine forces with the Germans to try to finish off the Soviet adversary in the north, they would take advantage of this huge distraction to pursue their own more immediate objectives in the south. Diplomatic efforts to persuade the Americans to accept Japanese policy in China ran into a dead end. Japanese forces moved into southern Indochina in July. The Roosevelt adminis-

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13. Farrell, *Basis and Making of British Grand Strategy*, ch. 4; Farrell, *Defence and Fall of Singapore*, chs. 4-6.

14. NA, CAB106/40, *Operations in the Far East, From 17 October 1940 to 27 December 1941*, Air Chief Marshal Sir Robert Brooke-Popham, published in *Supplement to The London Gazette* 20 January 1948 [hereafter "Brooke-Popham Despatch"]; Arthur E. Percival, *Operations of Malaya Command From 8th December 1941 to 15th February 1942*, published in *Supplement to The London Gazette* 26 February 1948 [hereafter "Percival Despatch"]. Despite the dates in the title, Percival wrote at length about preparations for war, and provided a lengthy postmortem. See: <[http://www.britain-at-war.org.uk/WW2/London\\_Gazette/Malaya\\_and\\_Netherlands\\_East\\_Indies/](http://www.britain-at-war.org.uk/WW2/London_Gazette/Malaya_and_Netherlands_East_Indies/)>. This despatch was the principal source for Percival's own memoirs, which he published in 1949: Arthur E. Percival, *The War in Malaya* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode: 1949); Farrell, *Defence and Fall of Singapore*, chs. 4-6.



tration, followed by the British and Dutch, cut off exports to Japan in retaliation. Japanese experts advised their government this would destroy Japan's ability to wage war within two years. Japanese leaders took this as an ultimatum to either cease and desist in China or face economic ruin. They opted to seize what they needed in Southeast Asia and defy the Americans to roll them back.<sup>15</sup> The war in China thus shaped Japanese grand strategy for war against the Western powers. Japanese strategy, in turn, influenced the choices the British could make to defend Malaya. Because we must analyze the use of irregular forces in Malaya within that context, we need to examine the other side of the hill.

Two maxims defined Japanese grand strategy to wage war in Southeast Asia: speed and economy of force. Western military forces in the region were understrength, dispersed, and vulnerable. Virtually the entire IJN was available to attack them. But that same navy declared it was too dangerous to attack only British and Dutch forces, hoping the Americans would not intervene while Japan seized the raw materials of Southeast Asia. If the American government did decide to intervene, American forces in the Philippines and Hawaii, especially the powerful United States Navy (USN) Pacific Fleet, would be perfectly placed to attack from the flank, cutting off Japanese forces in the south from the home islands. The IJN insisted it must attack American, Dutch, and British Empire forces simultaneously. Admiral Yamamoto Isoroku, Commander-in-Chief of the Combined Fleet, also insisted that the Pacific Fleet, the only dangerous Western formation standing in front of the Japanese, must be neutralized immediately, to protect the drive to the south. This would force the Japanese to launch simultaneous operations ranging from the South China Sea to the central Pacific, a formidable distance. The IJN General Staff accepted these demands. That meant assigning all six fleet carriers, the main striking force of the fleet, to Yamamoto to give him the power necessary to destroy the Pacific Fleet by a surprise attack, catching it dockside in Pearl Harbor. Vice Admiral Kondo Nobutake would command a strong Southern Force, which would combine with ground forces to launch simultaneous invasions of Hong Kong, Thailand, Malaya, and the Philippines. The principal target of the southern offensive, second only in priority to the attack on Pearl Harbor, was Singapore.<sup>16</sup>

Singapore was the most important military position in the region, with its naval base, airbases, large army facilities, and bustling commercial port. Should the British decide to fight hard to defend the region, it was the posi-

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15. JM, Numbers 147, 150, 152, *Political Strategy Prior to the Outbreak of War*, Parts II-V; Nobutaka Ike, ed., *Japan's Decision for War: Records of the 1941 Policy Conferences* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1967), Part One; NA, CAB106/180, "Wards Report."

16. JM, Numbers 150, 152, *Political Strategy Prior to the Outbreak of War*, Parts IV-V; NA, CAB106/180, "Wards Report"; Farrell, *Defence and Fall of Singapore*, ch. 4; Brian P. Farrell and Garth Pratten, *Malaya 1942* (Canberra: Army History Unit, 2009), ch. 2.

tion through which they must commit reinforcements. It was also the central position of Southeast Asia, from which an invading force could divide the region and overrun it in detail – or a defending coalition could coordinate defensive operations along interior lines. The IJA championed both the grand strategy to strike south and the specific priority to invade Malaya and conquer Singapore. As Japanese forces advanced, but even before they took Singapore, second phase invasions would be launched against Burma and the Dutch East Indies. Speed was essential. The Japanese expected to catch their enemies dispersed and off guard, but were well aware the British might, and the Americans would, build up and counterattack as soon as possible. Japanese forces must drive the Western Powers out of Southeast Asia before they could dig in and stand their ground, or reinforce and counterattack. They must therefore attack and advance relentlessly. Complicating this was the fact the IJA could only commit eleven of its fifty-five combat divisions to this grand offensive. The rest were committed to operations in China, or guarding the Manchurian frontier against a Soviet threat, or in reserve in Japan. Plans for second phase invasions would require formations already committed to operations in Malaya and the Philippines. This meant the Japanese must not only advance rapidly, but do so without suffering heavy casualties, particularly on the ground. The need for speed and economy of force compelled the Japanese to take calculated risks, and they planned and prepared accordingly.<sup>17</sup>

One advantage the Japanese fully exploited was an advantage every aggressor can enjoy: knowing in advance when, where, and how they will attack. The IJA set up in December 1940 a staff unit, under the cover name Taiwan Army Research Section, to develop a doctrine for land warfare in the terrain and climate of Southeast Asia. In 1941 the unit did just that, preparing, testing in the field, and circulating throughout the expeditionary forces a well calibrated doctrine for offensive operations in the jungle-heavy region. Particularly well-tailored to conditions in Malaya, the doctrine identified roads as the central tactical feature. Without the fleet carriers, the invasion force would not be strong enough to risk direct attack from the sea against Singapore island and its strong coastal artillery. Japanese forces must therefore invade farther north, closer to friendly air support moved to bases in southern Indochina. The expeditionary force would establish a beachhead, seize airbases, build up forward air and ground forces, gain command of the air, then advance south to Singapore as fast as possible. To advance more than 800 kilometres from the border with Thailand to Singapore island, the field army would need to move its supplies, heavy weapons, and equipment along Malaya's reasonably well developed road network. Assuming the defenders would draw the same conclusion, Japanese doctrine called for winning control of the road by fighting and winning the battle off the road. De-

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17. JM, Numbers 150, 152, *Political Strategy Prior to the Outbreak of War*, Parts IV-V; NA, CAB106/180, "Wards Report"; Farrell, *Defence and Fall of Singapore*, ch. 4; Farrell and Pratten, *Malaya 1942*, ch. 2.

veloping a simple yet robust battle drill, Japanese ground forces would advance to contact on the road, then try to overrun any defensive positions they encountered. If any positions were too strong to crush, they would pin them down by a holding attack, then send forces to infiltrate through and/or out-flank them. Close country would offset the danger from heavy weapons protecting fixed positions by giving Japanese maneuver forces enough cover to isolate or overrun them. The doctrine rested on a final command decision that shaped the campaign in Malaya: to advance without pause. That meant accepting the calculated risk the army would advance farther and faster than its logistics could keep pace, pass its point of culmination before the enemy was broken, and grind to a halt in disarray.<sup>18</sup>

Direct consultations between the army and navy commanders assigned to conquer Singapore, Lieutenant General Yamashita Tomoyuki, commanding Twenty-Fifth Army, and Vice Admiral Ozawa Jisaburo, commanding Malaya Force, produced the final campaign plan in November. The initial outline plan drafted in Tokyo was more cautious. Japanese forces would invade two ports in southern Thailand. This would allow them to exploit Thai neutrality by landing without British interference; any Thai resistance would be quickly suppressed. Strong air and ground forces would be built up in a secure lodgment. Once they were in position, some five weeks later, the army would advance on Malaya. But Twenty-Fifth Army staff felt this cautious plan would allow the British to attack the Japanese buildup from their airbases in northern Malaya, and give them time to bolster their ground defenses. Rightly expecting to be outnumbered on the ground, Twenty-Fifth Army planners believed the best way to offset this was to knock the enemy off balance and keep them that way, relying on the force multipliers of command of the air and superior combat power on the ground, to keep the advance going. Time was of the essence, at every level of planning. Yamashita agreed, and persuaded Ozawa to accept a calculated risk: launch a third initial invasion against the town of Kota Bharu on the northeast coast of Malaya, just south of the Thai border. This would allow the Japanese to prevent the British from using the airbases there to attack the main landings in Thailand; it would also help them move their own air forces forward, to support their ground advance. Yamashita then agreed to change the campaign plan. He discarded the idea of building up a secure forward base in Thailand

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18. SCSC, "The Outline of the Malayan Campaign," compiled by Twenty-Fifth Army HQ, 30 June 1942; AWM, 54/553/5/12, "Malaya Landing Operation (Jap)," translation by Liaison Commission (Tokyo) for the Imperial Japanese Demobilization Ministries for Historical Division, GHQ, AFCAP, 17 January 1946 (based largely on interviews with survivors); AWM, 73/65, Wigmore records: "Japanese Tactical Methods," February 1942 manual compiled by U.S. Army observer [hereafter "Japanese Tactical Methods"]; Tohmatsu Haruo, "The Imperial Army Turns South: The IJA's Preparation for War against Britain, 1940-1941," in Gow and Hiram, eds., *History of Anglo-Japanese Relations, 1600-2000*, Vol. III, *The Military Dimension*; Akashi Yoji, "General Yamashita Tomoyuki," in Farrell and Hunter, eds., *Sixty Years On*; Tsuji Masanobu, *Singapore: The Japanese Version* (Sydney: Ure Smith, 1960), pp. 52-55.

in favor of advancing immediately, at maximum tempo, against Malaya. Twenty-Fifth Army would feed its combat forces into the fight as they arrived, charge forward to overrun the border defenses, seize the initiative, and defeat British Empire forces in northern Malaya before they could regroup. The concept would be a *kirimomi sakusen*, or "driving charge."<sup>19</sup>

Japanese logistics were bound to be stretched to their limit as it was, given the distances they must cover, the simultaneous advances they intended to prosecute, and the limited number of transport ships they could deploy to move troops and supplies. Yamashita decided, in fact, to leave one of the four divisions assigned to him in reserve in Japan, to release shipping to move his other forces forward, and keep their supplies flowing. This "driving charge" would certainly increase the strain on logistics. Japanese margins for error were very narrow indeed. Their numbers up front would rarely be large. If the advance ran into determined resistance at any point, it would take time to move up reinforcements to help overcome it. If lines of movement and supply to spearhead forces were at any time seriously disrupted or blocked, the advance would quickly bog down. And Japanese planners, benefitting from prewar reconnaissance of the peninsula, worried about numerous chokepoints where the defenders might stand and fight to block the all-important roads. In many places, the trunk road was closely bordered by defensible jungle-covered high ground. One problem was a particular concern: there were more than 200 road and rail bridges between the border and Singapore.<sup>20</sup> If Malaya Command fell back in good order, the Japanese would face their calculated risk. The closer they came to Singapore, the more vulnerable they would be to what they could least afford: delay and disruption.

Three factors combined to reduce that risk considerably: the combat power of the Japanese forces assigned to the mission; British intelligence failures; and British defense strategy. The IJA assigned crack formations to Twenty-Fifth Army. 5th Division was a tough veteran formation with considerable combat experience in China, specifically trained and equipped for river crossings and amphibious operations. 18th Division was another veteran formation, manned mostly by tough coal miners from the Kyushu district. The Imperial Guards Division had not fought as a division since 1905, in the Russo-Japanese War, but was treated as an elite formation: recruiting from all over the country, boasting troops bigger and stronger than the army aver-

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19. JM, Number 24, *History of the Southern Army 1941-1945*, Number 107, *Malaya Invasion Naval Operations*; SCSC, "The Outline of the Malayan Campaign"; AWM, 54/553/5/12, *Malaya Landing Operation (Jap)*, 17 January 1946; Akashi, "General Yamashita Tomoyuki," in Farrell and Hunter, eds., *Sixty Years On*; Tsuji, *Singapore*, p. 25.

20. JM, Number 24, *History of the Southern Army 1941-1945*, Number 107, *Malaya Invasion Naval Operations*; SCSC, "The Outline of the Malayan Campaign"; Tohmatsu, "The Imperial Army Turns South: The IJA's Preparation for War against Britain, 1940-1941," in Gow and Hiram, eds., *History of Anglo-Japanese Relations, 1600-2000*, Vol. III, *The Military Dimension*.

age, and enjoying preferential treatment to receive new weapons and equipment. The army was organized as a task force tailored for combat in Malaya, reinforced by independent heavy artillery and tank units to help shatter strong defensive positions that could not be outflanked, and by engineering and bridging units to keep the advance moving. Yamashita himself had considerable combat experience, and was widely regarded as the army's best combat general. His headquarters staff included key officers who worked on both the doctrine by which the army would fight in the region, and the plan by which it would conquer Singapore. Japanese soldiers were not robots, far from it; but the army as a whole was a formidably tough fighting force that typically faced hardships, and took risks Western counterparts often saw as excessive. Yamashita and his army expected to be better led, trained, and equipped than their adversary, and to outfight them on the ground. These expectations were reasonable, not least because they were reinforced by a justified assumption: Japanese army and navy air forces would win command of the air, then throw their weight into the ground battle. Finally, when the navy won command of the sea, this would enable the army to outflank defensive positions by launching more amphibious invasions. Taken together, these factors were force multipliers the IJA confidently believed would allow Twenty-Fifth Army to outfight an army likely to outnumber it about nine to six.<sup>21</sup>

British intelligence failures helped justify these Japanese calculations. They were failures more of appreciation than information. One example was especially damaging: despite reports suggesting otherwise, many British senior officers in the region assumed Japanese combat aircraft and pilots were not very formidable. Summing up a complicated issue, the general assumption was that Japanese combat power at sea, in the air, and on land was not strong enough to cripple British Empire forces before they could effectively regroup. Too many senior officers expected the Japanese to behave as British forces would in similar situations, and Japanese capabilities to be at most similar to their own. This led them to believe the Japanese were not likely to invade before the monsoon season ended in February 1942 because their air forces could not yet be strong enough to support such a major at-

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21. JM, Number 24, *History of the Southern Army 1941-1945*, Number 54, *Malaya Operations Record*, Number 55, *Southwest Area Air Operations Record, Phase 1*, Number 107, *Malaya Invasion Naval Operations*; SCSC, *The Outline of the Malayan Campaign*; AWM54/553/5/12, "Malaya Landing Operation (Jap)"; AWM, 73/65, Wigmore records: "Japanese Tactical Methods, February 1942"; BL(OIOC), India Office Military Dept. Records [IO Military Dept.], L/Mil/17/20/25, Periodical Notes on the Japanese Army [War Office pamphlets], No. 1, *General Characteristics, Morale and Training*, L/Mil/17/20/25/3, Periodical Notes on the Japanese Army, No. 3, *Combined Operations* [1940 both pamphlets]. Excellent accessible studies of the IJA and its soldiers include Henry Frei, *Guns of February: Ordinary Japanese Soldiers' views of the Malayan Campaign and the Fall of Singapore, 1941-42* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2004); and Edward J. Drea, *Japan's Imperial Army: Its Rise and Fall, 1853-1945* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2009).

tack, and they would not in any case take such a chance during rough monsoon weather.<sup>22</sup> This general "mirror imaging" expectation – that Japanese behavior would be similar to British behavior – influenced a fatal decision about British defense strategy.

The pressure to defend all of Malaya did not dictate exactly how Malaya Command must do so, but certainly narrowed its range of choices. The mission was to hold the naval base. That mission could not be reconsidered, not least because that might provoke serious repercussions with the Australians. Their own national defense now seemed at risk, and they had committed air, naval, and ground forces to Malaya's defense. The British government also believed they could not afford to show weakness; this would probably make a Japanese invasion more likely, and might shake the faith of colonial populations in British power and protection. Such considerations ruled out an alternative strategy: to deny the naval base by concentrating the army in a smaller area on more defensible ground closer to Singapore, engaging as many Japanese divisions as possible for as long as possible. Compelled to work to an inflexible strategy, Malaya Command was then directed to protect the airbases by interposing fixed defensive positions between them and an invading force. On the east coast, this produced the decision to fight from long linear defensive positions right on the coastline, in vulnerable areas. In the northwest, near the border, this led to the construction of a major defensive position north of the most vulnerable airbase, but not itself on particularly good ground. Another strategy was proposed: to pre-emptively invade southern Thailand, to deny its landing beaches and airbases to the Japanese, and keep them at bay. This plan, Matador, was developed to the point where the vanguard formation defending the northwest border, the 11th Indian Division, prepared simultaneously for two scenarios: to invade Thailand, or to dig in at the main defensive position at Jitra to stop any Japanese advance. Unfortunately, Matador posed the danger that Britain might be seen to be the first belligerent to violate Thai neutrality. Fearing the effect this might have

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22. NA, CAB106/40, "Brooke-Popham Despatch"; AIR23/1970, "Possibilities of the Japanese Attacking in the South," 8 September 1941; WO208/1529, Comments by MI officers on reports by officers escaped from Singapore, May 1942, including extracts from the 1939 *Handbook on the Japanese Army*; IWM, Wards Papers, 92/24/1, Wards-Kirby correspondence April-May 1964; BL(OIOC), IO Military Dept., L/Mil/17/20/24, *Japanese Army Memorandum*, 1941. Malaya Command Intelligence Corps was formed on 23 July 1941 and eventually boasted four intelligence officers, supported by twenty-six interpreter officers and thirteen cypher specialists: NA, WO172/23, Malaya Command Intelligence Corps War Diary. See also J.R. Ferris, "Worthy of Some Better Enemy?: The British Estimate of the Imperial Japanese Army, 1919-1941, and the Fall of Singapore," in *Canadian Journal of History*, Vol. 28 (August 1993); "Double-Edged Estimates: Japan in the eyes of the British Army and the Royal Air Force, 1900-1939," in Gow and Hiram, eds., *History of Anglo-Japanese Relations, 1600-2000*, Vol. III, *The Military Dimension*; and "Student and Master: The United Kingdom, Japan, Airpower, and the Fall of Singapore, 1920-1941," in Farrell and Hunter eds., *Sixty Years On*, for important discussions of ethnocentrism and intelligence.

on American policy, the British government did not sign off on the plan until the very eve of the Japanese invasion. That left Malaya Command sitting squarely between two stools.<sup>23</sup>

In truth, Malaya Command could not have played more directly into Yamashita's hands had he told them what to do. The Japanese worried about a pre-emptive advance into Thailand, and drafted a back-up plan to address the problem, but British indecision compromised that scenario. Malaya Command might have chosen to concentrate at positions blocking roads that led inland from vulnerable beaches, rather than spread out along lengthy coastal sands. They were directed otherwise by higher authority, and at Kota Bharu had no choice in any case. One airbase, now the city's international airport, lies less than two kilometres from the long coastal beaches the Japanese attacked. They of course could concentrate superior numbers to penetrate one chosen sector of a long linear position. And the main position at Jitra, sited to protect the airbase at Alor Star, was vulnerable to both infiltration and outflanking. Better natural defensive ground was available farther south, but this meant conceding the airbase.<sup>24</sup> Malaya Command's defensive strategy was inflexible and disorganized: the army was so widely spread out none of its divisions could directly support another; the east coast defenses were too long and dispersed to be formidable; the main force protecting the trunk road in the northwest was distracted by preparing to implement two different plans, both of which had a fatal flaw. The really crippling blow was, however, an unforced error. Malaya Command, and the joint service headquarters to which it reported, Far East Command, both assumed the Japanese would operate the way a British force would operate.

The British expected the Japanese to consolidate a beachhead, build up their strength, advance only when their main force was concentrated, then advance methodically. This was, ironically, close to the original Japanese strategy. The British did not anticipate having to face Yamashita's "driving charge" instead. There is no evidence they seriously discussed such a threat, and much to indicate why not: it would have been dismissed as implausible, a reckless race ahead of supply lines and follow-on forces. No British army would risk such a strategy, so it must be too ambitious for the IJA. This was

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23. NA, CAB106/40, "Brooke-Popham Despatch"; WO172/33, III Indian Corps War Diary, 24 July 1941; WO172/11-14, GHQ Far East War Diary Appendices, August-November 1941, especially COS to Brooke-Popham, 9 August, 17 September, 9 and 28 October, 25 November 1941; WO172/1, GHQ Far East War Diary, September-November 1941; CAB106/53, "Unpublished History of 11th Indian Division and its operations in the Malayan campaign," by Colonel A.M.L. Harrison (GSO1 of Division) [hereafter "11th Indian Division history"], ch. 1; IWM, Heath Papers, LMH4, "Notes and Reports on the Malayan Campaign"; IWM, Percival Papers, P.23, F.49, "Some Personal Observations of the Malaya Campaign," Lieutenant Colonel B.H. Ashmore [hereafter "Ashmore Report," written spring 1942]; P.23, F.48, Phillips to Percival, 27 April 1953; "Percival Despatch."

