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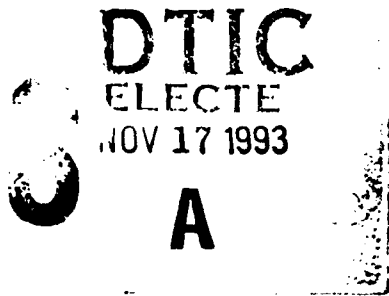


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**THE CHINA THEATER, 1944 - 1945:  
A FAILURE OF JOINT AND COMBINED OPERATIONS STRATEGY**

A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army  
Command and General Staff College in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for the  
degree

**MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE**



by

**SAMUEL J. COX, LCDR, USN**  
B.S., United States Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland, 1980

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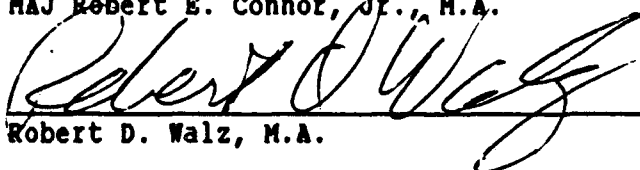
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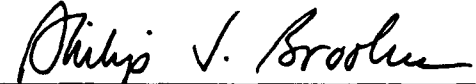
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## ABSTRACT

**THE CHINA THEATER 1944 - 1945: A FAILURE OF JOINT AND COMBINED OPERATIONS STRATEGY** by LCDR Samuel J. Cox, USN, 179 pages.

This study investigates the formulation and implementation of U.S. military strategy to conduct joint and combined operations in the China Theater, concentrating on the period 1944-1945. Focussing on the interaction between the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, senior Allied leaders, and key U.S. commanders in China (Generals Joseph W. Stilwell, Albert C. Wedemeyer, Claire L. Chennault, and Admiral Milton E. Miles), this paper examines the process of developing joint and combined military objectives in the China Theater.

This study finds that the U.S. military failed to accomplish desired military or political objectives in China. U.S. military strategy did not effectively link available resources with appropriate military objectives in support of U.S. national political objectives in China. The U.S. military failed to develop a coherent, coordinated strategy for effectively synchronizing U.S., British, Soviet, Nationalist and Communist Chinese military operations. Nor did the U.S. effectively synchronize U.S. Army, Army Air Force, and Navy operations. The primary causes of failure were unrealistic U.S. political objectives, incompatible Allied political objectives, inadequate logistics due to the demands of global war, and the actions of a determined foe, most of which were beyond the control of U.S. commanders on the scene.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAF	Army Air Forces (US)
ABDA	American, British, Dutch and Australian Command
AMMISCA	American Military Mission to China (Magruder Mission, 1941)
ATC	Air Transport Command (US)
AVG	American Volunteer Group (Flying Tigers)
BAAG	British Army Aid Group China
CACW	Chinese-American Composite Wing
CATF	China Air Task Force (US)
CBI	China-Burma-India Theater (US)
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CCS	Combined Chiefs of Staff (US/GB)
COS	Chiefs of Staff Committee (GB)
CNA	Chinese National Army
CNAC	Chinese National Air Force
CNO	Chief of Naval Operations (US)
CPS	Combined Staff Planners (US/GB)
EAC	Eastern Air Command (SEAC)
GB	Great Britain
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff (US)
JPS	Joint Staff Planners (US)
JSSC	Joint Strategic Survey Committee (US)
JWPC	Joint War Plans Committee (US)
KMT	Kuomintang (Chinese Nationalist Party)
NCAC	Northern Combat Area Command (SEAC)
NGC	Naval Group China (US)
OSS	Office of Strategic Services (US)
RAF	Royal Air Force (GB)
RN	Royal Navy (GB)
SAC	Supreme Allied Commander
SACO	Sino-American Cooperative Organization (USN/KMT)
SEAC	South East Asia Command
SIS	Secret Intelligence Service (GB)
SOE	Special Operations Executive (GB)
SOS	Services of Supply (US)
SWPA	South West Pacific Area (US)
USAF	U.S. Army Forces or U.S. Air Force
USN	U.S. Navy
VLR	Very Long Range bombers (US)



## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION AND STRATEGIC SETTING

Throughout 1944 and into 1945, the resurgent Allied powers rolled swiftly and inexorably toward final victory in every theater of war except China. Still retaining the initiative in China, Japanese forces launched the largest land offensive of the Pacific war, code-named ICHIGO, in April 1944. ICHIGO dealt a staggering blow to the American military strategy for conducting joint and combined operations in the China Theater, already hampered by lack of resources and extraordinary difficulty in synchronizing strategy and operations among the Allies (United States, China, Great Britain and Soviet Union) or even between the U.S. Army, Army Air Force, and Navy.

By the time ICHIGO reached its culminating point in January 1945, the damage to the Allied war effort in China was extensive and far-reaching. In the course of attempting to establish a secure overland line of communication to their forces in Indochina, the Japanese overran all of the American forward airfields in eastern China, virtually eliminating U.S. tactical land-based air support from China at a critical phase of initial U.S. operations in the Philippines and Western Pacific. The U.S. Navy cancelled longstanding plans to conduct landings on the China coast, at one time considered "essential"<sup>1</sup> to the conduct of the Pacific War. The U.S. Army Air Force's attempt to

conduct a sustained strategic bombing campaign from China proved ineffective, and drained scarce resources from the tactical air force and ground forces at a crucial time. In the midst of the debacle, the American theater commander, General Joseph W. Stilwell, was ignominiously fired. Stilwell's effort to transform the Chinese army into an effective fighting force went for naught. An attempt by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to cooperate with the U.S. in fighting the common Japanese foe evaporated after Stilwell's departure.

The impact of ICHIGO on Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist Party (Kuomintang or KMT) government was even more severe. KMT and provincial armies totaling 750,000 men had been either destroyed, rendered combat ineffective, or simply melted away,<sup>2</sup> while Mao Tse-tung's Communist army continued to grow in strength and popularity. The KMT emerged from the ICHIGO disaster mortally weakened, thereby making unattainable one of America's primary objectives of the Pacific War, a strong, united and democratic postwar China.

Matters improved little in the months after ICHIGO ground to a logistically over-extended halt in the vastness of China. At war's end, the Japanese China Expeditionary Army remained essentially undefeated. Only in Manchuria, where a well-executed Soviet combined arms offensive crushed the Japanese Kwangtung Army, had things gone according to U.S. strategic plans developed earlier in the war. The sudden Japanese surrender in August 1945 resulted in chaos in China, which threatened to draw American forces into the renewed outbreak of civil war between the KMT and CCP and led to the opening shots of the Cold War.

In the end, the substantial U.S. effort in the China Theater failed to accomplish more than the minimal objectives envisioned by the senior U.S. military strategists in the early years of the war, who believed China's potential contribution to the war effort to be vital. This strongly held view was derailed by divergent and sometimes unrealistic Allied political-military objectives and incompatible U.S. service strategies. Convoluted command structures, inadequate logistics, intense personality conflict, and a determined and resourceful foe all further exacerbated the situation.

#### Thesis Question

Focussing on the interface between the strategic and operational levels of war, this paper will examine the interaction between the U.S. service chiefs in Washington and the senior service representatives in the China Theater, particularly Generals Stilwell and Wedemeyer, in the formulation and implementation of joint and combined military operations strategy for the China Theater. The purpose will be to determine if U.S. military strategy in China during World War II failed, as it apparently did, and if so, why? In order to make this determination, several secondary questions relating to the relationship between military strategy and national interests and objectives, and the formulation of joint and combined warfare strategy must be addressed. For example, did the U.S. military develop a strategy that effectively linked available resources with appropriate military objectives in order to accomplish U.S. national objectives and support U.S. national interests in China? Did the U.S. military develop a coherent,

coordinated joint warfare strategy? Did the U.S. develop a coherent, coordinated combined warfare strategy with the the Nationalists, Communists, Soviets or British?

Current U.S. military doctrine emphasizes preparation for joint and combined operations, under the presumption that virtually all future operations will be joint service, and many, if not most, will be combined operations with allied or coalition forces. However, as events in the China Theater in 1944-45 suggest, there are numerous pitfalls which can cripple joint and combined operations, even when led by courageous, capable, and highly intelligent warfighters. Although there are numerous studies of successful U.S. joint and combined operations, a study of a case where joint and combined operations apparently failed to achieve desired objectives may offer even more insight to solutions for the inherent difficulties of waging joint and combined warfare.

#### Background

By 1944, China had been at war longer than any other Allied nation. From the early 1920's, internal tumult, warlord disputes, Nationalist reunification, civil war, and Japanese encroachment led to incessant fighting. In order describe the strategic setting of 1944-45, a brief survey is required of the KMT/CCP dispute, the overall course of the Sino-Japanese War, and Allied interests and objectives in China.

#### Nationalist and Communist Civil War

The Japanese invasion in 1937 interrupted the first phase of the Chinese Civil War, underway since 1927. Although initially allied with the KMT under Chiang, the CCP was brutally suppressed in the major

cities by the KMT in the late 1920's. Holding out in rural areas in south central China under Mao, the CCP resisted repeated campaigns of annihilation ("bandit extermination") by Chiang in the early 1930's. Finally, under intense KMT military pressure, the remnants of the CCP fled to Yen-an in remote northwest China in the epic "Long March." As a result of the experiences of the late 1920's and 1930's, the KMT and CCP viewed each other as mortal enemies. This fact is critical to understanding the actions of Chiang Kai-shek and the KMT during World War II. Peaceful co-existence and coalition government were impossible except for short periods of expedient cooperation.

As Chiang prepared for yet another campaign against the CCP in 1936, he was briefly held hostage in Hsian by a disgruntled warlord, upset by Chiang's failure to do anything substantive in response to the Japanese occupation of Manchuria and parts of North China which had begun in 1931. Chiang's concession to put off further forays against the CCP and take some sort of unified action against the Japanese set in motion an escalatory chain of events leading to the outbreak of full-scale warfare between Japan and China in August 1937.

#### The Sino-Japanese War

From the very beginning, the large, but poorly equipped and trained national and provincial Chinese forces were no match for the Japanese. During the battle of Shanghai in 1937, Chiang ignored the advice of his German military advisor, General von Falkenhausen, to conduct a strategic retreat. Chiang instead ordered his army to conduct a heroic, but futile, "death-stand" defense. As a result, China lost

the cream of its army in the opening months of the war. Most (over 10,000) of China's German-trained junior officers died at Shanghai.<sup>3</sup> However, the highly publicized battle did garner substantial international sympathy and led to serious U.S. diplomatic efforts against the Japanese. Japanese forces quickly occupied the major coastal and north Chinese cities, ruthlessly crushing the KMT capital in the "Rape of Nanking" and forcing Chiang and his government into remote Chungking in southwestern China. Two years later, Chiang launched an ill-conceived counter-offensive in the winter of 1939-40, with typically disastrous results.<sup>4</sup>

As Chinese battle casualties climbed over the three million mark and the Japanese grew reluctant to make the effort needed to occupy all of China or to bring about a decisive defeat, a stalemate situation developed. The Japanese contented themselves with holding major eastern cities and lines of communication, while conducting periodic limited offensive sweeps to keep Chinese forces off balance. On rare occasions the Chinese inflicted heavy losses and unexpected defeats on the Japanese, such as the battle of T'aierhchuang in early 1938.<sup>5</sup> However, in general, Japanese forces could go wherever they willed, limited only by logistical over-extension, not by any effective resistance by the Chinese army. In addition, Japanese aircraft bombed the new KMT capital at Chungking at will. In a feeble response, one Chinese Martin B-10 bomber conducted the first air "attack" on Japan, dropping leaflets on Nagasaki.<sup>6</sup>

Lacking the means to resist, Chiang had little choice but to trade space for time and hope the U.S. or anyone else would go to war

and defeat the Japanese for him. In terms of numbers, China still retained a formidable army, ranging at various times from three to four million men organized in approximately 300 divisions. However, only about 500,000 men in 30 divisions were under direct KMT control.<sup>7</sup> The remainder owed their allegiance to various provincial military governors (warlords), who formed a loose and frequently unruly alliance under the nominal authority of Chiang. Thus, Chiang, in effect, waged "coalition warfare" within his own country, constantly balancing the competing demands of rival regional leaders in order to maintain KMT dominance.

The loss of the Chinese coastal regions severely hurt the KMT in the long run. With Chiang isolated in Chungking, the Japanese set up a rival puppet Chinese government in Nanking under Wang Ching-wei, which claimed the allegiance of 600,000 Chinese provincial troops in eastern China.<sup>8</sup> Besides losing credibility with many Chinese as a result of being repeatedly beaten by the Japanese, the KMT also lost its moderate political base of support which existed primarily in the Japanese-occupied eastern urban areas. The KMT was forced to rely on regional military governors and the reactionary rural landlord class for its support for the duration of the war, which played right into the CCP's hands. To sustain the war effort, the long-suffering Chinese peasants bore the brunt of KMT taxation and forcible recruitment of personnel for the army. The economy eventually collapsed in an inflationary spiral resulting in widespread corruption throughout the KMT bureaucracy. This resulted in a widely held perception among the Chinese masses that the KMT was incapable of resisting the Japanese, or even more ominously, incapable of effectively ruling China after the war.

By contrast, CCP forces in northwest China steadily gained strength and stature throughout the war, despite near total isolation from outside sources of supply. In the early days of the war, CCP forces scored several surprising defensive victories, which dissuaded the Japanese from making a serious attempt to take Yen-an. Emboldened, the CCP entered Japanese held areas and launched the "Hundred Regiments" offensive in 1940. The Japanese retaliated with the brutally effective SENKO-SEISAKU (Three Alls Campaign - kill all, burn all, destroy all) against civilian populations, leading to a re-evaluation of CCP guerilla strategy.<sup>9</sup> To avoid Japanese retaliation, the CCP concentrated on expansion into areas not firmly held by the Japanese (or by the KMT), and training an ever-expanding "regular" army in the comparative safety of Yen-an.<sup>10</sup> Although at the end of the war, Japanese soldiers exhibited fear of the CCP, it was more likely due to fear of retribution than respect for combat accomplishments.<sup>11</sup>

However, in the ever expanding area under its control, the CCP vigorously implemented political and economic reforms, centered upon land reform and education, which proved highly popular with the peasantry. Highly visible CCP cadres worked with the peasants in close proximity to the porous Japanese lines, earning the CCP ever greater popularity, particularly when compared to the isolated Chungking regime. Zealous and competent leadership, coupled with terror when required, further improved the CCP's position as time went on. By 1940, the number of combatants loyal to the CCP approached that of the KMT.<sup>12</sup>

Chiang recognized that the CCP challenge was grave. Initial cooperation between the CCP and KMT weakened and was finally destroyed



as a result of the New Fourth Army Incident in 1941. After the CCP New Fourth Army ignored KMT warnings to cease operations south of the Yangtze River, KMT forces attacked and captured the New Fourth's headquarters, inflicting several thousand casualties.<sup>13</sup> From 1941 through the end of the war, over 200,000 KMT troops, including some of Chiang's best, maintained a blockade of the CCP forces in the north, ensuring that the CCP received no supplies, but also doing little to support the war against Japan.<sup>14</sup>

Chiang's position became even more precarious upon the outbreak of war between the U.S. and Japan. Momentary KMT elation at U.S. entry into the war was quickly dashed as the Japanese smashed American, British, and Dutch forces throughout the Far East. Far from lessening Japanese pressure on China, the outbreak made things much worse. By mid-1942, the Japanese offensive in Burma cut the only remaining land resupply route into China, leaving China completely isolated except by aerial resupply. Until 1945, when the Ledo Road was completed and the Burma Road reopened, all supplies destined for China had to be flown over the "Hump," a long, dangerous flight from India, over the Himalayas to southwest China. The critical need to protect the Hump route from Japanese air and land depredations, and the need to reopen a land resupply route into China as a prerequisite for sustained operations within China itself, formed the strategic rationale for U.S. operations in India and Burma during World War II.

Despite the early Allied setbacks, Chiang believed that the U.S. would eventually defeat the Japanese, with or without China's help. Clearly believing that the CCP represented an even greater long-term

threat to KMT rule than even the Japanese, Chiang sought to secure as much military equipment as possible from America and conserve the strength of his armies, with the intent of emerging from the war in the strongest possible position relative to the CCP. By alternating promises to exert greater effort against the Japanese with veiled threats to drop out of the war and seek a separate peace, Chiang attempted to ensure the continued flow of U.S. Lend-Lease support. Since a Chinese withdrawal from the Alliance would theoretically free as many as a million Japanese troops to oppose Allied operations elsewhere, Chiang's strategy had the desired effect. Unfortunately, the limitations of aerial logistics resupply, coupled with the enormous demands of global warfare upon U.S. resources, ensured that Chiang never received the amount of support he desired. In addition, it was Chiang's unwillingness to risk further destruction of his forces in battle with the Japanese that led to fundamental disagreements over military strategy between Chiang and the senior U.S. military officer in China, Lieutenant General Joseph W. Stilwell.

#### The Allied Coalition

Unlike in Europe, where Allied interests were basically complementary, the national interests and objectives of the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union in China were fundamentally different. About the only thing the three Allies agreed on was that the defeat of Germany came first and the liberation of China came last. While China remained lowest on the Allied scale of priorities, care had to be taken to ensure that China received enough aid to avoid collapse.

Additionally, Chinese national goals and aspirations, particularly recovery of lost territories such as Manchuria and Hong Kong, frequently were in direct conflict with those of the Soviet Union and Great Britain, which further complicated the Alliance.

### The Soviet Union

The first nation to come to Chiang's assistance was the Soviet Union. The overriding imperative of Soviet policy regarding China was pragmatic self-interest, frequently to the dismay of the CCP, who believed they had been cynically manipulated by Stalin on several occasions. Since the turn of the century, Japan had been the primary threat to Soviet interests in the Far East. Soviet policy supported anything that would serve to keep the Japanese in check. Stalin sought a China that was just strong enough to keep the Japanese from having free rein, but not strong enough to replace Japan as a challenge to Soviet interests. Despite intense mutual suspicion, Stalin readily supported the KMT when it suited Soviet interests. As George Kennan later described it, Soviet policy in China was "fluid, resilient" and designed to "achieve maximum power with minimum responsibility."<sup>18</sup>

Between 1937 and 1941, Stalin provided substantially more aid to the KMT than any other country, including America. Immediately after the Japanese invasion, the Soviet Union and China signed a mutual "non-aggression" treaty, which contained secret clauses promising large amounts of Soviet military and economic assistance. This aid included \$300 million in loans and credits, over 60,000 tons of munitions, enough arms to equip eight to ten KMT divisions, and construction of a 1,200

mile road for resupply through Sinkiang. The Soviets sent 885 aircraft to China, 400 of which were turned over to the Chinese air force.<sup>16</sup> Soviet pilots flew the remainder from Chinese bases and engaged the Japanese in numerous air battles over China and Manchuria.<sup>17</sup> Over 500 Soviet advisors, including several prominent general officers, replaced Chiang's German advisors, who were soon to be recalled by Hitler anyway.<sup>18</sup> In addition, Soviet forces aggressively engaged the Japanese Kwangtung Army along the disputed Manchurian/Mongolian border. In August 1939, Soviet forces under Zhukov virtually annihilated an entire Japanese division at Khalkin Gol (Nomonhan).

Soviet assistance to China decreased dramatically as Stalin became alarmed by the increasingly menacing German threat in 1941 and attempted to secure his Far Eastern flank before the anticipated outbreak of war. The Soviets in effect "dumped" China and signed a neutrality pact with Japan in April 1941, quickly withdrawing most of their advisors and all of their aircraft.<sup>19</sup> Within several months, the Soviet Union became locked in a desperate battle for survival of truly stupendous proportions. No aid and little concern could be spared for China. Nevertheless, the Soviets maintained nearly 40 divisions along the Manchurian border for the duration of the war to protect their critical lifeline through Siberia. Over 50% of U.S. Lend-Lease aid to the Soviet Union during the war was delivered by neutral-flag shipping to Vladivostock and shipped via the Trans-Siberian railroad to the western Soviet Union.<sup>20</sup> This vital link was within easy striking distance of the nearly one million Japanese troops of the Kwangtung Army.

Equally unsure of Soviet intentions, the Japanese maintained the Kwangtung Army at high strength through most of the war, although many of the best units were eventually replaced by newly mobilized and less well trained units. Although China is frequently given credit for tying down almost two million Japanese soldiers during the war, fully half these Japanese forces were actually tied down by the large Soviet presence in the Far East and not by the Chinese, thus substantially aiding the U.S. effort in the Pacific.

### Great Britain

Relations between Great Britain and China were characterized by as much mistrust and perhaps even more animosity as that between China and the Soviet Union. As a colonial power that had taken advantage of a weak China in the past, Great Britain was the object of intense dislike by Chiang and most of the KMT leadership, who firmly believed that the true British objective was to ensure that China emerged from the war as a weak, divided nation that would pose little threat to the British colonial empire in Asia and Hong Kong in particular. Stilwell pegged the Chinese attitude toward the British within days of his arrival in China with the observation, "How they hate the Limeys!"<sup>21</sup>

The perception that the British were anti-KMT and harbored ulterior imperial motives was nearly universally held to varying degrees by American military and foreign service officers in China. Some American commanders were as intensely anti-British as the Chinese. From the British perspective, the widespread American attitude was unfair. Although Prime Minister Winston Churchill clearly held the Chinese in

low regard, British policy did not deliberately support a divided and weak China since that would have adversely affected British commercial interests in China, which at the start of the war still substantially exceeded those of the U.S.<sup>22</sup> In fact, British policy was not so much anti-KMT as much as a more realistic recognition of the true weaknesses of Chiang's government, and a more realistic appraisal of the true potential of the Chinese Army to be a decisive factor in defeating the Japanese. British policy did not undergo the wild swings between inflated expectations and subsequent deep disillusionment with the KMT that ultimately characterized American policy.<sup>23</sup>

The already sorry state of British and Chinese military cooperation deteriorated rapidly upon the outbreak of war between Japan and Great Britain. Although Churchill had approved a plan to send a medium bomber and a fighter squadron piloted by Commonwealth volunteers to fight in China even prior to the outbreak of war between Britain and Japan, the aircraft were diverted to other more pressing British needs and never arrived in China.<sup>24</sup> As the threat of a Japanese invasion of Burma grew following the loss of Malaya and Singapore, the British diverted American Lend-Lease supplies intended for China to their own use. Although these supplies had piled up in Rangoon faster than they could be delivered via the overburdened Burma road, the Chinese were still angered by the British action.<sup>25</sup>

Despite the strain with the British, Chiang recognized the importance of holding the Burma Road and offered his best two remaining armies to assist the British in defending Burma, with the proviso that Britain provide logistics support. Reluctant to have Chinese troops in

colonial Burma and unable to support them, the British commander in the Far East, Sir Archibald Wavell, initially accepted only one Chinese division, which gave affront to the Chinese.<sup>26</sup> Only when the magnitude of the Japanese threat became clear did the British request the assistance of both Chinese armies. By then it was too late to effect a coordinated defense and by May 1942, the invading Japanese routed the British and Chinese forces in one of the worst debacles of the war.

The Chinese and many Americans harbored the belief that the British had only made a half-hearted attempt to defend Burma, which was critical to the resupply of China, while expending their greatest effort to defend their more important colony in India. During the rout in Burma, the British initially intended for two brigades, one of them armored, to retreat via the Burma road into China to continue the war. Due to serious logistics problems associated with such a move, the British chose instead to destroy their own tanks, and escape by foot to India with the rest of the retreating British, Indian and some Chinese troops.<sup>27</sup> Subsequent British reluctance to conduct offensive operations to re-open the Burma Road served to increase Chinese mistrust of British motives. U.S. commanders in Asia, such as Stilwell, were frequently caught in the middle between the reluctant British and Chinese allies.

Following the Burma disaster, Britain provided minimal direct military aid to China. Several missions had been dispatched to China during or just before the war to train and equip Chinese forces to conduct guerilla war against the Japanese. These efforts included the 204th Military Mission and a group of Danish commandos working on behalf of the British Special Operations Executive (SOE). The Chinese provided

minimal cooperation, believing the primary purpose of the British effort was the eventual re-occupation of Hong Kong, and the SOE group was kicked out of China early in 1942 and most activities of the 204th closed down by October 1942.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, some British training activity continued, while a variety of British intelligence organizations operated in China throughout the war, collecting on both the Japanese and Chinese.<sup>29</sup>

### The United States

United States policy toward China was driven by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who envisioned a strong post-war China that would be one of the world's four great powers, serving to stabilize Asia after the defeat of Japan. Roosevelt also desired that China regain all her lost territories, including Manchuria and Hong Kong, which naturally led to friction between U.S. policy and that of the Soviets and British.<sup>30</sup> Despite British and Soviet reluctance, it was U.S. policy to treat China as an equal with America, Great Britain and the Soviet Union.<sup>31</sup> This policy was repeatedly reaffirmed (in words, at least) at the major Allied conferences, despite the fact that to any reasonable observer in China the KMT was increasingly weak and moribund, and that prospects for a strong, peaceful, united post-war China were dim at best.

Although Roosevelt was aware of potential contradictions and flaws in his China policy, he avoided making public whatever his true feelings may have been. Repeated attempts by Army Chief of Staff General George C. Marshall and by Stilwell to get Roosevelt to issue clear, unambiguous guidance concerning realistic U.S. national



objectives in China met with little success. After his first meeting with Roosevelt, Stilwell described the President's China policy as "a lot of wind."<sup>32</sup>

American policy-makers held an almost mythologic view of China, strongly reinforced by an effective KMT propaganda effort. Americans viewed Chiang as a strong, pro-western leader of a democratic KMT government, fighting valiantly and inflicting great losses upon the Japanese. The fact that little of this was really true only began to become known in the latter stages of the war. Unfortunately, Roosevelt also held this same view during the early years of the war. In a letter to Marshall, Roosevelt wrote,

The Generalissimo came up the hard way to become the undisputed leader of four hundred million people - an enormously difficult job to attain any kind of unity from a diverse group of all kinds of leaders - military men, educators, scientists, public health people, engineers, all of them struggling for power and mastery, local or national, and to create in a very short time what it took us a couple of centuries to attain."<sup>33</sup>

This view of China was fiction.

Unfortunately, Roosevelt fancied himself to be a China expert, due to the Delano family's long history of trade in China.<sup>34</sup> Disdainful of professional foreign service officers, Roosevelt gained much of his knowledge of China through the reports of a long series of personal representatives whom he dispatched to China. However, these representatives, Laughlin Currie, Wendall Wilkie, Henry Wallace, Donald Nelson, and Patrick Hurley, all seemed to have one quality in common, absolutely no background in Chinese affairs. Every one of them, based on initial superficial contact, accepted the KMT's view of reality. The warnings of Stilwell and the U.S. ambassador to China, Clarence Gauss,

went unheeded, while the positions of both were repeatedly undermined by the parade of presidential emissaries.

Even after the KMT's faults became increasingly widely known, many U.S. policy-makers continued to hold the view that, even though he may have serious faults, Chiang was the only game in town and the only hope for a united China. The fact that Chiang was barely holding together an unruly coalition of reactionary warlords, led to the formulation of unrealistic policy, which filtered into unrealistic military strategy. Although much of Roosevelt's China policy seemed to exhibit a lack of realism, Roosevelt did have an instinctive aversion to the concept of committing large numbers of U.S. forces into combat on the continent of Asia. Roosevelt, and Marshall, believed that the American people would not support involvement in a land war in Asia.<sup>36</sup> This view led Roosevelt to constantly search for less costly short-cuts to victory, whether it be long-range penetration groups or complete reliance on airpower.

## CHAPTER 2

### U.S. PLANNING FOR OPERATIONS IN CHINA, 1937-1943

#### Pre-War Planning

While signs of divergent Allied objectives in Asia became evident in the prewar years, discord in U.S. military planning for joint and combined operations in China was also apparent from the very beginning of the Sino-Japanese War in 1937. Observing the outbreak of fighting in Shanghai from his flagship in the harbor, Rear Admiral Harry Yarnell, Commander of the U.S. Asiatic Fleet, recommended that an alliance of the U.S., Britain, France, Netherlands, and Russia initiate a "naval war of strangulation" in response to Japanese aggression.<sup>1</sup> Although the British ambassador in Washington was urging much the same thing, the U.S. State and War Departments opposed such a "reckless gamble."<sup>2</sup> Although Yarnell persisted in his calls for resolute action, even the senior naval leadership remained opposed. At that time, U.S. naval strategic thought emphasized the primacy of Atlantic operations. With some reluctance, the U.S. Navy entered into discussions with the British Navy, and even reached agreement that in event of war in the Far East, U.S. naval forces would conduct combined operations in the Western Pacific under the command of the British Commander-in-Chief, China Station.<sup>3</sup> However, persistent disagreements over basing and strategy ensured that no practical plans for combined operations had been

completed by December 1941, and both fleets were quickly driven from China and the entire Far East by the Japanese. However inadequate British and American naval plans were, the U.S. Army and Army Air Corps plans were even more so.

In 1940, the Chinese initiated a request to conduct combined offensive air operations against Japan. The Chief of the Chinese Air Force, General P.T. Mow, in company with Chiang's American air advisor, Claire Chennault, visited Washington, D.C., seeking American support. Chennault proposed that America provide 500 aircraft to China, including heavy bombers, which would carry Chinese markings but be secretly flown by American volunteer pilots. Direct American involvement would remain covert while these aircraft bombed the Japanese homeland and attacked Japanese naval forces and shipping from Chinese bases.<sup>4</sup> Secretary of War Henry Stimson described the plan as "half baked."<sup>5</sup> Marshall was more polite, calling it "impractical."<sup>6</sup>

Despite opposition from senior Army and Navy officers, senior officials in the Roosevelt cabinet, including somewhat surprisingly the Secretary of the Navy, Frank Knox, believed that a modified version of the plan would be useful in enabling the U.S. to "do something" to support China besides lofty rhetoric.<sup>7</sup> As finally approved by Roosevelt, the U.S. agreed to provide a small force of fighter planes to the Chinese, to be flown by volunteer pilots from the Army Air Force and Navy. This American Volunteer Group (AVG) became the famous "Flying Tigers."