24. JM, Numbers 150, 152, *Political Strategy Prior to the Outbreak of War*, Parts IV-V; NA, CAB106/180, "Wards Report"; personal reconnaissance by the author.

not completely blinkered. Japanese grand strategy was reckless, criminally so; provoking war with the USA was starting a fight Japan could not win. One can certainly understand how such considerations weighed on British thinking, from Churchill on down. But having accepted the overriding risk, what did the Japanese have to lose by following through – in for a penny, in for a pound? Less excusable is the extent to which British forces evaluated the Japanese by using their own standards as the measuring gauge. This blinded them to the danger the Japanese might try something quite different. Because they did not believe the IJA could wage high tempo maneuver warfare, seeking encounter battle, the British did not prepare for it. They prepared instead to control the campaign by imposing their own battle doctrine: positional warfare, set-piece battle at controlled tempo.<sup>25</sup>

By December 1941, British defensive preparations in Malaya and Singapore rested on four scenarios. Now that RAF Far East had some striking power, perhaps they could inflict serious punishment on a Japanese invasion force. Now that the RN had sent at least a squadron to Singapore, perhaps the capital ships could do the same thing by a well-executed sortie. When the British government at the eleventh hour authorized Far East Command to pre-emptively invade Thailand if a Japanese fleet approached, 11th Indian Division focused on this plan to advance – at the expense of completing the Jitra defensive position. Yet, if all else fell through, the army still expected it could halt the invaders – assuming they would be worn down by air and naval strikes – at its defensive positions on the east coast and at Jitra, then pin them down in set-piece battles. Bottling the Japanese up along the border would be positional warfare. For these and other reasons, Malaya Command did not devote much attention to organizing irregular forces, which could use their intimate knowledge of the country to harass enemy lines of reinforcement and supply. This turned out to be another gift to Yamashita, one too often overlooked. The "driving charge" strategy of high tempo maneuver warfare, if it worked, was bound to create exactly the kind of situation in which a hard-pressed defending army would find such irregular forces very useful indeed. If Yamashita's main force raced way ahead of its supply services and follow-on forces, it would move deeply through country rife with locations in which the right forces, in the right place at the right time, might seriously disrupt his advance, while posing little risk to the defense. Malaya Command failed to do this. The rest of this article will examine why, and to what end.

### **Defeat in the North**

The campaign unfolded as the very scenario in which effectively-used irregular forces could have made a timely difference. But it all happened very fast. The Japanese invaded Malaya and Thailand very early on the morning

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25. Farrell, *Defence and Fall of Singapore*, chs. 3-6; Farrell and Pratten, *Malaya 1942*, chs. 2-3.



of 8 December 1941, local time. Within 100 hours they shattered all British defensive plans, seized the initiative, and advanced boldly into northern Malaya. Force Z sortied, but was caught at sea by Japanese land-based naval air forces and destroyed on the morning of 10 December. This, plus the Japanese success at Pearl Harbor, gave the IJN command of the sea. That allowed it to threaten the whole east coast. This forced Malaya Command to keep much of its strength in southern Malaya and on Singapore island. RAF Far East gave battle, but was outmatched in every respect. Losing nearly half its strength in three days, the air force drew back to regroup and try to protect reinforcement convoys approaching Singapore; this left the army vulnerable. 11th Indian Division was compromised by command bungling that aborted the pre-emptive advance into Thailand, then mishandled its defensive battle at Jitra. The division was chased out of that position by a Japanese reconnaissance in force, and pushed into disorganized retreat on the night of 12/13 December. Kota Bharu's defenders fought hard but were overrun, forcing 9th Indian Division to retreat on that front. One week after being attacked, Malaya Command was left to fight on in the north with little support, scrambling to find defensive positions on which to try to regroup – and confused by being so badly beaten, so fast, by an enemy who now had the initiative, enjoyed air support, did not pause to regroup, and used battle tactics the defenders seemed unable to counter.<sup>26</sup>

Even more ominous, British disarray greatly assisted the Japanese advance. Both sides knew they were in a race. Yamashita's army must reach Singapore before Allied reinforcements strong enough to stop it could arrive. That meant Malaya Command must try to delay the Japanese advance, by any means available. But at Kota Bharu and Alor Star, units abandoned airbases without demolishing their facilities, and without destroying large stocks of oil, ammunition, and vehicles. This allowed the Japanese to press captured airbases rapidly into service, while the windfall eased the strain on their supply services, allowing them to advance without pausing. The retreat at Jitra added to the booty, which Japanese staff officers cheerily designated "Churchill supplies." Yamashita's staff were genuinely relieved to see signs of such disarray in their enemy. They knew how quickly their own supply situation might become a problem, and how far they must still advance. The only real delay imposed at Jitra came from blown bridges, which remained worrying.<sup>27</sup>

The Japanese advances along the east coast and down the railway line

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26. NA, CAB106/40, "Brooke-Popham Despatch"; AIR23/1870, "Employment of Aircraft Malaya," 9 December 1941; AIR23/3577, RAF Far East log, 8-12 December 1941; WO172/17, GHQ Malaya Command War Diary, 8-12 December 1941; CAB106/53, "11th Indian Division history," ch. 3; CAB106/54, "11th Indian Division history," ch. 8; IWM, Heath Papers, LMH4, "Notes on the Malayan Campaign"; SCSC, "Outline of the Malayan Campaign"; "Percival Despatch."

27. SCSC, "Outline of the Malayan Campaign"; JM, Number 107, *Malaya Invasion Naval Operations*, Number 54, *Malaya Operations Record*; Tsuji, *Singapore*, pp. 128-35.

running south from Kota Bharu, into the heavily forested interior, were not imminent threats. There was no all-weather road running along the east coast in December 1941, and monsoon rains imposed their own delay on the detachment advancing along coastal tracks. The railway line ran over many bridges and culverts and delay was easily imposed by a small rearguard. The problem lay elsewhere. Malaya was most vulnerable to invasion from the northwest. The peninsula was shaped like a pod, bulging in the middle then narrowing in the south. It was defined by a mountain range that crossed the Thai border and ran down the center like a spine, petering out roughly two thirds of the way to Singapore. East of the mountain range the harsher weather of the South China Sea left the east coast undeveloped and under-populated. The only really vulnerable points south of Kota Bharu were three small ports with nearby airbases: Kuantan, in central Malaya, was connected by a lateral road to the capital town of Kuala Lumpur; Endau and Mersing, in the south, were connected by a road to Singapore. The countryside west of the mountains enjoyed milder weather, so this area was more heavily populated and developed. The trunk road and railway line ran through it vertically, from the Thai border to Singapore. The terrain was mixed. There was a lot of jungle in many areas, especially around the central mountains. But there were also large plains dotted by rice paddies and open tin mines in the northern and central areas, rubber plantations in most areas, and large coastal swamps along much of the west coast. A reasonably well developed network of secondary roads covered much of this area, often running through plantation or jungle hill defiles. Two major rivers flowed from the mountains to the west coast: the Perak in the north, and the Muar in the south. The trunk road and railway corridor was, by default, the main axis of advance for the Japanese.

The Perak River was a major obstacle, designated by Twenty-Fifth Army planners as the main objective for the first phase of their advance. The question whether to fight on northwest of the river, or withdraw behind it, arose just as 11th Indian Division tried to dig in at its second defensive position, at Gurun. This was a much stronger natural defensive position than Jitra. The trunk road ran right below the eastern slope of a dominant coastal mountain feature, Gunong Kedah. But another Japanese night attack came straight down the middle, early on 15 December, split the defensive position astride the road, and forced the division to retreat, again in some confusion.<sup>28</sup> There was no other defensive position of such quality blocking the trunk road northwest of the Perak River, which it crossed some 250 kilometres south of the Thai border. III Indian Corps now had six brigades to defend northern and central Malaya. But its formations remained widely scattered, and 11th Indian Division, on the point, was now tired and badly disorganized. Lieutenant General Sir Lewis Heath, GOC III Indian Corps, discussed the fast-

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28. NA, WO172/18, GHQ Malaya Command War Diary Appendices A 6, K 6, 14 December, E 7, F 7, 15 December 1941; CAB106/54, "11th Indian Division history," ch. 7; "Percival Despatch"; personal reconnaissance by author.

moving situation with the GOC Malaya Command, Lieutenant General Arthur E. Percival, in person on 18 December.

Both commanders agreed the corps must retreat south of the Perak River to try to regroup. But Heath pressed for more. He argued his corps should either be reinforced by fresh troops or break contact and make a long strategic retreat to the southern state of Johore, where it could concentrate with the rest of the army along a shorter line of defense. Percival refused to commit forces from the south to the battle in the north and insisted Heath must fight on, to keep the enemy as far from Singapore as possible, for as long as possible. But both men knew the retreat would continue. This raised the question of how to delay the Japanese advance as they moved farther away from their supply ports in Thailand. Percival and Heath agreed it was now urgent to arrange for "land raiding parties and for 'left behind' parties to harass the enemy's communications."<sup>29</sup>

Staff officers from the two headquarters took up these directions the very next day. Brigadier Walter Fawcett, Brigadier General Staff [BGS, senior staff officer at any formation headquarters] III Indian Corps, suggested to Brigadier K.S. Torrance, his counterpart at GHQ Malaya Command, that:

The time had come to act offensively against the Japanese, so as to keep as many troops as possible guarding aerodromes and other vital points. Means which he suggested should be investigated were: dropping dummy parachutes at dusk; by seaborne expeditions up the West Coast and landings at places such as Alor Star; organization of the Chinese miners in Northern Perak into guerrilla bands. BGS considered this should be quite possible, and that if rewards of money were offered for each Jap rifle or head, etc, results should be very satisfactory. He was trying to consider further ideas of this sort and was asking everybody to forward any recommendations.<sup>30</sup>

This exchange spelled out how unprepared Malaya Command was to cope with the "driving charge" now ripping into it. Eleven days into a rapidly disintegrating defensive campaign, the chief staff officers at army and corps headquarters solicited ideas about how to disrupt and delay the enemy advance – after approving a call to arm completely unprepared, untrained civilians and send them behind enemy lines to wage guerrilla war, encouraged

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29. NA, WO172/18, GHQ Malaya Command War Diary Appendices A 8, U 8, 16 December, U 9, 19 December, O 11, 21 December, G 12, Z 12, 22 December 1941; WO172/15, GHQ Far East War Diary Appendix 334, Percival to GHQ FE, 25 December 1941; IWM, Percival Papers, P.21, F.26, "Narrative on the Fall of Malaya," including comments by Heath, n/d [written in captivity], P.23, F.48, comments on drafts of official history, and Heath Papers, LMH7, correspondence with Percival and others, lay out the sometimes bitter postmortem argument between Percival and Heath regarding retreat in the north; "Percival Despatch."

30. NA, WO172/15, GHQ Far East War Diary, 19 December 1941; WO172/18, GHQ Malaya Command War Diary Appendices N 6, 14 December, I 9, 18 December, U 9, 19 December 1941; CAB106/40, "Brooke-Popham Despatch."

by bounty money. This is absurd on so many levels it begs the obvious question: was the situation already so dire? Was there no better alternative? There was – at least in principle.

### **False Start**

Organizing the civilian population of Malaya to fight the Japanese invader was a strategy with military potential, but there were complications. British Malaya was a delicate creation. About 4.7 million people lived in the country. Ethnic Malays comprised just under half the population. They were nearly all Muslim, most lived in villages in what was still a very traditional society, acknowledging Sultans as rulers, and they regarded themselves as the indigenous people – *bumiputra*, sons of the earth. The European civilian population was very small, just over 30,000, less than 1% of the whole. Malay nationalism was nascent, but not somnolent. There was a distinct Indian minority community, some descended from imported convict labor, many working on plantations, but also including merchants, policemen, and professionals. This community was subdivided by religion and language. Indian nationalism made some headway, but the community nevertheless remained, on the whole, politically quiet. The real X factor was the large ethnic Chinese community.

The Chinese were the large majority in Singapore, the only large city; combining Singapore and Malaya, they were slightly more numerous than the Malay community. Subdivided into different ethnic, clan, and dialect groups, ranging from poor farmers to wealthy business tycoons, the Chinese were on the whole wealthier and better educated than the other ethnic groups, and, along with the British, dominated the economy. Race mattered in colonial Malaya. The Malays tended to see other communities as sojourners and aliens; the Chinese tended to see themselves as expatriates and regard China as home. British authorities governed this social salad lightly and cautiously. They assumed fault lines were too fragile to be disturbed by intrusion, experiment, or change. Malaya was a country, but not a nation. British rule was challenged by some, tolerated by most, welcomed by a few. The colonial civil service was very much inclined to let sleeping dogs lie. And before 1940 the security services were more worried about communist influence in the Chinese community than any Japanese threat. Efforts to mobilize popular support to defend the country faced all these complications.<sup>31</sup> But

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31. For colonial Malaya, see Paul H. Kratoska, *The Japanese Occupation of Malaya: A Social and Economic History* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1998); "Percival Despatch"; Margaret Shennan, *Out in the Midday Sun: The British in Malaya, 1880-1960* (London: John Murray, 2000); and <[www.malayanvolunteersgroup.org.uk](http://www.malayanvolunteersgroup.org.uk)> by Audrey Holmes McCormick. For security concerns, see NA, WO208/4567, FECB Intelligence Summary, "Index to Far Eastern Black List," 22 November 1941; WO208/1529, Comments by Military Intelligence on Phillips report, May 1942; CAB106/40, "Brooke-Popham Despatch"; and Ban Kah Choon, *Absent History: The Untold Story of Special Branch Operations in Singapore, 1915-1942* (Singapore: Raffles Press, 2001), pp. 169, 196, 204, 214-17, 227.

there was a potential lever.

The outbreak of open war in China in 1937, and the brutality by which the Japanese waged that war, stirred strong emotions among many Malayan Chinese. Campaigns to boycott Japanese goods, raise money for the Chinese war effort, and send young volunteers to China all stoked the political boiler, on the mainland and in Singapore. Sympathy for China cut across lines of clan, dialect, and politics. This was a potential reservoir of real support, waiting to be tapped to help defend Malaya against the Japanese. But the colonial authorities were nervous about the increasing politicization of a community they would rather stay focused on commerce. British policy made the problem possible in the first place. British paramount control in Malaya attracted investment capital and interest in development. Both came from China, as did waves of Chinese immigrants the British did not obstruct; without them it would have been impossible to build a modern capitalist economy in Malaya. But the British did not encourage political commitment to Malaya, mainly in order not to provoke the Malays. The colonial authorities tread warily around anything that might politicize the civilian population. Recruiting for Volunteer Force units remained focused on social elites, segregated by ethnic community, and below authorized numbers. The police Special Branch concentrated on disrupting underground activities by the Malayan Communist Party (MCP), very largely ethnic Chinese in membership. And this was all complicated by animosity between the MCP and the Malayan Chinese branch of the *Guomindang*, the political party leading the nationalist government in China; political divisions in the homeland were strongly reflected in this diaspora. The Chinese Protectorate, the colonial government department administering the Chinese community, did so little to try to resolve friction between the MCP and the *Guomindang* that one suspects they believed the feud helped maintain internal security. As a result, by autumn 1941 the only community in Malaya predisposed to help fight the Japanese was not organized to do so.<sup>32</sup>

On the other hand, by this time it was British policy to organize irregular forces in Asia to conduct sabotage and guerrilla operations against any hostile power – and no such force could be organized without Chinese involvement. The policy came from Churchill's forceful demand, in the summer of 1940, to find ways to take the war to the enemy in Europe. This demand produced an improvised covert irregular organization with an independent stra-

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32. NA, CAB106/45, Tan Kah Kee to Secretary of State for War, 3 March, Percival to WO, 21 April 1948; WO32/15539, Shenton Thomas comments on "Percival Despatch" and related correspondence, spring 1947; WO106/2250A, "Narrative of Personal Experiences" by Edmund A. Gardiner, Senior Executive Engineer, Malayan Public Works Service, March 1942; "Percival Despatch"; C.M. Turnbull, *A History of Singapore, 1819-1988* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1989); C.F. Yong and R.B. McKenna, *The Kuomintang Movement in British Malaya, 1912-1949* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1990); C.F. Yong, *Chinese Leadership and Power in Colonial Singapore* (Singapore: Times Academic Press, 1992).

tegic mission: the Special Operations Executive (SOE). SOE was directed to "set Europe ablaze" by conducting sabotage and subversion, and organizing, training, and equipping resistance groups to harass Axis occupation forces. This independent irregular offensive was designed to substitute for the field army, after it was expelled from the continent in June 1940. SOE was concealed within the Ministry of Economic Warfare, but operated under the higher direction of the COS. The suggestion that this new organization might also be able to do useful work in Asia was inspired by the perception that guerrilla units in China were carrying the war effectively to overstretched Japanese occupation forces.

This suggestion was not popular with many British senior military officers and civilian officials in the region, who argued that such an independent organization would surely complicate what they described as a delicate political situation. They had a point, because the overriding British policy from June 1940 was to try to avoid, or at least postpone, any clash with Japan. Churchill remained convinced the British must stay in step with the Americans, and not do anything to provoke the Japanese before Roosevelt was ready to intervene, should push come to shove. It was not unreasonable to argue that preparing for covert operations might actually provoke such a clash. This was the kind of contradiction in policy that only the central direction of the war could resolve. But instead they tried to have their cake and eat it too. The policy to avoid provoking Japan was reaffirmed, but Churchill personally intervened to compel all concerned, on 1 March 1941, to establish an SOE branch in Singapore. Its theater of operations ran from Burma to China, and its orders were to make all necessary preparations to conduct covert operations, including operations both in territories that Japan held now and those its forces might overrun in case of war. SOE was specifically charged to organize "stay behind" parties to operate in British territory overrun by the Japanese, and to work "in close co-operation with" the civil government and GHQ Far East. Valentine St. John Killery of the Foreign Office (FO) was appointed head of the Oriental Mission (OM), with his own swash-buckling cover name: 0.100. Killery set out for the Far East in April, with a budget of £5000 and Churchill's goodwill.<sup>33</sup>

Unfortunately, Prime Ministerial goodwill was not enough to overcome "a wall of skepticism, rivalry, bureaucracy and obstruction from Shanghai to Singapore." Killery struggled to gain support from either civilian authorities or military commanders. Both were heavily influenced by those standing orders to prevent incidents that might lead to war with Japan. Faced with this unresolved contradiction in policy, most decided organizing covert operations was too dangerous. The only time the FO intervened in a question involving the OM was to side with the British Ambassador in Bangkok, who

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33. NA, HS1/340, SOE Far East Files, C Files, miscellaneous correspondence and reports, December 1940-February 1942, has the most important documents regarding the establishment of the OM, including one cautionary note by Churchill. See also Farrell, *The Basis and Making of British Grand Strategy*, chs. 1-2.

opposed covert operations on the grounds they might offend the Thais. That compromised OM preparations to assist operation Matador. Killery struggled to break down the caution that constrained preparations for war in the theater, especially in Malaya. In July he asked Percival to help his organization set up training schools to prepare "stay behind" parties. Percival finally replied in October: no. Percival told Killery the army could not spare the resources, but in fact he was more concerned about problems OM could cause. Percival explained his attitude to Shenton Thomas, Governor of the Straits Settlements and High Commissioner to the Malay States, on 3 October: "The suggestion to Asiatics that there is any chance of the enemy entering the country may have serious psychological effects." Thomas strongly agreed, and flatly refused to allow OM to recruit Asian civilians for covert operations. Given that those same civilians were the only recruiting pool large enough to make his mission viable, Killery challenged both men, telling Percival on 20 November "We believe that for psychological reasons both [Thomas] and yourself are averse to training and using Asiatics." Percival admitted this, two days later.<sup>34</sup>

The OM was not however completely abandoned, or stymied, in its efforts to prepare for war, even in Malaya. Lieutenant Colonel Alan Warren, an enterprising and experienced Royal Marines officer, went out to Singapore with Killery, to serve as Liaison Officer. In that capacity he took it upon himself to organize a training school. Many visits to different army units produced enough volunteers to allow Warren, in July, to form No. 101 Special Training School (STS) in Singapore, despite Percival's indifference. Lieutenant Colonel J.M.L. Gavin, a Royal Engineer regular officer well versed in demolitions, was assigned to command the school. In early September Gavin brought in a specialist in field-craft training, Major Freddy Spencer Chapman, who had been training Independent Companies in Australia for nearly a year. Chapman soon took charge of the day-to-day running of the school, which ran courses in demolitions, signals, and "general irregular warfare"; fifteen courses were completed before the Japanese invaded. The objective was "to train all types of personnel – military and civilian, European and native – in irregular warfare, and to supply special intelligence

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34. NA, HS1/226, SOE Far East Files, miscellaneous papers, papers on organizing covert operations, Percival to Thomas, 3 October, Killery to Warren, 11 October, Dickinson to Killery, 18 October, Killery notes on meeting with Thomas, Percival, Dickinson and Warren, 24 October, Mott to Percival, 20 November, Percival reply, 22 November 1941; HS1/340, SOE Far East Files, C Files, miscellaneous correspondence and reports, December 1940-February 1942; HS1/227, SOE Far East Files, miscellaneous papers, papers on the dispute between SOE and Ambassador Josiah Crosby, October-December 1941. The only operation Crosby supported was to deny British owned mines in Thailand to the Japanese. F. Spencer Chapman, *The Jungle is Neutral* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1948), pp. 15-16, singled out qualms about alarming Asians years before these SOE files confirmed the point. Farrell, *Defence and Fall of Singapore*, pp. 114-15; Brian Moynahan, *Jungle Soldier: The True Story of Freddy Spencer Chapman* (London: Quercus, 2009), p. 97.

and carry out certain operations at the orders of GHQ Far East ...." But most pre-war trainees appear to have been regular soldiers, and European volunteers, trained in demolitions and sabotage. And while plans for covert operations in southern Thailand and elsewhere slowly started to take shape, the flat veto from higher authority meant no such progress was made in Malaya. When war broke out, No. 101 STS was not ready to send even one fully trained "stay behind" party into action in the country.<sup>35</sup>

High command in fact had no idea how to use this specialist asset, and demonstrated this all too soon. The Japanese advanced so rapidly they seized the island of Penang before the British could destroy useful facilities and equipment. This included a flotilla of small boats the enemy could use to help make amphibious landings on the west coast. GHQ Malaya Command asked the OM on 18 December, the day after the army evacuated the island, to send a sabotage party to destroy the boats. This was curious, given that the very men needed had just been there: Gavin and twelve army graduates from No. 101 STS, who, with Percival's permission, reported on 10 December to GHQ III Indian Corps with "a ton of explosives and devices." Gavin went up north hoping to go into action in southern Thailand. That made little sense, given that operation Matador was cancelled before he even left. The next order made even less sense: report to Penang. The party arrived on 11 December, in time to help with the necessary but non-specialist job of cleaning up after air raids. When the garrison was ordered to evacuate they were put to appropriate work: demolishing facilities, including the main power station. But for some reason, no one thought to order them to help destroy the all-important flotilla of boats. The Japanese got them instead, long before OM could send up another party from Singapore.<sup>36</sup>

When Percival and Heath belatedly agreed the army now urgently needed to organize raiding and "stay behind" parties to harass enemy lines of communication, they exposed the confusion their staffs expressed the very next day. The direct cause is clear in retrospect: the lack of any firm grip or coordination from above. It was as if the army suddenly tried to sing a song they did not rehearse in the middle of the concert, without the gift of improvisation this required. Percival did send some gifted artists, ordering Warren and Chapman to report to Heath's staff "expressly to organize and lead reconnaissance and operational parties behind the enemy lines." But the or-

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35. NA, HS1/226, SOE Far East Files, miscellaneous papers, papers on organizing covert operations, October-November 1941; HS1/340, SOE Far East Files, C Files, miscellaneous correspondence and reports, December 1940-February 1942; Chapman, *Jungle is Neutral*, pp. 11-15; Moynahan, *Jungle Soldier*, pp. 94-96.

36. NA, HS1/226, SOE Far East Files, miscellaneous papers, papers on organizing covert operations, October-November 1941; HS1/340, SOE Far East Files, C Files, miscellaneous correspondence and reports, December 1940-February 1942; WO172/15, GHQ Far East War Diary, 18, 22 December 1941; WO172/18, GHQ Malaya Command War Diary Appendix, Q 9, 18 December 1941; WO32/15539, Thomas comments on "Percival Despatch" and related correspondence, spring 1947; Chapman, *Jungle is Neutral*, pp. 18-19.



chestra lacked direction. Chapman found Heath and Fawcett "extremely keen" and very helpful, but at a loss as to how to proceed. Chapman persuaded them to allow him to make a personal reconnaissance of the area from the Perak River to the west coast, to help plan raids to disrupt enemy lines of communication. This seemed timely, because Chapman went into the field on Christmas Eve – the day the Japanese crossed the river. Chapman saw prime targets and reported back accordingly, returning on 28 December:

It became obvious to Advanced Command [III Indian Corps] that there were great opportunities for parties to operate behind enemy lines, particularly against communications. It was evident that the men would not be able to cover long distances and that they would have to be equipped to exist independently for long periods.<sup>37</sup>

That same day, Heath acknowledged such operations needed expert coordination, and agreed Warren should take on that mission. Chapman was correct on all points. After only three weeks, the Japanese were advancing towards the last good defensive position on the trunk road north of central Malaya, around Kampar. They were also closing in on Kuantan. But their supply lines now stretched a long way back to southern Thailand, over a lot of bridges, while less than half of Yamashita's combat units had as yet been committed to battle. The Imperial Guards Division had been assigned to occupy Bangkok, to intimidate the Thai government. It was still moving south, overland, towards Malaya. The Twenty-Fifth Army was stretched very thin trying to keep the advance going, while guarding the all-important and daily lengthening lines of supply and reinforcement. Was this at least a case of better late than never? OM can be forgiven for doubting this. Instead of having months to organize, it now had to scramble in desperate haste. Its post-mortem comment seems restrained: "It was naturally immensely more difficult to improvise at this stage what OM had hoped to do in an orderly manner beforehand."<sup>38</sup> Unfortunately, not even the spur of real military emergency could completely override political and cultural obstacles inside this fragile imperial entity. The outcome was instead a case of too little too late.

### **Improvising Irregulars**

Four complications did the damage. Time was of course the most serious. By the time the army and government discarded their political reluctance to mobilize the local population, most of northern Malaya was lost, and confidence was crumbling. Pressure of time now compromised the need to thoroughly train and properly equip "stay behind" parties before sending them

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37. NA, HS1/226, "Oriental Mission Operations Report," April 1942; Chapman, *Jungle is Neutral*, pp. 19-37; Moynahan, *Jungle Soldier*, p. 102.

38. NA, HS1/226, "Oriental Mission Operations Report," April 1942; WO172/18, GHQ Malaya Command War Diary Appendix Z 15, 28 December 1941; CAB106/54, "11th Indian Division history," ch. 10; Chapman, *Jungle is Neutral*, pp. 15-16.

into action. Second, it proved to be too late to organize integrated parties, forcing OM to settle for organizing parties segregated on ethnic lines, European or Chinese. Because these parties had different characteristics, it was eventually decided they must deploy and operate differently, which further complicated preparations. Third, the most militarily promising local group was also the most politically awkward: the communists. Efforts to resolve local differences between communists and nationalists, plus OM's desire to operate in China as well, delayed the training of communist recruits. Finally, there were the Straits Settlements and Federated Malay States Volunteer Force (SSVF and FMSVF) units.

Volunteer Force personnel seemed like an ideal source of recruits for OM parties. But because the civilian government and military high command both feared the Asian civilian communities would panic if anyone admitted, explicitly or implicitly, that Malayan territory might be overrun, Warren was not allowed to systematically recruit personnel from Volunteer infantry, cavalry, artillery, engineer, and miscellaneous units for SOE training until after the Japanese advanced deep into Malaya. Warren and Chapman enticed some individuals to take up the challenge; a few others were organized into specialist sub-units designed to exploit their particular expertise. One example came from the 1st (Perak) Battalion FMSVF, which, on its own initiative, raised both a Special Platoon, to patrol tracks that ran across the border in the jungle-covered mountains of the state, and an even more innovative Border Patrol. This small unit was raised by E.O. Shebbeare, Chief Game Warden of Malaya, and included the noted ethnologist Herbert D. "Pat" Noone, Protector of the aboriginal Sakai tribe that lived in the region. Shebbeare and Noone recruited and trained European volunteers in jungle craft and patrolling – to work with the Sakais that trusted Noone – to act as a reconnaissance and espionage force in the border region. But such efforts were not systematic enough to offset GHQ Malaya Command's policy: to mobilize and employ most Volunteer Force units as conventional military units, to augment the regular force.<sup>39</sup>

Most FMSVF units were mobilized into a Lines of Communication Command; many wound up fighting as infantry, artillery, cavalry, and engineers in battles north of Kuala Lumpur. The Japanese overran the area, forcing GHQ to disband this Command on 13 January 1942. Many Asian personnel had already walked away from their units to go home to see to their families; GHQ accepted this as a *fait accompli* and released the rest to do as they chose, which meant most were quickly lost to the war effort. Most European personnel still with their units were sent down to Singapore, where they were regrouped to serve as replacements for either regular army or SSVF

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39. NA, CAB106/156, "Notes on L of C Operations Dec 1941-Feb 1942" (written by Brigadier R.G. Moir, Commander Lines of Communication, hereafter "Moir Report"), n/d, written post-February 1942; S.W. Kirby, *The War against Japan*, Vol. 1, *The Loss of Singapore* (London: HMSO, 1957), Appendix 13; <[www.malayanvolunteersgroup.org.uk](http://www.malayanvolunteersgroup.org.uk)>.

units; SSVF units formed part of the garrison of Fortress Singapore, tied down to static defense of the island. OM was finally authorized, in the last days of December, to systematically recruit these men, as well as European civilian refugees. Many were just the kind of recruit the force needed so badly: planters, miners, civil servants working in such departments as Forestry or Survey, men who – like Noone – really knew the terrain, and the local languages. They simply never should have been wasted by being assigned to half-trained reserve infantry battalions in the first place; their familiarity with the country, and ability to operate independently in it, could have been used far more effectively in OM parties. Warren now belatedly undertook to try to do just that from Singapore; Chapman, having returned to corps headquarters, took the initiative to try the same thing from Kuala Lumpur.<sup>40</sup>

Chapman's plans derived from an OM proposal, first made in August, to organize a country-wide network of parties. Each would be led by an officer trained in irregular warfare, and manned by European Volunteer Force personnel with local knowledge, as well as Asian civilians "carefully selected for their reliability and knowledge of the country." These parties would operate against enemy lines of communication should their local area be overrun. Unfortunately, the prewar veto from the top meant that, with the enemy deep in Malaya and advancing fast, it was now too late to organize any such systematic integration of local resources and expertise in a coordinated campaign to disrupt that advance. Chapman bravely tried to improvise, submitting a new plan to Heath on New Year's Eve: install a chain of at least three "small self-contained European parties," each manned by five to ten British officers and volunteers, at strategic points in the jungle-covered mountains along the border between Pahang and Selangor states, north of Kuala Lumpur. They would be well placed to attack a narrow bottleneck through which all Japanese lines of communication, from Thailand, Kota Bharu, and Kuantan converged and must run, as the enemy advanced south towards the state of Johore. Warren's concept was similar, calling for European parties to operate independently in areas now controlled by the enemy, in parties ranging from four to eight men, for as much as three months. Each party would set up a base at a carefully chosen site, which provided good jungle cover close to communication routes the enemy needed to use. Training at No. 101 STS would emphasize sabotage, especially bridge demolition, and self-sufficiency in the jungle. The whole idea, for both projects, was to hamper, harass, and delay the enemy advance, to buy time for Malaya Command to dig in and regroup.<sup>41</sup>

Chapman moved quickly, sending a party into the field on 5 January. But

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40. NA, HS1/226, "Oriental Mission Operations Report," April 1942; CAB106/156, "Moir Report"; Kirby, *The Loss of Singapore*, pp. 246-47, 273, Appendix 13.

41. NA, HS1/226, "Oriental Mission Operations Report," April 1942; HSI/340, Killery to SOE, 16 January 1942; Chapman, *Jungle is Neutral*, pp. 15-16, 40-48; Moynahan, *Jungle Soldier*, pp. 96-103.

the Japanese moved even faster, shattering 11th Indian Division at the battle of Slim River, just north of the operating area Chapman defined, on 7 January. This forced III Indian Corps to break contact and make a long strategic retreat to southern Malaya. That forced the OM to send most parties into the field before completing their training; some men went in without any. Chapman's parties had to go in before they had time to establish their bases. Chapman, fighting a bout of malaria, went into the field himself on 8 January. His party was compromised when a local gang looted their stores. Another party lost their food when Chinese porters hired to carry it absconded instead. This exposed the most serious weakness of these European parties: they were very conspicuous in a countryside populated entirely by Asians. That forced them to be very careful about contact with local villagers and rely on stocks they carried in, as well as their own local knowledge of the area. Chapman's small party lost contact with the others, and only survived because they encountered friendly Chinese civilians willing to feed and assist them. The party did, in due course, carry out sabotage operations against Japanese supply lines north of Kuala Lumpur, for what Chapman called a "mad fortnight." But by the time they were ready to attack, very late in January, the army was already retreating onto Singapore island itself. On the night their mad fortnight ended – 15 February – because they had to move out to regroup and resupply, Malaya Command capitulated. On 14 January four of Warren's European parties went into the field, but by then the Japanese were already attacking the last defensive line on which Malaya Command could realistically hope to stand, in southern Malaya. One party did meet a communist party setting up nearby and they agreed to "operate separately but to render what assistance they could to each other when necessary."<sup>42</sup> This all fell well short of the kind of support the army now needed very badly.

A fifth European party sent out from Singapore did have a communist recruit attached for "intelligence purposes." This suggested what might have been done. Sensibly, Warren placed more emphasis on training Chinese parties, because they had greater military potential. But it took precious time to clear away political difficulties and get the recruits through their training. When war broke out, the MCP offered to help the war effort "in any capacity." Lieutenant Colonel John Dalley, Director of the Federated Malay States Police Special Branch, pressed his superiors to take up the offer. Dalley understood how helpful the communists could be, for two good reasons. First, he put many of their operatives in jail and knew how well organized they

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42. NA, HSI/226, "Oriental Mission Operations Report," April 1942; HSI/340, Killery to SOE, 16 January 1942; Chapman, *Jungle is Neutral*, pp. 40-91; Moynahan, *Jungle Soldier*, pp. 103-39; Aldrich, *Intelligence and the War against Japan*, p. 105; Richard Gough, *Special Operations Singapore, 1941-42* (Singapore: Heinemann Asia, 1985), pp. 100-01, notes the parties were sent in on the time-frame of preparing for a counteroffensive to be launched within three months, led by I Australian Corps – then en route by sea to Southeast Asia from the Middle East.

were for covert operations. Second, "the Chief Secretary of the Party in Singapore was in Police pay." Governor Thomas relented after Percival changed his mind, and authorized Chapman, representing OM, to meet Lai Tek, Chief Secretary of the MCP, along with representatives from Special Branch and the SIS. The meeting, held on 19 December, was kept strictly confidential, but produced an agreement to provide recruits for No. 101 STS.<sup>43</sup> Unfortunately, while this cleared the way for the MCP to join the war effort, one obstacle remained.

The Governor's reluctance to work with the communists was partly explained by concern this would alienate the Malayan Guomintang. OM soon appreciated this. It came under pressure to work with four Guomintang officers sent from China to observe the campaign in Malaya, willing to "offer their experience in guerrilla fighting ... as specialists in instructing Malayan Chinese to assist in the campaign." OM tried to deflect this power play, fearing the observers would only complicate the situation without providing useful training in return. They nevertheless arrived at No. 101 STS on 12 January, and were visited soon after by Lieutenant General Cheng Kai-Min, en route to take up a liaison appointment with Allied headquarters in Java. Cheng complained that communist recruits were being given priority. He seems to have been right; Chapman felt the MCP would provide more valuable military support than their rivals, particularly for covert operations, and made a point of welcoming their first recruits to No. 101 STS before he went up north. He also helped Dalley conclude an agreement with MCP leaders in Kuala Lumpur, on New Year's Eve, to train Chinese recruits for parties to operate in Perak. Unfortunately, the rapid Japanese advance aborted this plan. One party did go into the field on 5 January, but the rest of the recruits went down to Singapore to go through No. 101 STS. There, unfortunately, Cheng's complaint could not be ignored, because OM did not want to compromise operations in China it was just about to launch.<sup>44</sup> Once again, this wasted precious time.

OM did nevertheless manage to train and deploy communist parties. They turned out to be just what the campaign needed:

These men, particularly the first lots, included the finest men whom the school had to handle. They were all young – mostly 17 to 20 years

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43. NA, HS1/226, "Oriental Mission Operations Report," April 1942; CAB106/45, Tan Kah Kee to Secretary of State for War, 3 March, Percival to WO, 21 April 1948; Chapman, *Jungle is Neutral*, pp. 16-17; Moynahan, *Jungle Soldier*, pp. 100-01. Dalley's formal title was Director Intelligence Bureau Malayan Security Police; <[www.malayanvolunteersgroup.org.uk](http://www.malayanvolunteersgroup.org.uk)>.

44. NA, HS1/226, "Oriental Mission Operations Report," April 1942; Chapman, *Jungle is Neutral*, pp. 16-17, 39-40; Moynahan, *Jungle Soldier*, pp. 100-03. The OM operation in China was part of 204 Military Mission, organized during 1941, but not dispatched to China until 25 January 1942: see Lionel Wigmore, *The Japanese Thrust* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1957), Appendix 1; and S.W. Kirby, *The War Against Japan*, Vol. II, *India's Most Dangerous Hour* (London: HMSO, 1958), p. 11.

old – physically fit, intelligent, and inspired with an almost fanatical eagerness to fight the Japanese and prove themselves worthy of the Communist traditions. They had a most stimulating influence on No. 101 STS.<sup>45</sup>

One last obstacle remained. Lai Tek insisted all communications go through him, probably to protect his own duplicity. That caused "many delays at a time when delays were serious." In spite of it all, No. 101 STS trained 165 communist recruits from 21 December to 30 January. And it sent two parties into the field before the final Japanese offensive on the mainland began on 14 January. These parties were larger, fifteen and thirty men respectively, and trained to operate differently, to take advantage of the fact they could blend into the local population. Each was to act as a nucleus, recruiting and training more men from surrounding villages. And each would operate around a central supply dump, but could be expected to find their own food. That made them easier to equip and sustain, and gave them more choices for base locations. Such forces might have done really useful damage to the Japanese as they charged deep into Malaya, running on such narrow margins of time and supply. Unfortunately, Malaya Command was fighting on its last defensible mainland line, and close to breaking point, before they could intervene.<sup>46</sup>

The evidence is clear: because the British authorities treated colonial Malaya as a delicate compromise which should not be disturbed, when the country was invaded they were not prepared to harness the one truly willing source of local support it could provide to the war effort. Nor could they improvise to tap this support quickly enough to make any real impact – and different agendas in China imposed more complications and delay. By acting like an alien authority superimposed on the country, the British deprived themselves of its local knowledge. These problems also hampered one other effort to organize an irregular force to help the army: the Singapore Overseas Chinese Anti-Japanese Volunteer Army, which Malaya Command referred to as Dalforce after Dalley, who organized the unit.

The Singapore and Kuala Lumpur agreements cleared the way to organize such a force and recruits were quick to step forward. Dalley eventually put more than 4000 men into the field, all Malayan Chinese. But he felt obliged to divide them into MCP and Guomindang companies. This reflected how a bitter communal political rivalry complicated efforts to focus on a common enemy. By the time the force came together, the army did not have enough weapons and equipment to provide for it properly – and the Japanese advance did not leave enough time to train it adequately. Some volunteers had to go into battle in February with little more than shotguns and a handful of rounds. By the time Dalforce was ready to deploy, Malaya Command was retreating onto Singapore island itself, to fight its last battle. Some personnel

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45. NA, HS1/226, "Oriental Mission Operations Report," April 1942.

46. NA, HSI/340, Killery to SOE, 16 January 1942.

were attached in small groups to provide liaison help to regular units, which made sense. But most were concentrated in a blocking force assigned to cover one sector of the island coastline, as the Japanese prepared to invade. There they met the enemy, and while they fought with defiant gallantry, they were quickly overrun.<sup>47</sup>

Dalforce volunteers were included on a long Japanese list of incorrigible enemies to be purged, an operation they carried out with chilling brutality after Singapore capitulated. This reflected the harsh and cruel occupation policy the Japanese adopted towards the Malayan Chinese in particular. And it indicated what fate would have met any untrained and poorly equipped Chinese miners in Perak sent into battle as guerrilla fighters, chasing bounty money.<sup>48</sup> That feckless suggestion pointed to the root cause of British failure to harness popular support to defend Malaya against invasion. The civilian government, the army, and the security services were very conscious of how narrow a base British power in Malaya rested on. In a country populated overwhelmingly by Asians, relatively few of whom identified themselves first and foremost as grateful members of a great empire, prestige and coercion were the twin supports of power. And a large majority of senior British officers and civilian officials in Malaya and Singapore sincerely believed that Asian populations could not withstand the kind of military pressure the British people coped with in 1940. Thomas and Percival were so worried the population would panic if they thought the British might be losing the battle that they vetoed prudent measures, such as evacuating resources, or denying facilities, which surely would have helped delay the Japanese advance. It is easy to ascribe this feeling simply to racial prejudices, and they did matter. The decision to evacuate only European civilians from Penang seemed crudely to demonstrate this, and provoked bitter complaints from Malayan Chinese civilian leaders. But it also reflected the uneasy sense that British roots in Malaya were neither deep nor strong. This suggested that the best

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47. NA, WO172/21, GHQ Malaya Command War Diary Appendices D 47, A 48, 1 February 1942; CAB106/45, Percival to WO, 21 April 1948; FO371/31825, Ransome and Holmes statement, n/d [1942]; WO208/1529, Seabridge notes, March 1942; CAB106/45, Tan Kah Kee to Secretary of State for War, 3 March, Percival to WO, 21 April 1948; "Percival Despatch"; CAB106/70, "History of 18th Division, 1-9 February 1942" [written post-capitulation]; CAB106/71, "Diary of Events of 54 Inf Bde (18 Div) at Singapore 29 Jan 42-15 Feb 42," 3 February 1942 [written post-capitulation]; Ban, *Absent History*, pp. 229-32; C.H. Foong, *The Price of Peace: True Accounts of the Japanese Occupation* (Singapore: Asiapac, 1997); <[www.malayanvolunteersgroup.org.uk](http://www.malayanvolunteersgroup.org.uk)>.

48. JM, Number 54, *Malaya Operations Record*; SCSC, "Outline of the Malayan Campaign"; Frei, *Guns of February*, ch. 10; Malcolm H. Murfett, John N. Miksic, Brian P. Farrell, and Ming Shun Chiang, *Between Two Oceans: A Military History of Singapore from First Settlement to Final British Withdrawal* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 259-60. NA, WO172/180, Faber Fire Command War Diary, February 1942, records one incident when bodies of murdered Chinese civilians were recovered by British and Indian troops at Blakang Mati. The large Oral History collection in the Singapore National Archives contains information about all aspects of the *sook ching* massacre and occupation years.

way to preserve British power in Malaya was to monopolize control of its security. Most Malayan states were after all protectorates. The British would protect – and things would remain stable within. This attitude was simply too widespread and deeply rooted to discard overnight.<sup>49</sup> This was another great breakthrough the Japanese achieved by advancing so far so fast. Their "driving charge" outran Malaya's capacity to pull together to defend itself.

## Conclusion

While it is not possible to say how much systematically organized irregular forces could have done to delay the Japanese, by failing to give them any real chance to try Malaya Command deprived itself of one possible, and sorely needed, helping hand. And it is possible to establish the cost of this failure. Colonel Masanobu Tsuji, Twenty-Fifth Army Chief of Operations, recorded that for their final assault on Singapore island the Japanese only just managed to bring enough supplies forward to invade the island promptly because the haul of captured "Churchill supplies" allowed their hard-pressed logistics units to concentrate on bringing up ammunition; the string was taut to the end.<sup>50</sup> This all tells us something larger about Malaya Command, and its campaign. The strategy that Killery, Warren, and Chapman tried to implement was one in which Malayan irregular forces used their unique capabilities to provide effective assistance to the main force of the regular army, as a

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49. For examples of prevailing attitudes, see: NA, CAB106/80, Lieutenant General L.M. Heath, "Notes on the Malayan Campaign," 4 August 1947; WO32/15539, Shenton Thomas comments on "Percival Despatch" and related correspondence, spring 1947; "Percival Despatch"; Chapman, *Jungle is Neutral*, p. 11; Shennan, *Out in the Midday Sun*. See also AWM, 73/2, Bowden to Hodgson, 9 January, notes, 15, 18 January 1942; Farrell, *Defence and Fall of Singapore*, chs. 6, 15; and Joseph Kennedy, *British Civilians and the Japanese War in Malaya and Singapore, 1941-45* (London: Macmillan, 1987).