British cooperation in the formation of the AVG proved to be crucial, although a parallel British effort never came to fruition. The

British agreed to forego delivery of a Lend-Lease shipment of P-40 fighters, in exchange for a later delivery of updated model P-40's, which freed up aircraft for the Chinese without cutting into critically short U.S. fighter stocks.<sup>8</sup> The British also agreed to allow the aircraft to be assembled, and the pilots trained, in Burma. The AVG was still in Burma and had yet to arrive in China when war began in 1941.

Besides requesting U.S. support for air operations, the Chinese also sought help from the War Department for training Chinese guerilla forces. This plan, first proposed in the summer of 1941, requested U.S. arms and training for the Chun-t'ung, more commonly known as the Bureau of Information and Statistics (BIS).<sup>9</sup> BIS was the largest and most pervasive of the KMT's several secret police and security organizations, numbering at its peak as many as 300,000 agents, informers, police and special forces. Besides collecting intelligence on the Japanese, BIS performed a wide variety missions including suppression of political dissent, counter-espionage, internal KMT security, and enforcement of KMT wartime economic and trade regulations.<sup>10</sup> Commanded by General Tai Li, a virulent anti-Communist, intimate friend of Chiang, and reputed former Shanghai gangster, the BIS acquired a number of unofficial names including the "Blue Shirts" and the KMT's "Gestapo."<sup>11</sup> Sensing potential severe political ramifications, the War Department showed no interest in this plan. So the Chinese went to the Navy Department, which also turned the project down, but only initially.

As the threat of war with Japan increased, the Army dispatched two missions to China in late 1941. The first, a survey team under General Clagget of the Army Air Corps, observed Chinese air force

operations and bases to determine potential for future U.S. Army Air Corps operations against Japan in conjunction with the Chinese. This mission, which was separate from Chennault's AVG, led to creation of a Chinese aviator training program in America.<sup>12</sup>

The second Army mission, led by Brigadier General John Magruder, arrived in China shortly before Pearl Harbor. Magruder's narrowly defined mission was to ensure that American Lend-Lease aid intended for the development of an agreed 30 division re-equipment program was satisfactorily administered.<sup>13</sup> Small quantities of American Lend-Lease aid had begun to arrive over the Burma Road in mid-1941 and some of it was reportedly diverted by corrupt Chinese officials along the way. Magruder was not empowered to advise Chiang on strategy or develop plans for combined operations in the event of war.<sup>14</sup> Magruder observed that the KMT was already seriously weakened by over four years of war with the Japanese and that the prospect for effective offensive action by the Chinese was remote, even if extraordinary U.S. assistance were provided.

Magruder's reports described the sorry state of the Chinese armies, in which troops often fought bravely, but were frequently malnourished, disease-ridden, and poorly paid, if paid at all.<sup>15</sup> The Chinese officer corps was riddled with corruption, political favoritism, and had a poor understanding of modern tactics and logistics. Since China had very little remaining industry, weapons of any variety were in extremely short supply. Such artillery as existed consisted of widely varying makes and calibers, presenting a logistical nightmare. Generally, less than half the men in a Chinese division had rifles. The remainder served as porters. Since Chinese units were generally

undermanned to begin with, the effective combat power of a Chinese division was less than a typical Japanese regiment, not counting the overwhelming Japanese advantage in artillery and air support. A Chinese Army (three divisions) had less combat power than one Japanese division.<sup>26</sup>

During the period of the Magruder mission, the outgoing U.S. Naval attache to Chungking, Captain Schuirman, commented on the potential of China to play an active and decisive role in the defeat of Japan with the prescient observation, "If such a conception is seriously held by those controlling high strategy, it is fatally defective."<sup>27</sup> Schuirman was relieved by Colonel James McHugh, USMC, who was a long-time friend of Chiang's wife's family, and who ceaselessly extolled the virtues of the KMT.

#### The U.S. Service Chiefs' View of China

Within a couple months after Pearl Harbor, the senior level military leadership that would make strategic decisions affecting U.S. operations in China was in place and would remain constant for the duration of the war. The President's military chief of staff, Admiral William D. Leahy, had a much more constrained role than today's Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS). Although Leahy frequently significantly influenced strategic decisions, he generally did not originate strategic concepts. Although Marshall and the Chief of Staff of the Army Air Force, General Henry "Hap" Arnold, played crucial roles, the member of the JCS with the most influence over strategic decisions

affecting operations in China was the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO), Admiral Ernest J. King.<sup>18</sup>

#### King

A brilliant and ruthless naval officer, King was the JCS "executive agent" for Pacific war strategy. Although supportive of the Allies' "defeat Germany first" approach, King's heart was in the Pacific. King deliberately adopted a methodology of deferring to Marshall's judgement on European issues while expecting reciprocation on Pacific issues.<sup>19</sup> In general, this arrangement worked.

King believed that the geographic position and manpower of China held the key to victory in the Pacific, and said so repeatedly at Allied strategic conferences.<sup>20</sup> King reasoned that the situation in China was analagous to that of Russia, which King believed would do nine-tenths of the job of defeating Nazi Germany.<sup>21</sup> King sought to keep China in the war and keep the bulk of the Japanese army bogged down in a prolonged war of attrition on the continent of Asia, while U.S. amphibious operations attacked the Japanese Empire by sea.

In King's view, the primary objective of the Navy's offensive thrust across the Pacific was to reach the coast of China, in order to establish bases from which to conduct sustained strategic aerial bombardment and naval blockade of Japan, hopefully bringing about Japan's surrender without need of invasion.<sup>22</sup> If an invasion was required, King wanted Chinese troops to do the bulk of the fighting. Crucial to King's strategy was the need to land on the Chinese coast in areas under friendly Chinese control. King knew that a forced entry into Japanese-held territory on the mainland of Asia would be



prohibitively costly. Thus throughout the war, King vigorously supported any efforts to improve the combat effectiveness of the Chinese army, for the purpose of utilizing Chinese forces to drive to the sea and link with U.S. amphibious forces. King believed in, and strongly supported Stilwell's efforts in China.<sup>23</sup>

King's strategic concept was based on long-standing Navy strategic objectives embodied in the Joint War Plan ORANGE series dating well back before the war. The ORANGE plans largely reflected Navy thinking, given the maritime nature of war in the Pacific. The ORANGE plan iteration approved by the Joint Board in 1938 envisioned a naval offensive across the central Pacific which would culminate in relieving (or more realistically, recapturing) the Philippines and landing an expeditionary force in China to establish advanced naval and air bases which would cut Japan's line of supply to critical resources in Southeast Asia, and to provide logistics sustainment enabling Chinese manpower to defeat the Japanese army.<sup>24</sup> This same basic concept was incorporated in the RAINBOW series plans developed shortly before the war broke out. Although the stunning Japanese victory at Pearl Harbor necessitated radical changes to the RAINBOW plans, King never wavered in his conviction that the tremendous Navy building plan underway since 1939 would reach fruition by 1943 and enable him to accomplish the naval objectives contained in the basic ORANGE plans. King's vision was also shared by the senior naval commander in the Pacific, Admiral Chester Nimitz.

King believed that the best way to keep China in the war until a port could be taken on the China coast was to reopen the overland supply

route, although he also strongly supported aerial resupply as a supplement. King believed that the greatest contribution Britain could make to the Pacific war was to retake the port of Rangoon and reopen the Burma Road. British reluctance to commit the necessary resources to do so led to frequent clashes between King and the British Chiefs of Staff. Although the Indian Ocean and the Far East, including China, were technically in the British area of strategic responsibility, King fought for, and won agreement that support of China was a specific U.S. strategic interest and that resupply of China was a U.S. responsibility, which would be supported by British bases and operations in India and Burma.<sup>25</sup>

#### Arnold

Like King, Arnold believed that the geographic position of China was critical to war in the Pacific, particularly for strategic bomber bases. Until the costly and technologically risky Very-Long-Range (VLR) Bomber (B-29) program became operational, U.S. strategic bombers could not reach Japan except from bases in China or the Soviet Far East. The Marianas Islands were too far, and the weather in the Aleutians was too bad. However, operating from bases in China or Russia presented a monumental logistics challenge to sustained strategic bombing, until such time as reliable sea lines of communication could be established. Arnold did not share King's optimism that the Navy could drive across the entire Pacific within only a couple years. Therefore, Arnold devoted his greatest efforts to the strategic bombing campaign against Germany, resisting all efforts to divert aircraft, particularly bombers, anywhere outside Europe unless absolutely necessary.<sup>26</sup> Although Arnold

believed China was important, he was willing to wait until Chinese bases could be effectively sustained.<sup>27</sup>

Unfortunately for Arnold, the President developed an intense personal interest in the early use of airpower in China, stemming from Chennault's visit to Washington in 1940.<sup>28</sup> Roosevelt saw airpower as a low-risk, low-cost means to quickly demonstrate support to his Chinese ally, while the vast majority (over 98%) of American Lend-Lease aid continued to go to Britain and Russia.<sup>29</sup> Much to Arnold's chagrin, Roosevelt repeatedly intervened in decisions affecting the employment of aircraft in China, even ordering strategic bombers to deploy to China as early as mid-1942.<sup>30</sup> These particular bombers were diverted to Egypt due to Rommel's threat and never reached China.

Arnold did not share the President's infatuation with Chennault. Before his premature retirement from the Army Air Corps in 1937, Chennault had aggravated the Army Air Corps hierarchy with his vigorous advocacy of pursuit (fighter) aviation and outspoken opposition to the prevailing Army Air Corps doctrine of unescorted, daylight strategic bombing. That Chennault was proved right probably only made matters worse. Although Arnold eventually came to respect Chennault as a superb combat leader, he believed that Chennault "could not, or would not be bothered with logistics"<sup>31</sup> and that Chennault was prone to "oversimplification."<sup>32</sup> Arnold, along with Marshall, also harbored suspicions that Chennault placed the interests of himself and Chiang above that of the Army Air Force. This view was reinforced by the fact Chennault served as a well paid hired hand to Chiang between 1937 and his re-induction into the Army Air Force in 1942.<sup>33</sup>

## Marshall

Like King, Marshall also believed that China would play a vital role in the defeat of Japan. But like Arnold, Marshall was focussed on operations in the European theater, particularly the earliest possible insertion of U.S. troops on the northwestern continent of Europe. In order to concentrate as much force as possible for decisive combat against Germany, Marshall carefully weighed the competing requirements of other theaters. Marshall sought to provide only the minimum necessary forces to theaters such as the Southwest Pacific and China-Burma-India (CBI) until after the primary enemy, Germany, had been defeated. Faced with the extraordinary demands of conducting ground combat in multiple theaters, Marshall was forced to make numerous difficult and painful decisions concerning the allocation of scarce or insufficient equipment and manpower. Even with America's tremendous wartime production and manpower base, demand always out-stripped supply. Shortages of things such as landing craft and air transport severely hampered planned U.S. and Allied operations in all theaters. Even as late as the end of 1944, the Army suffered an acute shortage of combat infantrymen.

Although Marshall shared to a great degree King's conception of the strategic value of China, he remained unwilling to commit more than the bare amount of resources required to keep China in the war.<sup>24</sup> Serious plans for offensive actions in China were to be deferred until the defeat of Germany was certain. Marshall resisted commitment of significant U.S. ground combat forces into Burma and China throughout the war, although he was willing to approve minimum essential air combat

forces. Although Marshall based his decisions primarily on priority requirements, he also shared the President's aversion to fighting a land war in Asia with American troops. He assumed that such an undertaking would be drawn out and exceedingly costly.<sup>35</sup>

Like King, Marshall believed that re-opening a land route to China was crucial to keeping China in the war and to prepare for future offensive operations by the Chinese Army. Marshall accepted that the provision of war material to China was a U.S. responsibility. He also agreed with King that primary responsibility for retaking Burma belonged to Britain. Although Marshall and King were prepared to make up British equipment shortfalls, both expected British Empire troops to do the actual fighting to retake the British colony of Burma.<sup>36</sup> However, from Churchill on down, the British had an aversion to fighting on the mainland of Asia, particularly in the miserable swamps and jungles of Burma, that was equal to that of the Americans. Britain's reluctance to fight in Burma incensed King, and the issue became increasingly contentious as the war went on. Although Marshall generally acted as a moderating influence between King and the British Chiefs of Staff, on occasion he too became equally frustrated.<sup>37</sup>

#### U.S. Service "Components" in the China Theater, 1941-1943

The "China Theater" was formed during the first British/American conferences after Pearl Harbor which divided the world into areas of strategic responsibility. China was not invited or consulted. The Far East, including China, was in the British area. Recognizing that neither the British nor the Chinese were likely to be willing to serve

under the supreme command of the other, China was designated a separate theater, and Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek was named Supreme Allied Commander, China Theater. Worried that Chiang might take affront at being appointed by the Allies as commander of his own country, portions of Thailand and Indochina that were "accessible" from China were included within the boundaries of the China Theater. Northern Burma, which was of vital strategic concern to China, remained within the British area.<sup>39</sup> Upon being informed of these arrangements, Chiang requested that a senior American officer be appointed to serve in China as chief of staff for an allied staff expected to consist of American, British and Dutch personnel.<sup>40</sup> The British and Dutch never came. The mission fell to Lieutenant General Joseph W. "Vinegar Joe" Stilwell.

#### U.S. Army Forces, China-Burma-India

Stilwell was not Marshall's first choice to take on the China assignment, but Major General Hugh Drum refused the mission, viewing it as nebulous, peripheral, and doomed to failure.<sup>40</sup> Under intense pressure from Roosevelt and Stimson to send a high-powered senior officer to China, Marshall turned to Stilwell. Due to Stilwell's brilliant performance during a series of major pre-war Army maneuvers, Marshall had chosen him to be corps commander for the first U.S. forces ashore during the planned North Africa landings. However, Stilwell's extensive experience in China, dating all the way back to 1911, and his Chinese language capability, made him the obvious choice with any realistic chance to succeed. Stilwell was also one of a very few officers counted as a close personal friend of Marshall.<sup>41</sup>

Unfortunately, Stilwell never gained the unquestioning confidence of Roosevelt, or the freedom from interference that the President allowed to other theater commanders.<sup>42</sup>

To his admirers, which included Marshall and Stimson, Stilwell was a superb field commander, who could motivate troops and accomplish great things under the most adverse circumstances. Stilwell's physical endurance, aggressiveness, forthright honesty, and understanding of ground combat were unquestioned. To his detractors, Stilwell was weak in logistics planning and use of intelligence, devoting too much time to leading from the very front lines.<sup>43</sup> In these men's thinking, it was "Walking Joe" Stilwell's supposed misunderstanding of the capability and role of modern airpower that led to his greatest difficulties in joint operations. It was Stilwell's acerbic personality and well known lack of diplomatic tact that led to great difficulties in combined operations.

Despite their close relationship, Marshall and Stilwell disagreed on U.S. strategy for operations in the Pacific. Believing that it would be years before the Navy could advance across the Pacific, Stilwell saw China as the decisive area of operations. Painful as it might be, the large Japanese Army in China would have to ultimately be defeated in action. Had it not been for the unforeseen affects of a miracle weapon, Stilwell may very well have been proved correct, for in August 1945 Japan still had an undefeated million-strong army in the field. Stilwell believed the Southwest Pacific should be a defensive theater and that maximum offensive power should be generated in China, using

re-equipped and trained Chinese armies, centered around a U.S. Army corps, all under American command.<sup>44</sup>

Recognizing the reality of resource constraints, Marshall's initiating directive to Stilwell did not include plans for utilizing U.S. troops, let alone an entire corps, in offensive operations in China. Stilwell's primary mission was to improve the combat efficiency of the Chinese army. In addition, Stilwell was to administer U.S. Lend-Lease aid for the purpose of keeping China in the war against Japan and preparing for future offensive, most likely air, operations from China. Stilwell was tasked to command U.S. Army (including Army Air Force) forces in China, and within India and Burma. He was also authorized to command such Chinese troops as Chiang might allow. And he was directed to keep open the Burma Road, a task quickly overtaken by events.<sup>45</sup>

Upon arrival in China in March 1942, Stilwell was faced with one of the most convoluted command structures ever devised, an unfortunate by-product of political reality between China and Britain. As Chiang's chief of staff for Allied forces in China, Stilwell was roughly equal to Chiang's Chinese chief of staff, General Ho Ying-chin, who was also the KMT War Minister. Unfortunately, the only substantial Allied troops in China were American flyers. As commander of U.S. Army forces in China-Burma-India, Stilwell commanded American ground and air forces in two separate Allied theaters, one British and one Chinese, with operations in China dependent on support coming through India. This was complicated further when the British established India as a separate theater from Burma and the rest of Southeast Asia. As administrator of Lend-Lease, Stilwell reported directly back to Marshall on matters that



frequently put him in direct conflict with Chiang. Stilwell also "commanded" Chinese troops that were operating in British areas, since the Chinese refused to come under British command. As time went on, this muddled, contradictory command system only got worse.

#### The Burma Campaign, 1942.

Battle with the command structure would have to wait, for Stilwell was immediately faced with trying to salvage something from the debacle in Burma, already well under way. Although given command of the two Chinese armies then fighting in Burma, Stilwell quickly discovered that Chinese interpretation of "command" was closer to "non-binding advice." Chiang continued to issue orders from back in Chungking, frequently contradicting Stilwell's orders from the field without his knowledge, which contributed significantly to the confusion and lack of coordination already rampant.<sup>46</sup>

Hampered by confusion in the chain of command, Stilwell was unable to prevent the collapse of the Chinese armies in Burma. Both the British and Chinese were driven out of Burma in what Stilwell viewed as a humiliating and unnecessary rout. In the bitter recriminations afterwards between the British and Chinese over who ran first, Stilwell made few friends by bluntly stating that both armies performed terribly.<sup>47</sup> As a result of Stilwell's outspoken critique of British performance in Burma, most British officers believed that Stilwell was "anti-British." While he did have a pronounced anglophobic streak, Stilwell got along well with any British commander who earned his

respect as a competent and aggressive combat commander, such as British General William Slim.<sup>48</sup>

### Stilwell and the Chinese.

The Burma disaster also soured Stilwell's relationship with Chiang, permanently as it turned out. Stilwell became convinced that Chiang was an incompetent military commander, along with virtually the entire senior Chinese officer corps. As Chinese forces in Burma disintegrated in late April 1942, Chiang's order to issue every Chinese soldier a watermelon cemented Stilwell's view that Chiang was out of touch with reality in the field.<sup>49</sup> From Chiang's point of view, the Chinese had taken a great risk in allowing an unknown foreigner, who had no combat command experience, to take charge of the two best remaining KMT armies. These two armies had served as the core component of Chiang's strategic reserve for several years. Given that both armies were virtually destroyed, Chiang lost faith in Stilwell's command ability.<sup>50</sup>

Although Stilwell had little faith in KMT leadership, he had great respect for the bravery and potential capability of the average Chinese soldier. With decent leadership, proper training and care, such as regular feeding, Stilwell believed the Chinese soldier could be as good as any in the world. With the exception of Slim, most British commanders, and a good many Americans and Chinese too, did not share Stilwell's optimism.<sup>51</sup> Beginning with a training program in Ramgarh, India, for remnants of Chinese forces driven out of Burma, Stilwell began molding an effective Chinese fighting force. Overcoming

substantial obstruction by British authorities in India, and bureaucratic resistance from the KMT, Stilwell succeeded in training and equipping three Chinese divisions, designated the X-force.

Stilwell sought to expand the training program to 30 divisions in Yunnan in southwest China, designated the Y-force, and another 30 divisions in east China, designated Z-force. With much difficulty, Stilwell succeeded in accomplishing some training and re-equipping of the Y-force. Unfortunately, the key to improving the combat effectiveness of the Chinese Army was to streamline organization and eliminate incompetent commanders, whose primary quality was loyalty to Chiang rather than military prowess. Stilwell's proposed reforms struck directly at the mechanism by which the KMT maintained his control. Stilwell reasoned that such drastic action by Chiang was required if the Japanese were to be defeated in China. However, Stilwell's proposed reforms were politically unacceptable to Chiang, no matter how militarily sound.

Stilwell's immediate objective was to re-open the Burma Road. He originally desired a major coordinated British, American, and Chinese campaign, code named ANAKIM, to retake all of Burma in 1943, including the port of Rangoon. However, British and Chinese reluctance to play their envisioned roles led Stilwell to develop a less ambitious plan.<sup>32</sup> Using the X-force, Stilwell would advance from Ledo, India, through northern Burma, building a road behind him, until he linked up with the Chinese Y-force, which would be simultaneously advancing down the old Kunming-Rangoon route from China. Stilwell wanted the British to conduct at least a limited supporting attack in central or southern

Burma. Opposition to even this limited plan by the British, Chinese, and even Americans proved to be intense.<sup>53</sup>

#### The 14th Air Force

Stilwell's strategic plan was strongly challenged not only by the British, but also by his own subordinate, Chennault. Chennault believed that Stilwell's plan to push through a road and reform the Chinese army would take too long. By the time the Ledo-Burma Road was completed its strategic value would be gone, since by that time a port on the Chinese coast could have been established. In the meantime, the enormous engineering and supply effort that would go into securing, building and maintaining the road, would drain resources away from aerial resupply of Chennault's air operations in China.<sup>54</sup> Chennault believed that airpower was the answer to the problems in China. Every effort should go into commencing and supporting an offensive air campaign. Chennault had powerful allies, principally Chiang, Roosevelt, and the British.

Chiang saw Chennault's airpower strategy as an ideal means to strike the Japanese quickly, and increase the flow of American aid, without having to submit to Stilwell's onerous reforms or risk additional KMT ground forces in offensive combat with the Japanese. As Chiang's air advisor since 1937, Chennault had done more to fight for and support the Chinese than any other American. He had also demonstrated the ability to get results, as evidenced by the superb record of the AVG against great odds in Burma and later China. Throughout 1942 and 1943, Chennault's air force carried the full weight of American combat action in the China Theater. With minimal resources

and utilizing "guerilla-style" tactics, Chennault's flyers inflicted significant losses on the Japanese air force.

Chiang strongly supported Chennault's proposals. During a meeting with Arnold in Chungking in February 1943, Chiang demanded that Chennault be given command of an independent air force in China, with 500 aircraft and substantially increased logistics support.<sup>55</sup> Chiang's support of Chennault over Stilwell strongly influenced Roosevelt. In March 1943, Roosevelt directed that a separate air force be established in China under Chennault's command.<sup>56</sup> The China Air Task Force (CATF) was separated from its parent 10th Air Force (headquartered in India), and designated the 14th Air Force. Although still technically under Stilwell's command, Chennault enjoyed wide freedom of action, particularly by utilizing his other position as Chief of Staff of the Chinese Air Force granted to him by Chiang.<sup>57</sup>

Roosevelt viewed Chennault's airpower strategy as a way to strike the Japanese quickly and demonstrate support for Chiang without utilizing American ground troops or forcing reforms on the reluctant KMT.<sup>58</sup> Roosevelt's views were influenced by a very effective letter writing campaign, orchestrated by Chennault's public relations aide, Joseph Alsop. A distant Roosevelt cousin, Alsop was well connected with presidential advisor Harry Hopkins and with the Chinese Foreign Minister, T.V. Soong.<sup>59</sup> In addition, the succession of presidential envoys to Chungking all bought the Chennault program, recommending with dreary regularity that Stilwell be relieved.<sup>60</sup> Chennault dispatched a letter to Roosevelt with Wendell Wilkie in October 1942 in which he stated that with 105 fighters, 30 medium bombers, and 12 heavy bombers,

I will guarantee to destroy the principle industrial centers of Japan...The cutting of the Japanese sea route to her newly conquered empire is a simple matter. Once the above two objectives are accomplished the complete military subjection (sic) of Japan is certain and easy...probably within six months, within one year at the outside."<sup>61</sup>

Neither Stilwell, Marshall, Arnold or King thought it would be so easy.

#### Airpower versus the Burma Road.

The conflict between Stilwell's and Chennault's rival strategies came to a head in a series of meetings just before and during the British/American TRIDENT conference in Washington 12-25 May 1943. Both Stilwell and Chennault were called back to attend. Stilwell, strongly supported by King, continued to argue in favor of a campaign in Burma. Stilwell stated Chennault's strategy was premature, because when the air campaign began to really hurt the Japanese, they would respond by attacking and overrunning the American airfields with ground forces. The Chinese army, in its current condition, would be unable to defend the airfields in the face of a determined Japanese assault.<sup>62</sup> Despite Stilwell's arguments, Roosevelt already seemed to have made up his mind to support Chiang and Chennault, against the recommendations of his own Chiefs of Staff. He was supported in his decision by Churchill and Wavell who agreed that the most effective action that could be taken in China and Burma was through airpower.<sup>63</sup> The argument was clinched by a communication from Chiang which guaranteed that Chinese troops would be able to protect the airfields.<sup>64</sup>

Unfortunately, the decision reached at TRIDENT was an ambiguous compromise. Although the JCS directed Stilwell to increase support as much as possible to the 14th Air Force, the prospect of at least limited

offensive ground action in Burma in late 1943 or 1944 was not ruled out.<sup>65</sup> Therefore the intense competition for resources between Stilwell and Chennault continued. The critical bottleneck continued to be the limitations of the aerial transport route over the Hump. Despite an ambitious directive to fly 10,000 tons of cargo a month to China, the Air Transport Command, which reported directly to Washington and not to Stilwell, continued to fall far short. Primitive conditions in both India and China, severe maintenance and equipment problems, abysmal weather, lack of navigation aids, pilot unfamiliarity, and Japanese air attacks against planes and bases, all conspired to ensure transport capability remained woefully inadequate.<sup>66</sup>

#### Naval Group China

While the Stilwell-Chennault dispute raged, the U.S. Navy embarked on its own plan to prepare the coast of China for future amphibious landings. After their initial rebuff, the Chinese renewed their approach to the U.S. Navy for a program of cooperation with the KMT secret police. A Chinese colonel attached to the embassy in Washington, who also happened to be an agent of Tai Li, recruited a number of naval officers to the proposed program, including Commander (later Rear Admiral) Milton E. "Mary" Miles.<sup>67</sup> In the expediency of the moment after Pearl Harbor, the Navy agreed, although actual details of the program remained to be worked out.

Miles arrived in China in March 1942 under secret verbal orders from King to "prepare the China coast in any way you can for landings in three or four years."<sup>68</sup> Ostensibly assigned to the embassy as a Naval

Observer, Miles' involvement with Tai Li's organization was to be kept as discreet as possible, due to political ramifications. Miles' own outspoken anti-communist, anti-British, pro-Chennault attitude quickly endeared him to Tai Li and Chiang himself.<sup>69</sup>

Miles' first objective was to work with Tai Li's forces in establishing a network of weather stations throughout China which would provide important, and currently unavailable, weather forecasting support to the Pacific Fleet. As the Japanese persistently tracked down and destroyed the weather stations, Miles' "Friendship Project" grew to include provision of small arms and explosives training to Tai Li's paramilitary organization, the Loyal Patriotic Army, in order to defend the weather stations.<sup>70</sup> Although growth of the program was slow, due to the same logistics problems facing the rest of the theater, it quickly branched out into clandestine intelligence collection and sabotage.

By March 1943, the Navy-BIS arrangement was officially codified with the approval of both Roosevelt and Chiang and designated the Sino-American Cooperative Organization (SACO).<sup>71</sup> SACO was an integrated organization with Tai Li as commander, and Miles as his deputy. Miles also commanded the growing Naval Group China (NGC), which technically conducted some independent U.S. Navy activities. In reality, the dividing line between NGC and SACO activities was obscure.

Because of Miles' close relationship to the KMT's intelligence service, the U.S. Office of Strategic Services (OSS) sought to piggyback on the SACO agreement. For a time, Miles was designated head of OSS activities in China.<sup>72</sup> This proved to be a short-lived and contentious relationship, since the OSS' desire to cooperate with the British and



desire to seek accurate, unfiltered information on the CCP quickly earned the enmity of Tai Li.<sup>73</sup> Miles refused to carry out OSS directives that put his relationship with Tai Li at risk. The resulting disputes between the OSS and Miles brought the issue of the Navy's relationship with Tai Li before Stilwell on several occasions.

Although Stilwell took a dim view of Miles' "illegal action" activities, he had no control over Navy activities in China.<sup>74</sup> Miles reported directly to King, a relationship that King zealously protected until very late in the war. Marshall initially sought to have SACO/NGC placed under Stilwell's control. However, Stilwell recommended against doing so, recognizing that cooperation from Tai Li would likely cease in that event.<sup>75</sup> Despite his distaste, even Stilwell saw the potential of Tai Li's wide-ranging net of agents behind Japanese lines. He also saw the benefit of keeping the Army completely separated from Tai Li's unsavory organization. For his part, Miles respected Stilwell as a fighter, but disagreed with Stilwell's strategy and added his voice to the general clamor for Stilwell's replacement.<sup>76</sup>

### CHAPTER 3

#### SEXTANT, EUREKA, MATTERHORN, AND ICHIGO NOVEMBER 1943 - MAY 1944

##### The Cairo and Tehran Conferences

The Allied conferences at Cairo (SEXTANT) and Tehran (EUREKA) from 22 November to 7 December 1943 marked a major turning point in American and British military strategy regarding China. Decisions reached at Cairo and Tehran had far-reaching impact on operations in the China Theater for the duration of the war. For the first time, Roosevelt, Churchill, and the American and British Chiefs of Staff met Chiang Kai-shek and his staff face-to-face. The experience proved to be a profound shock. Admiral Mountbatten described the American and British leaders' reaction, "They have been driven absolutely mad."<sup>1</sup> The long unresolved British and American dispute over future operations in Burma in support of China also erupted into the most bitter and divisive strategy debates of the war. General Sir Alan Brooke, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, described one meeting as "the mother and the father of a row."<sup>2</sup> Although the official record is bland, Stilwell's diary captured some of the flavor of the discussions between the American and British Chiefs of Staff,

Brooke got good and nasty and King got good and sore. King about climbed over the table at Brooke. God he was mad. I wish he had socked him. 3:30. Chinese came. Terrible performance. ...Brooke was insulting. ...Antics by Peanut [Chiang].<sup>3</sup>

Several months prior to SEXTANT, the British and American Combined Chiefs of Staff (CCS) agreed to a major reorganization of commands in the Far East which significantly affected the dynamics of Allied relations. The CCS approved the formation of the South East Asia Command (SEAC), which incorporated Burma, Ceylon, Malaya, Singapore and Sumatra. It also included parts of Thailand and Indochina, although the dividing line with the China Theater was not explicitly clear.<sup>4</sup> After lengthy U.S. and British wrangling, the CCS named Admiral Louis Mountbatten as Supreme Allied Commander, SEAC. Stilwell was named Deputy Supreme Commander, although he still retained all his previous duties.<sup>5</sup> The CCS intended for the formation of SEAC to accomplish several objectives. Among the most laudable was the desire to improve coordination between Stilwell and the British. For a while it worked, as Stilwell and Mountbatten started off working well together.<sup>6</sup>

The first order of business at SEXTANT was for Mountbatten to brief his plans for operations in Burma for 1944. Stilwell and Mountbatten were in basic agreement, and Mountbatten's overall plan (CHAMPION) reflected much of Stilwell's earlier plans. The CHAMPION plan contained two components. The first (TARZAN) covered the land war in Burma. Stilwell would lead an attack into northern Burma from India, utilizing the Northern Combat Area Command (Chinese X-force), and the first U.S. ground troops to be committed to operations in Burma. These U.S. troops, a regiment-sized force under the code name GALAHAD (Merrill's Marauders), would conduct deep penetrations into the Japanese rear. In addition, the Chinese Y-force would attack across the Salween River from China into northern Burma to link with Stilwell. The British

would support the two Chinese thrusts with supporting attacks under Slim from India into western Burma, and with blocking operations by Long Range Penetration Groups (Wingate's Chindits), and a possible airborne assault into central Burma.<sup>7</sup> The second component of CHAMPION was an amphibious operation (BUCCANEER) to take the Andaman Islands. The purpose of BUCCANEER was to satisfy a long-standing demand of Chiang that the British commit to a major supporting naval operation before he would commit the Y-force into action in Burma.<sup>8</sup>

CHAMPION provoked prolonged debate. Chiang had arrived at the start of the conference at the invitation of Roosevelt and against the better judgement of Churchill.<sup>9</sup> As a result, Chiang attended debates concerning CHAMPION before the British and Americans had come to agreement with each other or even among themselves. In the ugly meetings that followed, British opposition to CHAMPION was intense. Churchill still had no desire to fight in Burma and he wanted to use scarce resources, particularly landing craft, devoted to BUCCANEER for operations in the Mediterranean against Rhodes and the Balkans. The British openly questioned the capability of the Chinese troops, particularly the Y-force, to carry out their assigned role.<sup>10</sup> In heated exchanges, King and Marshall argued in favor of the plan. Chiang didn't help matters by repeatedly reversing himself on whether BUCCANEER met the prerequisite for him to commit the Y-force.<sup>11</sup>

It was clear that neither the British nor Chiang had their hearts in Burma, but the U.S. Chiefs were adamant. When Chiang departed to return to China, he had received Roosevelt's promise that BUCCANEER would be carried out. In return, Chiang agreed to commit the Y-force.<sup>12</sup>

In the meantime, Stilwell presented a draft plan for future operations within China itself, which had been approved by Chiang. Stilwell and Chiang were on rare good terms in the months leading up to SEXTANT. Highly reflective of Stilwell's thinking, the plan called for,

- Continued training to improve the combat effectiveness of the Chinese Army.
- Initiation of a strategic bombing campaign from China against Japan by early 1944.
- An offensive drive, spearheaded by a U.S. three-division corps to take the ports of Canton and Hong Kong, Nov 1944 - May 1945.
- Cutting the Japanese sea lines of communication by intensive bombing of Formosa, the Philippines, and Japanese shipping.
- Additional offensive actions in east China culminating in a drive toward Shanghai in November 1945. The U.S. would land ten infantry and three armored divisions in China once a port had been secured to support further offensive action.<sup>13</sup>

This plan far exceeded anything envisioned by the JSC planning staff. However, Marshall argued against outright rejection of the plan on grounds that it represented the first commitment by Chiang to utilize the manpower of China in offensive action against the Japanese within the China Theater.<sup>14</sup> It also refutes criticism that Stilwell only thought in terms of infantry combat. However, events soon overtook the plan and it was never implemented.

#### Tehran and Return to Cairo

From Cairo, the British and American leaders went to Tehran for a meeting with Stalin that radically changed the strategic equation in the Pacific. The change downgraded the importance of China in Pacific strategy. Although the Soviets had been dropping hints for a long time that they intended to participate in the Pacific War, Tehran marked the first time that Stalin himself promised to enter the war against Japan. Actual entry would have to wait until after the defeat of Germany.

Unbeknownst to the Allies, the Soviets were already making initial preparations for offensive operations in Manchuria, rotating key General Staff officers in and out of the Far East Front to ensure that planners had both combat experience in the West and experience in the Far Eastern environment.<sup>15</sup>

Stalin's promise was welcome news to American planners who viewed Soviet participation in the Pacific war as "essential." As early as September 1943, the JCS-approved Long-Range Plan for the Defeat of Japan sought Soviet entry at the earliest practical date.<sup>16</sup> The JCS desired Soviet entry for two primary objectives, defeat of the Kwangtung Army in Manchuria, and to allow U.S. strategic bombing of Japan from bases in the Soviet Far East.<sup>17</sup> In October 1943, the JCS dispatched a U.S. military mission to Moscow under Major General John Deane. One of the mission's major objectives was to initiate combined U.S./Soviet planning for operations against Japan. Due to extreme Soviet desire to maintain the continued outward appearance of neutrality, so as not to provoke a pre-emptive Japanese attack, little combined planning was ever actually accomplished. After Tehran, the Soviets responded to a U.S. request and began to share their intelligence on the Kwangtung Army.<sup>18</sup> JCS enthusiasm for the approach to the Russians was not unanimous. King still believed that by relying on China, Soviet entry might not be necessary.<sup>19</sup>

Tehran also represented a stunning defeat for Churchill's Mediterranean/Balkan strategy for the defeat of Germany. Not only did Stalin specifically oppose Churchill, he vigorously supported the U.S. strategy for invading northern France by May 1944, and demanded a second

supporting attack, most likely in southern France.<sup>20</sup> As the British and Americans reconvened at Cairo on 3 December, this time without the Chinese, seething British resentment derailed the earlier hard won agreements on Burma and China.

The British balked at conducting BUCCANEER. Churchill argued that the Soviet entry negated the need to build-up China, which he believed was futile in any case. Roosevelt cautioned that the Allies might be trading the certain help of a long-time loyal ally (China) in exchange for future help based solely on Stalin's word. The American Chiefs, led by King, argued that the Allies had made a binding commitment to Chiang. Churchill argued that Roosevelt had, but he had not. In addition, Churchill maintained that BUCANNEER was a political sop to Chiang with no real military value, which was largely true. The British maintained that there were not enough resources to do BUCCANEER and OVERLORD/ANVIL (Northern/Southern France) at the same time. The Americans countered that there were, but that the British were trying to preserve assets for Churchill's still coveted eastern Mediterranean operations.<sup>21</sup>

The British insisted that if forced to do BUCCANEER, OVERLORD would have to be delayed. The discussions grew heated and protracted. As the British steadfastly refused to give in, the American position gradually eroded, with first Leahy and then Arnold giving in on grounds that OVERLORD must not be delayed.<sup>22</sup> Eventually Marshall reluctantly accepted this argument. King held out stubbornly to the end, in direct confrontation with Churchill, arguing that the Allies were breaking a promise and selling out the Chinese.<sup>23</sup> Although Marshall sought to

delay a final decision, Roosevelt terminated the argument by giving in and postponing BUCANNEER.<sup>24</sup>

The plan to support China continued to unravel. Without BUCANNEER, and the likely prospect that Chiang would therefore not commit the Y-force, Mountbatten reneged on major portions of CHAMPION.<sup>25</sup> By the time the dust settled, BUCANNEER was dead, along with most of the proposed operations in central and coastal Burma. The Allied Chiefs agreed to allow Stilwell to conduct limited offensive operations in northern Burma.<sup>26</sup>

Recognizing that Chiang would likely be angered by the British and American turnabout, Roosevelt sought to minimize the damage by agreeing to an earlier request by Chiang to equip and train 90 Chinese divisions. Roosevelt also reaffirmed plans to commence a strategic bombing campaign of Japan from China by May 1944, using the new B-29 bombers for the first time.<sup>27</sup> Roosevelt's message to Chiang, informing him of the decision to cancel BUCANNEER due to the overriding need to defeat Germany first, offered Chiang a face-saving way out of his commitment by suggesting that Chiang could opt to delay Y-force operations until November 1944.<sup>28</sup> Stilwell and King both believed that Chiang would feel betrayed, would not commit the Y-force, and that as a result Chinese-American cooperation would deteriorate rapidly. They were correct.

Chiang's response was worse than expected. He would withhold the Y-force from Burma and re-evaluate at a later time. Chiang said he agreed that the defeat of Germany was important. But he then none too subtly warned that if China were forced out of the war the consequences



would be very grave. Chiang warned that the Japanese would launch a major offensive in China in 1944. He complained that except for the Y-forces, China had received virtually nothing out of American Lend-lease to conduct operations in China itself, which was largely true. In order to ensure continued Chinese participation, Chiang wanted a one billion dollar loan, and a doubling of the U.S. Army Air Force in China.<sup>20</sup>

Chiang's message was not the first time he hinted at dropping out of the war, and the argument had proved effective before. However, Cairo had changed the attitude of American leaders, particularly Roosevelt. Chiang's demanding tone and constant vacillation at Cairo had aggravated and frustrated the Americans. Even Marshall had lost his temper in one exchange with Chiang's staff.<sup>20</sup> The American response to Chiang's demand for a billion dollars was anger. Most believed Chiang's threat to drop out of the war was a bluff.

By this time, American leadership became aware that Chiang's domestic position was weak and eroding quickly. While Chiang was in Cairo, Tai Li's forces discovered and put down the "Young General's Plot," which involved several hundred officers, including some division commanders, seeking to overthrow Chiang and institute reforms similar to those advocated by Stilwell. Many of the officers were executed.<sup>21</sup> The U.S. leaders' disillusionment with Chiang was profound and rapid. According to Stilwell's aide, Brigadier General Frank Dorn, Stilwell was ordered by Roosevelt to prepare a contingency plan to assassinate Chiang just in case. Stilwell did so, although he was opposed to the concept of actually ever executing such a plan.<sup>22</sup> Having deliberately built up Chiang's image as a heroic, democratic, pro-western leader, despite

considerable evidence to the contrary, the U.S. was in a poor position to publicly sever the alliance with Chiang and the KMT.

In the disillusioned aftermath of Cairo, British and American strategic planning diverged further. Although Britain had tried to improve relations with the Chinese and increase operations in China, Chinese reluctance remained. In October 1943, Churchill had appointed Lieutenant General Sir Adrian Carton de Wiart as his personal representative to Chiang, and to act as liaison between Chiang and Mountbatten. Stilwell opposed the appointment, since as Deputy Supreme Commander of SEAC, Stilwell was supposed to be the liaison between Chiang and Mountbatten.<sup>33</sup> Although the highly decorated Carton de Wiart had had an extremely colorful military career, he had no experience in China.<sup>34</sup> As a result, he accomplished little. British activity in China remained limited to small-scale guerilla training activity by SOE, and intelligence collection. Several British attempts to operate fighter aircraft in China were blocked by Stilwell on valid grounds that there were already insufficient logistics to support U.S. air operations.<sup>35</sup>

In the meantime, Mountbatten developed a plan more in line with senior British thinking. As a result, Mountbatten's relationship with Stilwell deteriorated rapidly. The new British plan (AXIOM) skipped Burma altogether and advocated a seaborne approach to China, which happened to go via Sumatra, Singapore and Hong Kong.<sup>36</sup> The British argued that it would be faster to reach China by sea than through the jungles of Burma. The JCS, especially King, refused to lend their support to a plan that smacked of restoration of British colonies.<sup>37</sup> However, AXIOM and the landings in Sumatra (CULVERIN) became pet

projects of Churchill, and the British repeatedly resurrected variants of the plan throughout 1944.

With cooperation between the Allies at a low ebb, Stilwell and Marshall believed there was little prospect of progress for Stilwell's efforts to improve the combat effectiveness of the Chinese Army. As a result, Stilwell devoted almost his entire effort to leading his Chinese divisions and the U.S. GALAHAD regiment in battle in northern Burma.<sup>38</sup> During Stilwell's absence from Chungking, China's situation deteriorated further.

#### ICHIGO - Japanese Planning

While the Allies debated strategy at Cairo, the Japanese finalized plans for a massive offensive of their own. On 22 November 1943, the Imperial General Headquarters presented a formal plan to establish a "continental" route connecting their forces in China with those in Southeast Asia.<sup>39</sup> The plan built on feasibility studies underway since December 1942, which recognized the increasing vulnerability of vital Japanese sea lines of communication connecting Japan with critical war-sustaining resources in Southeast Asia.<sup>40</sup> As the Japanese navy failed to halt the increasingly effective depredations of U.S. submarines, Japanese army planning to develop an alternative increased.

Japanese planning for offensive action in China received additional impetus from increasingly painful attacks by Chennault's 14th Air Force. In a see-saw air campaign throughout 1943, the 14th Air Force gained the upper hand. Moving into new bases in east China in May 1943, 14th Air Force planes, utilizing new skip-bombing tactics, began

inflicting substantial losses on Japanese merchant shipping. Chennault had long believed that Japan's merchant fleet was a critical weakness that should be vigorously exploited by air attacks from China.<sup>41</sup> In addition, the 14th Air force, working in close cooperation with Naval Group China personnel, dropped mines in ports and shallows throughout the Far East with devastating effect.<sup>42</sup> Despite continual shortages of everything, Chennault's fliers severely disrupted Japanese logistics activity throughout China, playing a substantial role in stalling two limited Japanese land offensives in 1943.<sup>43</sup> Chennault's first, and devastating, strike on Formosa on 25 November, shocked the senior Japanese planners, who accelerated preparations for Operation ICHIGO.

ICHIGO would be the largest ground offensive of the Pacific War. Although different accounts list ICHIGO's objectives in differing priority, they included the following,

- Establish an overland supply corridor to the south.
- Eliminate the 14th Air Force bases in east China to prevent both current use and expected future use by strategic bombers.
- Establish military and air control over areas into which U.S. amphibious landings might occur.
- Destroy the Chinese army as an effective fighting force and precipitate the collapse of the KMT (although no attack against Chungking or the vital airhead at Kunming was planned).
- Increase Japanese morale.<sup>44</sup>

The plan called for the China Expeditionary Army under General Shunroku Hata to execute a two phase-offensive beginning in April 1944 to last five months. Some additional ground forces from Manchuria and air forces from Japan reinforced the Japanese Army in China. The Japanese employed 24 divisions, 28 independent brigades, but only 230 aircraft.<sup>45</sup> Phase one (KOGO) would employ 140,000 men. The 12th Army of the North China Area Army would advance south along the Peking-Hankow

railroad to link with Japanese forces occupying Hankow. The purpose of KOGO was to obtain a secure overland route in order to build up logistics in Hankow for the second phase. Chennault's Air Force had made supply via boat on the Yangtze River too dangerous.<sup>46</sup>

After completion of KOGO, the Japanese 11th Army would commence phase two (TOGO), which had three sub-phases. In TOGO 1, 360,000 Japanese troops would attack south from Hankow, and take the key cities and airfields at Changsha and Hengyang. In TOGO 2, the 11th Army would continue to attack southwest toward the Kweilin airfield complex, while the 23rd Army advanced inland from Canton. The two thrusts would meet at the Liuchow airfields and then force a corridor through to Indochina. Finally, TOGO 3 would mop up several isolated airfields that remained east of the Hankow-Indochina corridor.<sup>47</sup> The conclusion of the operation would "insure a posture of undefeatability" and allow for the indefinite maintenance of the "Absolute National Defense Sphere."<sup>48</sup> This would be the first all-out Japanese offensive in China since 1938. Chinese armies were woefully unprepared to meet the challenge.

#### MATTERHORN - Strategic Bombing

While the Japanese were planning to eliminate the threat from U.S. airfields in east China, U.S. planning continued apace for the commencement of a strategic bombing campaign from China by May 1944. This operation, code named MATTERHORN, would overburden the China Theater's already inadequate logistics system at a critical time.

Under intense pressure from Roosevelt to commence offensive air action from China, Arnold agreed to a proposed plan (SETTING SUN) in

October 1943 which envisioned building airfields in east China to base the new B-29 very-long-range (VLR) strategic bombers, which would soon be coming into service.<sup>49</sup> Arnold clearly recognized the immense logistics difficulties involved in the project.<sup>50</sup> However, at that time, Arnold could not be certain when the Navy would be able to retake the Marianas Islands, which were also within B-29 range of Japan. Although Arnold's inclination was to wait for the better Marianas bases, the President was adamant.<sup>51</sup>

Arnold provided the SETTING SUN plan to Stilwell for comment. Stilwell responded with his own plan, TWILIGHT, which was mostly the work of Lieutenant General George Stratemeyer. Stratemeyer was Stilwell's senior air officer. However, in the typically confusing CBI command structure, Stratemeyer had command authority over the 10th Air Force based in India and Allied combat air forces in India and Burma, but not over Chennault's 14th Air Force in China. Chennault maintained his "independent" status with the approval of Roosevelt and Chiang.<sup>52</sup>

Along with comments on the enormous logistics burden, the TWILIGHT plan contained Stilwell's assertion that the U.S. would have to equip and train 50 Chinese divisions to U.S. standards in order to defend the bases. As an alternative to this massive undertaking, TWILIGHT proposed that the B-29's be based in India and stage through existing airfields in China. The B-29's would self-sustain, flying their own supplies over the "Hump."<sup>53</sup>

Much of TWILIGHT was incorporated in the final plan, MATTERHORN. A major difference was that under MATTERHORN, staging airfields would be constructed in secure areas in southwestern China near Chengtu.

Unfortunately, the Chengtu fields were out of range of most of Japan, but the Army Air Force proceeded with the plan anyway.<sup>54</sup> Building four massive new airfields in China consumed enormous resources. Four hundred thousand Chinese laborers worked for three months, basically building the fields by hand. The KMT actually charged the U.S. outrageously inflated sums of money in construction fees, which added to Arnold's dislike of Chiang.<sup>55</sup>

The problem of who would have operational control over the B-29's took months to solve, further demonstrating the unviably command and control structure in CBI. Although the bombers would be based in the British India Theater, Arnold wanted to ensure that the British had no operational control. Chennault wrote directly to Arnold, to argue that the B-29's should come under his command. Arnold refused, and was also annoyed that Chennault had skipped the chain of command.<sup>56</sup> For a while it looked like Stilwell would have operational control, which seemed to make sense since he was the senior American in theater. But in a twist, and possibly at Chennault's instigation, Chiang demanded control of the bombers since he was Supreme Allied Commander in China.<sup>57</sup> To preclude this, Roosevelt assumed operational control, which in reality meant that the JCS retained operational control itself, with Arnold as executive agent.<sup>58</sup> The result was that XXth Bomb Group commander took his orders directly from Washington. Only in an extreme emergency was Stilwell authorized to take control of the B-29's for in-theater use. Due to the lengthy machinations, the JCS did not finally approve the program until April 1944, after the first B-29's had already arrived in India. The first B-29 mission against Japan finally flew 15 June 1944.<sup>59</sup>

Although Stilwell and Stratemyer began to voice considerable doubts about MATTERHORN's feasibility, Arnold pressed ahead.<sup>60</sup> Sustainment of the XXth Bomb Group proved to be even more of a burden on theater logistics than anticipated, even though additional transport aircraft were assigned to the ATC "Hump" route. Each B-29 had to fly six round trips between India and Chengtu in order to build up enough fuel and bombs to conduct one strategic bombing mission.<sup>61</sup> Even then, the initial standup of the operation cut deeply into tonnage being flown over the Hump by ATC. As a JCS project, supplies for the XXth Bomb Group took priority over both the 14th Air Force and Stilwell's Chinese training programs. Naval Group China's supplies were virtually cut off during this period.<sup>62</sup> In a final blow, the JCS provided six squadrons of gas-guzzling P-47 fighters to the 14th Air Force, which Chennault then had to support from his own inadequate stocks. These fighters were to be used solely for the protection of the Chengtu airfields, to Chennault's considerable annoyance.<sup>63</sup>

#### The Debacle in East China Begins, March - April 1944

During the critical months of March and April 1944, Japanese action and inadequate Allied logistics combined to expose the serious flaws in American and Allied strategy for operations in the China Theater. As numerous Allied and Japanese operations came to a head at once, lack of Allied unity of effort, lack of synchronized joint operations, and deficient command structure, all became readily apparent.



### Burma-India Complications

Since the Cairo conference, the Chinese 22nd and 38th divisions (from the X-force), under Stilwell's command, advanced into northern Burma, supported by the U.S. 5307th Provisional Regiment (GALAHAD). Advancing against the tenacious resistance of units of the crack Japanese 18th Division, Chinese performance vindicated Stilwell's maligned training and reform effort. Although several long and difficult flanking marches into the Japanese rear by the GALAHAD force held the key to victory in these engagements, Stilwell's Chinese fought well by any standard. As Stilwell had long believed, a well-equipped, trained and led Chinese force could fight and win against the Japanese.<sup>64</sup> Behind the Chinese/American advance, American engineers cut a road through extraordinarily difficult terrain which would eventually connect Ledo, India to the old Burma Road, opening an overland supply line to China. Although Japanese forces escaped encirclement several times, and the terrain slowed progress, Stilwell's force steadily closed in on the key town of Myitkyina, crucial to the control of Upper Burma. Stilwell hoped to reach Myitkyina by May, before the monsoon.

As Stilwell advanced deep into northern Burma, the Japanese 15th Army struck across the Burmese border toward Imphal, India in massive force on 11 March. Although planned independently of ICHIGO, this offensive could not have been better timed to support ICHIGO.<sup>65</sup> If unchecked, the Japanese offensive would cut the rail and road route to the Upper Assam airfields, shutting off supplies to the China airlift and Stilwell's force in Burma. With the aid of strategic warning from ULTRA intelligence, extensive airdropped supply from U.S. aircraft, air

superiority, and the superb leadership of Slim, the British 14th Army valiantly held the Japanese in bitter battles at Imphal and Kohima.<sup>66</sup> The fight was long, costly, and desperate as many of the British and Indian units fought for extended periods of time while surrounded. For a long time, the issue was in great doubt.

The Imphal offensive immediately impacted the Hump airlift to China, as transport aircraft were diverted to dropping supplies to isolated British forces. Already stretched by aerial support to Stilwell's forces committed in action in northern Burma and by support to MATTERHORN, the quantity of supply destined to the 14th Air Force dropped to its lowest level in months, just at the crucial time that Chennault should have been stockpiling supplies to counter the anticipated Japanese offensive in China.<sup>67</sup> Both Chiang and Chennault complained loudly, but Stilwell rightly reasoned that if Slim failed at Imphal, there would be no supply to China at all. Nor did Stilwell have the authority to unilaterally divert tonnage from MATTERHORN.

Recognizing the grave threat to China's lifeline, and in response to repeated requests for help from the British, Stilwell immediately pushed to have Chiang commit the Y-force into action across the Salween to attempt to take some pressure off the British at Imphal.<sup>68</sup> Chiang refused, even though protecting the Assam airbases was vital to China's continued survival. At the time, Chiang was concerned over an incident with Russian aircraft in remote Sinkiang Province, possible increased anti-KMT activity by the CCP, and by the impending threat of a Japanese offensive in east China.<sup>69</sup>

Stilwell quickly enlisted the aid of Marshall, who convinced Roosevelt of the gravity of the situation at Imphal. On 10 March, Marshall authorized Stilwell to cut off supplies to Chinese forces in China if the Y-force refused to budge.<sup>70</sup> Stilwell did so, and diverted the Chinese tonnage to the 14th Air Force.<sup>71</sup> On 17 March, Roosevelt sent a message to Chiang requesting that the Y-force attack into Burma as soon as possible.<sup>72</sup> Ten days later, Chiang replied that China was not strong enough to go on the offensive in Burma.<sup>73</sup> On 3 April, Roosevelt replied with a sharply worded message stating it was "inconceivable" that the Y-force should sit doing nothing, particularly considering the U.S. effort to equip and supply many of the Y-force divisions. Only the weakened Japanese 56th division defended the Salween front against 12 Chinese divisions. If Chiang refused to attack, Roosevelt threatened additional cut-offs in aid.<sup>74</sup> After some face-saving maneuvering, China's War Minister, Ho Ying-chin, replied that the Chinese would attack across the Salween, but only because Chiang wanted to, not because of U.S. pressure.<sup>75</sup>

#### Chennault's Warnings and Stilwell's Response

In February, Chennault's reconnaissance aircraft detected signs of a Japanese build-up for a major operation in east China. Chennault issued his first warning to Stilwell on 12 February, although he muddied the message somewhat by predicting a "powerful air blitz" by the Japanese.<sup>76</sup> As the month passed, Chennault became convinced that a major ground offensive would commence by mid-April which threatened his bases in east China. Chennault requested additional supplies, but

Stilwell refused because of the Imphal situation.<sup>77</sup> By 31 March, Chennault's warnings were unambiguous, "The fate of all China itself may be at stake."<sup>78</sup> Chennault began to reposition aircraft to meet the threat, but was hampered by bad weather.

A coherent U.S. response to rapidly unfolding events was hampered by the convoluted China Theater chain of command. In his capacity as Chief of Staff of the Chinese Air Force, Chennault recommended to Chiang that the Salween offensive be postponed so that supporting aircraft could be reassigned elsewhere.<sup>79</sup> Chiang was more than willing to agree. However, Chennault's recommendation came at the very same time Stilwell and Roosevelt were urging Chiang to launch the offensive.

Stilwell, with his hands full at the front in Burma, did not take such a dire view and ordered Chennault not to give his pessimistic predictions to Chiang, which Chennault did anyway.<sup>80</sup> Stilwell believed that if the Japanese attacked in great force in east China, there was nothing the Chinese Army, or the 14th Air Force with a little more supply, could do about it anyway. Better to concentrate on things that could be handled, like keeping the Japanese out of Assam.

Chennault, and other critics of Stilwell, believed that Stilwell underestimated the magnitude of the ICHIGO threat and was slow to react.<sup>81</sup> Although speculative, Stilwell may also have had access to ULTRA intelligence that indicated that ICHIGO was not directed against Chungking or Kunming. Although Stilwell did not begin receiving ULTRA from American sources until June 1944, he did consult with Mountbatten regarding the British evaluation of the Japanese offensive.<sup>82</sup>

Mountbatten was getting ULTRA, along with considerable information from a highly effective British signals intelligence operation based in India.<sup>63</sup>

#### ICHIGO, Salween, and Myitkyina

Phase one of ICHIGO commenced 18 April. Chennault's aircraft were still out of position, and the Japanese offensive was unhampered by air attack for the first week.<sup>64</sup> In the open terrain between Peking and Hankow, Japanese mechanized forces, supported by their own aircraft, shattered 21 Chinese divisions within a little over a month. Even the peasants of Honan province turned on the Nationalist troops and assisted the Japanese.<sup>65</sup> By May, the newly operational Chinese-American Composite Wing (CACW) was in action against the Japanese and acquitted itself well in the air, although it suffered considerable losses on the ground from Japanese air attacks.<sup>66</sup> The CACW was a unique integrated fighter and medium bomber wing that had mixed American and mostly Chinese crews. Despite increasingly effective attacks by CACW and the 14th Air Force, by June ICHIGO KOGO had accomplished its objectives.

As ICHIGO decimated Chinese units north of Hankow, 40,000 Chinese troops of the Y-force finally attacked across the deep Salween gorge on 10/11 May. Within several days, over 12 Chinese divisions and 72,000 men were across the river, fighting over 9,000 foot mountain passes in the extremely steep and inhospitable terrain.<sup>67</sup> The defending Japanese 56th Division put up a tenacious delaying defense. Although the 56th Division was at less than full strength, because some units had been sent to defend Myitkyina, the Japanese were aided by the terrain, terrible weather that hampered U.S. air support, and the phenomenal luck

of acquiring a copy of the complete Chinese battle plan by accident."<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, the Chinese made some slow progress before becoming bogged down. By the time Chiang launched this offensive, the worst of the threat to Assam had already passed.