50. Tsuji, *Singapore*, pp. 187-88. The repercussions of mobilizing and training Malayan Chinese irregulars during the Malayan campaign, but then failing to employ them effectively, were both broad and enduring. Many SOE and Dalforce survivors took to the jungle, where, under MCP leadership, they formed the Malayan Peoples Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA), and established caches of arms and equipment, much of it provided by SOE. This constituted the only organized movement resisting Japanese occupation by force. That compelled the Allies to work with the MCP and its MPAJA for the rest of the war, cooperation implemented by SOE's Force 136, which provided arms and advisers to the resistance. The MPAJA ostensibly disbanded after liberation in 1945, but in fact went underground, preserving many of its hidden arms caches. The force surfaced in 1948 as the core of the new MCP armed wing, the Malayan People's Anti-British Army, with which the party launched the armed insurrection known as the Malayan Emergency, to try to drive the British out of Malaya. The Emergency was only formally terminated in 1960, but an intermittent communist insurgency rumbled on until a definitive peace treaty was finally concluded in 1989. Useful sources include Cheah Boon Kheng, *Red Star over Malaya: Resistance and Social Conflict During and After the Japanese Occupation, 1941-1946* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1983); Karl Hack, *Defence and Decolonisation in Southeast Asia: Britain, Malaya and Singapore, 1941-68* (Richmond: Curzon, 2001); Ban Kah Choon and Yap Hong Kuan, *Rehearsal for War: The Underground War Against the Japanese* (Singapore: Horizon Books, 2003).



force multiplier. What they lacked in training or firepower they might have made up in local knowledge and personal commitment. Most important, Japanese strategy provided a very real opportunity to try to do just that, at little risk to the overall fighting strength of the defending regular forces. Instead, the regular army wound up having to defend Malaya almost unaided. This neglect reflected the same trait that damaged broader government efforts to mobilize the population: the sense of being alien to the country it was trying to defend.

This trait shone through the exchange between Fawcett and Torrance on 19 December. It was expressed even more bluntly by some in a better position to know. Lieutenant T.H. Wade was a British expatriate executive who, after moving from China to Malaya, volunteered for the regular army. Wade was commissioned into 2nd Battalion The Loyal Regiment, one of the Singapore garrison battalions, and served throughout the campaign. Wade's summary was blunt and scathing: "Never was an army defending a country more foreign to that country than was the British Army in Malaya in 1941-42"; he was equally blunt as to why: "Class and above all racial distinctions reigned supreme and inviolable." This verdict was reflected in nearly every combat unit war diary in Malaya Command, records littered with so many "hysterical" reports that when Dickinson attended a meeting at GHQ Malaya Command on 15 February 1942 – the meeting that ended with the agreement to capitulate that day – to report on his investigation, he polled the senior army officers present, who all agreed fifth column operations did not do serious military harm. But even Dickinson, a police officer with more than two decades of experience in Malaya, implicitly betrayed that same attitude which so estranged the army from the people: "Generally the Malay, whatever his behavior, behaved better than was expected from him during the attack."<sup>51</sup> In the end, a European imperial army with too little confidence in an Asian colonial population could not rally that population effectively to a common cause – and both suffered accordingly.

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51. Tom Henling Wade, *Prisoner of the Japanese: From Changi to Tokyo* (Kenthurst: Kangaroo Press, 1994), pp. 24, 31, 39; NA, WO32/15539, Thomas comments on "Percival Despatch" and related correspondence, spring 1947; IWM, Percival Papers, File 43, "The Organization for the Control of Political Intelligence," n/d [written by Inspector-General A.G. Dickinson in January 1946]. The war diaries in the NA, WO172 series, and the AWM, 52 series, testify to how chronically unsettled Malaya Command was regarding the disposition of the civilian population it tried to defend.

# Recent Research into the *Reichsmarine* and *Kriegsmarine*

KLAUS SCHMIDER

*Deutsche Marinen im Wandel: Vom Symbol nationaler Einheit zum Instrument nationaler Sicherheit.* By Werner Rahn, ed. München: Oldenbourg Verlag, 2005. Illustrations. Maps. Notes. Cloth. Pp. xiii, 738.

*Die deutschen Schnellboote im Einsatz: Von den Anfängen bis 1945.* By Hans Frank. Hamburg: Mittler & Sohn, 2006. Illustrations. Maps. Notes. Appendices. Index. Cloth. Pp. 198.

*Der Sanitätsdienst in der deutschen Flotte im Zweiten Weltkrieg: Schwere Seestreitkräfte.* By Hartmut Nöldeke and Volker Hartmann. Hamburg: Mittler & Sohn, 2003. Illustrations. Maps. Notes. Index. Cloth. Pp. 231.

*Rüstung und Rüstungserprobung in der deutschen Marinegeschichte – Die Torpedoversuchanstalt (TVA).* By Oliver Krauß. Bonn: Bernard & Graefe, 2010. Illustrations. Maps. Notes. Appendices. Index. Cloth. Pp. 290.

*Erich Raeder: Admiral of the Third Reich.* By Keith Bird. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2006. Illustrations. Maps. Notes. Index. Cloth. Pp. xxvi, 282.

*Großadmiral Karl Dönitz: Legende und Wirklichkeit.* By Dieter Hartwig. Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2010. Illustrations. Notes. Appendices. Index. Cloth. Pp. 435.

Ever since Germany's unification in 1871, its navy traditionally has been the country's junior service. With the possible exception of a few peacetime years during the heyday of Hohenzollern shipbuilding and the creation of the *Luftwaffe* in the second half of the thirties, the army has always had first call on human and material resources as well as political attention, a state of affairs arguably only reversed by the twenty-three days which *Großadmiral* Karl Dönitz spent as acting head of state presiding over the surrender and occupation of the remains of Nazi Germany. In both wars, the army occupied center stage in terms of military victories scored and – arguably – crimes committed. Even so, when considering the almost intact body of primary sources bequeathed to historians by both German navies of the period, it is noteworthy that scholarly works on the subject of the *Reichsmarine*

and *Kriegsmarine* only began to see the light once Michael Salewski published his massive *Die deutsche Seekriegsleitung* in 1970/1975<sup>1</sup> and even then took quite a while in gathering momentum. Right after Salewski came Jost Dülffer<sup>2</sup> and Werner Rahn<sup>3</sup> on the subject of the Weimar navy, soon to be followed by Gerhard Schreiber who analyzed German-Italian naval cooperation.<sup>4</sup> The 1980s, however, constituted something of a hiatus until finally in the 1990s we were rewarded with a welcome burst of specialist studies on submarine warfare,<sup>5</sup> *Kriegsmarine* cooperation with the *Luftwaffe*,<sup>6</sup> wartime shipbuilding,<sup>7</sup> the politicization of the navy,<sup>8</sup> and even the legacy of the U-boat in the public imagination.<sup>9</sup> Those interested in the naval side of World War I, it goes without saying, have always profited from the interest which the Anglo-German arms race and its ultimate consequences have suscituated among historians since the 1970s,<sup>10</sup> a tradition continued with the recent publication of two important pieces of scholarship: in 2003 Joachim Schröder presented *Die U-Boote des Kaisers*,<sup>11</sup> an excellent political and operational history of the first Battle of the Atlantic which makes a controversial – but well-backed – argument that the German admiralty could have in-

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1. Michael Salewski, *Die deutsche Seekriegsleitung, 1935-1945*, 3 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Bernard & Graefe, 1970-75).

2. Jost Dülffer, *Weimar, Hitler und die Marine: Reichspolitik und Flottenbau, 1920-1939* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1973).

3. Werner Rahn, *Reichsmarine und Landesverteidigung, 1919-1928: Konzeption und Führung der Marine in der Weimarer Republik* (München: Bernard & Graefe, 1976).

4. Gerhard Schreiber, *Revisionismus und Weltmachtstreben: Marineführung und deutsch-italienische Beziehungen, 1919-1944* (Stuttgart: DVA, 1978).

5. Clay Blair, *Hitler's U-boat War: The Hunters, 1939-1942* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1997); Clay Blair, *Hitler's U-boat War: The Hunted, 1942-1945* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1999); Axel Niestle, *German U-boat Losses during World War II: Details of Destruction* (London: Greenhill, 1998); Timothy Mulligan, *Neither Sharks nor Wolves: The Men of Nazi Germany's U-boat Arm, 1939-1945* (London: Chatham Publishing, 1999).

6. Sönke Neitzel, *Der Einsatz der deutschen Luftwaffe über dem Atlantik und der Nordsee, 1939-1945* (Bonn: Bernard & Graefe, 1995).

7. Guntram Schulze-Wegener, *Die deutsche Kriegsmarine-Rüstung, 1942-1945* (Hamburg: Koehler & Mittler, 1997).

8. Charles S. Thomas, *The German Navy in the Nazi Era* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1990).

9. Michael L. Hadley, *Count Not the Dead: The Popular Image of the German Submarine* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995).

10. Volker Berghahn, *Der Tirpitz-Plan: Genesis und Verfall einer innenpolitischen Krisenstrategie unter Wilhelm II* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1971); Holger H. Herwig, "Luxury Fleet": *The Imperial German Navy, 1888-1918* (London: Ashfield Press, 1980); Michael Epkenhans, *Die wilhelminische Flottenrüstung, 1908-1914: Weltmachtstreben, industrieller Fortschritt, soziale Integration* (München: Oldenbourg, 1991); Robert K. Massie, *Dreadnought: Britain, Germany, and the coming of the Great War* (New York: Random House, 1991); Rolf Hobson, *Imperialism at Sea: Naval Strategic Thought, the Ideology of Sea Power, and the Tirpitz Plan, 1875-1914* (Boston: Brill, 2002).

11. Joachim Schröder, *Die U-Boote des Kaisers: Die Geschichte des deutschen U-Boot-Krieges gegen Großbritannien im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Bonn: Bernard & Graefe, 2003).

flicted nearly as much damage on Allied shipping by sticking to "restricted" submarine warfare in 1917 as it went on to do by resorting to the politically more damaging "unrestricted" tactic. His conclusion added up to a devastating indictment of the professional proficiency of most German admirals who were in some way involved with the making of the campaign against Allied commerce. More recently, the proceedings of a 2006 conference on the battle of Jutland resulted in an excellent anthology summarizing the latest scholarship on the politics, doctrine, and strategy which led to the clash of fleets in 1916 as well as the echoes it produced in post-war controversies.<sup>12</sup> Since Schröder's book in particular was arguably over eighty years overdue when it came out, any historian wishing to emulate the task for the naval side of World War II would appear to face the academic equivalent of mission impossible. Even allowing for this, the 21st century has seen a number of interesting new books on the navies of the Weimar Republic and the Third Reich.

*Deutsche Marinen im Wandel: Vom Symbol nationaler Einheit zum Instrument nationaler Sicherheit* [German navies in an era of change: from symbol of national unity to instrument of international security], brought to us by the German Armed Forces' Military History Research Institute (*Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt*, or MGFA), is what you might call value for money. Even though the majority of the thirty-one articles have been previously published (some of them in journals with relatively small print runs), they have all been updated and revised for this anthology. In view of the fateful role played by the Imperial Navy in creating or at least widening the Anglo-German rift pre-1914, it comes as no surprise that the navy in World War II is discussed in only eight contributions, the bulk of the remainder dealing with some aspect or other of the navy which *Großadmiral* Alfred von Tirpitz built for Kaiser Wilhelm II. In view of the scholarly relevance of some of these, this reviewer hopes you will forgive him for exceeding his brief prior to moving on to the period of World War II. Rolf Hobson's contribution is a revised version of the conclusion of his 2002 book on the thinking which propelled the Hohenzollern naval expansion. Contrary to his numerous predecessors, who tended to see this as a uniquely German manifestation (whether with a view to overseas expansionism or creating shipyard jobs), Hobson takes a closer look at the trend to invest in battleships by other great and not so great powers pre-1914 and comes to the conclusion that the parallels outweigh the differences by far and that in least in one instance (Tsarist Russia between 1907-14) the prioritization was if anything even more pronounced than in the German case.

Two articles deal with the officer corps of the Imperial Navy and the way in which its selection and training shaped the potential of their service. Wulf

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12. Michael Epkenhans, Jörg Hillmann, and Frank Nögler, eds., *Skagerrakschlacht: Vorgeschichte-Ereignis-Verarbeitung* (München: Oldenbourg, 2011, rev. ed.).

Diercks presents us with an excellent analysis of the career path of the German fleet commanders and chiefs of staff of the admiralty of World War I, how they came to be chosen for their position, and the extent to which they proved themselves capable or not. Even though not a fleet commander, Tirpitz is also included in the line-up made up of Henning von Holtzendorff, Gustav Bachmann, Hugo von Pohl, Friedrich von Ingenhohl, Reinhard Scheer, and Franz von Hipper. Among the sources used are the personal files of the officers in question. As a group, these individuals – regardless of their tactical acumen – failed to develop alternatives that might have ended the stalemate in the North Sea. Paradoxically, it was the one officer to have served the least time as a staff officer (Franz von Hipper – admittedly while serving as a squadron commander) who proposed a daring scheme involving a breakout into the North Atlantic by the battlecruiser squadron to disrupt trade and link up with von Spee's returning Pacific squadron. The extent to which the range of these units would have permitted such a plan would have been worth exploring in a footnote. All things considered, this is a very strong article which manages to blend the human side of history with its political, military, and – to a small extent – cultural strands. That the author should already have achieved this nearly twenty years before this approach became fashionable in mainstream academia is all the more remarkable.<sup>13</sup>

Thomas Scheerer's article on the internal problems of the naval officer corps is essentially a summary of the key points of a major work published in 2002. He addresses three issues only loosely linked to each other: the dysfunctional command and control set up of the Imperial navy (divided as it was between the Emperor, Tirpitz' *Reichsmarineamt*, the admiralty, as well as the commander of the *Hochseeflotte*), the friction between officers with a background in engineering and "proper" officers, and finally problems connected with the selection and training of officer candidates. Regrettably, the space the author can devote to each subject in a total of twelve pages is completely inadequate for the first subject and barely so for the last two. Singling out just one issue and addressing all its key problems in greater detail would most definitely have been the better course.

Gerhard P. Groß gives an excellent account of the plan by the German High Seas Fleet to challenge the Home Fleet in October 1918. He does not succumb to the obvious temptation of simply dismissing it as a senseless *kamikaze* sortie, but instead goes to great lengths to judge the issue through the prism of the decisionmakers in charge. His conclusion is that, while not intended as a death ride, it certainly reflects a worrisome tendency among the senior naval leadership to march to its own drum and put the interests of the service before those of the nation. William Michaelis' reflections on Alfred von Tirpitz as a leader are worth the price of the book alone. Michaelis

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13. An earlier version of this article was published in 1988. Credit must go to Werner Rahn for facilitating the publication of this edition, which includes updated source notes, Wulf Diercks having passed away in 1986.

was a retired World War I admiral<sup>14</sup> who in 1933 was requested by the *Marine-Archiv* to produce a memorandum on how he viewed the strengths and weaknesses of Alfred von Tirpitz as a naval leader. Expertly introduced by the volume's editor, Werner Rahn, the text is a devastating indictment for two reasons: first, Michaelis wrote while being under the impression that this document would never see the light of day; second, he tried very hard to be fair to his former boss and emphasize his strengths as well as his weaknesses. In the end, however, the latter tended to weigh much heavier. It would appear that Tirpitz was aware well before the outbreak of the war that he had no chance of ever backing the British into a corner, but carried on with his battleship building program essentially for want of anything better to do. This sort of equivocation carried on straight into the war, with Tirpitz more or less publicly clamoring for more decisive action, while at the same time impressing on the commanders of the *Hochseeflotte* the need for utmost caution. This was probably just as well, because his short-sighted building program had equipped the fleet with escort destroyers custom-built to escort the battlefleet to a point about 100 miles north of Helgoland – this was in keeping with the belief that the British would attempt to impose a close blockade of sorts. Now that the Home Fleet had decided to settle for a distant blockade based at Scapa, the *Hochseeflotte* was incapable of challenging it that far north even if it had wanted to.

The limitations imposed by history and geography on German naval power are also the subject of Werner Rahn's chapter, which straddles the line separating both World Wars. At thirty-seven pages, it is one of the lengthier as well as most heavily footnoted chapters of the volume. It essentially looks into the intellectual debates between those German admirals who from 1914 to 1945 attempted to square the circle of a naval war with the Western Powers which Germany – given her geographic position and numerical inferiority – could not reasonably expect to win. The most important reflections concern the politics behind the writing of the naval official history in the 1920s and 1930s and the manner in which Erich Raeder lobbied for the building of capital ships, thus dooming his navy to go into an arms race it had even less hope of winning than the pre-1914 one. At the same time, it is difficult to make out a real spokesman for the building of a strong U-boat fleet prior to April 1939. The inevitable comparison between the naval leaderships of both wars will tend towards an even more devastating indictment of Tirpitz and his peers: not just because the British margin of superiority was not quite as overwhelming, but because genuine options like a more se-

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14. Wilhelm Michaelis (1871-1948) had spent World War I in several postings, both within the *Reichsmarineamt's* bureaucracy as well as afloat with the *Hochseeflotte*. He ended the war with the rank of commodore. In March 1920, he was promoted to vice admiral and *de facto* head of the navy and given the task of imposing discipline in a service thoroughly discredited by its involvement in both the revolution of October/November 1918 as well as the Kapp coup of March 1920. This he did until the end of the year, when he asked to be retired.

rious approach to mine warfare right from the start as well as the potential of restricted submarine warfare went begging. Anybody without the time to read the armful of books really needed to explore these issues at depth is well advised to read Rahn's article, ideally in conjunction with a recent piece by Jörg Hillmann published the previous year.<sup>15</sup>

Intimately linked to Rahn's contribution is Jörg Hillmann's chapter on the thoughts developed by Karl Ernst Haushofer – the nearest thing to a German equivalent of Halford Mackinder – on geopolitics and naval strategy. It is one of the few specifically commissioned for this volume. Haushofer's importance lies in the fact that for a number of years he had – courtesy of his former student Rudolf Hess – the ear of Adolf Hitler and may have influenced his thinking on a number of key issues. The extent of his influence is of course difficult to assess, though Hillmann highlights the fact that Haushofer's thoughts on the best way to find a niche for German naval power in the short- to mid-term offer a more than passing similarity with what the *Kriegsmarine* actually implemented pre-1939.

Michael Salewski and Gerhard Schreiber both explore the *Kriegsmarine's* ideological commitment to the regime. Both authors are eminent scholars in this field and have presented groundbreaking work in the past; the present articles hark back to the research they did in the 1970s and 1980s. Although a little dated (as can be seen by the authors' assessment of Milward's and Fischer's theories), they are still valuable on account of the wide range of primary sources explored.

Werner Rahn and Herbert Kraus address issues connected with the final months of the war. Rahn explores the *Kriegsmarine's* deployment of "Kleinkampfmittel" (mini subs and speedboats) against the Allied logistical lifeline in the Channel as well as briefly looking into the deployment of barely-trained youngsters as infantry. The former suffered horrendous casualties and in at least one instance went to sea under operational conditions which made their sortie the equivalent of a one-way trip. Attempts to cover this up post-war included the falsification of official records by one of the officers involved. Unlike other authors, Rahn is willing to concede that one of the weapons systems used in this campaign (the "Seehund" submarine) had the range and speed to make its deployment something other than a lunacy. Rather revealingly, suggestions to suspend the campaign to wait for the arrival of a large enough number of these craft were forbidden by Dönitz. The latter's uncompromising loyalty to Hitler is explained by Herbert Kraus by his inclination to believe rather than think politically, an attitude he would consistently expect of his subordinates. The transition he made on being named Hitler's successor quickly revealed his strengths and limitations: the professional soldier sought terms from the Western Allies after only a

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15. Jörg Hillmann, "Seestrategische Überlegungen und Planungen in der Reichsmarine und in der Kriegsmarine bis zum Kriegsausbruch 1939," in Eckardt Opitz, ed., *Seestrategische Konzepte vom kaiserlichen Weltmachtstreben zu Out-of-Area-Einsätzen der deutschen Marine* (Bremen: Edition Temmen, 2004), pp. 25-91.

brief hiatus, while the newly minted politician appears to have seriously believed in the possibility of keeping alive the National Socialist state by making a number of superficial changes to its constitutional structure.

As usual, such an eclectic bag of good or very good contributions leave the reader with a hunger for more. This reviewer could not help feeling that adding an essay on Raeder's and Dönitz' antagonistic strategic philosophies as well as a comparison between the progressive deterioration of Tirpitz' political position in 1915/16 and that of Raeder throughout 1942 might have been beneficial. Seeing as this is a volume on strategy and global strategy rather than tactics, a chapter on the Z Plan of 1939 would also have been a major asset. That said, *Deutsche Marinen im Wandel* is an excellent collection of cutting-edge scholarship which deserves a place on the bookshelf of any naval historian of the period.

*Die deutschen Schnellboote im Einsatz: Von den Anfängen bis 1945* [the operations of the E-boat arm: from the beginnings to 1945] is a true labor of love, a fact that does not come as a surprise when the author of a book on torpedo boats is revealed as a former torpedo boat officer in the *Bundesmarine*. The author, making copious use of primary sources as well as a wide range of excellent maps and photographs, tells the story of the *Kriegsmarine's S-Boote* in chapters arranged chronologically and divided by operational theaters. These are complemented by a number of chapters on training, weapons technology, tactics, and – most interesting of all – the personality and career of the head of the *S-Boote* from April 1942 till the end of the war, *Kommodore* Rudolf Petersen. As an individual alienated from the regime by virtue of his religious beliefs, he was exceptional in repeatedly managing to refuse exhortations from the high command to deploy his assets "more aggressively" and thus accept higher losses. He managed to stand his ground, continuing to achieve a measure of success until 1943, when his men were overwhelmed by the Allied superiority both in the air and at sea. What this book does not quite manage to convey is the very serious concern with which the *S-Boote* were regarded by the British during 1940/41, especially when used in close cooperation with the *Luftwaffe*. Those readers wishing to get a more complete picture of this campaign should therefore turn to Nick Hewitt's recent work on the British defense of coastal convoy traffic,<sup>16</sup> which at the time was considered vital for want of any realistic transport alternative, and not just as a means of showing the flag or luring *Luftwaffe* bombers to their destruction.