In the meantime, Stilwell's forces closed in on Myitkyina. Having already stretched his supply line and the endurance of his troops beyond reasonable limit, and with the monsoon upon him, Stilwell gambled. In an audacious move, he sent the Marauders on yet another long jungle march, which caught the Japanese by surprise and captured the airfield at Myitkyina on 17 May. With a truly stunning victory in his grasp, Stilwell gloated in his diary, "Will this burn up the Limeys!"<sup>9</sup> Unfortunately, during the assault on the town of Myitkyina, fresh but untested Chinese troops faltered, allowing the Japanese to regroup and dig in for a bitter, protracted siege lasting months. The X-force and the Y-force would not link until January 1945.

As the ICHIGO offensive rolled on, Chiang asked Stilwell to return to Chungking. With the attack on Myitkyina at a critical stage and turning sour, Stilwell declined. Chiang insisted again and Stilwell finally complied. As Stilwell returned reluctantly to Chungking, the JCS reached decisions that fundamentally altered the nature of Stilwell's mission.

## CHAPTER 4

### DISASTER IN EAST CHINA, JUNE - OCTOBER 1944

#### Stilwell's Changed Mission

By the time Stilwell returned from Myitkyina to Chungking on 6 June, he had received a message from Marshall that signaled the end of the mission to improve the combat effectiveness of the Chinese army, and the end of hopes that China would play a decisive role in the ultimate defeat of the Japanese army. The new guidance explicitly relegated the China Theater to a supporting role for operations in the South West and Central Pacific Theaters. As of 27 May 1944, Stilwell's unambiguous paramount role was to maximize the effectiveness of 14th Air Force support of MacArthur's and Nimitz' operations in the western Pacific.<sup>2</sup>

The shift in JCS thought on the strategic value of China began even before the Cairo conference. Although the senior leadership still believed China's contribution would be vital, members of the JCS planning teams were beginning to seriously question this assumption. This idea gathered momentum as the pace of U.S. operations in the Pacific accelerated. Disillusion with Chiang's lack of cooperation, frustration with lack of British activity in Burma, realization that the Ledo-Burma Road would not be forced through until early 1945, and the prospect of Soviet entry into the Pacific War also influenced the change in U.S. thought in the wake of Cairo. By February 1944 new JCS planning

documents viewed China's value primarily in terms of bases for air attacks in support of Pacific operations.<sup>2</sup> A number of planners thought all the U.S. really needed to do was keep China in the war.

In April 1944, just as ICHIGO broke, the JCS ordered Stilwell to begin stockpiling supplies in east China in order to provide air support for U.S. landings in the Philippines and Formosa which could occur before the year was out.<sup>3</sup> Given the already critical supply situation in theater, stockpiling was out of the question. The only way to carry out the directive would be to cut off efforts at equipping and training Chinese ground forces. Following a series of somewhat confusing directives, Stilwell wrote to Marshall on 24 May asking for clarification and stating for one last time, "I contend that ultimately the Jap army must be fought on the mainland of Asia."<sup>4</sup> Marshall's response clearly indicated that the JCS now believed that Japan could be defeated without fighting the Japanese army in China.<sup>5</sup>

#### Stilwell versus Chennault

At the same time that Stilwell's primary purpose became to support 14th Air Force operations, his relationship with Chennault sank to new lows. Throughout the spring of 1944, Chennault gave advice and recommendations directly to Chiang that contradicted what Stilwell was trying to do, sometimes in spite of Stilwell's orders to desist.<sup>6</sup> As Chinese armies disintegrated before the Japanese onslaught, and the threat to the east China airbases grew, Chennault's warnings became increasingly apocalyptic and his demands for unavailable supplies more



incessant. Stilwell viewed Chennault's actions as an attempt to "duck the consequences of having sold the wrong bill of goods."<sup>7</sup>

The final straw for Stilwell came when Chiang, at Chennault's instigation, wrote directly to Roosevelt demanding that the supplies stockpiled in China for the XXth Bomb Group all be turned over to the 14th Air Force.<sup>8</sup> Stilwell had already tried to do this and been turned down by Arnold and Marshall.<sup>9</sup> Stilwell had also already managed to double the amount of supplies going to Chennault at the expense of all other theater activities, including the Navy, and by temporarily reallocating new shipments intended for the B-29's to the 14th Air Force.<sup>10</sup> Stilwell requested that Chennault be relieved. Recognizing that Chennault still retained the support of Chiang and Roosevelt, the War Department refused Stilwell's request, stating that relieving Chennault would leave Stilwell with the burden of the blame for the impending disaster in East China.<sup>11</sup>

#### ICHIGO TOGO - The Offensive Continues

The full magnitude of the Japanese offensive finally became clear to everyone in late June as over 360,000 Japanese troops attacked southward from Hankow, directly towards the string of U.S. airfields in east China. The Japanese attacked into the Chinese 9th War Zone, commanded by General Hsueh Yueh, a "warlord" not in Chiang's favored clique, who had nevertheless defeated three previous Japanese attempts to take the city of Changsha. This time, the Japanese swept around the city, encircled and overwhelmed it by 18 June. The Chinese executed the commander of the KMT Fourth Army for failing to carry out Chiang's

directive to defend the city to the death.<sup>12</sup> The Japanese repeatedly sought out and engaged the strongest Chinese forces they could find, correctly reasoning that by doing so, the weaker Chinese forces would flee.<sup>13</sup> The 48 Chinese divisions in the 9th War Zone crumbled before the Japanese.

The most effective opposition to the Japanese offensive came from the 14th Air Force. Although by this time Chennault had almost achieved his long-standing goal of 500 aircraft, only 400 were operational. A squadron of fighters and a squadron of medium bombers were tied down supporting the faltering Chinese Salween offensive, while another six squadrons of fighters were tied down uselessly defending the B-29 fields at Chengtu.<sup>14</sup> Stilwell's actions in June to reallocate Hump tonnage to the 14th Air Force did not begin to take effect until August due to the usual difficulty in getting supplies from the airhead at Kunming to the east China airfields over China's primitive road system. For several periods in July, Chennault's entire force in east China was grounded due to lack of fuel.<sup>15</sup> Getting a taste of Stilwell's experience, Chennault was dismayed when the Chinese air force refused to share fuel from common stockpiles.<sup>16</sup>

By the end of June, the Japanese steamroller reached the city and airfields at Hengyang, where their plan first began to go wrong. This time, aided by more difficult terrain, and effective attacks by the 14th Air Force, Hengyang's defenders held for 49 days until 8 August 1944. Of 16,000 defenders, all but 1,200 were killed or wounded during the valiant defense. The Japanese suffered 20,000 casualties.<sup>17</sup>

With the supply situation improving somewhat in August, the 14th Air Force attacked Japanese supply lines with devastating effectiveness. With only 150 fighters and bombers operating in east China, the 14th Air Force had already destroyed 505 trucks, 1,000 small boats, 114 aircraft and caused 13,000 Japanese casualties by 1 August, for a loss of 43 aircraft to all causes.<sup>19</sup> Air attacks staggered the Japanese during the battle for Hengyang, and the Japanese seriously considered calling off the offensive.<sup>20</sup> But without adequate supplies of fuel, airpower alone was not enough. The Japanese pressed on despite their losses.

As the immense scope of ICHIGO became increasingly clear, American leaders faced the alarming prospect that the Japanese might actually succeed in knocking China out of the war. Even Roosevelt began to see that reliance on Chennault's airpower strategy and Chiang's "guarantee" to defend the airfields was a mistake. (Although Chennault claimed that his strategy assumed that the defending Chinese armies would be armed and trained by the U.S., his ever increasing "minimum" demands for supplies always exceeded the total that could be delivered over the Hump route, which would have precluded any supplies going to Chinese ground forces.)<sup>20</sup> Only one month after relegating the China Theater to a supporting role, Marshall asked Stilwell's recommendation for what could be done to salvage the deteriorating situation. This request set in motion a chain of events that resulted in Chiang's demand for Stilwell's recall.

## The Recall of General Stilwell

By mid-1944, Stilwell had already survived numerous attempts to have him relieved. Every presidential emissary had returned to the U.S. with the recommendation that Stilwell be replaced in favor of Chennault, something Chiang certainly desired. Chennault's press aide bombarded the White House with anti-Stilwell letters, while even the Naval Attache, Colonel McHugh, wrote to the Secretary of the Navy stating that Stilwell's reform efforts were counterproductive and should be abandoned.<sup>21</sup> Stilwell had even weathered the first "Stilwell Crisis" of October 1943, when Chiang had first asked for his recall. Only the strong support of Stimson, Marshall, Mountbatten, and (for unknown reasons) Chiang's wife, prevented Roosevelt from acquiescing.<sup>22</sup> However, by June 1944, Mountbatten was actively lobbying for Stilwell's ouster while Field Marshal Brooke personally asked Marshall to replace Stilwell.<sup>23</sup> Stilwell's luck finally ran out during the ICHIGO offensive.

In response to Marshall's message, Stilwell replied that the only way to change the situation would be to take KMT troops that were blockading the CCP and attack from the northwest toward Hankow, and force the Japanese to pull back from the south and defend the key logistics center. Even then, Stilwell's evaluation was very pessimistic. The only hope, in Stilwell's view, was if he were to be given real command over all Chinese forces.<sup>24</sup> The JCS reviewed Stilwell's reply, concurred, and recommended to Roosevelt that he write to Chiang that Stilwell should be placed in command. To give added

impetus, the JCS and Roosevelt approved Stilwell's promotion to four star rank.<sup>25</sup>

Born of increasing frustration and genuine fear that the collapse of China was impending, Roosevelt's message contained harsh language from one head of state to another, warning that Chiang must take "drastic" measures and that "the fate of all Asia is at stake." Roosevelt urged in the strongest possible terms that Chiang appoint Stilwell to command of all Chinese and American forces in China.<sup>26</sup>

From Chiang's point of view, Roosevelt's message was a humiliating ultimatum that practically demanded that he remove himself from power. Recognizing that failure to comply could lead to a loss of critical American aid and support, Chiang acquiesced in principle and resorted to another tactic that had worked well in the past, to stall.<sup>27</sup> In his reply, Chiang stated that the internal problems of China made things very difficult, and that time would be needed to prepare for the transition. Chiang, who had just met with Vice President Wallace, repeated Wallace's suggestion that the President appoint a special personal representative to act as go-between for Chiang and Stilwell. Marshall warned Roosevelt that Chiang was playing for time, but the President agreed to the request.<sup>28</sup>

#### Chinese Internal Dissent - Warlords and CCP

Chiang was correct in saying that the internal situation in China was difficult. Threats to his rule were increasing from many sources besides the CCP. Chiang could not appear to lose the support of the U.S. at this critical point and expect to keep the KMT in power. Nor

could he appear weak and powerless before American demands. Relations with several powerful regional military governors deteriorated significantly in 1944. One of the reasons it took so long for Chiang to initiate the Salween offensive was due to unfriendly relations with the military governor of Yunan.<sup>29</sup> KMT and Szechuan Provincial forces actually clashed near the capital of Chungking, a situation of grave concern since the Szechuan armies outnumbered the KMT armies by two to one.<sup>30</sup>

The greatest difficulty arose between Chiang and those regional military governors whose territory lay in the path of advancing Japanese forces. These "warlords" had never been more than nominally loyal to Chiang, and as the threat increased they began actively forming coalitions to carry on if and when Chiang fell.<sup>31</sup> Most believed, with ample justification, that Chiang withheld critical support even in the face of the Japanese attack because they were not "loyal" to Chiang. The governor of Kwangsi Province accused Chiang of deliberately standing by while the Japanese decimated potential KMT rivals in east China, and by August 1944 a growing separatist movement was underway in south China.<sup>32</sup> Some leaders of this movement requested assistance from the U.S. Others sought accomodation with the Japanese.<sup>33</sup> The warlord's accusations were not completely without foundation. Despite repeated requests from Stilwell and even Chennault, Chiang refused to supply arms or allow Americans to supply arms to Hsueh Yueh, whose forces were desperately defending the American airfields in east China.<sup>34</sup>

In addition to some warlords, the CCP also actively sought U.S. assistance. Stilwell's desire to make use of the CCP in fighting the

Japanese led to the greatest friction with Chiang and was probably the primary root cause of the recall crises of September-October 1944. As early as July 1942, the CCP representative in Chungking, Chou En-lai, indicated that the CCP sought to cooperate with the U.S.<sup>36</sup> By June 1943, Chou invited the U.S. to visit the CCP capital at Yen-an, followed by numerous CCP offers to place themselves under Stilwell's command.<sup>36</sup> The CCP sought to begin operational discussions in preparation for U.S. landings in north China.<sup>37</sup> CCP offers appeared sufficiently sincere that by the end of August 1943, Stilwell recommended that the KMT and CCP conduct joint action in north China. Chiang's reaction was hostile, and within a month Chiang called for Stilwell's relief.

CCP motivation for cooperation with the U.S. probably centered on getting the U.S. to force Chiang to end the blockade of north China and to acquire U.S. arms, ammunition and training. Certainly, Stilwell took a dim view of the large number of KMT and provincial troops, perhaps as many as 500,000, devoted to enforcing the blockade of the CCP while doing little to actively fight the Japanese.<sup>38</sup> At this stage of their development, CCP interests may not have been inimical to the U.S., although analysis after the fact suggests CCP policy may have been as shrewdly manipulative as Chiang's. Regardless, Stilwell was willing to work with anyone who desired to fight the Japanese. In words, at least, the CCP seemed very willing to reciprocate.

Following Cairo, Roosevelt took an interest in finding out more about the CCP's true willingness to cooperate, and suggested to Chiang that Americans be allowed to go to Yen-an as observers.<sup>39</sup> Chiang rebuffed Roosevelt's first overture, but the President persisted.

Finally, as a result of Vice-President Wallace's visit to China in June 1944, Chiang finally relented and allowed a small U.S. group to go to Yen-an.<sup>40</sup>

In July 1944, the U.S. Military Observer Group ("Dixie Mission" due to its presence in "rebel" territory), under Colonel David D. Barrett, arrived in Yen-an. Consisting of from one to two dozen Army, OSS, and embassy personnel, the mission remained in Yen-an until the end of the war. The U.S. members of the mission were immediately impressed by the CCP and reports written by the mission cited high morale, vigorous competent leadership, popular reform programs, lack of corruption, and exceptional cooperation.<sup>41</sup> Certainly, compared to the defeatism and corruption that had taken hold of Chungking by this time, Yen-an seemed like a breath of fresh air to the members of the Dixie Mission. The CCP was so cooperative, that the mission rapidly began to exceed its "observer" charter. By August, the OSS was conducting classes in small arms and demolitions attended by several thousand CCP troops.<sup>42</sup> U.S. observers were not the only ones impressed by the CCP at this time. British intelligence reports indicated much the same thing.<sup>43</sup>

Impressed by the positive and optimistic tone of the Dixie Mission's reports, Stilwell demanded that Chiang allow him to work with and command CCP forces.<sup>44</sup> By September 1944, CCP General Chu Teh announced his support for the concept of American command over all Chinese armies, including CCP forces. Chu Teh also warned that Tai Li was actively seeking ways to sabotage the growing spirit of U.S./CCP cooperation.<sup>45</sup> Seeing his worst fears materializing, Chiang was forced



to take drastic action in order to prevent the CCP from gaining further legitimacy in the eyes of the Americans.

### Chiang's Perspective

Although Stilwell's flirtation with the CCP was probably the primary factor in motivating Chiang's action in the command crisis that followed, Chiang had numerous other reasons for being upset with American policy. While many Americans believed that Chiang was deliberately manipulating America in order to acquire arms with which to resume the civil war with the CCP, many Chinese had a different perspective. To them, the U.S. was manipulating China by providing only the barest level of assistance to ensure that China remained in the war, at the cost of enormous Chinese casualties, solely to ease the burden on U.S. forces in the Pacific. The shift in America's strategic view following the Cairo conference only reinforced this perception.

In Chiang's eyes, the U.S. had not treated China as an equal despite U.S. rhetoric. China was not consulted on major issues of strategy in the Pacific War. Due to British and Allied security concerns, China was not allowed to participate in plans for future operations except within the borders of China itself, and even then Allied intelligence was withheld. For example, the Allies went to great lengths to ensure that Chiang had no knowledge of the ULTRA intelligence program.<sup>46</sup> Unlike Britain and Russia, China did not control the distribution of Lend-Lease within their own country. China was not permitted membership on the Munitions Assignments Board. U.S. aid repeatedly fell well short of U.S. promises. Frequently, what little

material intended for and promised to China was diverted to other theaters. During 1943 and 1944, China received 0.4% of the total U.S. Lend-Lease aid for those years.<sup>47</sup> That this was due to the limitations of aerial transport and the failure to re-open the Burma Road at an early date did little to assuage Chinese feelings. There is no doubt that KMT and American perceptions of reality differed considerably.<sup>48</sup>

In addition, the personal animosity between Chiang and Stilwell was very real. To Chiang, Stilwell was rude and ill-mannered, contemptuous of Chiang's position as head of state. Chiang believed that Stilwell lacked combat experience, disregarded sound military principles, repeatedly underestimated the enemy, advanced recklessly, and was frequently insubordinate. Worst of all, in Chiang's view, Stilwell did not understand the true nature of the CCP.<sup>49</sup> Although much of Chiang's view was ill-founded, Stilwell did not refrain from publicly criticizing Chiang in front of his American staff, who in turn allowed Stilwell's disrespectful attitude to permeate staff-to-staff dealings at lower levels of command. Marshall believed that this had been Stilwell's greatest mistake, along with failure to actively court better relations with Roosevelt.<sup>50</sup>

The question of Stilwell commanding all Chinese forces, including KMT, CCP and provincial troops, developed into a political contest of wills between Chiang and Roosevelt. To Chiang, it became an issue of China's fundamental sovereignty. In addition, Chiang could not realistically grant control over forces that he himself did not really control, even if he had wanted to. As Marshall anticipated, for many

weeks there was little movement toward resolution of the command issue as Chiang awaited Roosevelt's appointment of a special representative.

In late August, Chiang added conditions to his earlier agreement "in principle" that Stilwell should be given command of Chinese forces. Chiang stated that Stilwell could command only those forces that were loyal to the central government. This condition would rule out the CCP and some warlords unless they agreed to submit to KMT authority. In addition, Chiang asked for control of Lend-Lease distribution within China, which would give him the authority to use American aid however he saw fit, without needing Stilwell's agreement as in the past. Control of Lend-Lease, one of Chiang's long sought goals, would enable him to continue to circumvent Stilwell's new "command" authority.<sup>51</sup>

#### The Hurley Mission and the End of Stilwell

On 6 September 1944, the President's special representative, Major General Patrick J. Hurley arrived in Chungking. Both Stimson and Marshall had supported the selection of Hurley, a former Republican Secretary of War under President Hoover and a successful troubleshooter for Roosevelt in the past, for this mission. Even Stilwell was favorably impressed and pleased upon Hurley's arrival.<sup>52</sup> However, Hurley had no experience in Chinese affairs and proved not to have the temperament for such an assignment, quickly becoming a "loose cannon," or in the words of Mao, "that clown."<sup>53</sup> Although Hurley was to act as his personal representative, Roosevelt only met Hurley briefly before Hurley's departure for China.<sup>54</sup> With only Roosevelt's verbal guidance, Hurley understood his mission to be to facilitate Stilwell's assumption

of command of Chinese armies, to strengthen the KMT, and to encourage a united front (KMT and CCP) against the Japanese.<sup>55</sup>

Although Hurley's motives remain unclear, he very quickly privately sided with Chiang against Stilwell while maintaining the outward appearance of continuing to back Stilwell.<sup>56</sup> As negotiations between Chiang and Hurley became protracted and difficult, Hurley began sending his confidential and sensitive comments on the negotiations, and his recommendations for changes in U.S. policy, via the Naval Group China (NGC) radio rather than through the Army, cutting Stilwell out.<sup>57</sup> Stilwell became aware and concerned that Hurley was doing so, but because Hurley gave no outward signs of lack of support, Stilwell did not become overly alarmed.

However, Stilwell probably should have been concerned that Hurley's privileged communications might have been compromised to the Chinese, providing a crucial advantage to Chiang during the negotiations. Although Miles denied that any of Hurley's messages or Roosevelt's responses that passed through the NGC communications system fell into Tai Li's agents' hands,<sup>58</sup> the pervasive integration of NGC and SACO activities and those of Tai Li's secret police make this a plausible argument. Although by this time Miles made no secret of his admiration for Chiang and Chennault or of his desire to see Stilwell relieved, there is only circumstantial and inconclusive evidence that Miles deliberately worked with Tai Li to undermine Stilwell's position. Indeed, Tai Li's agents were ubiquitous, including even Stilwell's housekeeping staff and the senior Chinese liaison officer with Stilwell's (and later, Wedemeyer's) staff, and the Chinese could have

obtained critical intelligence from other potential sources.<sup>50</sup> Further complicating the murky situation, Chennault's public relation's aid, Alsop, later claimed that he (Alsop) had actually drafted Chiang's aide memoire that demanded Stilwell's recall.<sup>51</sup> Although Miles and Chennault may not have deliberately sabotaged Stilwell's position, their actions certainly played into Chiang's hands.

Detailed blow-by-blow accounts of the events leading to Stilwell's recall are available in numerous sources and will not be repeated here. However, several combined operations issues were key factors in the crisis, particularly Stilwell's plans to conduct operations with the CCP and British plans for a combined offensive in Burma. On 13 September, Stilwell met with two CCP representatives in Chungking who indicated CCP willingness to place their forces under Stilwell's command.<sup>52</sup> Stilwell then proceeded to the front in east China for some firsthand observation of the Japanese offensive, which had resumed following a thirty day halt for resupply after the capture of Hengyang.

While at the front, Stilwell received a message from Chiang demanding that the Chinese forces at Myitkyina go on the offensive within two weeks, or else he would withdraw the Y-force back to China.<sup>53</sup> The Chinese forces, which had just concluded the drawn-out siege of Myitkyina, were in no condition to go on the attack, not to mention that actions in Burma needed to be coordinated and approved by Mountbatten. Withdrawal of the Y-force from Burma would prevent re-opening the Burma Road, which was almost within reach. In addition, withdrawal of the Y-force would pull the rug out from under Mountbatten's plans to go on the

offensive in Burma at a critical time. After years of reluctance to fight in Burma, the smashing defeat of the Japanese at Imphal the previous spring now gave the British the opportunity and incentive to go on the attack. Already thoroughly disgusted by evidence of KMT neglect of the Chinese divisions attempting to defend the American airfields in east China, Stilwell sent a blistering situation report to Marshall and the JCS, who were then meeting with the British in Quebec (OCTAGON).<sup>63</sup>

On 16 September, in response to Stilwell's report, the Army Operations Division in Washington drafted a message for Roosevelt to send to Chiang demanding that Stilwell be given command promptly. Approved by Marshall and the JCS, Roosevelt added some moderating language to an already blunt message, which warned of "catastrophic consequences" and the need for "drastic and immediate action" to prevent the impending loss of everything China and the U.S. had worked together for.<sup>64</sup> Hurley was appalled by the tone of the message and sought to soften its impact, but Stilwell personally delivered the message to Chiang with ill-suppressed satisfaction.<sup>65</sup>

Chiang did not respond for over a week. In the meantime Stilwell continued his efforts to work with the CCP, proposing on 23 September to go personally to Yen-an to propose to the CCP, that if they would recognize Chiang's authority, the U.S. was prepared to arm and supply five CCP divisions.<sup>66</sup> On 25 September, Chiang gave Hurley an aide memoire that China was prepared to accept an American commander, provided it wasn't Stilwell.<sup>67</sup>

Marshall and Stimson pushed for a firm refusal of Chiang's demand, but faced with an open break with an ally just before the

presidential election, Roosevelt wavered and offered Chiang a compromise that would replace Stilwell as Allied Chief of Staff, but retain Stilwell in command of the Chinese divisions in Burma.<sup>60</sup> Chiang remained uncompromising. Either as result of leaks, or as a result of a reported (and disputed) conversation between presidential advisor Harry Hopkins and Chiang's brother-in-law H.H. Kung, Chiang believed that Roosevelt was prepared to sacrifice Stilwell.<sup>61</sup> Chiang replied, "as long as I am head of state and Supreme Allied Commander there should be no question as to my right to request the recall of an officer in whom I can no longer repose confidence."<sup>70</sup> On 11 October, Hurley forwarded a memorandum to Roosevelt stating that Chiang and Stilwell were "fundamentally incompatible" and recommending that Stilwell be recalled.<sup>71</sup>

On 18 October 1944, Roosevelt recalled General Stilwell. Despite Stimson's warning of "the evil result...that will come from Stilwell's relief,"<sup>72</sup> several factors influenced Marshall and the President's action. One was the realization that the disaster in east China was already beyond salvage as the Japanese overran 13 American airfields, which had been built at enormous cost. If Stilwell were to be given command at this point, he, and the United States, would be saddled with the blame for the loss of east China.<sup>73</sup> A second factor, was the realization, strongly held by Army planners, and increasingly held by Navy planners, that plans to utilize the manpower and geographic position of China for the ultimate defeat of Japan were unnecessary and had been overtaken by events.

### The Demise of King's China Strategy

During the period between Chiang's demand for Stilwell's recall and the President's final decision, King's plans for a landing in China became a casualty of ICHIGO and the failure of Stilwell's mission to improve the combat effectiveness of the Chinese Army. Other factors influenced this outcome, including Roosevelt's politically motivated decision to support MacArthur's plan to take Luzon instead of Formosa, and the rapid American advance across the Pacific that exceeded expectations. However, the need to deal with the Japanese army on the mainland of Asia remained. To replace China, American planners now counted on Soviet assistance, a circumstance King had hoped to avoid.

Affected by Miles' uncritical and over-optimistic reports of KMT strength and capability, many Navy planners persisted in the belief that China would play an important role in the final defeat of Japan well after their Army counterparts had begun seriously questioning this assertion. Throughout the early months of 1944, Nimitz' plans for the Pacific Theater (GRANITE) continued to stress the objective of reaching the China coast.<sup>74</sup> By March, King and Nimitz were recommending a two pronged approach to the Japanese homeland as a follow-on to the Marianas campaign. One prong would advance via the Bonin Islands, supporting B-29 bombing of Japan, while the other prong would take Formosa and a base on the China coast.<sup>75</sup> In May, the JCS reaffirmed an intent to land in Formosa and the China Coast to, in King's words, "supply and utilize Chinese manpower as the ultimate land force in defeating the Japanese."<sup>76</sup> During a Pacific strategy conference in May, Nimitz stressed the importance of China and suggested that the rapid U.S.



advance across the Pacific could enable landings in Formosa to be moved up from February 1945 to November/December 1944. As a result, King directed Miles to accelerate preparations for landings and to coordinate with Stilwell to determine the most convenient place for landings.<sup>77</sup>

Miles met with Stilwell and the deputy CBI commander, General Dan Sultan, at Myitkyina in early June. It became apparent that Stilwell's and King's plans were not in complete agreement. The Navy was looking to land somewhere from Amoy northward, while Stilwell's plans focussed on a drive toward Hong Kong/Canton, several hundred miles to the southwest of Amoy. Miles claimed that SACO guerrillas could seize and hold a port on the coast with the aid of carrier-based air cover, enabling Chinese forces to advance faster than Stilwell's plan. Stilwell disagreed, countering that such an advance was not possible until a land supply route to China had been opened. Although Miles rightly pointed out that half a dozen Liberty ships could deliver more cargo than the Burma Road and airlift combined, Stilwell comprehended that like airfields, the ports would still have to be defended by the deficient Chinese ground forces against aggressive Japanese counter-action. Miles then stated his conviction that the Japanese in China would soon withdraw because of the affects of American submarines on Japanese supply lines.<sup>78</sup> Although Miles was right about the affects of American submarines, the Japanese response was to attack, not withdraw.

The Japanese push south from Hankow in June caused Army planners to question the feasibility of landing on the China coast without becoming embroiled in a costly conflict with the Japanese on the mainland.<sup>79</sup> In addition, closer inspection revealed that Formosa would

be a tough target and by July, Nimitz' planning staff shied away from complete occupation of Formosa, utilizing it only as a quick stepping stone to landings at Amoy.<sup>10</sup> Further complications arose due to King's and Nimitz' stated views that Luzon could be bypassed in favor of Formosa, which led to severe conflict with MacArthur, whose loud protestations resulted in Presidential intervention.

The "Luzon versus Formosa" debate raged in Washington and Pacific planning staffs throughout the summer and early fall. It is important to note that, in King's view, Formosa was not an end in itself, but a jumping off point for the establishment of logistics bases and airfields on the coast of China for sustained blockade and aerial bombardment of Japan, and to completely cut Japan's sea route to South East Asia. To King, the only reasons to take Luzon were political, since Luzon was further from Japan than Formosa, which meant that after Luzon was taken, either Formosa or the Ryukyus would still have to be taken.<sup>11</sup> Marshall's approach was even more radical, favoring bypassing both Formosa and Luzon and going straight to Kyushu.<sup>12</sup>

MacArthur bitterly resisted the Navy's desire to bypass Luzon after taking Mindanao or Leyte. In a meeting with MacArthur and Nimitz in July, Roosevelt ignored Nimitz' advice and promised MacArthur that the U.S would retake Luzon. Roosevelt responded favorably to MacArthur's argument that national honor required the U.S. to liberate the Philippines. Roosevelt also sought to ensure that MacArthur remained mollified and quiescent during the upcoming Presidential election campaign.<sup>13</sup> However, the question of whether to take Formosa before or after Luzon, or even at all, remained unresolved.