Publications dealing with the technology of naval warfare have tended to focus on its most visible embodiment – the ships themselves. The paraphernalia of human skills and machinery of all kinds which are needed

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16. Nick Hewitt, *Coastal Convoys, 1939-1945: The Indestructible Highway* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2008).



to turn the hull of a ship into a fully functioning weapons system are usually given short shrift. Two recent titles have successfully gone against this trend.

Hartmut Nöldeke and Volker Hartmann both are naval doctors, the former having served in both the wartime *Kriegsmarine* as well as the West German Navy. Their latest book, *Der Sanitätsdienst in der deutschen Flotte im Zweiten Weltkrieg: Schwere Seestreitkräfte* [the medical services of the German Navy in World War II: capital ships and disguised raiders], is the last in a trilogy dealing with medicine as practiced onboard the *Kriegsmarine's* seagoing vessels from 1939 to 1945.<sup>17</sup> The first two addressed the topic with regards to submarines<sup>18</sup> and destroyers,<sup>19</sup> with this one covering so-called heavy units (battleships, cruisers, disguised raiders). The book is thoroughly footnoted, with primary sources being much in evidence. Contrary to what one might believe, the challenges inherent in ensuring the health of several hundred individuals (mostly young or youngish) on a long cruise was still something of a challenge in the 1940s and the authors are able to stress this by pointing to the surprisingly large number of cases when German sailors encountered cases of scurvy onboard enemy ships they were in the process of searching. While the book is what might be called a cracking good read, there are only a few instances where the authors manage to connect with the wider world of military history and turn their subject into something of interest to readers who lack a devotion to either seafaring or practical medicine. One such case is the story of the commander of the raider *Widder*. Hellmuth von Ruckteschell became famous, or rather notorious, for his tendency to overwhelm his prey with a large volume of fire, leading to a high number of casualties and a post-war charge for war crimes at Nürnberg. During their research, the authors came across a source which revealed that Ruckteschell was essentially medically unfit to face the challenges of a long cruise on account of stomach ulcers and gall bladder problems, ailments which must have played a role in his choleric nature and notoriously poor relations with his officers. The *Widder's* medical officer even protested that a second cruise was completely out of the question, but was overruled by Admiral Raeder himself,<sup>20</sup> who thought very highly of von Ruckteschell, thus displaying a truly breathtaking lack of professionalism. The workings of human dynamics of this kind at the highest levels of command and control are usually lost to posterity when the last witness passes on and the authors are to be commended for having unearthed it. Having said that, this book sorely

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17. The practice of medicine has been a topic much neglected by historians of modern naval warfare. For a recent exception see, William P. McEvoy: "Experiences at Sea: A Navy Doctor at War," *Journal of Military History*, Vol. 75 (October 2011), pp. 1159-82.

18. Hartmut Nöldeke and Volker Hartmann, *Der Sanitätsdienst in der deutschen U-Boot-Waffe* (Hamburg: Mittler & Sohn, 1996).

19. Hartmut Nöldeke and Volker Hartmann, *Der Sanitätsdienst in der deutschen Flotte: Leichte Seestreitkräfte* (Hamburg: Mittler & Sohn, 1999).

20. After commanding the *Widder* on her cruise from May to October 1940, von Ruckteschell returned to sea with the *Michel* from March 1942 to February 1943. He suffered a major health breakdown on arrival in Japan.

needed a discussion of the extent to which German naval doctors were inclined (or not) to shield their patients from the reprisals of a regime notoriously unsympathetic towards so-called "malingerers." They addressed this issue only briefly in the second volume and ended their conclusion by giving both of the *Kriegsmarine's* wartime *Sanitätschefs* (the equivalent of the U.S. Navy's Surgeon General) a clean bill of health. Such a judgement is contrary to much of what we have learned about the inclination of the *Wehrmacht's* senior leadership to toe the line and needed to be explored in greater detail.

The work authored by Oliver Krauß, *Rüstung und Rüstungserprobung in der deutschen Marinegeschichte – Die Torpedoversuchsanstalt (TVA)* [armament and armament testing in German naval history: the torpedo testing facility], is a published Ph.D. which looks in a truly exhaustive – at times bordering on exhausting – manner at the history of the naval agency (the *Torpedoversuchsanstalt*, or TVA) which from 1889 to 1945 was responsible for the development and testing of the German Navy's torpedos. As such it should be required reading for anyone researching the multi-layered subject of civilian-military cooperation both in wartime and peace. It is also relevant to the question of the alleged hostility towards high technology often associated with the military elites of Germany (which Krauß denies). The book's crown jewel is, needless to say, the rash of failures which afflicted the main weapon of the *Kriegsmarine's* U-boat arm from about September 1939 to June 1940 and the manner in which the *Kriegsmarine* dealt with it. It is probably fair to say that these events bore a downright spooky similarity with the crisis the U.S. submarine arm had to go through in 1941/43, especially the fact that in each case both the magnetic as well as the contact exploder were equally affected, but for different reasons! The Germans managed to identify the most egregious problems in about six months and even court-martialed three senior officers they held responsible for dereliction of duty. Both as regards the political impact and the extent to which this series of accidents shook the confidence of the soldiers using it, the torpedo crisis is comparable to the *Luftwaffe's* problems with the F 104 Starfighter in the 1960s. This reviewer could not help feeling that while Krauß has certainly given us the most exhaustive account available so far on this affair, the balance of the book would have profited from moving it onto center stage. The discussion of the torpedo crisis and its aftermath takes up about thirty pages of text (out of a total of 260), but so do the chapters dedicated to issues of personnel, use of foreign labor, and the facilities used by the TVA. In particular, a more thorough comparison with the way in which the U.S. Navy addressed (or rather, did not address) a virtually identical problem would have been enlightening. The assessment by Krauß that the Americans dealt with their crisis in a more expeditious manner than the *Kriegsmarine* is certainly at odds with the latest research into the subject by Anthony Newpower.<sup>21</sup>

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21. Anthony Newpower, *Iron Men and Tin Fish: The Race to Build a Better Torpedo*

The author's assessment that to a large extent the TVA's unique remit of both developing and testing its products was to blame is well argued and difficult to dispute. He also makes a good case why this concept worked after a fashion in World War I, but then failed twenty years later. That the alternative – private industry to develop, the armed forces inspectorate to test the finished product – would by no means have been a foolproof guarantee against failure is shown by the series of design failures suffered by the *Luftwaffe* after 1941. In terms of leaving a mark with the big themes of World War II historiography, Krauß is certainly to be applauded for not going down the most obvious rabbit hole open to every historian of the Third Reich: to blame everything on the uniquely byzantine nature of the regime.

More than sixty years after the end of World War II, virtually all political and most senior military leaders of the Third Reich have become the subject of at least one scholarly biography. Among the latter, the most glaring omissions until recently (apart from army chief of staff Kurt Zeitzler) were the two commanders in chief of the *Kriegsmarine*, Erich Raeder (1935-43) and Karl Dönitz (1943-45). It would appear that these two gaps have now been plugged. Professor Keith Bird presented *Erich Raeder: Admiral of the Third Reich* in 2006 and Dieter Hartwig (formerly of the MGFA) followed with *Großadmiral Karl Dönitz: Legende und Wirklichkeit* [Grand Admiral Karl Dönitz: the legend and the reality] in 2010. The approaches taken by each author in analyzing their subjects are diametrically opposed: while Bird opted for an orthodox, chronologically arranged biography, Hartwig offers what is essentially a collection of snapshots with a different theme each.

Bird's book is very user-friendly and can be understood even by readers with only a minimum of previous knowledge of the subject matter. Raeder's early career and his time as head of the Weimar Republic's navy are treated adequately, with the young *Kapitän zur See's* role in the aborted Kapp coup of 1920 being of particular interest. On the downside, Bird's omission of Johannes Hürter's 1993 seminal biography of war minister Wilhelm Groener,<sup>22</sup> who was Raeder's direct superior for more than three and a half years (October 1928 - May 1932) in the final phase of the Republic, detracts from the overall value of the chapter. A much more serious problem, however, arises with the length of the remaining manuscript. The entire complex of Third Reich and World War II is dealt with in a total of 120 pages. Even allowing for the fact that not all historians will have at their disposal the primary sources needed to replicate the 1,000 page feast which Bernhard Kroener recently served up on the life and times of *Generaloberst* Friedrich Fromm,<sup>23</sup> it is difficult to escape the conclusion that even the most gifted biographer will

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during *World War II* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2006).

22. Johannes Hürter, *Wilhelm Groener: Reichswehrminister am Ende der Weimarer Republik, 1928-1932* (München: Oldenbourg, 1993).

23. Bernhard R. Kroener, *Der starke Mann im Heimatkriegsgebiet – Generaloberst Friedrich Fromm: Eine Biographie* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2005).

struggle to do justice to the track record of the officer boasting the greatest seniority of all the service heads of the Third Reich in such a brief space. Almost inevitably, some subjects, like the manner in which Raeder made sure of a smooth transition from a Republican to a Third Reich navy are given adequate coverage, while others are only briefly hinted at in passing or at least not dealt with in a manner commensurate with their importance. The latter encompasses a long list ranging from the *Kriegsmarine's* role in executing the *Kommandobefehl* to Raeder's obsessive micromanaging of operations, his incapacity to effectively put his views across to other leaders of the Third Reich, or his relationship with Karl Dönitz and their opposing strategic views. Perhaps worst of all, the author repeatedly hints at the negative impact which the overall lack of *Luftwaffe* air support had on *Kriegsmarine* operations, while completely ignoring the one monograph available which has comprehensively discussed all the political, operational, and technological aspects of this multilayered problem: Sönke Neitzel's magisterial *Der Einsatz der deutschen Luftwaffe über dem Atlantik und der Nordsee* (Bonn: Bernard & Graefe, 1995). Such an omission is more than just bizarre, it raises the question of whether the second half of this biography was written in an almighty rush. The book ends rather abruptly with Raeder's death, leaving the reader to draw his own conclusions. This is regrettable since Bird had given every indication in his excellent introduction that he is thoroughly familiar with all the key debates about German naval power in the 20th century. In the end, Erich Raeder remains something of a puzzle. Most of his army peers, while allowing themselves to be thoroughly corrupted by the regime, still managed to retain a high level of – admittedly technical – professionalism. Raeder, on the other hand, both sold his soul and turned out to be an utterly inept naval commander whose baleful influence on his service probably rivalled that of Tirpitz. Pattern or fluke?

As previously mentioned, Dieter Hartwig has abandoned the well-trodden paths of biographical writings to present the reader with a collection of biographical studies seeking to illuminate different phases or themes in the life of Karl Dönitz. By his own admission, he has lectured repeatedly on the subject of the second commander in chief of the *Kriegsmarine* and it does not come as a surprise that some of the chapters read like lecture manuscripts. This reviewer cannot remember a single instance where he has come across such a mixed bag of article-length contributions which were all penned by the same author. Strangely enough, those most obviously deserving of a rating of "very good" or "excellent" tend to be those where the author – whether by accident or design – allowed himself to be sidetracked from his thematic approach and just went with the chronological flow of his subject's life. The second chapter dwells on the intake of naval cadets who went to naval academy with Karl Dönitz and introduces some of its better known members, a well-known post-1918 pacifist among them. The fact that he and Dönitz managed to stay on very good terms until the latter's death is a remarkable testament to the human cohesion which was a hallmark of the intakes of the Imperial Navy. Much the same can be said for chapter twelve,

which focuses on the post-war navy's attempts to keep a distance from the admiral after his release from Spandau prison, while making allowances for the fact that many of its senior officers held sentiments not entirely in tune with this policy. Chapter thirteen tells the story of the few public appearances Dönitz allowed himself after the war and the public reactions which followed. This gives a fascinating insight into the shifting public mood of the Federal Republic of the 1960s. Chapter fourteen takes up the same theme, but from a different perspective. It addresses the preparations which the defense ministry began making for the admiral's funeral and gives the reader an inside view of the tug of war which went on for several years between politicians, soldiers, and senior civil servants about how to find a compromise solution which would avoid the embarrassment which followed the quasi-official funeral given to admiral Raeder in 1960. This chapter draws its strength from copious primary sources, some of them only recently released – it is obvious that it is the result of original research. The remaining chapters address issues as disparate as the support shown to Dönitz by most of his peers (chapter three) as well as many foreigners (chapter six) throughout his entire life, the thoughts of some early critics (chapter four), the U-boat war (chapters seven and eight), his role in organizing the flight of German civilians before the Red Army (chapter nine), the casualties which were the direct or indirect result of his unrestricted approach to total war (chapter ten), as well as his commitment to National Socialist ideology (chapter eleven). There are two basic problems with this approach. First, it soon becomes clear that, unlike Keith Bird, Hartwig does not believe in a user-friendly narrative. Anyone not already thoroughly familiar with all the ins and outs of the history of three German navies (Weimar Republic, Third Reich, Federal Republic) will soon enough find themselves crashing against the rocks of some long-forgotten scandal or admiralty power-struggle mentioned only in passing, but often important to understand the wider context of what the author is trying to convey. This reviewer, to give but one example, served as a peer-review reader for most chapters of the MGFA's eighth volume of *Das Deutsche Reich und der Zweite Weltkrieg*. As a result, he is quite familiar with the naval and military operations which make up the total of the Kurland battles (in present-day Latvia) of 1944/45. Even this previous knowledge was not enough to allow him to keep up with the author's narrative on the prioritization, sequencing, or even destination of Baltic convoys in early 1945. Second, and to make matters worse, due to the thematic approach, much of the information which he does make available is disseminated across various chapters or buried in the footnotes. As a result, repetition alternates with gaps. This is all the more regrettable since it is obvious to anyone familiar with the history of the *Kriegsmarine* in World War II that Dieter Hartwig possesses a vast knowledge of the subject.

An entirely different problem stems from the fact that, conceptually, this book suffers from an Achilles heel not too uncommon among contemporary German military history. This is to say, that to a very large extent it is military history without war. Out of a total of 400 pages of text and footnotes, a

grand total of forty deal with the subject which would have kept Karl Dönitz busy throughout most days of every working week from September 1939 to April 1945: the implementation of submarine warfare against the Western Allies.

To this day, even defenders of Dönitz struggle to condone his willingness to accept monthly casualty rates not far off 50% in the last two years of the war. While this is true, Hartwig does not really engage to the necessary degree with the primary sources (especially the war diaries of the *Seekriegsleitung* and the *Befehlshaber der U-Boote*), which would have told him what exactly Dönitz knew and when. He is particularly insistent on the criminal folly of sending his men back to tackle the Atlantic convoys in September 1943, four months after a near-catastrophic defeat in May of the same year. While his condemnation is essentially justified, he considerably weakens his case by completely omitting to mention the fact that they went into battle with the world's first genuine fire-and-forget weapon (the T 5 acoustic torpedo), which managed to make quite an impact on the first night of the battle for convoy ONS 18 (three escorts sunk, one crippled). The Allies would eventually implement reasonably effective counter-measures to this new threat and U-boat losses would rise again, but both the initial success as well as the overestimation of the T 5's kill rate<sup>24</sup> led Dönitz to believe for a time that he had a potential campaign winner on his hands. Facts of this kind cannot be swept under the carpet if justice is to be done to Dönitz as a naval commander.

Again, real gems can be found in the two chapters dealing with the Battle of the Atlantic, which indicate that the author has a stupendous knowledge of the subject matter, but is reluctant to make the most of it. A brief reference in a footnote to the less-than-expected diving depth of the new Type XXI U-boat<sup>25</sup> is hugely important for the very simple reason that Dönitz rationalized many of his decisions in 1944/45 based on the supposed impact which this new generation of U-boats would have when deployed in sizeable numbers in the spring and summer of 1945. The impact they might conceivably have had is still a matter of debate among naval historians to this date<sup>26</sup> and prior knowledge on the part of Dönitz that their performance might fall well below expectations would indeed be a major black mark against his

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24. U-boat commanders were instructed to dive deep immediately after discharging a T 5. Failure to do so could result in the torpedo homing in on the noise of its mother ship's propellers. As a result, it was often difficult to assess the results of a shot visually. Acoustic confirmation tended to be unreliable because a number of T 5s detonated in the target vessel's propwash. Once the Allies introduced noise-making decoys ("Foxers"), which were pulled along by the escort, it became even more difficult to distinguish between a T 5 detonating on target or thirty yards behind it. In total, T 5s would account for fifty-three Allied escorts and two "Jeep" carriers between September 1943 and April 1945. David Brown, *Warship Losses of World War Two* (London: Arms and Armour, 1996, rev. ed.).

25. Hartwig, *Dönitz*, p. 343, fn. 31.

26. See the discussion on this subject in Blair, *Hitler's U-boat War: The Hunters*, pp. ix-xiii.

name. In a similar vein, for the Battle of the Atlantic to make any sense at all, Dönitz needed to know how many ships his commanders were accounting for. He appears to have trusted them implicitly (referring to the *Kriegsmarine's* war record in 1945 with the words: "Wir sind eine ehrliche Firma"<sup>27</sup>). Keeping in mind that successful U-boat commanders were lionized by the media like ace fighter pilots, it is easy to see that for at least some of them, temptation would have been lurking just around the corner. The author's refusal to break new ground by discussing this problem (again, only two obvious overclaimers are mentioned in as many footnotes) is nothing short of infuriating. Did he not see the obvious relevance of this subject or did he sense that a thorough investigation might not yield the results he wanted? That Hartwig does have an agenda becomes abundantly clear in his discussion of the Laconia order. As readers of *Global War Studies* will know, this order was issued after a major rescue operation of survivors of the SS *Laconia* by *U-156* (*Korvettenkapitän* Werner Hartenstein) in September 1942 tied down several Axis submarines and very nearly resulted in the loss of Hartenstein's boat to an American bomber. The Laconia order stated unambiguously that survivors of ships sunk by a U-boat were no longer to receive any assistance in whatever form. Both the prosecution at the Nürnberg war crimes tribunal and, more recently, British historian John Terraine<sup>28</sup> have made the case that the Laconia order also implied the murder of survivors in their lifeboats by whatever means happened to be convenient (shelling, ramming, machine-gunning). Even though Hartwig devotes rather more space to this subject than Terraine did, three and a half pages are still not nearly enough in view of the gravity of the matter. Quite apart from the fact that much of the evidence he presents is based on hearsay, he fails to address one very simple problem: even if the flotilla commanders in France and Norway (as Hartwig appears to imply) were encouraged to pass on a "homicidal" variant of the Laconia order to their U-boat commanders orally and just a fraction of them then took this as their cue to murder survivors in the water the first time such an opportunity presented itself, we are still left with an embarrassing dearth of evidence. As the numerous cases where the Imperial Japanese Navy in the Pacific disposed of enemy survivors have made clear, it could be surprisingly difficult to account for every single individual who might be clinging to wreckage or the underside of a life raft. Even hours of scouring the general area of a sinking – often in failing light – could still leave several of them alive after the enemy vessel departed for new hunting grounds. This means quite simply that in view of the sheer scale of U-boat warfare in 1942/45, we should have records for at least 20-30 such cases instead of the one we know of.<sup>29</sup> It is difficult to escape the

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27. "We are an honest company" (author's translation).

28. John Terraine, *Business in Great Waters: The U-boat Wars, 1916-1945* (London: Leo Cooper, 1989), pp. 466-75, esp. pp. 472-74.

29. The machine-gunning of the survivors of the SS *Peleus* in March 1944 by *U-852* (*Kapitänleutnant* Heinz Eck) was thoroughly investigated after the war in the course of

conclusion that the author just decided to present the circumstantial evidence which he had, without properly weighing the pros and cons.

The ultimate paradox of this book is that for somebody so keen to put Karl Dönitz back in the dock of history, Hartwig actually misses a trick or two. The last attempt made by the *Kriegsmarine* to interdict the Arctic convoys with surface units ended with the sinking of the battlecruiser *Scharnhorst* and very heavy loss of life in December 1943. The entire idea behind the operation, the manner in which it was implemented, and Dönitz' fumbling attempts to justify himself for it during and after the war show the admiral at his very nadir both as a naval leader and a human being. This episode alone would have warranted a whole chapter entirely based on primary sources; Hartwig disposes of it in barely a page.

The only conclusion to be drawn at this stage is that the expectation that the lives of Raeder and Dönitz have finally received the scholarly attention due to them has been disappointed. Keith Bird's work at least can serve as a scholarly introduction to Raeder's personality, and it is user-friendly and readable. In Hartwig's case, we are left with a collection of essay-style chapters which offer some genuine insights into the impact which Dönitz had on his contemporaries and post-war German society. As far as his role during the Third Reich is concerned, the author essentially buries the reader under an avalanche of names, facts, and suggestions for future research, some of which are relevant, others less, but all have one thing in common: a lack of structure and the reluctance on behalf of the author to set aside at least 100 pages in order to judge Dönitz by the same yardstick he would use in assessing the career of any other senior naval commander: his effectiveness as a military leader.

It is thus unavoidable that this article should finish on a note of disappointment. A discerning reader looking back on more than half a century of *Kriegsmarine* historiography would have to note that not only do we still want for scholarly biographies of the two commanders-in-chief, but that there is also a veritable vacuum with regards to studies of other leading personalities. Ideally, these could take the form of a "group" biography of the kind recently presented by Johannes Hürter for the generals who served in the East during the first twelve months of the war there, and which probed deeply into their personalities and deeds on and off the battlefield.<sup>30</sup> In the case of the *Kriegsmarine*, exploring the human dimension of its leaders in

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the war crimes tribunal which condemned Eck and two of his officers to death. It has been alleged that the sinking in July 1944 of the fishing trawler *Noreen Mary* by *U-247* (*Oberleutnant zur See* Gerhard Matschulat) belongs in the same category on account of the ruthless manner in which it was carried out. The only account of this incident, though purporting to quote from official documents, lacks source notes. See Tony Bridgland, *Waves of Hate: Naval Atrocities of the Second World War* (Barnsley: Leo Cooper, 2002), pp. 146-55.