As the Formosa/Luzon issue reached a climax in September, debate was not limited strictly by service lines. With invasion of Luzon now presidentially mandated, several of Nimitz' key planners, including Admirals Spruance, Halsey and Sherman began to side with Army planners in arguing against taking Formosa at all. Spruance finally convinced Nimitz that taking Okinawa in the Ryukyus would serve as an acceptable substitute for Formosa.<sup>64</sup> Nimitz finally agreed, convinced by the seemingly unstoppable Japanese offensive in east China that landings in China would be extremely costly. In addition, due to the invasion of Luzon, sufficient ground forces, particularly service forces, would not be available to take Formosa until after the defeat of Germany.<sup>65</sup>

Nimitz finally convinced the reluctant King in late September that the U.S. could either take Okinawa with forces at hand, or wait until the end of the war in Europe to take Formosa. On 3 October, the JCS issued a directive for MacArthur to take Luzon and Nimitz to take positions in the Bonins and Ryukyus. Stilwell was to support both efforts, but events in China quickly made this a moot point. In deference to King, future China landings were not completely ruled out, but were postponed, indefinitely as it turned out.<sup>66</sup>

#### Naval Group China and 14th Air Force

As King's China strategy sputtered in the fall of 1944, Miles' efforts to prepare the coast for landings finally hit full stride. After a slow start due to logistics difficulties, SACO strength began to rapidly grow to 2,500 Americans, 15,000 U.S.-trained Chinese guerillas, plus as many as 50,000 para-military personnel. Combined U.S./Chinese

SACO teams were laying mines in the Yangtze and conducting other acts of sabotage behind Japanese lines.<sup>97</sup> By October 1944, SACO had established over 300 weather stations throughout China which provided information of great value to Pacific Fleet operations.<sup>98</sup> Throughout the summer and fall of 1944, SACO teams established coastwatching stations which worked in conjunction with Fleet Radio Units (signals intelligence) in providing extraordinarily valuable information on Japanese shipping to U.S. submarines.<sup>99</sup>

In one of the few joint operations success stories of the China Theater, Miles and Chennault worked extremely well together. Navy personnel were assigned to the 14th Air Force headquarters providing target intelligence, photo interpretation, and mine warfare coordination services.<sup>100</sup> Through this arrangement, Chennault benefited by Tai Li's intelligence gathering activity without being overtly associated, which might have damaged Chennault's cooperative relationship with the Communist New Fourth Army, which reliably returned U.S. flyers shot down behind Japanese lines in north China. Chennault also received ULTRA information on Japanese ship movements from, strangely enough, British naval sources in India.<sup>101</sup> With this information and that provided by Miles, the 14th Air Force and U.S. submarine forces conducted numerous coordinated and effective attacks on Japanese convoys, particularly before the Japanese overran the east China airfields. In addition, effective coordination between Miles' signals intelligence activity and long range reconnaissance by Chennault's B-24 bombers played an important role in providing early warning of Japanese naval activity during the huge naval battle of Leyte Gulf in October 1944.<sup>102</sup> In fact, it was one

of Chennault's bombers that first sighted the Japanese carrier force northeast of Luzon, although U.S. Navy carrier pilots repaid this act of inter-service cooperation by accidentally shooting one of the B-24's down.<sup>93</sup>

As Stilwell returned to the U.S., where he remained under a presidential gag order until after the election, Japanese once again resumed their advance, driving on the important airfields and cities of Kweilin and Liuchow. These cities fell in mid-November as the Japanese drive from Canton linked with the 11th Army's drive down the Hankow-Indochina axis, and any semblance of effective Chinese resistance ceased. In mid-November, the 11th Army continued the long tradition of Japanese forces in China of exceeding orders, and attacked westerly from Liuchow.<sup>94</sup> This action threatened the absolutely critical cities of Chungking and Kunming, and spread panic within KMT ranks.

All was not totally bleak, however, as the benefits of Stilwell's campaign against Myitkyina began to take effect. The capture of Myitkyina removed the Japanese air threat to the Hump airlift, enabling transport aircraft to fly a more direct, much shorter, and lower altitude route. Within a month after the fall of Myitkyina, aerial transport tonnage to China doubled, and continued to skyrocket.<sup>95</sup> Stilwell's Burma campaign bequeathed a dramatically improved supply situation to his successor, Major General (soon to be Lieutenant General) Albert C. Wedemeyer.

## CHAPTER 5

### RESURGENCE AND VICTORY, NOVEMBER 1944 - AUGUST 1945

#### Wedemeyer's Arrival and the Culmination of ICHIGO

Major General Wedemeyer arrived in China in late October 1944 during the darkest hour of U.S./KMT wartime cooperation. Nevertheless, Wedemeyer achieved remarkable success in the last nine months of the war, partly due to the greatly improved logistics situation, and the collapse of the Japanese Empire's seaward flank which forced the Japanese onto the defensive in China. Seeking to use "honey" where "vinegar" had failed, Wedemeyer benefited by Chiang's increased cooperative attitude in the wake of Stilwell's ouster.<sup>1</sup>

As Mountbatten's chief-of-staff in SEAC since late 1943, Wedemeyer was well acquainted with many of the complex issues in the China Theater. Due to his time as one of the Army's foremost strategic planners in Washington in 1941-1943, Wedemeyer had a better understanding of global Allied strategy, and of China's increasingly diminished role, than Stilwell did. Also unlike Stilwell, Wedemeyer believed that, "It would be unsound for the U.S. to undertake extensive land campaigns on the Asiatic continent."<sup>2</sup> Wedemeyer had also believed that the Ledo-Burma Road would be an engineering folly, although he later benefited by its completion.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, Wedemeyer was already wary of Chennault's "extravagant claims."<sup>4</sup>

Wedemeyer provoked widely varying reaction among those who worked with or for him. To his admirers, including Chennault, Wedemeyer was a far-sighted strategic thinker, who appreciated the importance of supporting the KMT, and who possessed the right amount of tact to handle an extremely difficult assignment. To his detractors, including Stilwell and Miles, Wedemeyer possessed an enormous sense of self-importance, and was wedded to inflexible, suffocating, "regular" Army bureaucratic staff procedures. Miles later regretted his wish to be rid of Stilwell.

As Wedemeyer arrived in China, the War Department split the Army China-Burma-India (CBI) Theater into two parts, which corresponded better with the Allied theaters. Wedemeyer took command of U.S. Army forces (including the 14th Air Force) in China, while Sultan assumed command of U.S. Army forces in Burma and India. Wedemeyer did not have command of the XXth Bomb Group or the Air Transport Command (ATC), both controlled by Washington. Nor did he have command of Navy, OSS, or the variety of British special operations and intelligence activities in the China Theater.

Wedemeyer retained Stilwell's position as administrator of Lend-Lease in China, and he also remained as chief-of-staff to Chiang. As a result of Stilwell's ouster, Roosevelt and Marshall thought better of having an American in command of Chinese forces, since then the U.S. would get the blame for whatever continued disaster was in store in east China. Wedemeyer's mission, issued by the JCS on 24 October 1944 contained no reference to reforming the Chinese Army,

- a. Your primary mission with respect to Chinese forces is to advise and assist the Generalissimo in the conduct of military

operations against the Japanese.

b. Your primary mission as to U.S. combat forces under your command is to carry out air operations from China. In addition you will continue to assist the Chinese air and ground forces in operations, training and logistical support.

c. You will not employ United States resources for suppression of civil strife except in so far as necessary to protect U.S. lives and property.<sup>5</sup>

King's only comment on the mission was to ensure that Naval Group China remained independent of Wedemeyer's command.<sup>6</sup> King's new lack of interest in reform of the Chinese army was shared by the rest of the JCS, who now believed it was futile. In fact, the Stilwell incident poisoned the attitude of senior American leadership toward China. Roosevelt scarcely corresponded with Chiang at all after the firing. Marshall and Hopkins were not even on speaking terms regarding China.<sup>7</sup> Arnold was eager to get his B-29's out of China to better bases in the Marianas.

Despite his intent to bring a new cooperative and objective attitude to relations with Chiang, Wedemeyer quickly ran into the same problems identified by Magruder and Stilwell. In a message to Marshall on 16 December 1944, Wedemeyer stated,

The Chinese have no conception of organization, logistics or modern warfare...The Generalissimo will not decentralize power to subordinates...He is vacillating - in fact he has ordered movements of divisions from the Kunming area without my knowledge...It is the influence and chicanery of his advisors who have selfish, mercurial motives and who persuade him when I am not present to take action which conflicts with agreed plans...Self-sacrifice and patriotism are unknown...The Chinese soldiers are starving by the hundreds...If only the Chinese will cooperate!<sup>8</sup>

Wedemeyer's immediate problem was the continued Japanese offensive. Chinese troops showed little sign of effective resistance, while the Japanese army's increasingly acute supply problem was not yet



outwardly apparent. The situation looked even worse than it was, as the rogue Japanese 11th Army ignored the restraining order of its parent command and pressed its attack toward Kweiyang.<sup>9</sup> From Kweiyang, a critical road junction, the Japanese could threaten either the KMT capital at Chungking or the vital Hump airhead at Kunming, although both cities were still 300 kilometers distant over tough terrain. Based on the experience of ICHIGO so far, there would be nothing the Chinese could do to stop the Japanese from going wherever they chose. Although the 11th Army was about to completely outrun its supply line and come to a halt, the threat appeared extremely grave to Chiang and Wedemeyer.

Wedemeyer believed it most important to concentrate on the defense of the vital supply point at Kunming.<sup>10</sup> Chiang, ever unconcerned about logistics, wanted to concentrate at Chungking. While this remained unresolved, Wedemeyer agreed with Chiang on the need to bring back the two best Chinese divisions from Burma, naturally two trained by Stilwell in India.<sup>11</sup> Mountbatten immediately protested since the two divisions were then in contact with the Japanese and were playing an important role in Mountbatten's offensive in Burma. In addition, the air transport required to bring the Chinese back would come at the cost of support to British operations in Burma.<sup>12</sup> Wedemeyer got unexpected and useful support from Churchill's representative in Chungking, Carton de Wiart, who agreed that the threat to Kunming and Chungking was so grave that such action was justified.<sup>13</sup> Wedemeyer also got unusual support from Chiang, who agreed to bring two divisions off the CCP blockade to Kunming, something Stilwell had never been able to get Chiang to do.<sup>14</sup>

After some haggling and swapping of one Chinese division for another, the Combined Chiefs of Staff concurred with Wedemeyer. This led to operation GRUBWORM in December, in which various air transport units in Asia airlifted 25,095 Chinese soldiers and 1,596 animals back to China in one of the largest troop airlifts of the war.<sup>19</sup>

Unfortunately, they arrived in Kunming after the worst of the threat had passed. Despite the sudden withdrawal of Chinese troops, Mountbatten's subordinate, Slim, continued the offensive in Burma. In January, the remaining X-force division and the American MARS Brigade (successor to GALAHAD) finally linked with the Y-force and reopened the Burma Road.

As the Allies finally re-established land communications with China in January, the Japanese forces in China finally linked with a drive coming out of Indochina, establishing a land route all the way from Manchuria to Southeast Asia. Unfortunately for the Japanese, the strategic picture had changed radically since ICHIGO started in May. As part of the Japanese defensive SHO plan, objectives of ICHIGO had already been scaled back from establishing a rail link from China to Indochina to just pushing a road through.<sup>20</sup> Following the failure of SHO at the Battle of Leyte Gulf, the Japanese were forced to begin pulling back to their inner defense zone, just as ICHIGO reached its objectives. With the invasion of Luzon underway, and with U.S. carrier aircraft striking at will in Formosa, the Ryukyus and soon Japan itself, the purpose of ICHIGO became increasingly pointless. Nevertheless, the Japanese continued with the final phase of ICHIGO, clearing out several isolated U.S. airbases located to the east of the Hankow-Indochina axis.

### 14th Air Force Resurgence and Demise of MATTERHORN

In December and January, Chennault gave lessons in the inherent flexibility of airpower, by establishing the East China Air Task Force at the surrounded fields in the Suichuan area of east China. By flying in supplies over the Japanese-occupied area, Chennault sustained this small force in conducting repeated effective attacks against Japanese logistics until finally being overrun by the Japanese ground forces in early February. After repeated refusals by Chiang (which Chennault had blamed on Stilwell) to allow Americans to provide arms and supplies to the Chinese defenders in east China, Chennault went ahead and provided some anyway in a desperate attempt to hold on to the last airfields. This brought Chennault a rebuke from Wedemeyer at the insistence of Chiang.<sup>17</sup>

Despite the loss of all the fields in east China, the 14th Air Force was not put out of action, although it would be of little tactical support to U.S. operations in the Pacific. Operating from airfields west of the Japanese-occupied area, and aided by the vastly improved supply situation, the 14th Air Force had its best days as the ICHIGO offensive ground to a halt.<sup>18</sup> In December and January, the 14th Air Force shot down over 400 Japanese aircraft, effectively clearing the Japanese from the skies of China for good. With increasing numbers of aircraft, plus the fuel pipeline that accompanied the opening of the Burma road, and lack of Japanese air opposition, the 14th Air Force went on a rampage for the duration of the war, severely degrading Japanese logistics activity in the China Theater.

As the 14th Air Force rebounded, the B-29 strategic bombing offensive from China ended. MATTERHORN was a casualty of ICHIGO and of the extraordinary logistics difficulties that rendered the campaign largely ineffective, despite heroic efforts. Since the first mission on 15 June 1944, the XXth Bomb Group managed to conduct only about 25 major strategic bombing raids from the Chengtu airfields, mostly against Manchuria, while placing a substantial burden on China Theater logistics.<sup>19</sup> Due to teething problems with the new B-29's, inadequate pilot training, and supply shortages, the XXth Bomb Group was only able to fly two combat sorties per aircraft per month.<sup>20</sup> The XXth Bomb Group's poor showing prompted Arnold to relieve the commander and bring in Major General Curtis LeMay. The XXth Bomb Group's performance improved under LeMay, who learned many lessons and techniques which he later used to great effect while commanding the B-29 offensive from the Marianas.

Throughout ICHIGO, Chennault had tried to get supplies diverted from the XXth Bomb Group to the 14th Air Force due to the critical theater situation, or at least to have the B-29's strike the key Japanese logistics node at Hankow. Although Stilwell endorsed Chennault's proposals, he readily accepted Arnold's refusals. Arnold believed that since Chennault had a B-24 bomb group, the B-29's should not be diverted from their strategic mission except in the greatest emergency.<sup>21</sup> By the time Wedemeyer arrived, it was plain to everyone that an emergency existed. Wedemeyer refused to take no for an answer, arguing that either the B-29's strike targets in the theater, or be pulled out of the theater.<sup>22</sup> The result was a massive raid by the XXth

Bomb Group and the 14th Air Force on Hankow on 18 December. Although the coordinated raid became uncoordinated, the B-29's incendiary attack (the first of the war by the B-29's) still devastated Hankow.<sup>23</sup>

Despite this one effective raid, Wedemeyer continued to press for removing the B-29's from the theater.<sup>24</sup> By this time, Arnold was more than glad to get the B-29's out of China, but the XXth Bomb Group was already tasked to support the Luzon and Okinawa invasions by bombing Formosa and Kyushu. This operation, dubbed Alternative PAC-AID, continued through mid-January in support of the Luzon invasion, but was then terminated and the B-29's withdrawn from the China Theater.<sup>25</sup>

#### The End of CCP Cooperation

Besides MATTERHORN, another casualty of Wedemeyer's arrival was the CCP's attempt to cooperate with the United States. Although Wedemeyer did not abandon Stilwell's plans to cooperate with the CCP, he was far less willing to press Chiang or Hurley on the issue. At the height of the ICHIGO offensive in December, Wedemeyer's chief-of-staff, Major General Robert McClure, developed a series of proposals ranging from simply providing munitions to the CCP, to providing arms and training to 5,000 CCP men under American supervision, to the most ambitious, insertion of 4,000 U.S. airborne technicians who would work with CCP guerilla units. Despite Chiang's negative reaction, Wedemeyer approved continued planning, and Barrett of the Dixie Mission was directed to determine CCP reaction, without making any formal commitment.<sup>26</sup>

At this stage of relations, developments took a bizarre course. As Barrett was making his proposals, an OSS representative was offering the CCP even more ambitious plans to train 25,000 troops.<sup>27</sup> The Army and OSS positions were uncoordinated. At the same time, the CCP believed that Hurley, now officially Ambassador to China, was no longer a neutral arbiter, but was firmly in league with KMT objectives. Convinced that Hurley was blocking CCP proposals for military cooperation with the U.S. from reaching higher authority, the CCP, in cooperation with the OSS, initiated a plan fly Mao and Chou out of China to Washington to meet directly with Roosevelt.<sup>28</sup> Tai Li's agents caught wind of the plan, passed the information in distorted form to Naval Group China, who in turn informed Hurley.<sup>29</sup>

Hurley angrily moved to block the plan, which had been described by NGC as a plot to get arms for the CCP and to embarrass the President.<sup>30</sup> As inaccurate versions of the incident reached Washington, Wedemeyer was directed by Marshall to find out why Army personnel were making unauthorized contacts with the CCP, which were subverting Hurley's mediation efforts.<sup>31</sup> As a result, McClure's initiatives were quelled along with that of the OSS. By the time the incident ran its course, Wedemeyer refrained from any further attempts to cooperate with the CCP, Barrett and McClure were both moved to other jobs, and numerous professional State Department personnel in the embassy literally rose in open rebellion against Hurley, before they too were transferred out of China.<sup>32</sup> Although a much smaller observer mission remained in Yenan until the end of the war, U.S. and CCP wartime cooperation was dead.

## Allied Plans for Victory in China

### Soviet Planning for Manchurian Offensive

As U.S. efforts in China encountered great difficulty, Soviet planning for operations in Manchuria and north China was well underway. In the summer of 1944, Stalin named Marshal Vasilevsky, then Chief of the General Staff since 1942, to be the future Far East Theater commander-in-chief. In September 1944, Stalin tasked the Operations Directorate of the General Staff to develop courses of action and logistics estimates, to be completed in time for meetings between Churchill and Stalin in Moscow, scheduled for October 1944.<sup>33</sup>

On 11 October, General Deane, Chief of the U.S. Military Mission in Moscow, attended a meeting between Churchill and Stalin during which Stalin briefed the general Soviet plan and requested U.S. logistics assistance to carry it out. Deane presented a JCS-approved list of objectives that the U.S. hoped the Soviets would accomplish by their entry into the Pacific War. In the JCS view, the primary Soviet task should be to destroy the Kwangtung Army in Manchuria to prevent its withdrawal to the home islands of Japan.<sup>34</sup> Stalin agreed with the JCS plan, then revealed how far along the Soviets already were. The Soviet plan as presented by Stalin, was very close to what the Soviets eventually executed in Manchuria. Stalin described a double strategic envelopment with two fronts while a third front executed a supporting attack. The key to the plan was an audacious attack by one front through extremely difficult terrain along the Manchurian/Mongolian border that would isolate Japanese forces in Manchuria from those in north China.<sup>35</sup>

Equally audacious was the request for U.S. supplies. The Soviets said that in order for the attack to be carried out within three months after the defeat of Germany, the U.S. would need to provide enough fuel, food and transport to support 1.5 million men, 3,000 tanks, 75,000 motor vehicles and 5,000 airplanes for 30 days, all to be delivered to the Pacific port of Vladivostok by 30 June 1945. This amounted to 860,000 tons of dry cargo and 206,000 tons of liquid cargo.<sup>36</sup> The U.S. actually delivered 80 per cent of the request by the target date, utilizing neutral-flag shipping.<sup>37</sup> The U.S. delivered more supplies in six months by sea to support the Russian offensive in Manchuria than it had delivered to China by land and air during the entire course of the war.

Although the U.S. began shipping the requested supplies, attempts to conduct combined operations planning met with repeated delay, obfuscation and obsessive Soviet secrecy, and in the end proved fruitless. Attempts to reach agreement with the Soviets on basing U.S. strategic bombers in the Soviet Far East met a similar fate, only after enormous effort had been expended.<sup>38</sup> Soviet actions increasingly led U.S. leaders, such as King, to fear that the Soviets would wait until after the U.S. invasion of Japan was underway before actually intervening. In the U.S. view, the optimum timing for the Soviet attack would be at least several weeks before the U.S. invasion of Japan commenced.<sup>39</sup>

At the Yalta Conference in February 1945, Stalin spelled out his political objectives for intervention in Manchuria. Although the Soviets stated they were willing to recognize KMT sovereignty over Manchuria, they wanted special rights to the railroads and to the ports



of Dairen and Port Arthur.<sup>40</sup> Roosevelt agreed with Stalin without consulting the Chinese, who in fact weren't informed of U.S./Soviet discussions concerning the fate of Manchuria until July 1945. In an interesting role reversal, the British were now recommending that China be consulted in such matters, but the U.S. leadership's disgust for dealing with Chiang was readily apparent.<sup>41</sup> Soviet plans for military action in north China and Manchuria remained a secret from the KMT until they were executed.

Throughout the spring and early summer of 1945, the Soviets conducted one of the most massive troop movements in history, and succeeded in deceiving the Japanese in doing so. Utilizing 1,666 trains on the Trans-Siberian railroad, the Soviets shifted two front headquarters and four entire armies of 400,000 men from eastern Europe to the Manchurian border.<sup>42</sup> Over 39 divisions shifted positions as the Soviets built up to an attack strength of over 60 divisions of 1,577,000 men, 5,566 tanks, 5,000 aircraft, and 26,000 artillery pieces.<sup>43</sup> By 25 July 1945, the Far Eastern Theater of Military Operations (TMO), the first of its kind, was ready to attack.<sup>44</sup>

Facing the Russian threat was the Japanese Kwangtung Army. The Kwangtung Army had numbered a million men in 1941, but by 1945 was down to about 443,000 Japanese troops plus Manchurian puppet troops, for a total force of about 700,000. The best Japanese units had been withdrawn to fight elsewhere and had been replaced by recently mobilized and poorly trained reserve divisions. The Japanese considered none of the divisions to be combat ready.<sup>45</sup> Nonetheless, with 1,200 tanks, 6,700 artillery pieces, and 1,900 aircraft the Kwangtung Army remained a

formidable force, particularly since the Manchurian terrain favored defense.<sup>46</sup>

By September 1944, as the quality of the Kwangtung Army steadily diminished, the Japanese had scaled back their plans from offense to realistic defense. A pre-emptive strike against the Soviets was no longer an option. By June 1945, the new Japanese plan called for conducting a delaying defense, while gradually withdrawing to a highly defensible fortified redoubt area along the southern border of Manchuria with Korea.<sup>47</sup> Unfortunately for the Japanese, the high command firmly believed that the Soviets could not shift enough forces or build-up enough logistics to attack until the fall of 1945 at the earliest, or more likely, the spring of 1946.<sup>48</sup> The Japanese were still building their fortifications when the offensive came.

#### British Plans for Offensive in Far East

Compared to the massive Soviet build-up, British plans for operations in China remained inconsequential. At the Malta conference at the end of January 1945, Churchill offered to send British troops to fight in China, taking both the U.S. and even his own Chief's of Staff by surprise.<sup>49</sup> Brooke quickly pointed out that no logistics facilities were available to support British troops in China, and Marshall quickly agreed with Brooke. Although it was clear neither the British or the U.S. Chiefs wanted British troops in China in large numbers, the Prime Minister finally stated that if the U.S. wanted British help in China, he would send the troops.<sup>50</sup>

Within the China Theater, relations between Wedemeyer and the British were no better than they had been under Stilwell, although

everyone may have been more polite. The British viewed Wedemeyer as increasingly hostile, as Wedemeyer repeatedly opposed British attempts to increase military aid to China.<sup>91</sup> For his part, Wedemeyer believed that such aid was directed primarily toward regaining Hong Kong, and that the British were paying lip service to the concept of establishing a strong, united, democratic China.<sup>92</sup> Hurley and Miles shared even stronger anti-British feelings.<sup>93</sup>

By the spring of 1945, numerous problems arose between the U.S. and the British in the Far East. Wedemeyer sought to gain control over the various British special operations and intelligence activities in China, something which even Carton de Wiart had tried to do with only limited success.<sup>94</sup> The ill-defined boundary between the China Theater and SEAC also led to difficulty. Most troublesome of all was Wedemeyer's support of Chiang's demand for the return to China of all remaining Chinese forces in Burma, along with the U.S. MARS brigade and supporting U.S. aircraft.

In the midst of an offensive drive to take Rangoon before the onset of the monsoon, Mountbatten vigorously protested, largely to no avail. Mountbatten even flew to Chungking to meet with Wedemeyer and Chiang. With the Burma Road finally open, the U.S. sought to distance itself from British efforts to reclaim former colonies, such as Burma. From the British perspective, the U.S. had hounded the British into taking offensive action in Burma, and now that it was actually underway, were withdrawing needed support. The U.S. relented and allowed the British to keep some of the air support, but the Chinese and American troops began moving to China.<sup>95</sup> Despite the sudden handicap of losing a

large percentage of his force, the ever-resourceful Slim nevertheless led the British 14th Army to ultimate victory in Burma.<sup>56</sup>

#### U.S. Plans for Offensive in China

As the Japanese ICHIGO offensive finally ran out of steam in January 1945, Wedemeyer began seriously working on plans for the Chinese army to take the offensive by the summer of 1945. Wedemeyer inherited Stilwell's 30-division training programs, although the entire Y-force program was still far from complete, while the Z-force program had largely been abandoned during ICHIGO. Wedemeyer also built upon Stilwell's plans to take Chinese divisions that had been forced out of east China, and reorganize and equip them in the Kweiyang area in order to ensure the defense of Kunming. Combining elements of the earlier programs, Wedemeyer developed a plan (ALPHA) that ultimately grew to include training and supplies for 36 divisions in the Kunming/Kweiyang region.<sup>57</sup> Although Wedemeyer encountered numerous obstacles due to KMT inefficiency, he still obtained far more cooperation from Chiang than had Stilwell. Wedemeyer's position that only those divisions which were "loyal" to Chiang should get U.S. help was a large factor in obtaining KMT cooperation.<sup>58</sup> China's bleak situation at the end of 1944 also made Chiang more amenable.

Although Wedemeyer's mission did not include improving the combat effectiveness of the Chinese army, many of his efforts succeeded in doing just that, for some Chinese divisions. Wedemeyer took effective steps to improve the supply distribution system in southwestern China. These actions were not strictly limited to the ALPHA divisions, and many

Chinese forces benefited by increasingly reliable food shipments, which had been a critical weakness in the past. Wedemeyer succeeded in improving Chinese command coordination arrangements and in gaining Chiang's permission for U.S. liaison officers to operate down to division level.<sup>50</sup> In stages, the ALPHA divisions began a 13 week cycle of weapons training to be followed by a second 13 week cycle of unit tactics.

Wedemeyer also built upon Stilwell's plans for an offensive drive toward Canton and Hong Kong to open a seaport. Unlike Stilwell's plan, Wedemeyer's plan (BETA) envisioned no significant operations by U.S. ground forces in this offensive. Substantial air support would be required, and Wedemeyer initiated plans for bringing the 10th Air Force from India into China. Anticipating the massive logistics effort that would be involved in conducting the offensive, Wedemeyer counted on two factors that would make the plan feasible. The first factor was the impending end of the war in Europe, which would lead to vastly increased quantities of supplies for the China Theater. The second factor was that the threat of Soviet entry into Manchuria and north China would force the Japanese to weaken their forces in southern China.<sup>50</sup>

The BETA plan envisioned a four phase operation, which was given the overall cover name RASHNESS. Phase one would commence 1 May 1945, with an advance by ready ALPHA divisions to Liuchow and Nanning, cutting the Japanese line between China and Indochina. Phases two and three involved consolidation and preparation for further offensive operations. The actual attack toward Hong Kong/Canton, phase four, would take place

In the spring of 1946. Wedemeyer obtained Chiang's approval of RASHNESS on 14 February 1945 and then flew to Washington to sell it to the JCS.<sup>61</sup>

Meeting with Wedemeyer in late March, the JCS favorably received the RASHNESS proposal, believing it would assist the planned invasion of Japan by tying down Japanese forces in China with no drain on U.S. ground or naval forces and minimal claim on air resources. The JCS felt RASHNESS served a more useful purpose than British plans to retake Malaya and Singapore and accorded RASHNESS a higher priority of support than Southeast Asia operations.<sup>62</sup>

#### Navy versus Army

During the meetings in Washington, a simmering dispute between Wedemeyer and Miles caused considerable debate by the JCS and exemplified growing animosity between Navy and Army personnel in China. As part of his plans to gain some semblance of control over the wide range of activities in the theater, particularly after the OSS/aid-to-CCP fiasco, Wedemeyer wanted all activities, including NGC and SACO placed under his command. Although Wedemeyer spoke highly of SACO's activities against the Japanese, he believed that the close relationship with Tai Li could easily result in great embarrassment.<sup>63</sup> Nor did Wedemeyer think that the Navy should be involved in training and advising guerilla forces to begin with, and found that some SACO projects, such as the "police training" academy to be of dubious value for fighting the Japanese. Wedemeyer believed that China's primary rationale for SACO was to obtain arms and training for forces whose real purpose was to fight the CCP, not the Japanese.<sup>64</sup>

Miles argued that although it would be possible to place NGC under Army control, it would not be possible to do so for SACO since it was not commanded by an American, but by Tai Li. The inextricably intertwined nature of NGC and SACO activities made separating them a difficult issue. King argued against placing Navy activities under Wedemeyer's control, but Wedemeyer's contention that Chiang had approved the proposed new arrangement won the argument, and the JCS approved Wedemeyer's proposed change. Unfortunately, as Miles unsuccessfully attempted to point out, Chiang had not agreed, and the issue eventually led to some embarrassment as Chiang never signed the JCS-approved amended SACO agreement. In fact, Chiang strongly wanted to continue SACO and the independent Navy/KMT relationship after the war.<sup>65</sup>

As soon as NGC came under Wedemeyer's control, Miles was shut out of the planning process, including important arrangements for Navy cooperation in taking the ports envisioned in RASHNESS. Miles' activities were hamstrung by the increased bureaucratic regulations of Wedemeyer's rapidly expanding staff. Although Stilwell had kept his staff in China to a bare minimum, the greatly improved efficiency of the air transport enabled Wedemeyer to bring in many more staff officers, and training and liaison personnel. Ironically, the increased number of Americans in China caused even greater demands on the air supply system. Repeatedly forced to justify and rejustify every item of supply brought into China, Miles eventually claimed that after the Army took control, NGC/SACO was never able to complete a single project that hadn't already been well underway.<sup>66</sup>

### The Finale

A side benefit of Wedemeyer's trip to Washington was that the State Department finally produced an authoritative statement on U.S. national goals and objectives in China, something Stilwell had long sought but never been given. Even at this late date in the war, the document remained couched in indefinite terms. Short-term U.S. policy was to foster unified Chinese action against the Japanese, while long-term policy was to foster "a united, democratically progressive, and cooperative China."<sup>67</sup> Although policy was finally in writing, it was of little practical value to Wedemeyer by this time.