30. Johannes Hürter, *Hitler's Heerführer: Die deutschen Oberbefehlshaber im Krieg gegen die Sowjetunion 1941/42* (München: Oldenbourg, 2006).



general is an endeavor which so far has only been attempted twice: in 1987 Eric Christian Rust delved into the careers of an entire officer intake of the naval academy,<sup>31</sup> while six years later Timothy Mulligan gave us an excellent biography of a relatively little-known U-boat ace.<sup>32</sup> Much more work along these lines remains to be done.

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31. Eric Christian Rust, "Crew 34: German Naval Officers Under and After Hitler," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Texas at Austin, 1987.

32. Timothy Mulligan, *Lone Wolf: The Life and Death of U-boat Ace Werner Henke* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1993).

# The Air War in East Africa, 1940-41

JAMES D. SCUDIERI

*Air War East Africa, 1940-1941: The RAF versus the Italian Air Force.* By Jon Sutherland and Diane Canwell. Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2009. Illustrations. Maps. Index. Cloth. Pp. 192.

The Mediterranean has long established itself as a sideshow theater of the Second World War. The Campaign in East Africa is arguably a sideshow within that sideshow. The authors narrow the focus further with their concentration upon aerial operations. *Air War East Africa, 1940-1941* reads as a relatively straightforward account which is intended for a more general audience, one with whom the East African Campaign strikes special notes of unfamiliarity.

The Introduction articulates well the vastness of the region and the unpreparedness of both sides to conduct large-scale operations. Seven well-executed maps go far to set the locale in its operational and tactical contexts, though their positioning, all at the beginning of the book, requires considerable page flipping later. Chapter One covers a lot of ground. There is a brief survey of Italian colonial interventions in the region, culminating with the Ethiopian invasion of 1935. The balance of the chapter surveys early war-time strategic and operational situations and forces available in the theater.

The preliminary coverage is as wide as it is ambitious, and results in challenges. While footnotes or endnotes are not in vogue in contemporary "non-scholarly" publishing, this work would have benefitted from them. The use of so many statistics raises the question of sources, itself a topic for future discussion.

Furthermore, the authors go beyond mere narrative survey. They make several sweeping generalizations, ranging from the simplistic to the outright inaccurate. For example, the blanket statement that Italian East Africa was a hotbed of simmering revolt raises controversy without substantiation.<sup>1</sup> The contention requires considerable analysis, given the Duca d'Aosta's sweeping administrative changes and attitude as Governor after replacing General Rodolfo Graziani in 1937.

More significantly, their blanket categorization of the Italian armed forces lacks authority and accuracy. They dismiss both the Italian Army and Air Force as mere colonial forces and the blackshirts as territorial forces with no further elaboration. Native units were terrified of artillery and "led by aloof

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1. Sutherland and Canwell, *Air War East Africa*, p. 8.

Italian officers on horseback.<sup>2</sup> The realities of Italian national finances, industrial capability and capacity, fascist politicization of institutions, inadequate military doctrine, the binary reorganization of the Army divisions, and the growing obsolescence of frontline Italian aircraft are all missing.

Arguably, a monograph on air operations should not stray so far afield, even in its preliminaries, but success requires very careful crafting of summaries and overviews. One problem is that the authors paraphrased much from a passage in *Dust Clouds in the Middle East*.<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, the ensuing text lacks sufficient qualification and precision of language, thus creating simplistic and/or inaccurate renderings. Comments at best applicable to the forces solely in the East African theater instead imply reference to the Italian armed forces in general.

The outline of the amazingly heterogeneous collection of aircraft on both sides in this campaign is fascinating reading. The informed may wonder why they take the time to describe certain types with fixed landing gear and not others of similar design. More specifically, the Hawker Hart was not an Army cooperation type like its Hardy and Audax derivatives, but rather a light day bomber.<sup>4</sup> Reading the array of deployed air forces was tedious and a task organization list or order of battle would have been more effective.

The authors generally integrate the operations in the air with operations on the ground fairly well. They also have some coverage on the Royal Navy in the Red Sea and the eclipse of the *Regia Marina*.

The final chapter has an excellent outline of the Italians' little-known guerrilla war, which continued after their formal surrender. Yet the rest of the chapter then switches subjects completely to provide capsule biographies of selected Italian pilots. Similarly, all but one of the Appendices discuss only the Italians. Appendix One lists British claims of downed aircraft, but not Italian claims. Appendices Two through Four then cover a portrait of a single Italian pilot, Alberto Gobbo; *Regia Aeronautica* organization on 10 June 1940; and finally, Italian aircraft production figures. A comparative analysis of the opposing air forces would have been more useful.

One is hard pressed to avoid the assessment that this work is under-researched, affecting the overall presentation of both the air and ground elements. The bibliography lists only fifteen sources. While the East African Campaign has hardly produced an explosion of literature, there are some puzzling and significant omissions.

The authors strive hard to set the stage operationally for the British in the Middle East, yet they make no reference to the superb monograph on Wavell as Commander-in-Chief, Middle East.<sup>5</sup> They list two wartime British War

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2. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

3. Christopher Shores, *Dust Clouds in the Middle East: The Air War for East Africa, Iraq, Syria, Iran and Madagascar, 1940-42* (London: Grub Street, 1996), p. 5.

4. Sutherland and Canwell, *Air War East Africa*, p. 26.

5. Harold E. Rough, Jr., *Wavell in the Middle East, 1939-1941: A Study in Generalship* (London: Brassey's, 1993).

Office documents and the South African Official History, but missing are the relevant volumes in the British and Indian Official Histories.<sup>6</sup>

Specifically regarding the air war, the authors cite the detailed work by Shores, *Dust Clouds in the Middle East*, but make no mention of Boyne's survey of World War II air forces, a helpful overview and starting point.<sup>7</sup> Likewise, the relevant volumes in the RAF and South African Official Histories are absent.<sup>8</sup>

This review no doubt reads as mixed at best, if not outright negative. *Air War East Africa, 1940-1941* is a praiseworthy effort that highlights an early Allied success during otherwise dark days. Unfortunately, it falls short of what it could have been. Recommended with reservations.

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6. I.S.O. Playfair et al., *The Mediterranean and Middle East*, Vol. 1, *The Early Successes against Italy (to May 1941)* (London: HMSO, 1954); I.S.O. Playfair et al., *The Mediterranean and Middle East*, Vol. 2, *The Germans come to the Help of their Ally* (London: HMSO, 1956); and N.A. Qureshi, Dharm Pal, K.N. Pandey, and Bisheshwar Prasad, *East African Campaign, 1940-41* (Delhi: Combined Inter-Services Historical Section, 1963).

7. Walter J. Boyne, *Clash of Wings: World War II in the Air* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994).

8. Denis Richards and Hilary St. George Saunders, *Royal Air Force, 1939-1945*, Volume 1, *The Fight at Odds* (London: HMSO, 1954); and James Ambrose Brown, *A Gathering of Eagles: The Campaigns of the South African Air Force in Italian East Africa, June 1940 – November 1941* (Cape Town: Purnell, 1970).

# Book Reviews

***Mussolini's War: Fascist Italy's Military Struggles from Africa and Western Europe to the Mediterranean and Soviet Union 1935-45.*** By Frank Joseph. Solihull: Helion, 2010. Illustrations. Maps. Notes. Cloth. Pp. 237.

Generally, any new book written on Italy's 1935-1945 wars should be welcomed. It is now a *lieu commun* to say that American, British, and German scholars have neglected the role and the importance of Italy before and during the Second World War. But this is not a lasting consequence of Allied wartime disinformation as proposed by Frank Joseph. The reasons, and there are some obvious ones, lie elsewhere. First and foremost, few non-Italian scholars can read Italian. Second, Italian military archives are very rich, but not easily accessible. And third, the Italian military official histories and the most important works dealing with this period have not been and may never be translated in English. The conjunction of these elements explains more than anything else.

The author of *Mussolini's War*, Frank Joseph, is neither a scholar nor a professional historian, but this is not a reason to disregard, *a priori*, his work. The problem is not so much the author's background, but rather the objective of the undertaking: "a blow-by-blow recreation of the Second World War from the Italian perspective divested of its dated propaganda trappings, resulting in an unsuspected revision of our understanding of the *Duce's* armed forces, their performances in North Africa, the Mediterranean, France, Britain and Russia, together with his own leadership abilities" (p. 10). This is an amazingly ambitious project, one that necessitates a deep, extensive, and thorough knowledge of the current historiography and of the Italian military archives. Today, sixty-five years after the end of the war, only a very small group of Italian and non-Italian scholars share this knowledge.

Frank Joseph proposes an overview of the Fascist military campaigns, from the Ethiopian war of 1935-36 until the death of Mussolini in April 1945. For this purpose, the author uses supposedly "original, often neglected, recently disclosed source materials" (from the blurb inside the book jacket). Joseph presents what he considers to be the most important issues and topics related to Mussolini's foreign policies and the employment of the Italian *forze armate* during this critical ten year period. His intention is clear: to propose a new understanding of Mussolini's strategies and a reappraisal of the armed forces' performance, especially during World War II.

To fulfill his task, Joseph produces nineteen chapters totalling only 237 pages, including the introduction and the very short bibliography. In his introduction, the author takes no more than two pages to explain his work, his main ideas, and his methodology. There is no room here to present and dis-

cuss each chapter, but two general comments are necessary. First, the coherence of the chapters is very inconsistent. Some chapters covering very important episodes of Mussolini's wars and campaigns (chapter 1 on the invasion of Ethiopia, chapter 7 on the role of the Italian navy in the Mediterranean, chapter 11 on the Italian participation in the Russian campaign) are truly relevant and their presence in such a book is totally justified. Unfortunately, some others are simply anecdotal. For instance, in chapter 6, Joseph presents the deployment of Italian planes and aircrews in Belgium in the summer of 1940 and praises the Fiat CR.42 in an unnecessary way. In chapter 8, he describes the role of Italian submarines in the naval war, but again, he focuses more on individual exploits than on a rigorous analysis of the fleet's possibilities and shortcomings. In chapter 18, he proposes that the Axis powers "outstripped the Allies' nuclear research in almost all respects" (p. 210). German science excelled in aerodynamics, guided weapons, and missiles, but there is still today no scientific evidence proving that Heisenberg's team came close to making an atomic bomb. In the case of an Italian bomb, Joseph writes that one day, when the British intelligence archives are fully investigated, the truth will be known. Compared to the fundamental relevance of other chapters, the insertion of these chapters breaks the coherence of the book.

The second element deals with historical rigor. There are numerous historical mistakes or areas that lack precision, and following are some examples. When discussing the Ethiopian war, Joseph mentions that the "*Duce's* 300,000 troops were outnumbered by three-to-one odds" (p. 23). At the opening of the offensive, according to Rochat and Ceva, in Eritrea there were 110,000 Italian troops, supported by 50,000 *Ascari*. In Somalia, another 50,000 men were ready for action against the Ethiopian forces. But more importantly, Italian reinforcements were massive: in June 1936, more than 450,000 troops supported by an additional 100,000 military workers were present in East Africa. Lucio Ceva estimates the Ethiopian forces at 250,000 men, and Giorgio Rochat at 300,000. Joseph is right to offer a full chapter on the Italian intervention in the Spanish Civil War in which more than 70,000 Italian troops took part (p. 32), but at the end of the same chapter, he talks about the "37,000 Italian troops" that saved Spain from Stalin's greed. A typo? The commanding officer of the French *armée des Alpes* that will brilliantly oppose the Italian invasion in June 1940 is General Olry, not Orly, which is the name of an airport in the vicinity of Paris. Joseph writes that the Italian invasion of Greece began on 23 October 1940 (p. 65). In fact, it started five days later, on 28 October. In the opening pages of chapter 6, he discusses simultaneously the misfortunes of the Italian armies in North Africa and East Africa. It is worth quoting:

On New Year's Eve 1941, after three days of continuous fighting, a pair of Indian Divisions and two more Indian Infantry Brigades forced the Italian Army to withdraw from the Keren Plateau. Four days later, 30,000 British troops attacked its 23,000 defenders. First the Indians,

then the Scots were beaten back, as the Italians held the line for almost seven weeks. On 27 March, they were forced to evacuate the plateau, leaving behind 3,000 dead. But a general collapse had been staved off, and Graziani's position, however fragile, stabilized. (p. 74)

It is true that the battle of Keren was an example of Italian fighting power. The Italian commander at Keren, General Frusci, was an excellent officer, serving under the Duke of Aosta, the able commandant of all Italian forces in East Africa. And yes, Italian fatalities were around 3,000 men. But one might wonder about the meaning of the last sentence. From 9 December 1940 and until the final defeat of Beda Fomm, 2 February 1941, Graziani and his forces were incapable of stopping General Richard O'Connor's offensive in North Africa and only 8,000 men escaped to Tripolitania. By the end of March 1941 (more precisely, 24 March), Graziani was relieved of all his duties. I could continue with more examples of the same.

The lack of coherence and rigor is probably related to the very uninspiring use of sources, and more importantly, the lack of the most important ones. Consequently, Joseph's book does not meet the expectations in terms of historiographical depth. The major works written in Italian on the same topic are absent from the endnotes and the bibliography. Lucio Ceva's unrivaled *Storia delle forze armate in Italia* (Torino: UTET, 1999); the wonderful work by Giorgio Rochat, *Le guerre italiane 1935-1943: Dall'impero d'Etiopia alla disfatta* (Torino: Einaudi, 2005); the detailed and fine works of Mario Montanari, *L'esercito italiano nella campagna di Grecia* (Rome: Ufficio Storico, 1991) and *Le operazioni in Africa settentrionale*, 4 vols. (Rome: Ufficio Storico, 1991-2006), should be compulsory reading for everyone interested in these topics. One might wonder if Joseph is aware of these essential sources.

But the absence of Italian sources is not the only major problem. On too many occasions Joseph neglected works that are fundamental for the understanding of specific topics. On the Spanish Civil War and the Italian involvement, John Coverdale's *Italian Intervention in the Spanish Civil War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975) is still the best study published in English, and Alberto Rovighi and Filippo Stefani, *La partecipazione italiana alla guerra civile spagnola, 1936-1939*, 2 vols. (Rome: SMEUS, 1992-93) presents the Italian perspective in a very rigorous and detailed way. On the invasion of Ethiopia and on Italian East Africa, the many works of Giorgio Rochat and of Angelo Del Boca are also missing. When discussing the role of the Italian Navy in the Mediterranean between 1940 and 1943, Joseph uses the work of Bragadin, but he totally neglects the many articles and the book by James J. Sadkovich, *The Italian Navy in World War II* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994). And there are many other historiographical omissions. Hence, Joseph's claim that he produced a revisionist work is not supported by such a select and narrow bibliography.

Perhaps the most serious flaws of *Mussolini's War* are some very doubtful interpretations made by the author. Following are some examples. Joseph

points out that the invasion of Ethiopia and the subsequent victory was a great success for the fascist regime and the *Duce*. This is correct. The war was the most popular one undertaken by Mussolini and the victory consolidated *il consenso*. But, the intervention in the Spanish Civil War is another story and Joseph is wrong when he writes that "Italian military prestige at home and abroad soared" and that "Such a decisive victory seemed to confirm Mussolini's capable leadership and the superiority of his armed forces" (p. 40). For Ceva, Rochat, and De Felice, the battle of Guadalajara was more than a military setback; it was a major political defeat for Mussolini and his regime, and despite a military recovery, the war became a burden for Italy. Martin Clark referred to the Italian intervention in the war as a "diplomatic disaster." The victory of 1936 did not repeat itself in 1939.

Another example of the author's lack of historical awareness manifests itself when he writes that Mussolini "had more trouble with Paris politicians. They refused to recognize his contribution to their defeat" (p. 54). In fact, the Italians did not defeat the *armée des Alpes*. It also appears that during this critical period it was Hitler, and not the politicians in Paris, who gave Mussolini trouble (see Mario Montanari, *Politica e strategia in cento anni di guerre italiane*, Vol. III, Part II, Rome: SMEUS, 2007, pp. 199-225, and the work of Giorgio Rochat and Richard Carrier in *Revue Historique des Armées*, No. 250 (2008), pp. 77-84 and pp. 85-93).

But one of the most surprising examples of historical "re-interpretation" comes in chapter 5. Joseph writes about Mussolini's decision to invade Greece: "Accordingly, he decided to invade Greece as a major diversionary strategy, hoping the British would draw away enough of their forces to make a critical difference in Africa" (p. 64). Galeazzo Ciano, the Italian Foreign Minister and Mussolini's son-in-law, proposes a different interpretation:

But above all he is indignant at the German occupation of Rumania. "Hitler always faces me with a *fait accompli*. This time I am going to pay him back in his own coin. He will find out from the papers that I have occupied Greece. In this way the equilibrium will be re-established." (12 October 1940, *The Ciano Diaries 1939-1943*, Garden City, NY: Simon Publications, 2001)

The invasion of Greece took place after Mussolini decided on 10 October to demobilize 600,000 men from the army. The invasion was a masterpiece of improvisation and a brutal display of strategic myopia from Mussolini, Ciano, and the Italian military leadership. It is true that Mussolini expected the renewal of Graziani's offensive in Egypt, but it is also a fact that he changed his mind. In a letter to Marshal Graziani, Mussolini wrote that the "most important front is now the Greek front" (see Mario Montanari, *Le operazioni in Africa Settentrionale*, Vol. 1, Rome: SMEUS, 1990, p. 149). Marshal Badoglio acknowledged this *volte-face* in a meeting of the *Comando Supremo* on 1 November 1940. Far from being a diversion, the Greek campaign became the most important campaign for the Italian Army for the next five months. For almost six weeks after the invasion of Greece,



it was "all quiet on the North African front" until Richard O'Connor's troops took the offensive on 9 December 1940 and successfully defeated all forms of resistance from the Italian 10th Army. And it is only in early February 1941, not November 1940, that Churchill decided to halt O'Connor's offensive in order to send forces into Greece. Far from being the diversion imagined by Joseph, the Italian invasion of Greece nearly became a complete fiasco.

I am afraid this book will not get a warm welcome from the small group of Italian and non-Italian specialists of the military history of this period. The work does not meet expectations, and the promise of a revisionist understanding of Mussolini's wars is not kept. If Joseph's good words about the Italian soldiers, pilots, and navy crews are welcome commentary, his praise of Mussolini as a great strategist is historically unsound. Should military historians forgive the numerous and very serious limitations of this book? I believe that question will have to be answered by the reader.

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***A Hard Way to Make a War: The Allied Campaign in Italy in the Second World War.*** By Ian Gooderson. London: Conway, 2008. Illustrations. Maps. Notes. Appendix. Index. Cloth. Pp. 352.

On a cold January afternoon in 2005 a small group of soon to be operational planners found themselves winding up tortuous mountain roads characteristic of Italy beyond the *Autostrada*. Clambering off the bus at the onset of twilight with the sky transitioning from orange to deep hues of purple, the lights of the rebuilt monastery atop Monte Cassino floated like an island in the distance. As the dean of Marine Corps University explained, sometimes you need to gain a little altitude to gain a better operational perspective. That is exactly what Ian Gooderson has accomplished for the entire Mediterranean land campaign beginning with the preparation for the invasion of Sicily and culminating with the collapse of Fortress Europe's southern front. Not only does he deliver what is promised, an operational overview, but he does it with a consistent eye for the synergy gained through well executed joint operations and the limitations imposed when all the forces cannot be brought to bear. *A Hard Way to Make a War* never lets the reader stray from the overall strategic context that defines the operational events. Periodic glimpses into the tactical level of war remind the reader that the world of the soldier is quite unlike the realm of pins on maps and brave speeches at conference tables.

The first five chapters focus on operations in Sicily and establish the thematic construct used throughout the book: a brief strategic context, an ex-

ploration of the specific issues related to planning, an understanding of the means available to achieve the ends desired, an operational overview of the actual execution, and a brief review of the tactical face of battle that characterized the operation. For Sicily, at the strategic scene-setting level, Gooderson deftly negotiated the controversy associated with the Allied pronouncement on unconditional surrender and established an important *leitmotif* of resource constraint as the real strategic thrust was always envisioned for Western Europe. This reviewer felt as if he were back in the classroom at times with Gooderson almost saying, "Wake up future planner; look at what these men had to contend with and how well they did given the myriad constraints, time limitations, and above all, the fact that they were still trying to finish the ongoing operation in North Africa!" Both the Axis and Allies are given their due, but the importance of Allied airpower emerges as a critical factor as well as Montgomery's voice of experience with respect to the dispersion of land forces. During the execution chapter, Patton emerges as a dynamic army commander, but in Gooderson's operational treatment he dodges yet another verdict of history for his, at times, equally dynamic interaction with soldiers. If anything, the Allies are let off easy for their failure to close the Straits of Messina. The brief examination of Sicily from the soldier's perspective is but an early indicator of things to come.

Success on Sicily quickly begged the question: What next? But did it? Not really, as Gooderson explains, given the tight sequence of operations, mostly a function of maintaining pressure on the deteriorating Axis, the planners once again had to begin planning for the next operation without knowing how things would finish in Sicily. Having explained this, one of the book's most interesting and useful chapters plumbs the depths of the military-political negotiations with the crumbling Italian regime. If one thought Mark Clark's mission to Darlan in Algeria was interesting, contemplating Walter Bedell Smith prowling the cobblestone streets of Lisbon with Italian interlocutors is at least in the same league. If most of the book speaks to operational issues, this important foray into the strategic level has exceptional relevance even today when considering the challenges of conflict termination. The unconditional surrender policy certainly played a role, but as the author concluded, the German response was far more important to the events that ensued after the Allies arrived on mainland Italy.

In three chapters, two of which could hardly be called brief essays, the Allies fight their way ashore, Clark's Fifth Army more so than Montgomery's veterans in the south. Again the joint aspects of the ensuing operations are highlighted with concise explanations on the limits of airpower, the importance of naval gunfire in the near-run affair at Salerno, and demonstrable learning through the use of carrier-based aviation to mitigate the limitations imposed by the tyranny of distance on land-based fighters. This section illustrates the defender's dilemma as well and foreshadows similar events that will occur in June 1944. Not convinced that Kesslering was his man, Hitler equivocates on the rapid dispatch of mobile formations being held in the north for Rommel's intended defense. Although Allied firepower offset the

initial advantage the Germans achieve in the race to build combat power around Salerno, Alexander emerged as the steadying hand when thoughts of embarkation emerged. Once again the Allies come up just short, failing to capture the port of Naples swiftly, setting the stage for the remainder of the book, a long, hard slog north to victory.

Four more short chapters cover the distance from Salerno to Rome. As weather conditions limited the utility of airpower, the troops moved beyond the range of naval support, and terrain became a seemingly active opponent, the learning shifts from the joint arena to that of treacherous ground combat. The utility of mountain specialist emerges, especially French colonials, the limitations of mechanization, and remarkable defensive competence of the German formations charged with delaying the advancing Allied formations. Kesslering, and his ever-present "invasion phobia," emerges as a remarkable field commander, earning Hitler's confidence in the process. No place was this more evident than Anzio. Here Gooderson offers an informative lesson, but perhaps not the one with which most readers are familiar. Kesslering keeps his cool when Churchill's "wildcat" gets tossed on the beach behind the Gustav Line, but why? The succinct description of the immediate reaction – a branch plan – that put forces in motion from as far away as France and the Balkans insured that Lucas and VI Corps would be contained. Why did Lucas fail to dash for Rome when he was nearly unopposed, and why did Clark and Alexander not encourage him to do so? They were on the beach with him, after all. Again, context provides the answer. With OVERLORD only months away, no one was going to offer the Nazi's the chance to destroy an Allied formation delivered by sea. Monte Cassino and the Rapido River proved to be harder problems to solve than the tolerances of Operation SHINGLE could accommodate. Months of stalemate and hard fighting gave way to better weather and prevailing offensive action that afforded one last opportunity for controversy as Clark allowed the Germans to escape while he dashed for Rome and glory.

The balance of the book, in three chapters, sees the war through from the halcyon days of pursuit north of Rome, more grueling mountain fighting akin to that described in earlier chapters, and final victory. Following the established pattern, another chapter allows the words of veterans to describe a broad range of activities that defined their experience fighting in Italy. The final chapter provides a bookend to the first by placing the campaign in the broader tapestry of the entire Second World War. From beginning to end, the Italian Campaign was a compromise. If the commanders seemed to lack imagination, it was a function of constraints and limitations that sometimes seem to be forgotten as one looks backward. There was never enough assault shipping, trained mountain troops, and the Germans repeatedly exercised options contrary to Allied expectations – the enemy always gets a vote. Even so, as the author concludes, aside from being a hard way to make a war for both the Allies and the Germans, it ultimately contributed to the overall victory.

Gooderson's use of primary and secondary sources provides a scholarly

foundation for this well written operational account. Sharp analysis accompanies potentially self-serving contributions drawn from memoirs. Maps, often problematic, are adequate to follow the story outlined in the text, but would need to be supplemented for a more nuanced understanding. A wide selection of photographs compliments the overall presentation. Although leaders appear throughout the text, Gooderson rarely offers more than a glimpse of their individual chemistry. It works well for this operationally focused work, but the reader new to the field or more inclined toward the tactical end of the operational spectrum will be left wanting more.

Gooderson acknowledges the contribution of his students in making this work possible. Having walked a number of the battlefields covered in this work, written about the fighting in Sicily and Italy, and practiced and studied the operational level of war, I can only say that if this book is indicative of Ian Gooderson's mentorship to his students, they have been well served. I expect this book to be the first one plucked from the shelf as I prepare for future staff rides and need to gain the necessary altitude to gain an outstanding operational perspective.

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***The Fall of Hitler's Fortress City: The Battle for Königsberg, 1945.*** By Isabel Denny. London: Greenhill Books, 2007. Illustrations. Maps. Notes. Index. Cloth. Pp. 240.

Isabel Denny's *The Fall of Hitler's Fortress City* disappoints. The avowed purpose of the book is to reveal for the first time in English through first-hand accounts the fate of people caught up in the brutality of the city's fall (preface, p.17). However, the book's reconstruction of the experiences of individuals caught up in the brutality of the fall of Königsberg encompasses about thirty published memoirs and autobiographies backed by approximately ten secondary sources related to the Second World War, Nazi Germany, East Prussia, and the war on the Eastern Front. The source base for the study is therefore very limited.

The book's biggest disappointment is that the majority of the text does not directly address the subject of its title. Instead, the first nine chapters covering 210 pages, provide brief reviews of Königsberg's history and geography, inter-war Königsberg, the rise of Nazism in East Prussia, the treatment of Königsberg's Jews, the early war years, and the war on the Eastern Front. Finally, in Chapter 10, discussion turns to the Soviet advance into East Prussia in January 1945. Not until Chapter 11 is the siege and fall of Königsberg – the supposed focus of the book – discussed. In eighteen pages Denny provides a brief and superficial overview of the siege and fall of the city.

The post-capture fate of Königsberg and its people are summed up in another ten pages. Less than thirty pages out of 240 pages of text address directly the supposed focus of the book, which is very disappointing. While introduction and background is necessary, 7/8ths of the book is massively excessive, as any good editor should know.

The text is supplemented by two maps: a generic street map of Königsberg and a poor map depicting East Prussia in September 1939. No maps show the Soviet advance in January 1945, the escape routes of fleeing East Prussians, the defense of Königsberg, or the course of the siege etc. Some thirty photographs supplement the maps. Some are nice 1920s images of Königsberg, but only a few actually depict the fighting in and around Königsberg in 1945 and the brutal impact of those caught up in it. In addition, there is a four-page chronology which might have been helpful, except that it has only five entries for 1945.

The book offers little that is new about the history, siege, or fate of Königsberg and the people caught up in its brutal fate, bar the personal experiences of about a dozen individuals whose lives were impacted by the fall of the fortress. There is no real examination of Hitler's rationales for declaring Königsberg a fortress and insisting it be defended to the last.

While it is true that there have been few English-language studies of the fate of Königsberg in 1945, Denny's book adds little of real value, originality, or significance beyond encapsulating the impact of the city's fall on a small number of individuals caught up in it. Certainly preserving, compiling, and publishing the terrible consequences of World War II on individuals is a praiseworthy endeavor, but the book's title and dust jacket description promise much more than is delivered. There are better books that examine the terrible consequences of World War II on the cities and people of Eastern Germany.

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***Battleground Prussia: The Assault on Germany's Eastern Front 1944-45.***  
By Prit Buttar. Oxford: Osprey, 2010. Illustrations. Maps. Notes. Index.  
Cloth. Pp. ix, 482.

One of the areas of the Second World War that has not received extensive coverage, at least not in English, is the conclusion of the Russo-German war. What coverage there is focuses primarily on the battle for Berlin. However, in 1945, much of the most intense fighting took place on the flanks of the German Eastern Front. In the south, this centered around the fight for Budapest and the successive German attempts to relieve the garrison and then to re-take the city. In the north, the struggle for East Prussia was as bitter as

any combat during the brutal war between the Germans and the Soviets. Unlike on the other parts of the Eastern Front, the German defense of East Prussia was protracted and by the end of the war small enclaves on the Baltic coast had not yet surrendered.

Osprey Publishing has attempted to fill this void with one of its general military titles. *Battleground Prussia* is not one of Osprey's formatted series titles, but a hardcover totaling almost 500 pages. Within this space, the author seeks to trace the entirety of the struggle for Prussia from late 1944 up until the end of the war.

The account actually starts in October 1944 when the Soviets made their first attempt to break into East Prussia in the aftermath of the decisive defeat of German Army Group Center in June. This late-war Soviet defeat is largely unknown to Western readers. The Soviet operation opened on 16 October with the 3rd Belorussian Front attacking into the heart of East Prussia. With adequate armored reserves in place, the Germans were able to blunt the Soviet drive and by early November, to re-capture almost all that they had lost. In the course of this action, the small town of Nemmersdorf was re-taken and Soviet atrocities revealed. This provided much fodder for the German propaganda machine and did much to stiffen subsequent German determination. This first round set the pattern for the entire campaign – fierce German resistance often anchored on fixed defenses, massive Soviet firepower, and the German civilian population caught in the middle.

The massive Soviet attack beginning on 12 January 1945 included two fronts attacking into Prussia. Within days, the German front in central Poland utterly collapsed, leaving Prussia unsupported. In fact, two of the seven reserve divisions in Prussia were immediately sent south, removing any possibility of a successful defense. In the northern part of Prussia, the 3rd Belorussian Front began a grinding advance and by 26 January the capital city of Königsberg was under artillery fire. In the south, the Second Belorussian Front made a quick breakthrough and by late January had reached the Baltic coast, cutting Prussia off from the rest of Germany.

Throughout the book, a central focus is the fate of the civilians. They were not allowed to flee before the Russian onslaught, and given the speed of the Soviet advance in most areas, they were unable to escape in time when approval for an evacuation was finally given. The author includes many first-hand accounts of the atrocities visited upon the fleeing Germans, providing the most compelling parts of the book. Adding to the suffering was the fact that this mass flight was taking place in the dead of winter, and the Soviet soldiers had good reason to take their revenge on anything German. The result was an orgy of rape and murder, which makes for difficult reading. Another outstanding aspect of the mass flight was the maritime evacuation efforts of the German Navy, which receives much coverage in the book.

By the beginning of February 1945, the Germans were reduced to holding several coastal enclaves. The first to fall was the Heiligenbeil Pocket between Königsberg and Elbing where the remnants of twenty-four divisions

were located. Another indication of the intensity of the fighting was that this isolated pocket did not fall until the last few days of March. Königsberg proved more difficult to take for the Soviets. In mid-February, the Germans counterattacked and re-established contact between the city and the coast. Finally, on 6 April, the Soviets launched a massive attack supported by overwhelming artillery and air power and by 10 April the heavily defended city had fallen.

After the capture of Königsberg, the fight was not over. The bulk of the remaining German forces were left defending the Samland Peninsula west of Königsberg. However, this German grouping was quickly routed when attacked by the Soviets on 13 April, and by 25 April the last remaining large port in the area, Pillau, was captured. However, the Germans did succeed in holding the Hela Peninsula until the end of the war; the marshy Vistula River delta was also held as were areas of the Frische Nehrung.

Overall, the book does a good job of detailing the military aspects of the campaign and provides much coverage of the plight of the civilians. However, the book does suffer from some serious drawbacks. Foremost among these is the very limited use of Russian sources. Making up for this in part is the use of a wide array of German sources, many not available in English. Another weak aspect of the book is the maps. The simple addition of color would have made a significant difference, and this shortcoming is difficult to understand for a publisher so adept at graphic presentation as Osprey. The photograph collection is also somewhat sparse and many of those included have nothing to do with the fighting in Prussia. Nevertheless, the book does an impressive job of portraying the military aspects of the campaign and giving the reader a feel for the desperate and ultimately unsuccessful German attempt to defend Prussia against the Soviets. Those seeking more insight into the non-military aspects of the campaign from a German perspective are advised to consult Alastair Noble's excellent work, *Nazi Rule and the Soviet Offensive in Eastern Germany, 1944-1945, The Darkest Hour* (Portland: Sussex Academic Press, 2009). Unfortunately, there is no comprehensive Soviet account of the campaign available in English.

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***The Korsun Pocket: The Encirclement and Breakout of a German Army in the East, 1944.*** By Niklas Zetterling and Anders Frankson. Philadelphia: Casemate, 2008. Illustrations. Maps. Notes. Index. Cloth. Pp. ix, 374.

In January of 1944 Zhukov set out to destroy General Otto Wöhler's 8th Army and create a Stalingrad on the Dnepr. The 1st and 2nd Ukrainian Fronts trapped two of Wöhler's corps in a pocket around the *shtetl* of Kor-

sun, thus placing Manstein's entire Army Group South in an exceptionally dangerous predicament.

8th Army had taken a terrible beating at Kursk and all units were under strength and inadequately equipped. The troops in the pocket were very much a mixed bag. The elite 5th SS Panzer Division *Wiking* had an outstanding commander in Herbert Otto Gille, but had been hastily patched up after having successfully parried the massive Soviet offensive in Operation Rummyantsev. Hardened veterans of the Division did not take kindly to the inclusion of the Belgians in 5th *SS-Sturmbrigade* Wallonien and had reservations about the Estonian volunteers in the Narwa Battalion, to say nothing of the thousands of wretched Russian auxiliary troops (*Hiwis*) who were prepared to risk their lives serving the enemy in the desperate hope of not being taken prisoner and facing certain death by starvation in a German POW camp. Another elite unit, 1 Battalion SS-Panzer Regiment 26, which had been detached from the *Grossdeutschland* Division, was well equipped, but the troops were inexperienced and had the misfortune to serve under Colonel Büsing, a loudmouth with a Knight's Cross who, unlike Gille, commanded from the rear and blamed his subordinates for his own errors of judgment.

Thanks to the outstanding efforts of the *Luftwaffe*, the troops in the pocket were far better supplied than the 6th Army at Stalingrad and more than 4,000 sick and wounded were evacuated by air, but conditions were still appalling. No soap had been supplied to the army since October, so that hygienic conditions were unspeakable. Troops were plagued by lice and decimated by sickness. In spite of the announcement on the back cover of the book that the Red Army and *Wehrmacht* fought "on equal terms," the Soviets had an almost three-to-one superiority in manpower, four-to-one in artillery, and an overwhelming superiority in armor. There were about six replacements on the Soviet side for every one German. That Wöhler's men managed to survive and fight their way out of the pocket was due more to Soviet problems with command and control, poor communications, uncoordinated movements, and inefficient use of artillery, especially anti-tank guns. The actual breakout was such a shambles that it is hardly worthy of the name. It was made possible by the cover of a snowstorm and dogged determination not to fall into the hands of a merciless enemy. Konev particularly was known to be a bloodthirsty thug favored by Stalin, and his treatment of prisoners was notorious. His swan song, as commander of the Warsaw Pact, was the brutal suppression of the Hungarian uprising in 1956.

This book is a detailed operational account that does precious little to penetrate the fog of war. In large part this is because we are told virtually nothing of what happened above the corps level. Thus, the arguments between Hitler, OHL, and Manstein are overlooked. There is brief mention of Manstein following Hitler's orders to stand fast at whatever cost, but there is no analysis of his attitude towards the *Führer* and how it varies with the account given in his self-serving autobiography. We are given no details of the planning of Operation Wanda, in which Hitler cooked up the fantastic notion of a massive counter-attack that would destroy both Soviet Fronts in



two encirclements, recapture Kiev, and restore the front as it was in January 1943. It is true that this crackpot scheme ended up as a mere relief operation, but we need to know why it was so. Similarly, there is precious little on Soviet planning, so that what went on between Stalin, Zhukov, the *Stavka*, and the two Front commanders, Vatutin and Konev, is largely overlooked. Lacking the details of the overall picture, the reader is left feeling much like Pierre at Borodino. We are given a mass of often confusing detail, spiced with some personal accounts, mostly taken from Anton Meisner's lurid memoirs. More interesting characters involved in the drama, such as the egregious Léon Degrelle, are scarcely mentioned. The maps do nothing to clarify the picture, in fact they often add to the confusion. In many instances, the units mentioned in the text do not appear on the maps, and in one remarkable instance a map purporting to show a plan of attack illustrates the actual engagement.

The astonishing downplaying of the *Wehrmacht's* atrocities in the Soviet Union leaves a very unpleasant taste in the mouth. The bland statement that the "treatment of prisoners on the Eastern front was often deplorable" is a truly remarkable understatement, given that millions of Soviet POWs were systematically starved to death. *Oberfähnrich* Olaf Ehlers gallantly refused to shoot two Soviet prisoners "even though he had seen Soviet soldiers kill Germans who had surrendered." A little further on orders were given that all Soviet prisoners were to be shot. Do the authors really believe that German atrocities were simply a regrettable repayment in kind? An order stating that "violations of international law may under no circumstances occur, or else enemy acts of cruelty against the wounded may be expected" goes without comment.

In any battle of encirclement logistics are critical to those trapped inside the cauldron. Far too little attention is paid to this issue and the role of the *Luftwaffe*, particularly the sterling performance of the "*Tante Ju*" – the antiquated but reliable Junkers JU-52 – in spite of overwhelming Soviet air supremacy, is not given its due.

Soviet historians styled the battle as a second Stalingrad, but this book is far from original in challenging this view. In fact, it tends to exaggerate the *Wehrmacht's* achievement in escaping from the Red Army's clutches, and downplays the Soviet victory. Soviet claims that 75,000 surrendered and 52,000 were killed are indeed preposterous. It is uncertain how many troops were in the pocket, but it was probably less than 60,000. About 36,000 escaped, 19,000 were killed or taken prisoner, and 4,000 sick and wounded were evacuated. Soviet losses were twice that of the Germans, and they destroyed three times more tanks; but they could not sustain such losses, whereas the Soviets still had vast reserves of manpower and materiel. Zetterling and Frankson seem somewhat reluctant to admit that this was indeed a Soviet victory; but six divisions were effectively neutralized and Army Group South had been sent reeling, with Manstein trapped again at Kamenets-Podolsky within a few weeks and relieved of his command. The ground was prepared for Operation Bagration against Army Group Center in June,

which liberated the Soviet Union from the invader.

The production of this book leaves much to be desired. It would seem that the publishers do not provide any editorial assistance. We are presented with all manner of oddities such as "toothbrushing glasses," "turned to his business," "thinking on," "indignance," and the infantry is said to have been "very week." The maps are seldom helpful. The numbering of various units is sometimes incorrect. The endnotes do not always match the text. The index is totally inadequate and there is no bibliography, perhaps to disguise the paucity of sources consulted.

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***May 1940: The Battle for the Netherlands.*** By Herman Amersfoort and Piet Kamphuis, eds. Leiden: Brill, 2010. Illustrations. Maps. Notes. Index. Cloth. Pp. x, 462.

On 1 September 1939 the German military machine sprang to life. It crushed the gallant Poles and then paused. In April 1940 it re-awoke: Denmark quickly fell; Norway would hold out for some months, but with its capital and major southern ports quickly captured, its fate was sealed. The Allies suspected there was more to come, but they did not know the extent of Adolf Hitler's plans, specifically his order of 9 October to prepare for a war of aggression in the west and the plans first issued ten days later which detailed how German forces would occupy the Netherlands, Belgium, and northern France. On 10 May 1940, all units received special orders from Hitler. The *Führer* ended these with the following call:

What we have seen as a growing threat for many months has now happened. Under cover of a gigantic diversionary manoeuvre in south-eastern Europe, England and France are trying to get into the Ruhr area through Holland and Belgium. Soldiers of the Western Front! That means your time has come! The battle starting today will decide the fate of the German nation for the next thousand years. Do your duty! The German people are with you with their wishes for victory. (pp. 134-35)

With this call, *Fall Gelb* began and Army Group B launched the largest German advance of the war to date. More than 750,000 troops began the march westwards.

This important new addition to the historiography of the early campaigns of the Second World War is much anticipated and greatly welcomed. Those interested in the German campaigns fought throughout the spring of 1940 will no doubt have been aware of the Dutch-language volume published fifty

years later which provided a "critical analysis" of the five-day war fought between Germany and Holland. As its editors acknowledged, this had provided "an explanation for this crushing defeat which the Dutch armed forces suffered at the hands of the German *Wehrmacht*" (p. ix). Updated in 2005 it remained, however, inaccessible to the vast majority, in part due to the limited numbers of the initial print run, but also more commonly – certainly in the case of this reviewer – an inability to follow the Dutch text. There have been other important studies published in English, perhaps most notably Lieutenant Colonel E.H. Brongers' absorbing *The Battle for the Hague, 1940* (Soesterberg: Aspekt, 2004). The publication now of *May 1940* not just as a translated work but as a revised edition incorporating the latest research, at last offers, however, a definitive account of what in many respects proved to be a critical phase of the wider military conflict.

The first three chapters deal with the pre-war and pre-invasion period. Two of these focus on Germany looking at both the political and military dimensions. These inevitably confirm the now familiar story of the inter-war years, the rise in Germany of National Socialism, followed swiftly by rearmament and expansion culminating with the attack on Poland. Perhaps drawing its title from Winston Churchill's celebrated description of events, one of the chapters, "Gathering Storm," provides an extremely well researched account, drawing heavily on a wealth of German sources, of how the country's military readied itself for war. Poland's rapid destruction leads on to the planning for westwards operations. During a meeting in Berlin on 16 March 1940, Hitler told his assembled commanders that "the defence capabilities of the Netherlands should be regarded as extremely limited" and the general plan anticipated a rapid occupation of the country releasing units for the more significant fight against the British and French armies (p. 132). Sandwiched between the German preamble is an analysis of the Dutch armed forces during this same period, one that notes at the outset that the defence policy adopted by the country's politicians "is still considered by many Dutch people to be one of the main reasons for the defeat in May 1940" (p. 35). A long chapter, some fifty-four pages in total including numerous pictures and a map, provides an exhaustive account explaining not just the rising political tensions which grew beyond the country's borders, but also its strategic responses to the mounting crisis and the defensive plans that were formed. There is even space for a brief discussion about the military geography of the Netherlands, which was of potentially critical significance (p. 62). A neutral state with only relatively small forces to safeguard its security, it establishes what will remain one of the key underlying questions posed throughout the study: in light of the situation that existed, could the Dutch military actually have done any better?

The remaining six chapters provide a scrupulous examination, conducted at the strategic, operational, and even tactical level, of the German assault on Fortress Holland. While all of the chapters are highly engaging, well researched, and well written, the first is in many respects the best of them providing as it does a day-by-day account of the battle. This, as its title sug-

gests, is military history examined at the strategic level switching between the two opposing commander's headquarters recounting the decisions they made and the impact they had. It demonstrates how the German plan had been well prepared and relied heavily in the first instance on the element of surprise to capture airfields and bridges of critical importance. Airborne forces were to be widely used, vertical envelopment dramatically improving upon the speed and mobility available to battlefield commanders. As had happened in Norway the previous month, the results were mixed. Indeed, whilst "the possibility had been taken into account that the country might capitulate on the first day," this proved to be a somewhat fanciful assessment (p. 141). General Winkelman, the Dutch commander, was even cautiously optimistic on the afternoon of the first day and by the evening it had been established that the initial German blow "had generally been dealt with well" (p. 149). As the writer goes on to describe, however, the initial position quickly deteriorated as a combination of superior German numbers and the Allies' inability to deploy adequate support, not to mention the huge psychological impact of the *Luftwaffe's* terror bombing of Rotterdam, meant that by the evening of 14 May 1940 the Dutch military was left with little option other than to capitulate (p. 175). Even in Zeeland, where resistance continued for three more days – a battle which is explained most effectively in one of the later chapters – poor morale and poor coordination of Allied forces meant that it proved an uneven contest.