As planning for RASHNESS continued, it became increasingly obvious that the plan greatly exceeded current and projected theater logistics capability, a fact which Wedemeyer wanted to remain within the theater.<sup>68</sup> In addition, training and equipping the ALPHA divisions took much longer than anticipated. As the time for initial action approached, substantial modifications to the plan became required, threatening to push the start date from May to July. In addition, the Japanese took the initiative again.

In April 1945, the Japanese China Expeditionary Army went back on the offensive one more time. A force of 60,000 struck toward the U.S. airfield at Chihchiang, while another force struck in the north toward Hsian. Unable to affect the outcome in the north, Wedemeyer concentrated his attention on Chihchiang. Although the Japanese advanced, this time the Chinese defense did not crumble. The Chinese divisions facing the Japanese thrust were not among those that had reorganized, equipped and trained under the 36-division program. U.S.-



trained divisions were airlifted to the area but arrived too late. However, U.S. advisors were now working down to the division headquarters level with the units on the scene. Some of the Chinese officers and NCO's had been through some U.S. training, and many of Wedemeyer's food, medicine and supply programs had been implemented. Although it took a Chinese army for every Japanese regiment, the improved Chinese forces finally held and forced the vastly outnumbered Japanese to halt the offensive in June.<sup>69</sup>

With the loss of Okinawa, Iwo Jima, and the continued B-29 bombardment of the home islands, the Japanese strategic situation had become grave. In June, Japanese forces in China began an orderly withdrawal to bastion areas around Shanghai and in north China, giving up everything they had won in the ICHIGO offensive. Wedemeyer sought to take quick advantage of the Japanese retreat by modifying the RASHNESS plan. The new plan, CARBONADO, skipped the first phase of RASHNESS since the Japanese were already abandoning the objectives. A planned diversionary attack toward Indochina was reoriented under the CARBONADO plan toward the Luichow Peninsula and the small port at Fort Bayard. After taking the port, supplies would be brought in by sea to support the final offensive toward Hong Kong, now scheduled for 1 September.<sup>70</sup> Miles believed that the port at Fort Bayard would not support the intended operation, principally due to the poor transportation network leading away from the port, but Wedemeyer's staff did not seek his input.<sup>71</sup> The sudden Japanese collapse made it a moot point.

By May 1945, the Navy's plans to land on the coast of China were finally shelved. Throughout the early months of 1945, Navy planners

focussed on the Chusan-Ningbo island area near Shanghai as a good spot for establishing a base on the Chinese coast. King was still unwilling to consider an invasion of Japan to be inevitable, and as late as March was arguing to establish a series of bases in China and Korea around the East China Sea in order to sustain a long-term blockade of Japan.<sup>72</sup> But that same month, King finally acquiesced in the JCS decision to invade the Japanese island of Kyushu on 1 December 1945 (OLYMPIC). Marshall argued that landings on the China coast at this point would only draw needed resources away from OLYMPIC.<sup>73</sup> As a result, King's long-desired landing on the China coast became the basis for a deception plan (LONGTOM) designed to cover the Kyushu landings. The Navy's earlier planned landings on Formosa and Amoy, had met a similar fate by being converted into a deception plan (BLUEBIRD) for the invasion of Okinawa.<sup>74</sup> As deception plans, both worked very well, and confused Japanese planners.<sup>75</sup>

While King's plan finally fell by the wayside, Chennault's days became numbered. Following Roosevelt's death in April, Chennault's long list of enemies, including Stimson, Marshall, and Arnold, moved against him.<sup>76</sup> Arnold pushed for Wedemeyer's major reorganization of air forces in the Far East which would move the 10th Air Force from India to China, and which would bring in Stratemeyer as overall commander of both the 10th and 14th Air Forces. As with the OSS and SACO, Wedemeyer sought to clean up loose ends in the China Theater command structure by bringing the 14th Air Force more firmly under his complete control. In addition, with the Burma Road open and U.S. objectives in Burma met, the U.S. also

desired to terminate U.S. air support for British efforts to reclaim their Southeast Asian colonies.

Chennault believed that implementation of the plan would bury him under another level of staff bureaucracy and cut his direct access to Wedemeyer, and to Chiang. Chennault argued against the plan, claiming it was based on an "absurd logistical foundation."<sup>77</sup> Chennault was correct, since the plan turned out to be logistically unsupportable. Only part of 10th Air Force moved to China. However, with Wedemeyer's concurrence, Stratemeyer still came in as overall commander. Arnold also sent a note to Wedemeyer, none too subtly suggesting that if Chennault wanted to retire with the benefits of his current wartime rank, he better do so soon.<sup>78</sup> By July, Chennault was gone from the theater, a hero to Chiang and the Chinese, but bitter at being deprived of the fruits of final victory.

Although Chennault's 14th Air Force continued to harrass the Japanese even after his departure, the Japanese conducted a dogged fighting retreat. Chinese divisions followed behind, usually at a respectful distance. There were cases of Japanese platoons holding up the advance of entire Chinese divisions. Even at the very end, the Chinese could not prevent the Japanese from doing as they willed.<sup>79</sup>

#### The Cold War Dawns

As the Japanese withdrew and consolidated their position, a confused scramble ensued as KMT, CCP and former-puppet troops tried to stake out new territory. Clashes between the CCP and KMT intensified. Miles' SACO guerilla forces were in the thick of it and had become

involved in fighting with CCP forces while trying to infiltrate the Shanghai area as early as February. Most of the incidents involved SACO units defending themselves against CCP attacks, according to Miles. However, Wedemeyer became increasingly concerned that U.S. Navy advisors accompanying their Chinese units might become involved in the fighting with CCP forces. Miles was directed to take steps to preclude American involvement in such incidents.<sup>20</sup> However, in the rush that followed the Japanese collapse in mid-August, Navy advisors continued to operate with their units as they moved to accept the surrender of Japanese positions in coastal and northern China.<sup>21</sup>

During thunderstorms on the night of 9-10 August, Soviet forces invaded Manchuria. Strategic, operational, and tactical surprise was complete.<sup>22</sup> Ready since 25 July, the Soviet high command made the final decision on 7 August (one day after Hiroshima) to attack on 9 August.<sup>23</sup> The Trans-Baykal Front (four combined arms armies spearheaded by one tank army) attacked from the west, through the Gobi desert and the Greater Khingan mountains, splitting the Japanese 3rd Area Army in two. The First Far Eastern Front (four combined arms armies) attacked from the Vladivostok area into eastern Manchuria. A day later, the Second Far Eastern Front (three combined arms armies) launched its supporting attack in northern Manchuria.<sup>24</sup>

Demonstrating superb air, ground and even naval (riverine) coordination, learned during the war with Germany, the Soviet forces decimated the Japanese, advancing through difficult terrain with stunning rapidity. Individual Japanese units fought tenaciously and bravely, inflicting 32,000 Soviet casualties.<sup>25</sup> But the Soviet attack

caught the Japanese high command unprepared for the size, scope and audacity of the Soviet plan. The Japanese defense was uncoordinated and futile. The Japanese commander, General Yamada, refused to honor the cease-fire agreed to by the Emperor on 14 August, so the Soviets continued attacking. However, by 19 August most Japanese forces surrendered, although some resistance continued until 30 August.<sup>66</sup>

Suddenly alarmed by the unprecedented speed of the Soviet advance, several senior U.S. leaders, including Ambassador to Russia Averell Harriman and Secretary of State Byrnes began supporting an idea that King advanced at the Potsdam Conference in late July, to land U.S. forces in Dairen and Port Arthur before the Soviets got there.<sup>67</sup> Between the Yalta and Potsdam conferences, U.S. decision-makers underwent a dramatic change of heart regarding the necessity and desirability of Soviet entry in the Pacific War. On 11 August, President Truman and the JCS directed Nimitz and MacArthur to conduct landings in Korea and Dairen before the Soviets, and to expedite landings in northern China in order to accept the surrender of Japanese troops before the Soviets or the CCP. The Dairen landings were cancelled on 18 August because it was clear the Soviets would reach the Manchurian ports shortly. Unfortunately, U.S. occupation of Japan required most available resources and major U.S. Marine forces were not underway for northern China until 19 September.<sup>68</sup>

The first U.S. forces into Shanghai belonged to Miles, who was there waiting for units of the U.S. Seventh Fleet and for Wedemeyer's theater headquarters staff to arrive.<sup>69</sup> In the days that followed, Miles clashed with Wedemeyer over plans for post-war U.S. Navy and Army

Missions in China. Wedemeyer was determined to close down NGC/SACO activities as soon as possible despite Chiang's wish to continue the arrangement. Wedemeyer was sure continued U.S. cooperation with Tai Li's organization would lead to U.S. involvement in Chinese "fratricidal strife," something he had just recently been directed by the JCS to avoid.<sup>90</sup> Suffering from extreme fatigue and the effects of anti-malarial drugs, Miles openly challenged Wedemeyer's authority. Despite personal intervention by Chiang, Miles was quickly hustled out of China under medical supervision.<sup>91</sup>

Although British naval forces occupied Hong Kong without a fight on 30 August, U.S. Marine occupation forces only began to arrive in north China on 30 September. The 1st Marine Division took key positions in the Peking/Tientsin area, while the 6th Marine Division occupied the port of Tsingtao. The Marines immediately stepped in the middle of the renewed Chinese civil war. U.S. forces found themselves occupying key positions that the CCP wanted, and could have had, were it not for the presence of 53,000 U.S. Marines.<sup>92</sup> In the meantime, although U.S. forces were directed not to become involved in fratricidal strife, U.S. air and naval transports moved over 100,000 KMT troops to areas in north China, where the KMT troops immediately clashed with CCP forces. By the first week of October, U.S. Marines suffered their first casualties in action with CCP guerillas.<sup>93</sup> Japan was defeated, but the Cold War in Asia was already on.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

#### The Endstate

By the end of August 1945, Soviet forces had decimated the Japanese Kwangtung Army in Manchuria, killing, wounding or capturing almost 700,000 Japanese and Manchurian troops. South of the Great Wall of China, the situation was dramatically different. The Japanese China Expeditionary Army, numbering 1,050,000 men, remained undefeated.<sup>2</sup> Although short on logistics and with their mobility greatly impaired by U.S. air strikes, the Japanese China Expeditionary Army nevertheless remained fully armed and continued to occupy key strategic positions in northern and coastal China. Had they chosen to fight on, Japanese forces in China could have continued to hold off Chinese advances. Instead, the Japanese patiently waited for the arrival of U.S. and KMT forces so that they could obey the Emperor's order to surrender. Japan may have lost World War II, but not due to events in China.

The cost to China of achieving such a hollow "victory" was staggering. Reliable casualty statistics do not exist, but China's official battle losses exceeded three million men. However, of eleven million men drafted into the Chinese army, fully 80 per cent deserted, starved, died of disease, or otherwise perished or were unaccounted for.<sup>2</sup> Unknown numbers of civilians, but certainly several million, died

due to famine, disease or Japanese action. As but one example, 250,000 Chinese civilians in Chekiang Province died as a result of Japanese retaliation for Chinese assistance to the Doolittle Raid.<sup>3</sup>

Most of China's casualties came during the first couple years of war, and during 1944-45. The Japanese ICHIGO offensive inflicted grave losses on China, particularly to the KMT. During ICHIGO, the Chinese officially suffered 310,000 battle casualties, but over 40 division-equivalents with 750,000 men were put out of action.<sup>4</sup> In addition, the loss of the rice harvests in provinces overrun by ICHIGO resulted in severe hardship in the remaining unoccupied areas of China. China's war-torn economy collapsed in an inflationary spiral aggravated by KMT corruption and defeatism. The KMT emerged from ICHIGO severely, if not mortally, wounded.

Despite Chiang's best efforts, the KMT finished the war in a weaker state than at any time during the course of the war. Conversely, the CCP emerged stronger than ever, clearly suggesting that Chiang's wartime strategy failed. By 1945, the CCP claimed to have an army of 910,000 men and a people's militia of over two million.<sup>5</sup> However, the vast majority of these forces lacked arms and equipment, giving KMT forces an initial momentary advantage during the civil war which resumed even before the Japanese surrender was complete. Despite increased political popularity, the full extent of the CCP's gain was not initially apparent, even to the CCP leadership, who despaired of Stalin's willingness to recognize the KMT as China's sovereign, and of the Soviets' pillaging of Manchuria, the potential industrial heartland of future Communist China. Not until the Cold War was well underway and



the Soviets abandoned large stocks of captured Japanese weapons during their withdrawal from Manchuria, did the CCP reap any significant benefits from the Soviets. With the infusion of arms, the CCP finally began in 1947 to take military advantage of their successful wartime strategy.

Of China's allies in the fight against Japan, only the British and Soviets achieved their objectives. Although British policy-makers would have preferred a stable post-war China rather than the chaotic situation that actually developed, the British did recover their colony at Hong Kong and succeeded in keeping it during the turmoil that followed. Thus British strategic policy in China achieved qualified success at minimal cost, probably the best realistic outcome. On the other hand, Soviet wartime strategy in the Far East during World War II was a resounding success. With the critical aid of massive U.S. logistics support, the Soviets accomplished their intended objectives in Manchuria. The Soviet invasion of Manchuria also accomplished the primary objective desired by the Americans, that of defeating the Kwangtung Army prior to the planned U.S. invasion of Japan. Ironically, Soviet actions regarding China and Manchuria were one of the few things that met U.S. expectations and went according to U.S. strategic plans. Unfortunately, Stalin soon exceeded U.S. desires.

The Soviets' protracted occupation of Manchuria was but one sign that America's wartime strategy for China achieved far less than had been hoped. Contrary to U.S. intent, China did not emerge from the war as a strong, united, progressive, democratic nation, able to act as one of the world's four great powers in maintaining postwar stability in

Asia. Nor in the final analysis did U.S. military activity in China contribute substantially to the defeat of Japan.

After four years of U.S. military effort in the China Theater, only three Chinese divisions had been equipped (not including artillery) and trained to U.S. standards.<sup>6</sup> These three divisions, plus two more hastily trained divisions had fought effectively in Burma, proving Stilwell's thesis on the potential combat capability of the Chinese soldier. Another 33 Chinese divisions had been more or less fully equipped, but of these, 22 had still received less than six weeks of U.S. training when the war ended.<sup>7</sup> Except for the divisions of the Y-force which attacked across the Salween in support of the Burma campaign, none of the U.S.-equipped and trained divisions defeated, or even fought, Japanese forces within China itself.

No U.S. ground combat units fought within the China Theater, although U.S. Army personnel advised some Chinese units in combat, while a small number of U.S. Navy advisors accompanied Chinese guerilla forces in combat. B-29 bombers of the XXth Bomb Group conducted an ineffective strategic bombing campaign from China against Japanese targets in Kyushu, Manchuria and Formosa, but had minimal direct impact on events in China. The burden of U.S. combat operations in China was carried almost exclusively by Chennault's 14th Air Force. Chennault claimed that the 14th Air Force destroyed at least 2,600 aircraft, 13,000 river boats, 2,230,000 tons of merchant shipping and killed 66,700 Japanese.<sup>8</sup> Although large in absolute numbers, these claims represent only a small proportion of Japanese losses suffered during World War II. In addition, many of the aircraft shot down by the 14th

Air Force were not from first-line units, although to be fair, the 14th Air Force was never flying first-line U.S. aircraft either. Even when the 14th Air Force's kills are added to the claims of 20,485 Japanese killed by Navy/SACO guerillas, it is clear that U.S. military action inflicted painful, but not decisive, losses upon the million man Japanese army in China.<sup>9</sup>

Although the results of U.S. combat action in China were relatively insignificant, U.S. losses were also fortunately relatively small, with the exception of scarce transport aircraft. Army and Navy personnel losses in the China Theater were negligible. However, Army losses during Stilwell's campaign in Burma (Southeast Asia Command theater) were incurred as a direct result of efforts to support China and were a high proportion of the few U.S. ground combat personnel involved. The 14th Air Force lost 500 aircraft to all causes, although most aircrew were recovered.<sup>10</sup> The most significant U.S. losses were the 468 transport aircraft which crashed or were shot down while flying the Hump route to China. Over two-thirds of the downed transport aircrews perished. This amounted to the loss of one American life for every 340 tons of supplies flown to China.<sup>11</sup> Coupled with the fact that transports were in critically short supply in every theater, the China airlift was one of the most costly logistics operations ever conducted. Despite this sacrifice, the amount of Lend-Lease supplies delivered by air to China in 1943 and 1944 amounted to less than four-tenths of a percent of total Lend-Lease supplies delivered to other allies. By the end of 1945, only 555,000 tons of supplies had been flown into China by the Air Transport Command (147,000 tons were delivered via the Burma

Road and pipeline in 1945, although this included the weight of the transport trucks).<sup>12</sup>

Despite the heroic efforts of the relatively small numbers of U.S. military personnel involved in China, U.S. military strategy in the China Theater failed to accomplish intended objectives. Far from being a vital factor in the defeat of Japan as envisioned by U.S. strategists such as King, the China Theater proved to be largely irrelevant. Chinese forces did not defeat the large Japanese army in China, nor did China serve as an effective logistics base for conducting sustained aerial bombardment and naval blockade of Japan. Even worse, at the end of the war, U.S. policy-makers were left with a dilemma regarding further U.S. support for China. On the one hand, the U.S. would have to expend enormous effort in lives and money to prevent KMT defeat at the hands of the CCP, a cause for which success was far from guaranteed no matter what amount of U.S. support might be provided. On the other hand, the U.S. was unwilling to decide to cut losses and dump a "loyal" wartime ally, which would practically guarantee a CCP victory, and which would negate the primary purpose for U.S. involvement in the war with Japan in the first place. Faced with these equally unpalatable alternatives, the U.S. attempted to foster a course of compromise and coalition government between two mortal enemies, the CCP and KMT. This path inevitably led to the ultimate failure of U.S. national strategy towards China in the first half of the Twentieth Century.

## The Failure of U.S. Military Strategy in China

### National Objectives, Military Strategy, and Application of Resources

The U.S. military failed to effectively link available resources with appropriate military strategy in order to accomplish U.S. national objectives in China for several reasons. These include unrealistic national political objectives and expectations in China, which in turn fostered unrealistic military strategy. In addition, the extraordinary demands of global total war and higher priority theaters upon the military resources of the United States ensured that assets devoted to the China Theater would be inadequate to the task.

President Roosevelt's China policy was unrealistic. His expectation of the role China could play during and after the war was based on an inadequate understanding of the enormous forces of change at work in China. Roosevelt was far from alone in his faulty analysis of the true weakness of Chiang Kai-shek and the KMT, as the recommendations of the series of special presidential representatives to China attest. However, neither was he ignorant of the warnings of Magruder, Stilwell, Wedemeyer, Gauss, and most of the professional diplomatic corps in China. Roosevelt chose to hear that advice which supported his preconceptions. Lacking first-hand understanding of the true situation in China and bombarded with contradictory advice from the likes of Chennault, Hurley, and Miles, no senior military leaders seriously questioned the fundamental, and flawed, assertions of Roosevelt's China policy. Even King, whose understanding of global strategy exceeded that of any senior U.S. leaders, failed to grasp until late in the war the

unreality of his expectations regarding China's contribution to the war effort.

The unrealistic nature of U.S. objectives in China, coupled with the propensity of U.S. military leaders such as Stilwell and Wedemeyer to attempt to accomplish their mission no matter how impossible, led to unrealistic military strategy. As an astute observer of the situation in China, Stilwell was correct in his assertion that radical reform of the Chinese military, and government, was absolutely essential if China was to play the role envisioned by U.S. national policy and military strategy. However, Stilwell's narrow military focus prevented him from correctly evaluating the political realities that made such reforms impossible for the KMT. In effect, Chennault was correct in his assessment that Stilwell's plans, especially those of cooperation with the CCP, were doomed to fail because the KMT would never accept them. However, Chennault's alternative, almost total reliance on airpower, was equally as flawed, as the Japanese ICHIGO offensive demonstrated. In effect, Stilwell identified the most effective way to accomplish U.S. objectives in China, but failed reach the correct conclusion of, "It can't be done." Stilwell's character prevented him from ever reaching such a conclusion. Wedemeyer too persisted in attempting to achieve at least some success out of an otherwise impossible situation.

In addition to flaws in national objectives, lack of military resources hampered the formulation of a successful U.S. military strategy in China. U.S. strategic decisions to defeat Germany first through aid the Soviet Union, massive strategic bombing, and early Anglo-American invasion of Europe, coupled with the decision to begin an

early counter-offensive in the South Pacific after Japan's defeat at Midway, ensured that resource requirements for the China Theater would be lowest priority. Even had sufficient resources been available to fulfill all theater needs, the amount that could be delivered to China was severely constrained by the tenuous nature of the aerial supply route. Stilwell's road, or the opening of a seaport, was a necessity. But lack of resources, plus enemy opposition, ensured that neither could be accomplished in timely fashion. The lack of sufficient resources laid bare the fissures between Stilwell and Chennault's competing strategies, and exacerbated the incompatibilities of divergent Allied strategies.

#### Failure of Joint Warfare in China

The U.S. military failed to develop a coherent, coordinated joint warfare strategy for operations in the China Theater. Current U.S. military doctrine states, "In all multinational endeavors, the teamwork of the U.S. armed forces should set a strong example."<sup>1</sup> Teamwork among the U.S. forces in the China Theater, particularly at the operational level of war, was sorely lacking. The Stilwell/Chennault ground versus airpower dispute and, to a lesser extent, the Wedemeyer versus Naval Group China dispute serve as prime examples of failure of joint warfare. These examples also indicate that difficulties in joint operations are deep-rooted and defy easy solutions. Stilwell and Chennault were technically from the same service, the U.S. Army, but that fact did not prevent them from engaging in bitter internecine battle. The fact that Army-Navy relations in the China Theater deteriorated greatly after

Wedemeyer was finally given command authority over all U.S. military activity in China suggests that simply naming one person to be in charge does not always solve all problems. The principle of "Unity of Command" is not necessarily a panacea.

The causes of failure of joint operations in the China Theater are numerous. Intensive personality conflict, competing and incompatible strategic and operational concepts, lack of understanding of other service capabilities and doctrine, lack of a genuine U.S. Theater Commander-in-Chief with true command authority over all U.S. military activity within his theater, repeated interference in U.S. military affairs by the political leadership of the U.S. and China, and the adverse affects of the even more difficult task of conducting coalition warfare, all contributed greatly to lack of joint operations success. However, the acute lack of all manner of logistics resources in the China Theater proved especially crippling to joint operations. In other theaters, application of relatively abundant resources served to paper over cracks in joint operations strategy. In the China Theater, military commanders were forced to make very painful "either or" decisions, which necessarily radically increased competition between services for scarce resources.

The example of the China Theater clearly demonstrates the need for coordinated joint operations. For instance, Stilwell's campaign in Burma vividly showed the true synergistic effect of ground and air operations, as actions by ground forces had direct impact on dramatically increasing the tonnage capability of the aerial transport route to China. Conversely, the Japanese ICHIGO offensive painfully



pointed out what happens when air and ground operations are not properly coordinated to be mutually supporting. In another example of synergism, the enormous quantities of supplies delivered by the U.S. to the Soviets by sea in support of the Manchurian offensive, amply demonstrated the great impact that access by strategic seapower can have on the outcome of air/land campaigns.

#### Failure of Combined Warfare in China

The U.S. military failed to develop a coherent, coordinated combined warfare strategy for operations in the China Theater. Current thought regarding combined operations cites a number of potential problems, including; differences in national goals, doctrine, intelligence procedures, language, training, equipment, logistics, cultures, and sensitivities.<sup>14</sup> Every one of these adversely affected combined operations in the China Theater. However, as in joint operations, the lack of sufficient logistics greatly exacerbated all of the aforementioned factors. Another critical factor which contributed directly to the failure of combined operations in the China Theater, and one that is noticeably absent from current doctrinal writings, is the impact of a tenacious, resourceful foe. Maintaining the initiative in China until the very end, the Japanese repeatedly stymied Allied plans.

Probably the most influential factor affecting combined operations in the China Theater was the widely divergent Allied political and military objectives in the Far East. The U.S., British, Soviets, KMT, and CCP were simply not fighting for the same things. Where objectives overlapped, as in U.S. and Soviet desire to defeat the

Kwangtung Army, remarkable and even surprising success could be achieved, even with almost complete lack of combined operational planning. On the other hand, the extraordinary feuding between the British and Americans regarding strategy in Asia demonstrated that even the closest of alliances can easily falter when objectives diverge.

The U.S. effort to conduct combined operations with China may rank as one of the most difficult attempts at coalition warfare in history. In fact, differences in objectives and perceptions of reality were so great as to suggest that conducting effective coalition warfare with an ally such as China is impossible. As the central figure in U.S. wartime relations with China, Stilwell found himself in a situation reminiscent of a classical Greek tragedy. By background and ability, Stilwell was the ideal choice to command U.S. forces in China. But the character attributes which served him well in previous tours, and would have served him well in operational assignments in other theaters, contributed greatly to the failure of U.S. military strategy in China. However, Stilwell's famous personality conflict with Chiang was only part of the problem. Stilwell was not a Theater Commander-in-Chief by today's standards. Chiang was not only the Supreme Allied Commander of the China Theater, he was also head of state. In any conflict between the two men, Chiang held the ultimate command power. Although his actions were severely constrained by political realities and the mortal threat from the CCP, Chiang also bears ultimate responsibility for the failure of coalition warfare in the China Theater.

By comparison with the China Theater, General Dwight D. Eisenhower's experience in Europe, and General Norman Schwarzkopf's

experience in DESERT STORM demonstrated great success with combined operations. However, Eisenhower and Schwarzkopf benefited from numerous advantages not available to Stilwell. Current U.S. military doctrine emphasizes the increasing likelihood that future U.S. military operations will be conducted as part of coalitions,<sup>19</sup> a situation increasingly necessitated by a down-sized U.S. military. Although the China Theater was a unique and perhaps worst-case coalition war, history is replete with examples of failed coalition warfare. The Eisenhower/Schwarzkopf models of coalition warfare may in fact represent exceptional best-cases. U.S. leaders would do well to be aware of the reasons for failure of coalition warfare and combined operations in China, so as to prevent recurrence.

#### The Failure of U.S. Military Strategy in China

Despite the numerous problems evident in U.S. military endeavors in China, it has been argued that U.S. military strategy in China was in fact a success because two million Japanese soldiers remained tied down in China and Manchuria for the duration of the war rather than opposing the U.S. advance in the Pacific. This argument is false for several reasons. For one, about half these two million men were tied down by the threat of Soviet action in Manchuria, not by the Chinese. The million Japanese troops in China were barely adequate to garrison occupied territory, but even then, the Japanese sent several divisions from China to Indochina and the Philippines when they so chose. Most of the Japanese forces in China were only lightly equipped, since the majority of equipment such as artillery and first-line aircraft were

stripped early for use elsewhere. Also, by later in the war, it is doubtful that the Japanese could have transported more than a few forces from China even if they had wanted to, given the destruction of Japanese shipping by the U.S. Navy, particularly submarines.

Additionally, from the beginning of the war, U.S. military leaders envisioned a much greater contribution from the Chinese than just keeping the large Japanese army busy. Had this been the sole objective, the Chinese paid an enormous cost in millions of lives just to ease the burden on U.S. operations in the Pacific. U.S. military leaders were certainly shrewd and calculating, but there is no evidence of such cynically exploitative motives. Indeed, the fact that China emerged from the war gravely crippled disturbed many U.S. military leaders and was certainly not the desired outcome.

Given the failure of the U.S. to attain its wartime national and military objectives in China, it is appropriate to conclude that U.S. military strategy in the China Theater likewise failed. But it is also appropriate to note that this failure was not due to the incompetence of U.S. leadership. The same leaders who brilliantly executed the victories in Europe and the Pacific, namely Marshall, King and Arnold, also produced the strategy that flopped in China, suggesting factors at work beyond the control of military leadership. In addition, U.S. commanders in China such as Stilwell and Chennault proved to be superb combat leaders who achieved the most possible with meager resources. Nor is the U.S. failure in China the fault of the U.S. military personnel who fought heroically throughout the Far East in the most difficult of circumstances.