Each of the following five chapters analyzes in turn a particular aspect of the battle. The German use of airborne forces and Brandenburger commando units both feature large in the account, a focused study on the surprise attack on The Hague and the battle for the Moerdijk bridges and Dordrecht and Rotterdam, for example, being especially interesting. There are also three chapters which examine the efforts of the Dutch Army as it fought against the more conventional massed German forces which had crossed the border. Each of these chapters benefits from a succinct conclusion which, when taken together, provide a neat summary of the five-day battle and contribute towards developing a truly comprehensive understanding of what took place in May 1940. Having begun with a thoughtful introduction, the study ends with a reflective conclusion which highlights the many key points that have been raised throughout the nine chapters that have gone before it. Its conclusion is certainly an attempt to try and counter long-standing efforts to find excuses for what happened to Holland. As one of the co-editors succinctly puts it: "...it is incorrect to suggest that the five dark years of occupation could have been prevented by the allocation of a higher defence budget from 1922 onwards or if the Germans had not employed all kinds of illegal methods and ploys" (p. 417). As the more than 400 pages of text help make clear, there was much more to the defeat.

This edited volume is a fascinating read from beginning to end. The six contributors, all of whom are Dutch, are a mixture of senior academics, government employees, and military officers, and some of them have contributed more than others (for example, Professor H.W. van den Poel, who

alone is responsible for four of the chapters). The editors, currently Professor of Military History and Strategy at the Netherlands Defence Academy (Herman Amersfoort) and Director of the Netherlands Institute of Military History (Piet Kamphuis), are to be highly commended for their individual chapters and for having supervised the volume's production.

Finally, a comment on the quality of the production of this sumptuous volume. Fully footnoted and benefiting greatly from an annotated bibliography, the source material is in itself a valuable resource enhancing greatly the detailed narrative and analysis found within the main body of the text. The translation is of the highest quality and amply demonstrates the considerable time and effort that this must have taken. The range of photographs is extremely impressive and really helps to illuminate the story not just of the invasion and defense, but also the events leading up to the start of the European war. Especially noteworthy are the thirteen color maps at the book's beginning, which are later reprinted within the main text in monochrome. This is indeed a most commendable military study, one of the best that this reviewer has ever received, and would grace any bookshelf.

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***Swedes at War: Willing Warriors of a Neutral Nation, 1914-1945.*** By Lars Gyllenhaal and Lennart Westberg (translation by Carl Gustav Finstrom). Bedford, PA: The Aberjona Press, 2010. Illustrations. Maps. Notes. Index. Paper. Pp. xix, 394.

Despite the vastness of historiography on the First and Second World Wars, there is a relative paucity of information about the contributions of Swedes to these conflicts. This should come as little surprise to anyone even minimally versed with the World Wars since the great battles of Götaland, Umeå, and Stockholm never took place. As an officially neutral state, Sweden was not the site of any major, or even minor for that matter, battle during these wars. This does not however imply individual citizens, men who were or had been members of the Swedish Armed Forces, did not participate in these conflicts. In fact, they did – over the course of the two World Wars and the period between them, some 15,000 Swedes served in the armies and air forces of foreign nations, while another 8,000 volunteered as seamen. Though numerous Swedish-language books have been produced that detail largely isolated (in time, space, or numbers) examples of Swedish contributions to warfare, *Swedes at War*, originally published as *Svenskar i krig, 1914-1945* (Lund: Historiska Media, 2004), represents an attempt to bring a broad and encompassing narrative to the topic over the entire period of time

spanning the two World Wars. Twenty-plus years of combined research by the authors has brought readers a truly unique and original piece of work describing the "who, what, when, where, and why" of Swedish service in foreign militaries in the early 20th century.

In order to give their story focus and continuity, Gyllenhaal and Westberg organized the prose firstly by "when" along a linear timeline from before World War I (Chapter 1) to post-World War II (Chapter 12), and then by "who" and "where" to place combatants in particular services and/or geographies within a particular time period (Chapters 2-11). Given the breadth of their research, the authors were indeed wise to compartmentalize their narrative in this fashion. Too many authors succumb to the desire to weave time and space into a single lilting prose that lends itself to "broad readability," but tends to sacrifice historical detail and focus. Gyllenhaal and Westberg appear to have sacrificed little by way of readability to give priority to their research, resulting in a book that is packed with details you will find nowhere else. Only in instances where it appears the primary of the two authors has changed does readability suffer, but these are few in number and minimally distracting.

Two of the most compelling and surprising themes that immediately come to the surface in reading *Swedes at War* are how many different foreign armed services Swedish citizens have fought for and how varied are the reasons (the "why") for their foreign service. When a common motivation to fight for a foreign country can be found, it generally falls into one of two classes: service based largely on historical and emotional reasons, or service for purely practical reasons. One example of the former is also the most significant in terms of numbers of all Swedish foreign service; namely, fighting in support of Finland in their wars with the Soviet Union (Winter War, 1939-40; Continuation War, 1941-44). It was a strong Nordic brotherhood that truly bound Swedes to Finns during the Second World War, rather than political and ideological animosity between Swede and Soviet. Two notable examples of service in foreign lands for largely practical reasons are the Swedish *Gendarmes* in Persia (today's Iran) and the relatively large number of Swedish officers that fought in the Spanish Civil War. In each of these cases, the absence of conflict on Swedish soil and the belief that experience in combat was the only way for the Swedish officer corps to become truly elite drove these men to seek opportunity elsewhere. As the authors point out, this was however a two-way street where the organization to which Swedes posted also gained some of the most professional officers on the European continent.

In addition to providing a wealth of fascinating new information, *Swedes at War* also makes waste of some long-held assumptions about Swedish arms. Most notable of these is Gyllenhaal and Westberg's demonstration that the number of Swedish citizens fighting in Allied uniform in the Second World War, be that Western or Soviet (~9,000 in total), far surpassed that serving with the *Wehrmacht* and *Waffen-SS* combined (maybe 200 total). Any popular belief that the "Aryan" men of all Nordic countries flocked *en*

*masse* to the Nazi cause in World War II is simply untenable in light of the discussion presented in Chapters 8-11 of *Swedes at War*. Though these revelations are unlikely to negate overnight popular beliefs that are based, at least in part, on decades of unbalanced historiography, one can hope that the authors have pushed us in the right direction.

Though it is likely to be perceived as a book for specialists, *Swedes at War* represents a thoroughly rewarding piece of historiography that any student of 20th century military history can appreciate. We are indeed fortunate that publishers like The Aberjona Press are willing to invest in bringing gems like *Swedes at War* to English-speaking readers.

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***Grunts: Inside the American Infantry Combat Experience, World War II through Iraq.*** By John C. McManus. New York: New American Library, 2010. Illustrations. Maps. Notes. Index. Cloth. Pp. viii, 518.

This author has labored long and intensively to deliver to the reader a "face of battle" based upon the experiences of infantrymen of the U.S. Army and U.S. Marine Corps spanning the past seventy years. Simple in concept but incredibly complex in the doing, the project consists of detailing close combat actions of infantry battalions engaged in World War II (Guam, Peleliu, Aachen, and Ardennes), Vietnam (Binh Dinh, Dak To, and Combined Action Platoons), and the two most recent Persian Gulf conflicts.

He spared no effort to uncover the research material, and has succeeded very well in disentangling the details of combat that remain so difficult to decipher from the variety of often-contradictory documents and personal accounts. One advantage of the coverage of recent actions has to be the data mining the author pursued, ranging from the usual official records and reports to the supporting documents packages for recommended decorations for valor, casualty reports, personal diaries, and collected letters.

McManus demonstrates to the reader in often chilling detail the horror, confusion, stress, and suffering of close combat for the infantryman and his team mates. He may have overstated his case that too much of this detail has never been appreciated by the reading public. The events of the last decade of conflict for U.S. forces and the unmistakable presence of the severely wounded in our hospitals and among us, amplified by competing media coverage by the news industry, has brought much of this into the public mind as perhaps never before in the United States. While citizens admittedly thrill to "techno-war," there remains a heightened awareness of the human costs, even among the advocates of present wars.

Each combat episode leads off with the author's strategic and operational

settings, sometimes punctuated with some political commentary that may add less to the reader's knowledge. One persistent theme that distracts is the author's apparent wish for a loosening of the constraints on the riflemen aimed at curtailing civilian casualties, which the assault troops at Aachen and Guam did not share as a burden with their modern comrades. This has become part of the modern soldier's burden, perhaps unavoidably.

In any case, the combat actions are related in well organized and well conceived narratives, conveyed with astonishing clarity and with little in the way of contradictions. The intensity of the fighting perhaps will astound the most seasoned reader of military history, especially when the author chimes in with his vision of the damage caused to fragile bodies by high-velocity bullets, explosives of all kinds, and the fragments of metal and wood as the casualties mount in each encounter. Nor does McManus show any critical restraint when evaluating the varying degree of combat leadership and skills to be found among the U.S. units thus engaged. After a wringing out of several vignettes of fierce close quarters fighting and the bloodbath thus produced, the reader may be astounded to find that any men remained standing or conscious at the end of the day.

The author's portrayals of infantry fighting in contemporary history conclude with the 100 hours in which the 1990-91 Gulf Conflict was fought on the ground, the twin battles for Fallujah in 2004, and two battalions of the 7th Infantry operating against urban counterinsurgency in Iraq.

This ambitious and far-ranging effort honors the American infantryman with scores of first-person accounts and testimonies, all artfully organized in a highly readable narrative. The forty-two photographs not only support the text, but comprise an admirable photo essay in their own right, including several pictures not previously seen by this reviewer. *Grunts* forms a welcome addition to the literature of the soldier's story.

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***Neptune's Inferno: The U.S. Navy at Guadalcanal.*** By James D. Hornfischer. New York: Bantam Books, 2011. Illustrations. Maps. Tables. Notes. Index. Cloth. Pp. xxii, 489.

The house of history has many mansions; many stories to tell, and many ways to tell them. In this, his third book on the U.S. Navy's varied experiences in the Pacific during World War II, James D. Hornfischer returns to an oft-told tale seeking new perspectives and perhaps a few new truths.

Formidable competition already exists, of course. Three books come immediately to mind: Richard B. Frank, *Guadalcanal: The Definitive Account of the Landmark Battle* (New York: Random House, 1990); John B. Lund-



strom, *The First Team and the Guadalcanal Campaign: Naval Fighter Combat from August to November 1942* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1993) and *Black Shoe Carrier Admiral: Frank Jack Fletcher at Coral Sea, Midway, and Guadalcanal* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2006). But Hornfischer has slipped in to focus, in great deal, on the surface actions that took place in the waters immediately adjacent to the island, treating the carrier battles of the Eastern Solomons and Santa Cruz briefly, though not perfunctorily. At points, his narrative focuses on a few ships and their crews, most notably the doomed cruiser USS *Atlanta* (CL-51). Like much writing today, the emphasis is upon individuals as much or more as upon strategies (though they are not slighted), and many publishers demand such an approach. Hornfischer views the melancholy history of the *Atlanta* (lost in part to friendly fire) largely through the eyes of one young officer, Robert Graff, and fleshes out fully the unhappy fates of Robert Ghormley, Gilbert Hoover, Howard Bode, and to a lesser extent, Frank Jack Fletcher.

The combination of time, distance, and research has allowed Hornfischer to soften Morison's often brutally expressed criticisms of key figures on the American side; criticisms that the old admiral retained or even sharpened when he came to revise his multi-volume study into the single-volume *The Two Ocean War: A Short History of the United States Navy in the Second World War* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1963).

*Neptune's Inferno* will remain an invaluable work for many years to come for two reasons: first, its emphasis (which could have been even stronger) on the U.S. Navy's total unpreparedness for the kind of nighttime warfare it fought off Guadalcanal; and second, the book's graphic but by no means inaccurate depiction of modern naval combat. Historians often ignore the fact that the U.S. Navy never fought a major fleet action during the Age of Fighting Sail and prior to 1941 fought only two relatively modest squadron-to-squadron battles (during the Spanish-American War). Japan's naval combat record was no richer, but prior to Guadalcanal, their sailors out-trained and in some ways out-thought their American counterparts, especially in night action tactics. As one "appalled" Guadalcanal veteran remarked: "The requirement to be ready to execute simple tactics in the dark while engaging the enemy, I suppose, is one of the things that you'd expect naval officers would be taught from the time they become midshipmen" (p. 410). Obviously, they were not. Add to that the fact that Japanese 24-inch long-lance torpedoes were clearly superior to those of the U.S. as late as Guadalcanal, and even beyond. Given these facts, it would have required remarkable and consistent foresight on the part of Bode, Riefkohl, Scott, and Callahan to have avoided the tragic results of Savo Island and, to a lesser extent, Cape Esperance. The two night battles of mid-November revealed how far American naval commanders had come.

Hornfischer's meticulous recounting of the five confusing brawls between the American and Japanese surface fleets is a study in horrors not often fully appreciated. Compared to the filth, squalor, and never-ending terror of ground combat, especially close-in fighting, naval and aviation warfare can

seem relatively benign. When not engaged in action, all but the smaller warships are not disagreeable habitats. But when the guns roar and the torpedoes strike, "the emotional truth of [naval] battle" (p. 427) emerges. Ships become exploding, burning death traps. Men are mutilated, scalded, and drowned. Those who survive and take to the water often experience a prolonged and equally savage ordeal. To the generations of sailors who have since been spared the worst aspects of modern naval warfare, Hornfischer's account will be a fresh reminder of their good fortune.

Toward the end of the book, the author quotes another *Atlanta* survivor who wrote his wife shortly after Guadalcanal: "As for the 'military commentators' who learn their strategy out of books, we writhe in disgust at their positive statements as to how the actual combat should be carried out" (p. 400). This voice from the past ought to remind us all that each of us grasps only a portion of the history we contemplate, and that in the end, the events we research can only be viewed, not recovered. Someday, perhaps, another historian will take a crack at decoding the confused and terrifying surface actions that comprised the naval battle of Guadalcanal and will come up with new insights and new information. Until then, Hornfischer can take justifiable pride in having given us the most definitive account to date.

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***Großadmiral Karl Dönitz: Legende und Wirklichkeit.*** By Dieter Hartwig. Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2010. Illustrations. Notes. Appendices. Index. Cloth. Pp. 435.

The year 2010 marked the centenary of Karl Dönitz's entry into the *Kaiserliche Marine* and the beginning of a career that made him a household name and, for a week, successor to Adolf Hitler and caretaker of a devastated and utterly defeated Third Reich. Dieter Hartwig's *Großadmiral Karl Dönitz: Legende und Wirklichkeit* is an important contribution not only to naval history, but also more crucially to the understanding of the memory of the Third Reich in the post-war era. It is fitting to see that this monograph found its place in the excellent series of books on the German military leadership published by Ferdinand Schöningh over the past years. However, unlike, for example, the authors of the volumes on Friedrich Fromm, Friedrich Paulus, or Ludwig Beck, Hartwig has not set out to write a biography. Indeed, from the outset he is clear that there is little to add to the narrative of Dönitz's pre-war life and wartime career. Peter Padfield published a good, readable, critical biography in 1984 – *Dönitz, the Last Führer: Portrait of a Nazi War Leader* (New York: Harper & Row, 1984) – that still remains relevant today. Instead, the purpose of this book is to address the legends that surrounded

Dönitz's *persona* and which evolved into "sacrosanct myths" over time. This methodology is concurrently the book's greatest asset and point of critique.

Hartwig's credentials to pen a historiographical approach to Dönitz's life and role are impeccable and the result, being the product of three decades of thoughts, papers, and discussion, demonstrates his absolute command of the subject matter. Yet this is unmistakably a book by a naval officer and historian for naval historians and interested naval officers. The majority of the sixteen chapters deal with questions of leadership, loyalty, and the inner-cohesion of the officer corps that remained a constant, regardless of the evolution of the *Kaiserliche* to *Kriegs-* to *Bundesmarine*. At its core, this book is about the politics of memory in the *Bundesmarine* and West German defense establishment. This is very much a reflection of themes addressed by German academia dealing with the navy today and the author's own experience as lecturer at the naval academy in Mürwik. As eloquent as the writing might be, the book will require diligent study and even readers confidently familiar with German wartime military history will struggle with the detailed analysis. The thematic approach to chapters is understandable, but often there is somewhat of a repetition of ideas.

What then do we learn about Dönitz? Surveying the writing about him from the perspective of 2011, the idea of "sacrosanct myths" must be seen in relative terms. Dönitz's devotion to the national-socialist state, its *Führer*, and his disregard for human life both of his sailors and the wider civilian population is common knowledge. His reputation might have been somewhat more intact during the 1980s, but even then historians like Jost Dülffer or Michael Salewski had already challenged the prevailing image before Padfield's biography, aptly subtitled *Des Teufels Admiral*, reached German shelves. Hartwig's account of this episode is illuminating. Since then, others like Sönke Neitzel or Jörg Hillmann and countless popular documentaries have chipped away at the reputation of *Kriegsmarine's* senior leadership. But Hartwig is right to assert that all these disparate approaches over the decades have never focused on Dönitz. It is more accurate to describe this book not as one about these myths, but a history of them.

While there are no major revelations, the book is full of details that will be of interest. If Hartwig's aim is to deconstruct the Dönitz mythos he does so concisely at the outset, by dealing a blow to the image of Dönitz as a master of submarine warfare. His appointment to the command of the Weddigen Flotilla in September 1935 owed nothing to his affinity with submarine warfare or the associated technology. Kurt Slevogt or Werner Fürbringer were more qualified in this regard, and Wilhelm Marschall had spent more time between the wars thinking about U-boat operations. Dönitz was appointed because he was acknowledged as a loyal, obedient pair of hands and for his ability to motivate his subordinates. The three wartime myths that Hartwig examines are Dönitz's role in the seaborne evacuation of German civilians from East Prussia in early 1945, his conduct of the Atlantic campaign, and his perception of the utility of new designs in turning the tide in the Atlantic. In the first case, Hartwig clearly demonstrates that the impetus to save civil-

ians from the Soviet advance, a key aspect in the post-war attempts at rehabilitating Dönitz, did not originate with him. The chapters dealing with the Atlantic campaign show Dönitz as being quite unsuited to understanding the complexities of modern naval warfare. This is important as particularly Anglo-Saxon writing has a tendency to acknowledge his political failings yet laud his supposed operational skills. The reality in the Atlantic was that initial German success was based on Allied weakness; once the going got tough, Dönitz lacked the necessary technical and operational understanding. Prior to 1939, Fürbringer had warned of the futility of sacrificing skilled crews against modern ASW defenses, yet Dönitz did so until the very end while portraying himself after the war as the caring commander.

Considering the horrendous casualty rate of the U-boat arm – around three-quarters of submariners were killed – it is all the more surprising he received so much support after the war. This leads to another important point Hartwig makes: the complicity of many others in perpetuating myths in the post-war era for political ends. Devoting a chapter to the analysis of defense ministry deliberations over the contingency plans of how to deal with Dönitz's death might strike some readers as excessively diligent. Indeed, both the narrative and analysis are indulgently excessive in places and the text is accompanied by an overly generous set of references, appendices, and bibliography accounting for well over a quarter of the volume's length. Could Hartwig have been more concise? Superficially one would be inclined to say so, yet when dealing with such established myths, perhaps such a dose of "overkill" is necessary to put them to rest.

In a similar manner to Ian Kershaw's deconstruction of some of the myths surrounding Hitler, Hartwig cuts Dönitz down to size by exhaustive analysis. What emerges is a rather small character not worthy of the loyalty shown towards him by his sailors or the post-war popular adulation of his skills as a commander and operational thinker. This book will not necessarily give the reader what he wants to know, should the desire be to further understand the U-boat campaign, but what he needs to know about the historiography of the *Kriegsmarine* and the German view of the naval war. This exhaustive work is not easily digestible and not likely to be read beyond an academically inclined audience. It is, however, an important and overdue critical examination framed by means of a methodology and understanding of the subject that is required of historians dealing with the naval dimension of the Second World War in the 21st century. While history is never a closed book, Hartwig has closed the Dönitz chapter as it is unlikely there remains anything substantive to say.

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***Call for Papers:***  
**Global-Regional Nexus:**  
**The Sea and the**  
**Second World War**

**3-5 May 2012, King's College London**

The King's College London War Studies Group and *Global War Studies* are pleased to announce a conference on the impact of the sea on the conduct, experience, and legacy of the Second World War. This was the first truly global conflict in which high intensity warfare was waged simultaneously across the world's oceans. The conference aims to investigate the ways in which the war raised the strategic status of the sea to "world's largest maneuver space," linking the experience in different maritime theaters and illustrating its role in national strategies. The conference seeks to promote an interdisciplinary approach, drawing upon the latest international scholarship from a variety of disciplines, including naval, international, social, and cultural history, regional studies, and international relations. Papers addressing one or more of the above questions in the context of the following themes are welcome (suggestions for additional related themes are encouraged and will be considered):

Morale and Motivation / The Indian Ocean / Ports and People  
Intelligence / Economics / Grand Strategy and Global War  
Land and Sea / The Civilian Experience of Naval Warfare  
The Periphery and the Center / Command / Legacies  
Amphibious Warfare

Paper proposals should include an abstract and a curriculum vitae. Panel proposals are welcome and should also include a description of the panel's theme. The deadline for proposals is **10 January 2012**. It is planned to publish the conference proceedings in due course. Presenters should be prepared to submit a draft text by 30 March 2012 and an edited version no later than 15 July 2012. Please address submissions and queries to: Dr. Marcus Faulkner ([marcus.s.faulkner@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:marcus.s.faulkner@kcl.ac.uk)) and Robert von Maier ([globalwarstudies@gmail.com](mailto:globalwarstudies@gmail.com)) respectively.