In the final analysis, U.S. military strategy in China in World War II failed. Numerous problems identified with conducting joint and combined operations contributed to this failure, but three stand out above all. First, the unrealistic political objectives of Roosevelt's flawed China policy directly contributed to unworkable military strategy. Second, the lack of adequate logistics resources laid bare the flaws of competing U.S. joint operations strategies, and exposed the divergent and incompatible objectives of the Allies. Finally, the actions of the Japanese, a determined and resourceful enemy who repeatedly took the initiative and attacked the weaknesses of U.S. and Allied military strategy, played a large role in the failure of U.S. military strategy in China.

As in every historic case, such as China in World War II, there are numerous unique factors which limit the applicability of historic "lessons learned" to contemporary situations. Nevertheless, China will not be the last situation where a U.S. President will be reluctant to commit sizable ground forces to a potential "quagmire" and will seek some high-technology "quick-fix," such as primary reliance on airpower, in an effort to obtain "cheap" success. China will not be the last situation in which the U.S. will fight under severely constrained resources, or where the U.S. will seek to aid the weaker side against a stronger, tenacious opponent, or where allied or coalition objectives may be widely divergent. The case of the China Theater during World War II demonstrates that there are great inherent difficulties in waging joint and, especially, combined warfare that may very well defy efforts at solution by even the best leaders.

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<sup>82</sup>Kipp, 27.

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\*<sup>12</sup>Shaw, 1.

\*<sup>13</sup>Shaw, 3.

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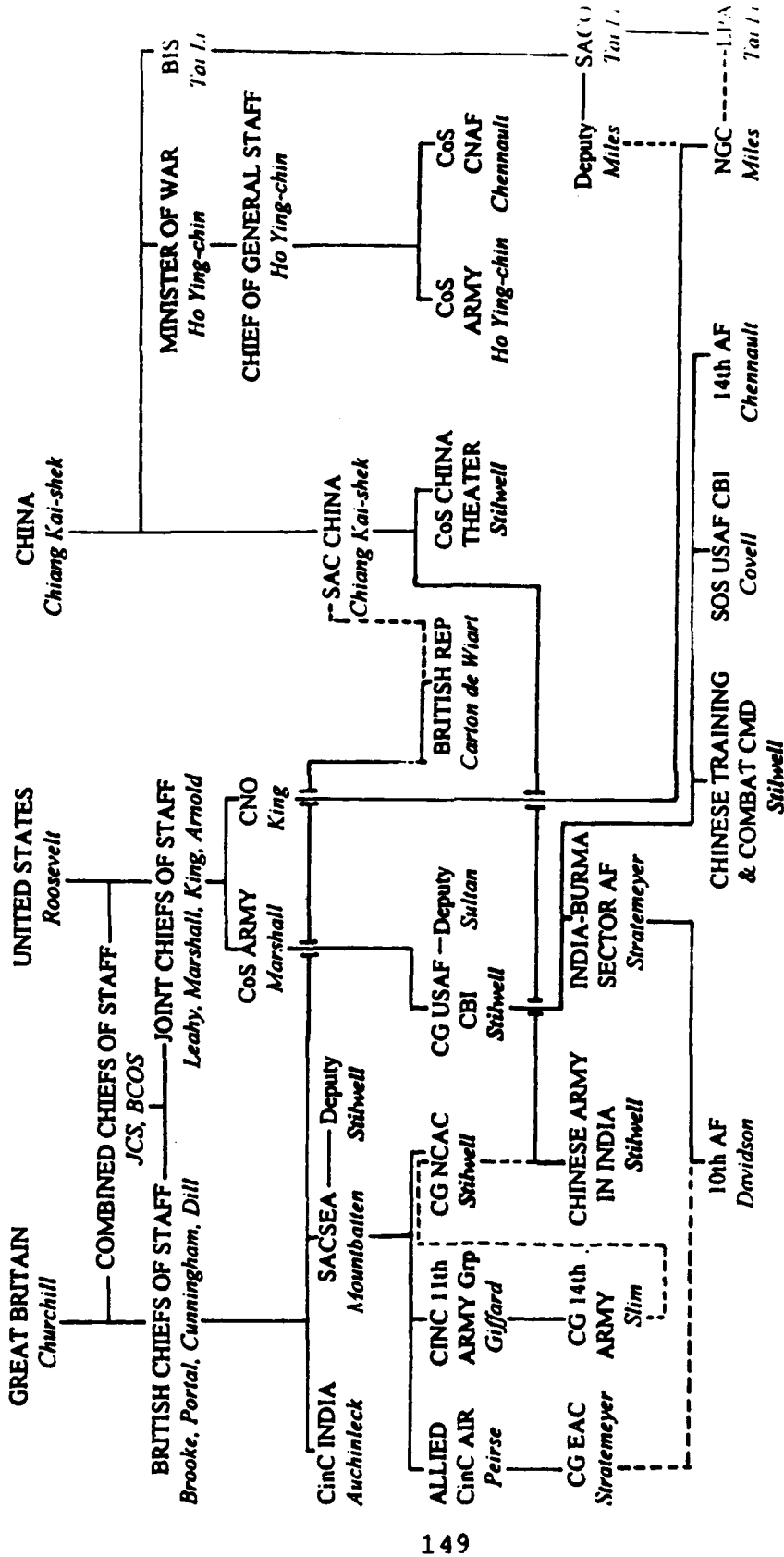
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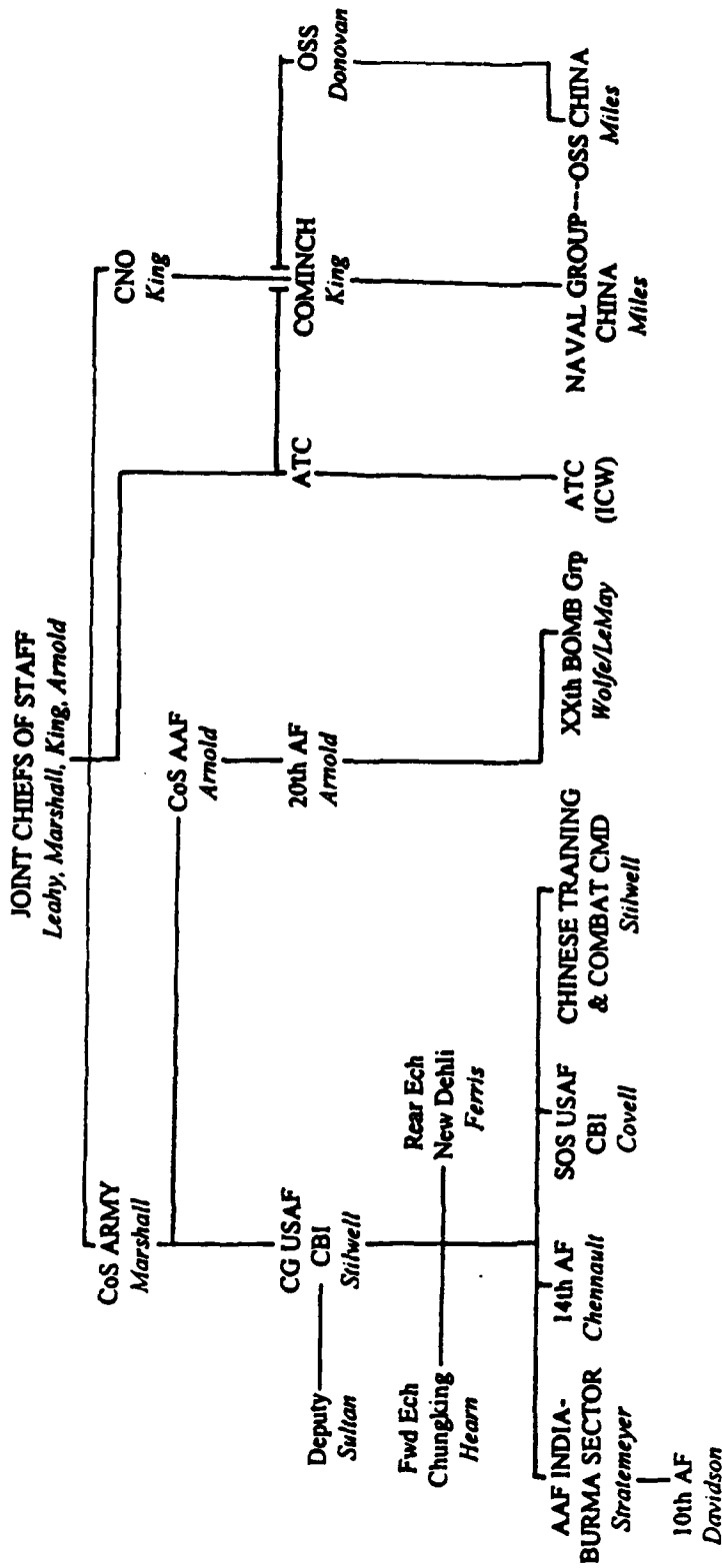
<sup>15</sup>Joint Pub 1, 41.

# ALLIED CHAIN OF COMMAND, FAR EAST; JANUARY 1944 (selected)



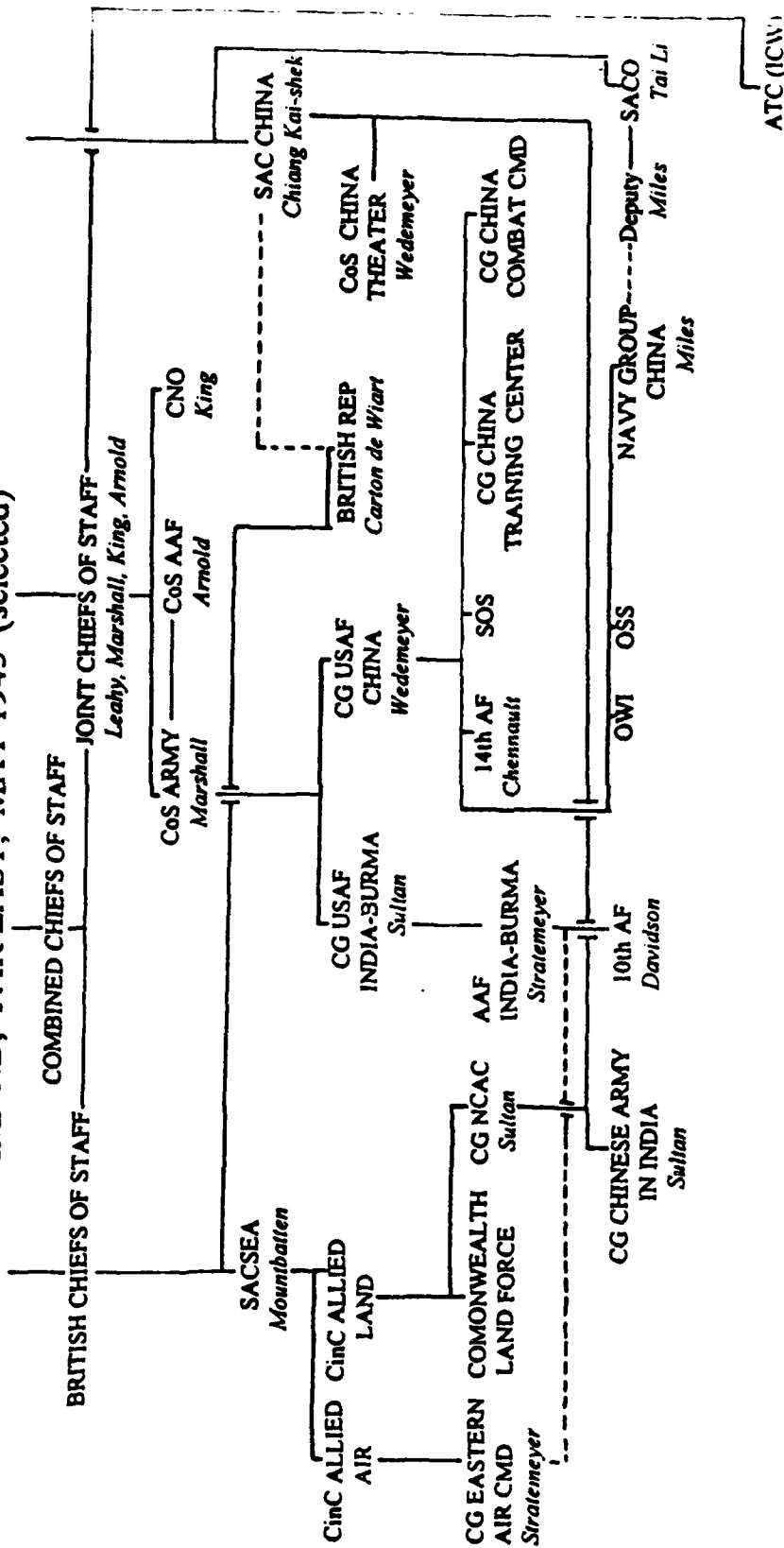
AF (Air Force), BCOS (British Chiefs of Staff), BIS (Bureau of Information and Statistics), CBI (China-Burma-India), CG (Commanding General), CinC (Commander in Chief), CMD (Command), CNAF (Chinese National Air Force), CNO (Chief of Naval Operations), EAC (Eastern Air Command), JCS (Joint Chiefs of Staff), LPA (Loyal Patriotic Army), NCAC (Northern Combat Area Command), NGC (Naval Group China), SAC (Supreme Allied Commander), SACO (Sino-American Cooperative Organization), SEA (Southeast Asia), SOS (Service of Supply), USAF (U.S. Army Forces).

U. S. CHAIN OF COMMAND, FAR EAST; JANUARY - OCTOBER 1944 (selected)



AF (Air Force), AAF (Army Air Force), ATC (Air Transport Command), CBI (China-Burma-India), CG (Commanding General), CMD (Command), CNO (Chief of Naval Operations), COMINCH (Commander in Chief, U.S. Fleet), CoS (Chief of Staff), Ech (Echelon), ICW (India-China Wing), OSS (Office of Strategic Services), USAF (U.S. Army Forces).

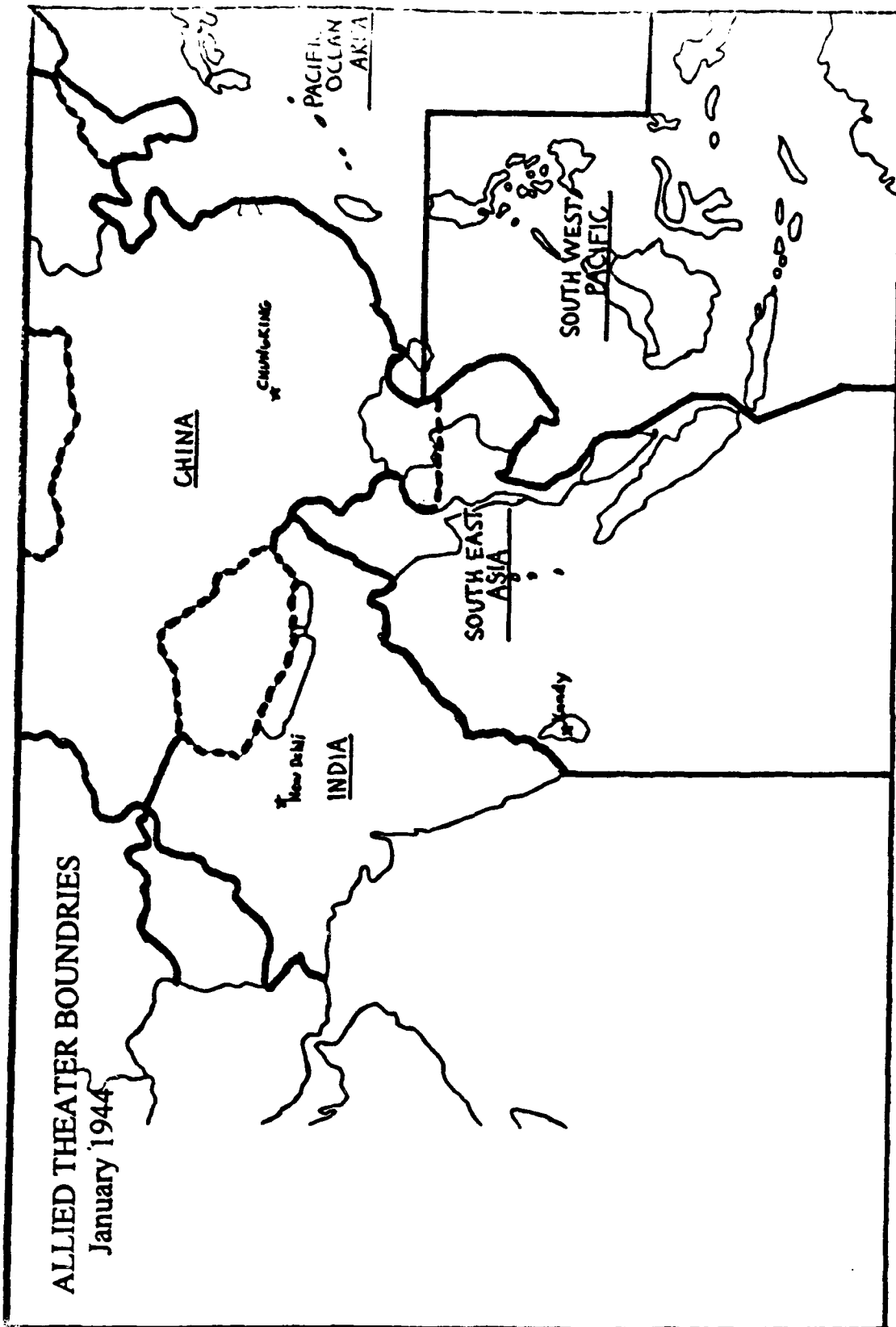
# ALLIED CHAIN OF COMMAND, FAR EAST; MAY 1945 (selected)

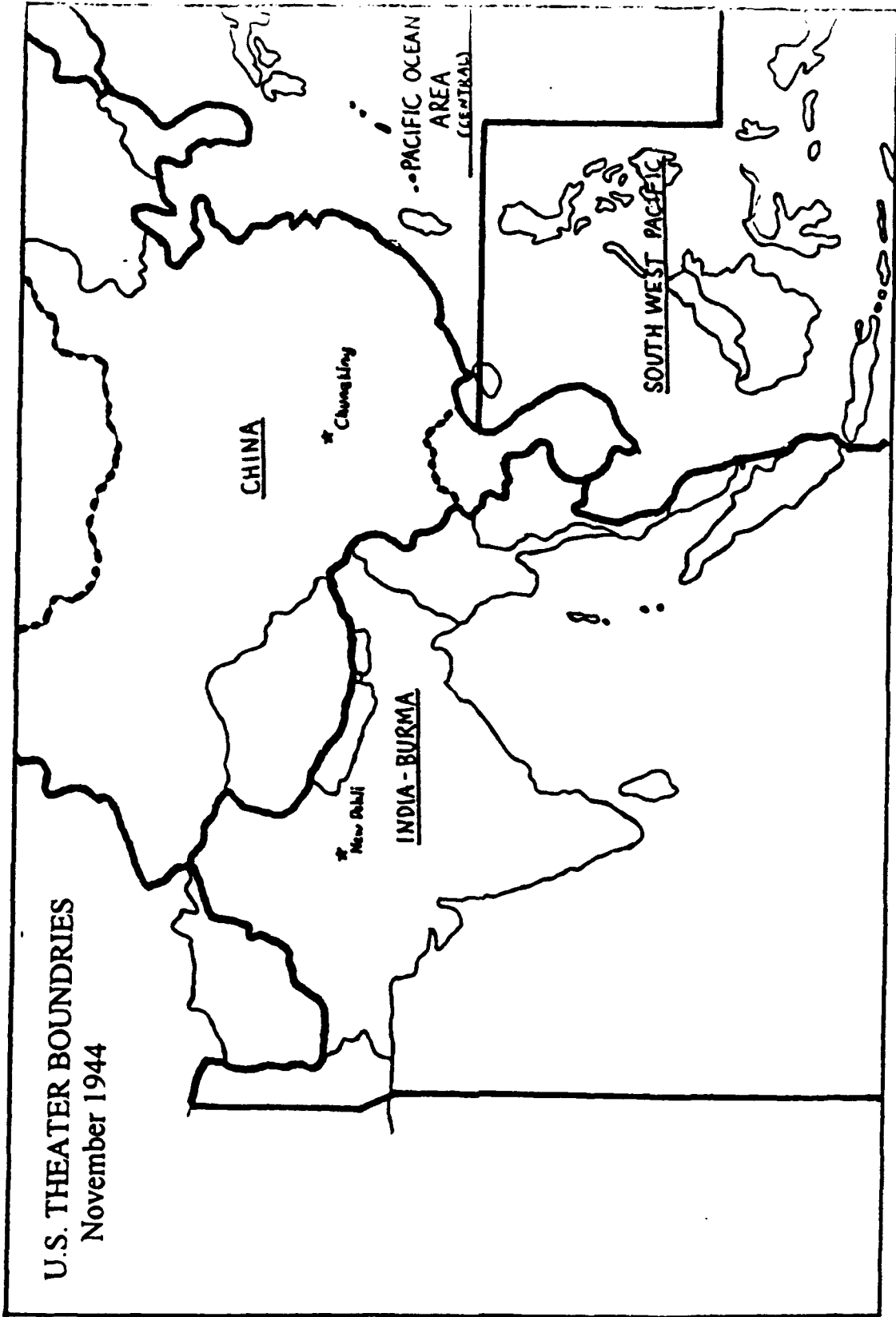


AF (Air Force), AAF (Army Air Force), ATC (Air Transport Command), CinC (Commander in Chief), CG (Commanding General), CMD (Command), CNO (Chief of Naval Operations), CoS (Chief of Staff), ICW (India-China Wing), NCAC (Northern Combat Area Command), OSS (Office of Strategic Services), OWI (Office of War Information), SAC (Supreme Allied Commander), SACO (Sino-American Cooperative Organization), SEA (Southeast Asia), SOS (Service of Supply), USAF (U.S. Army Forces).

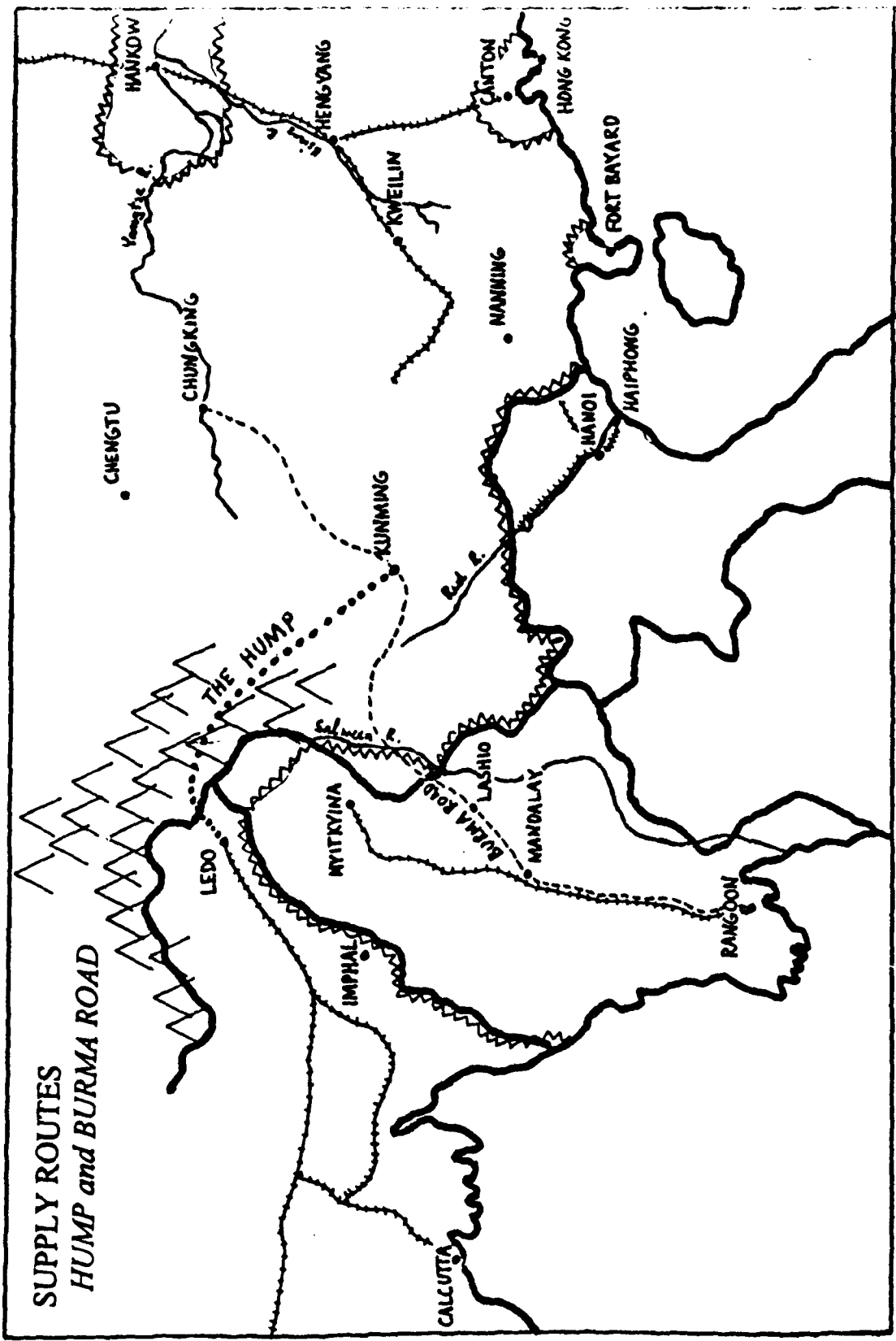


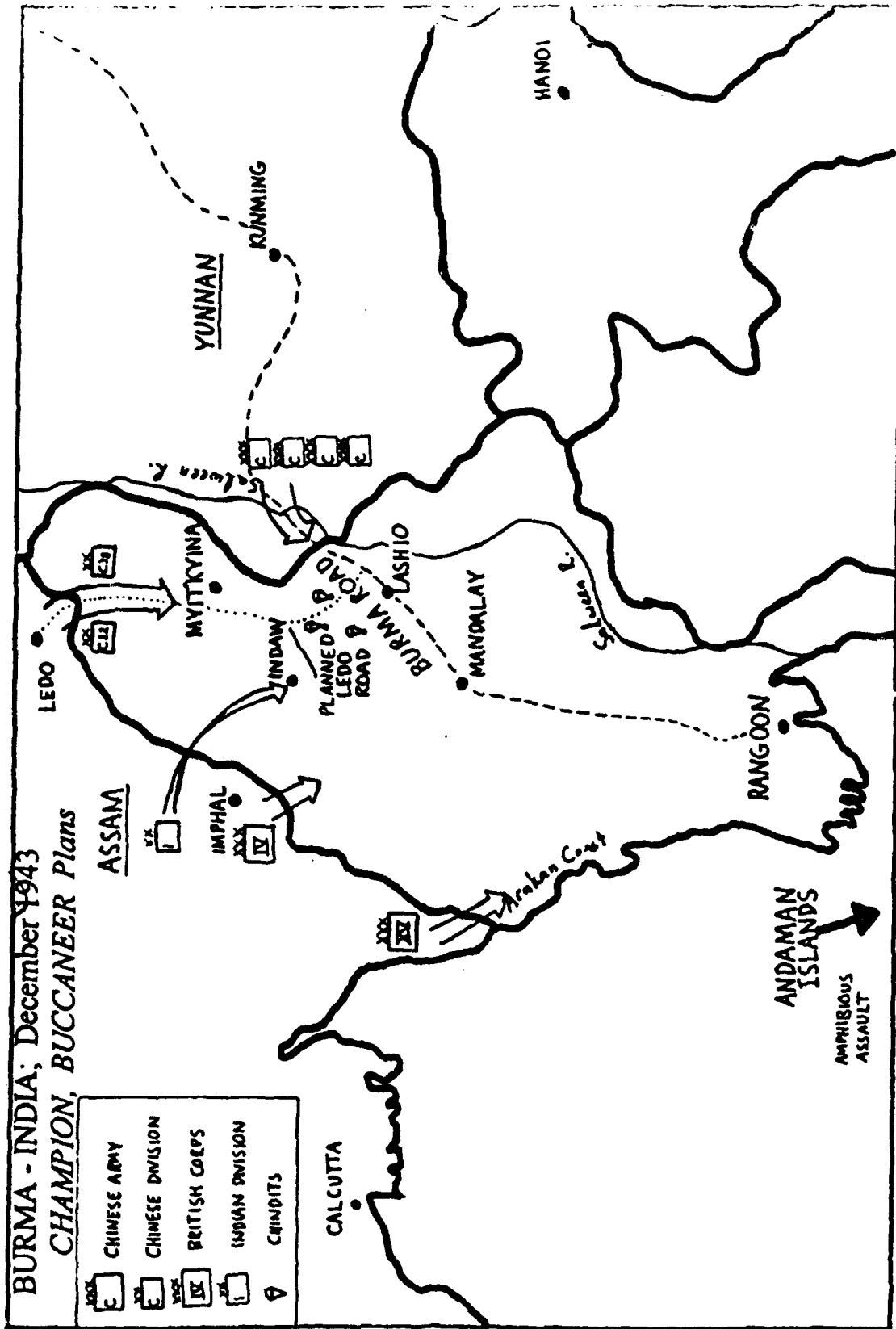


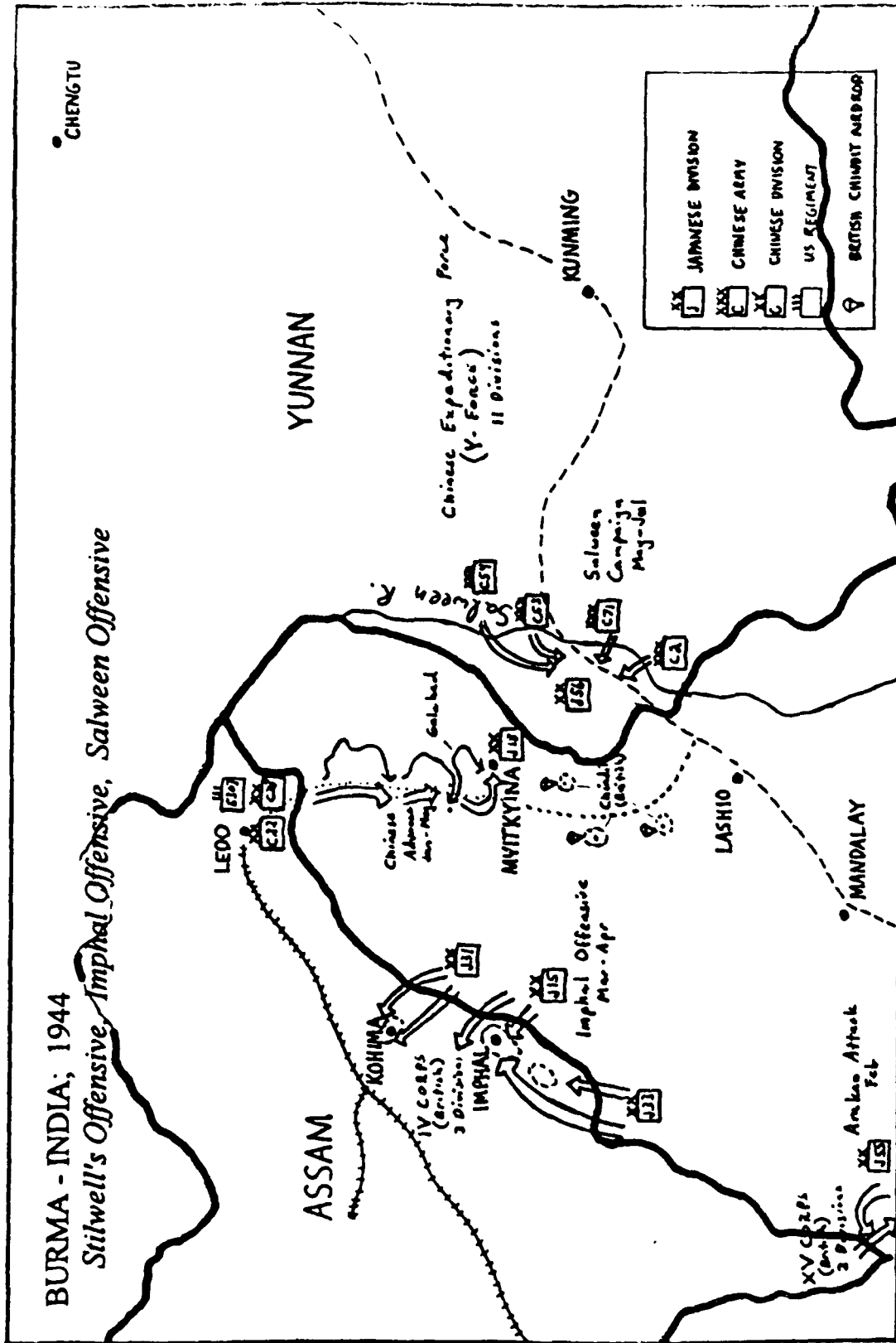




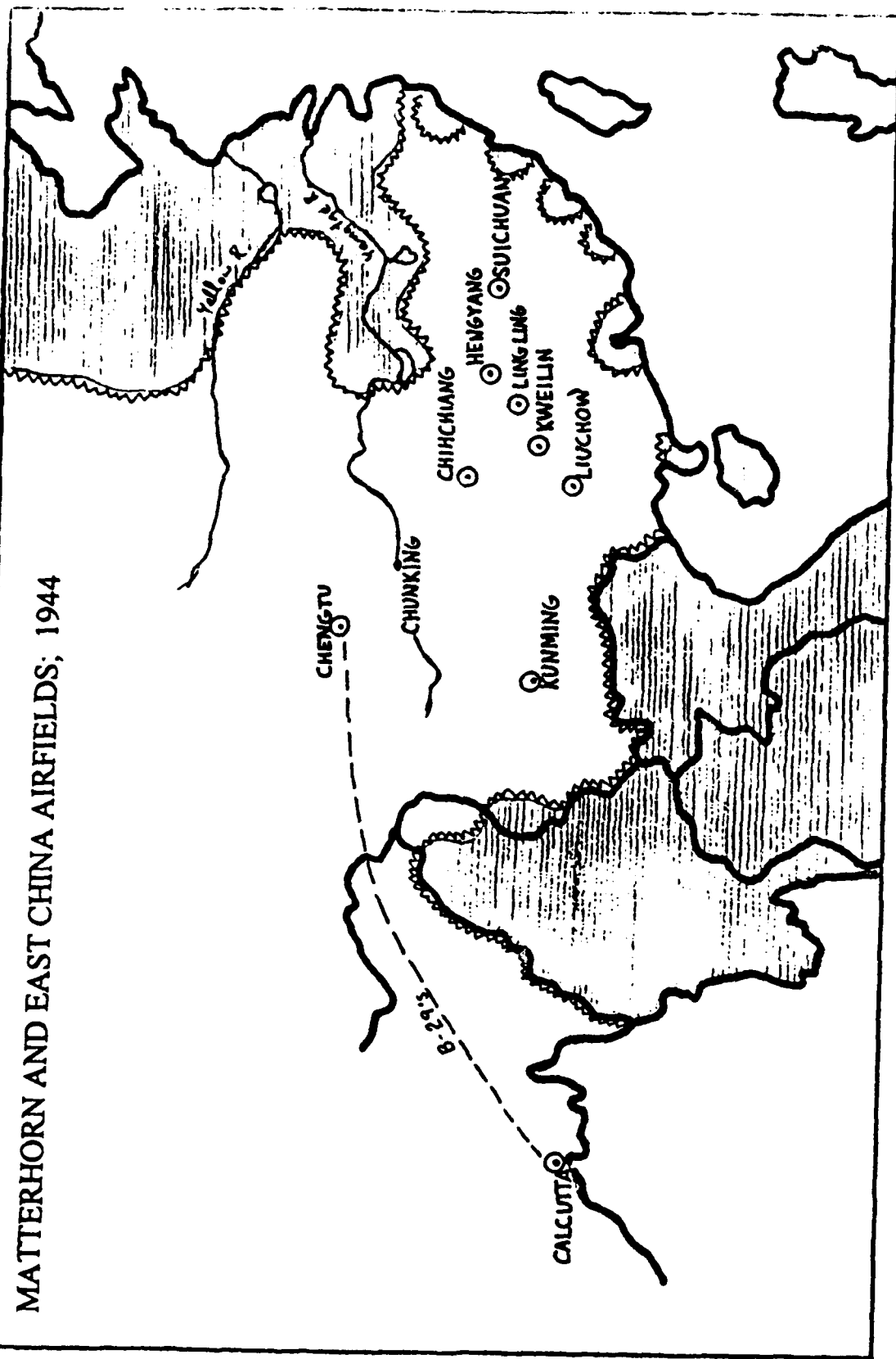
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November 1944

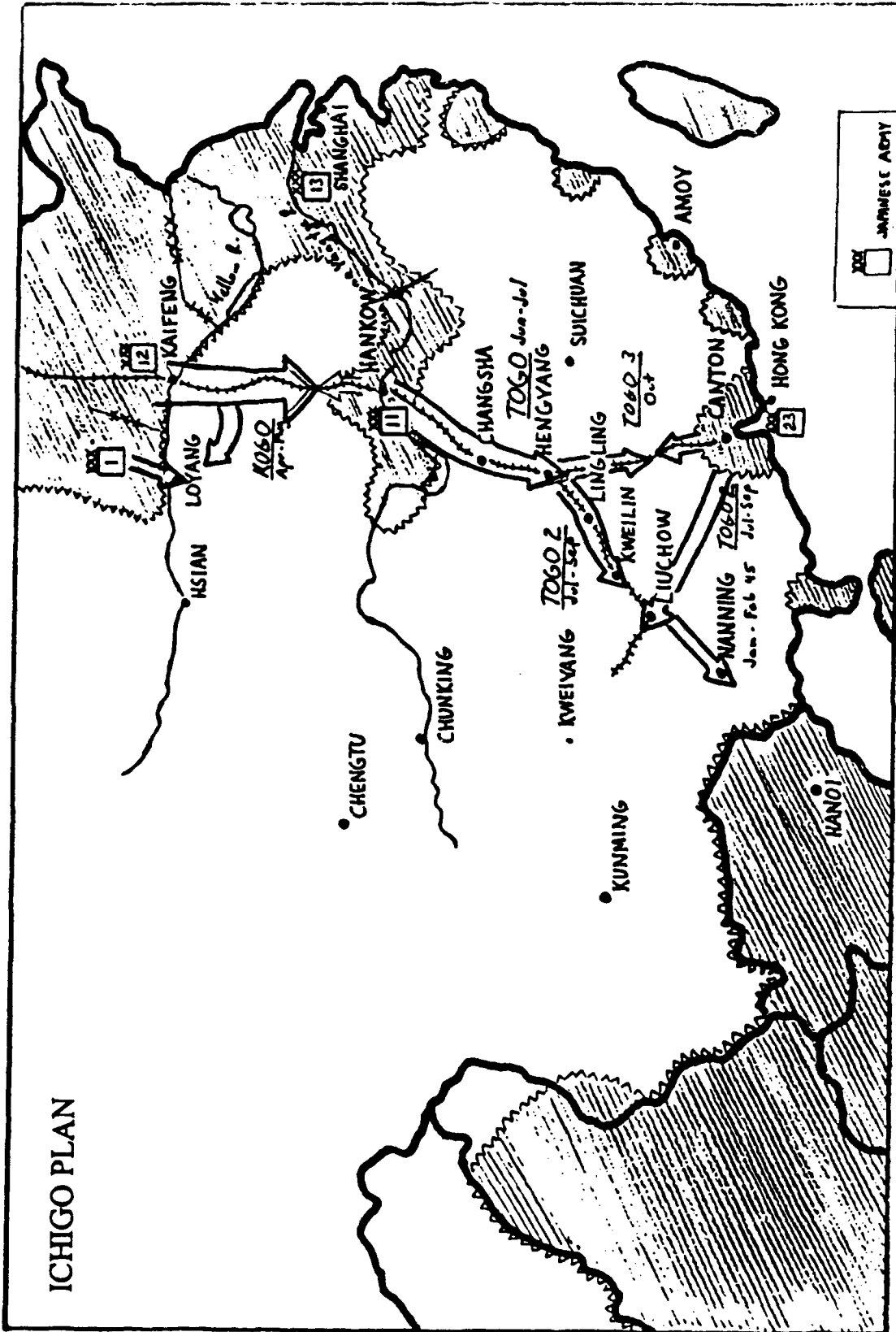




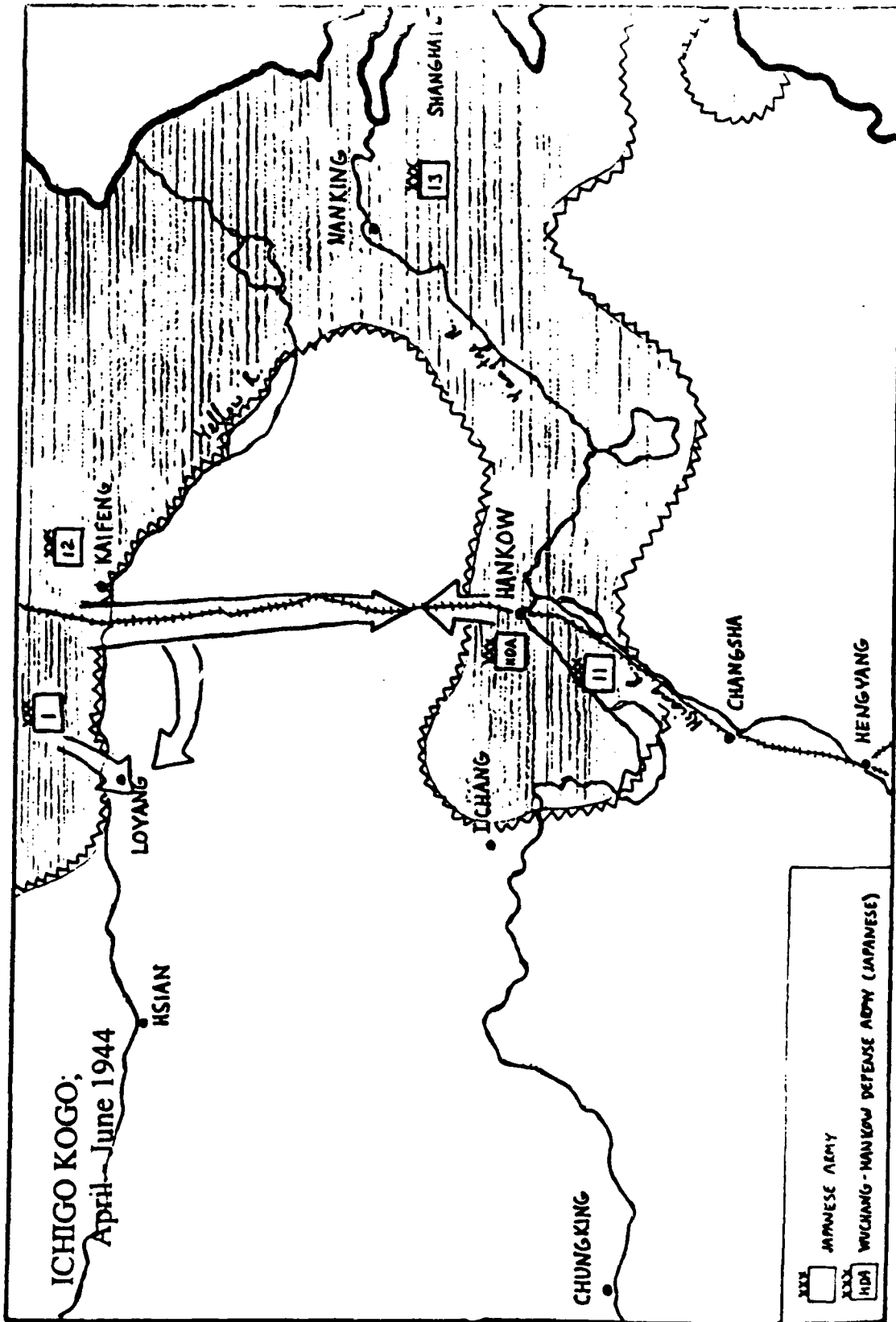


MATTERHORN AND EAST CHINA AIRFIELDS; 1944

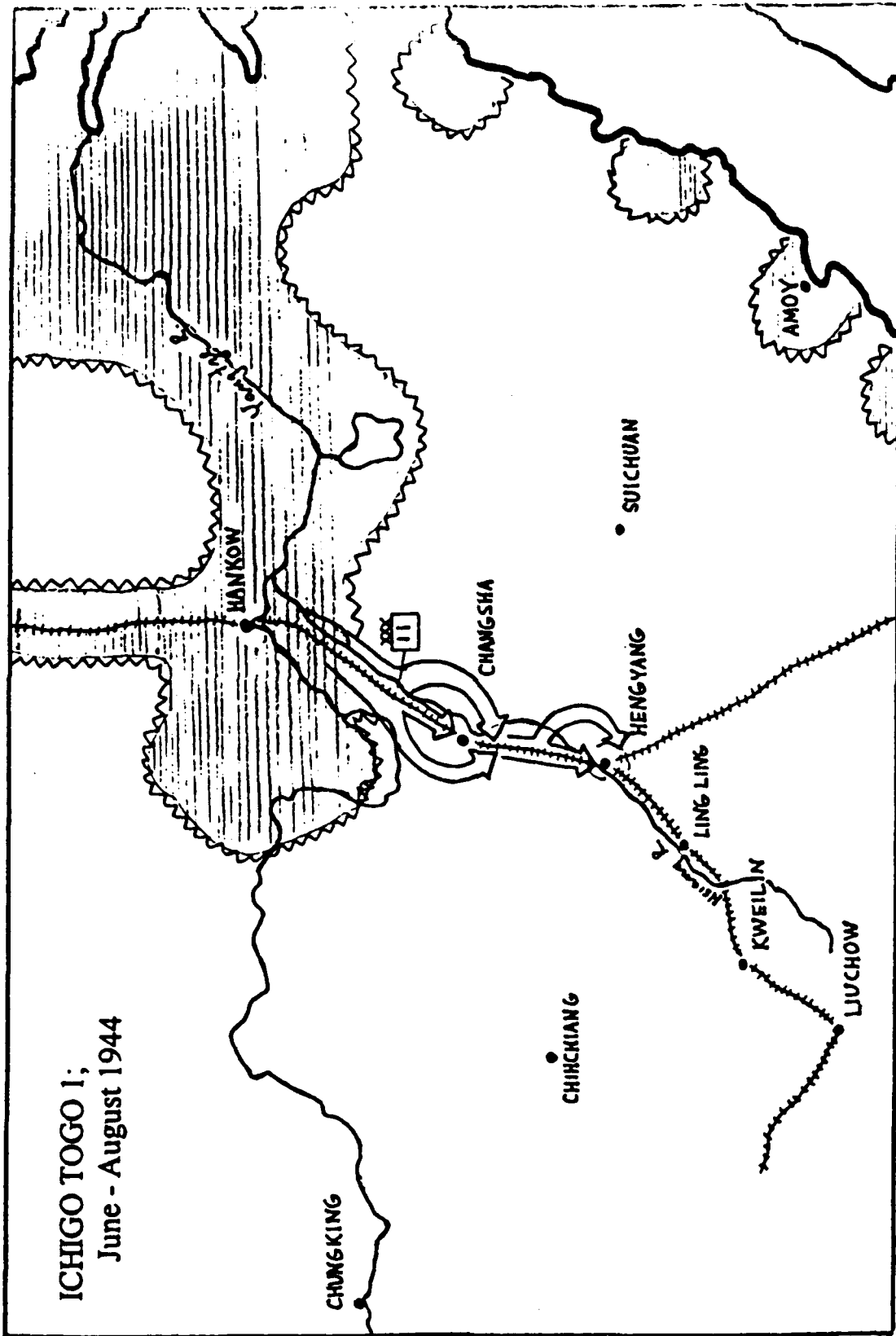




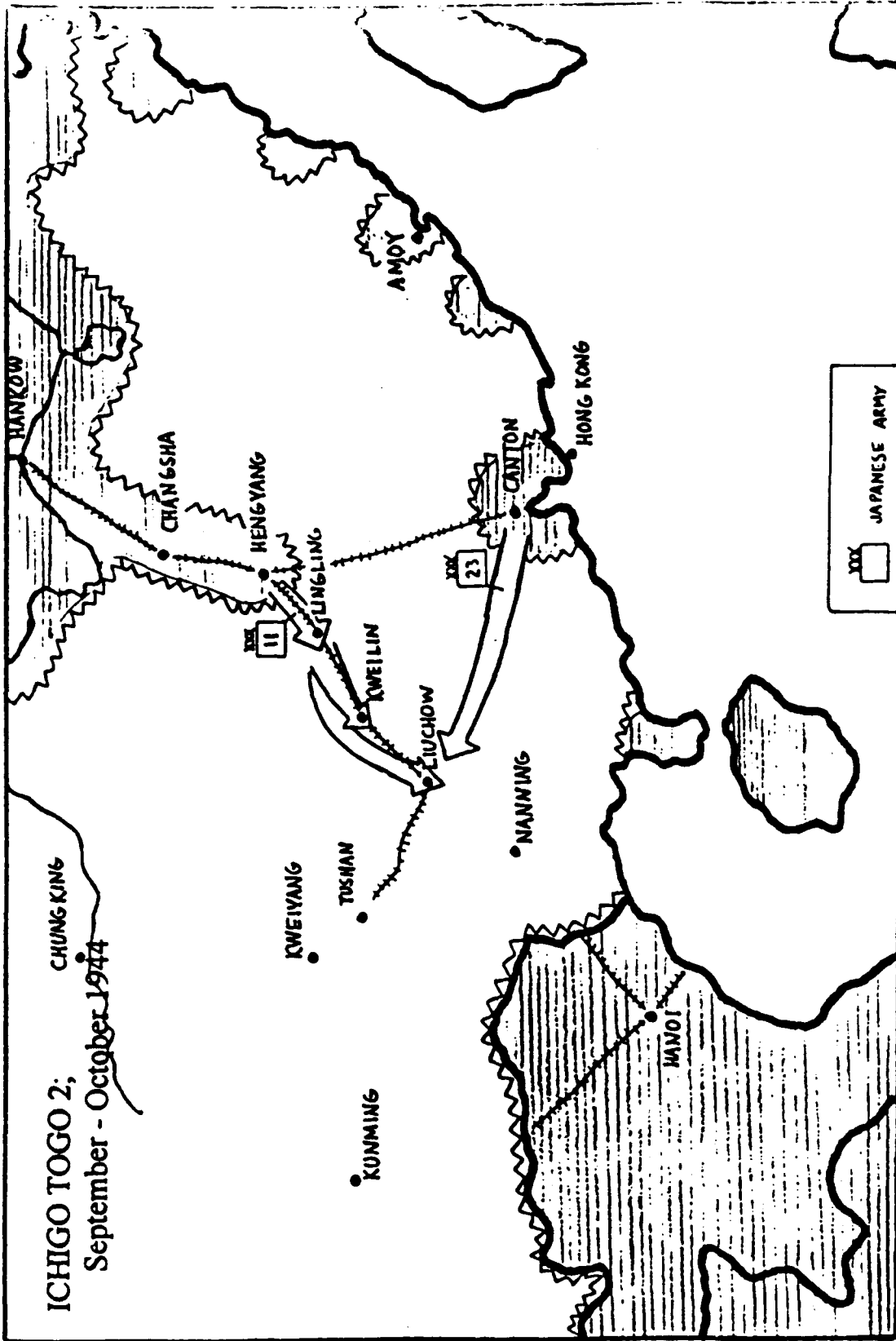
ICHIGO PLAN

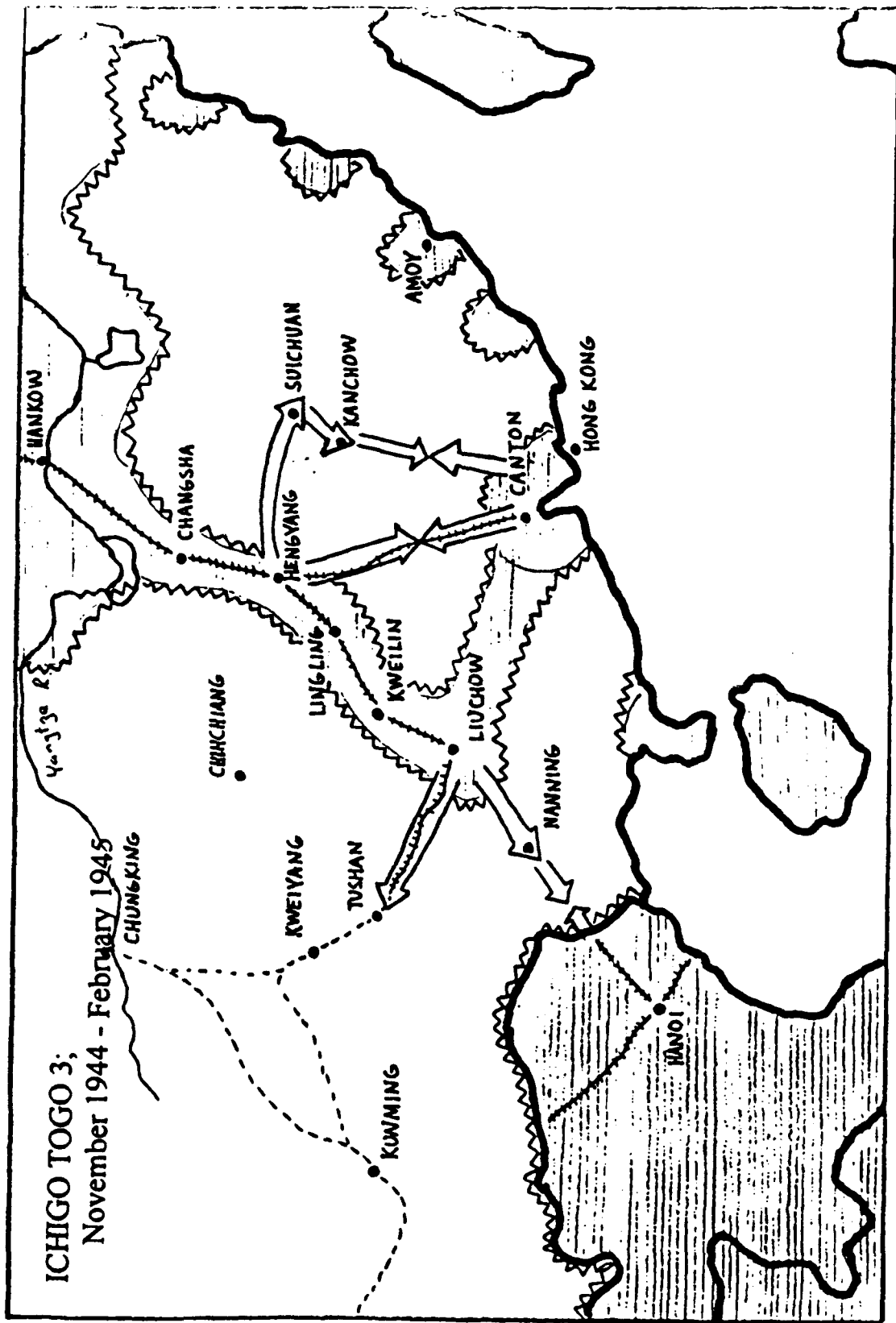




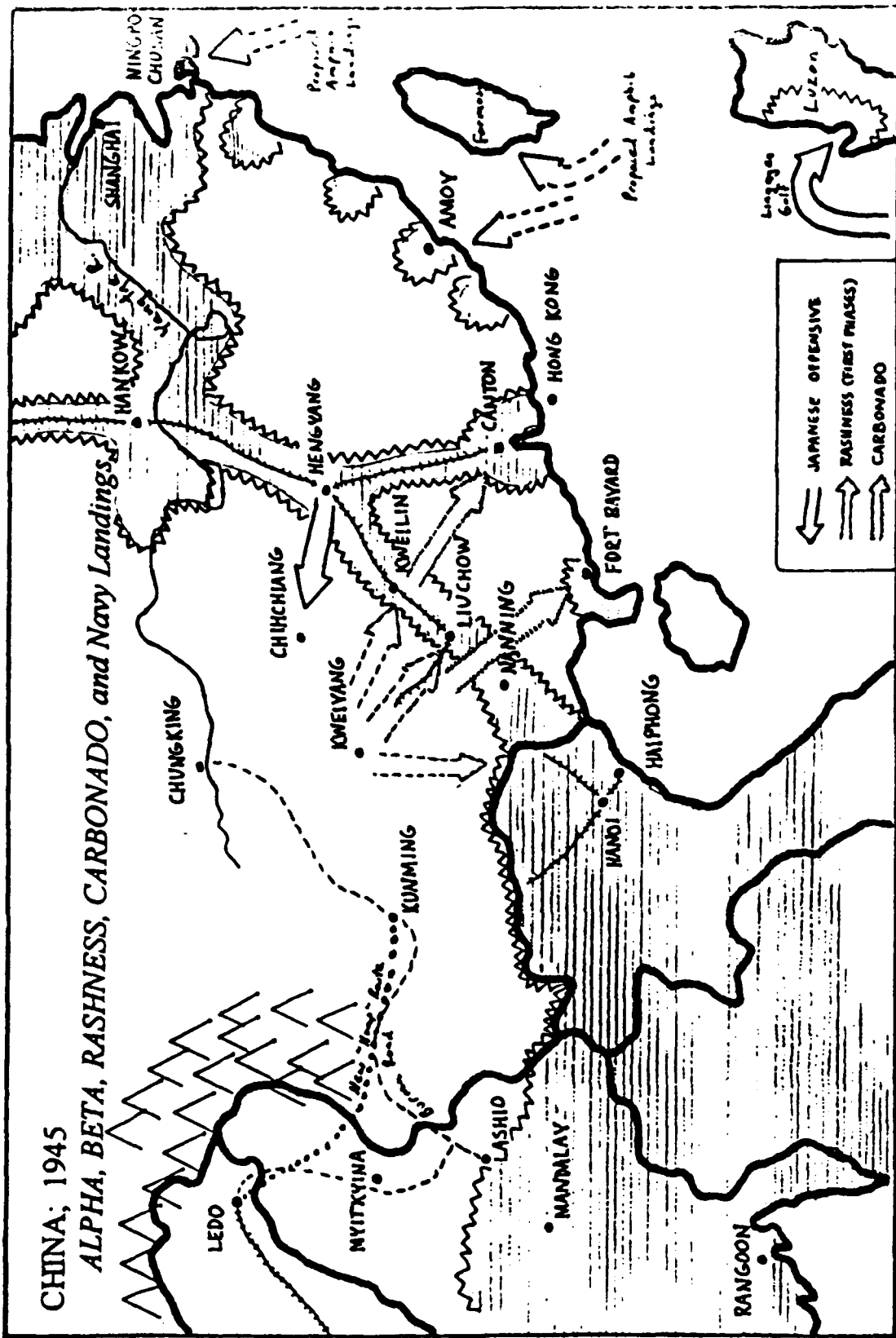


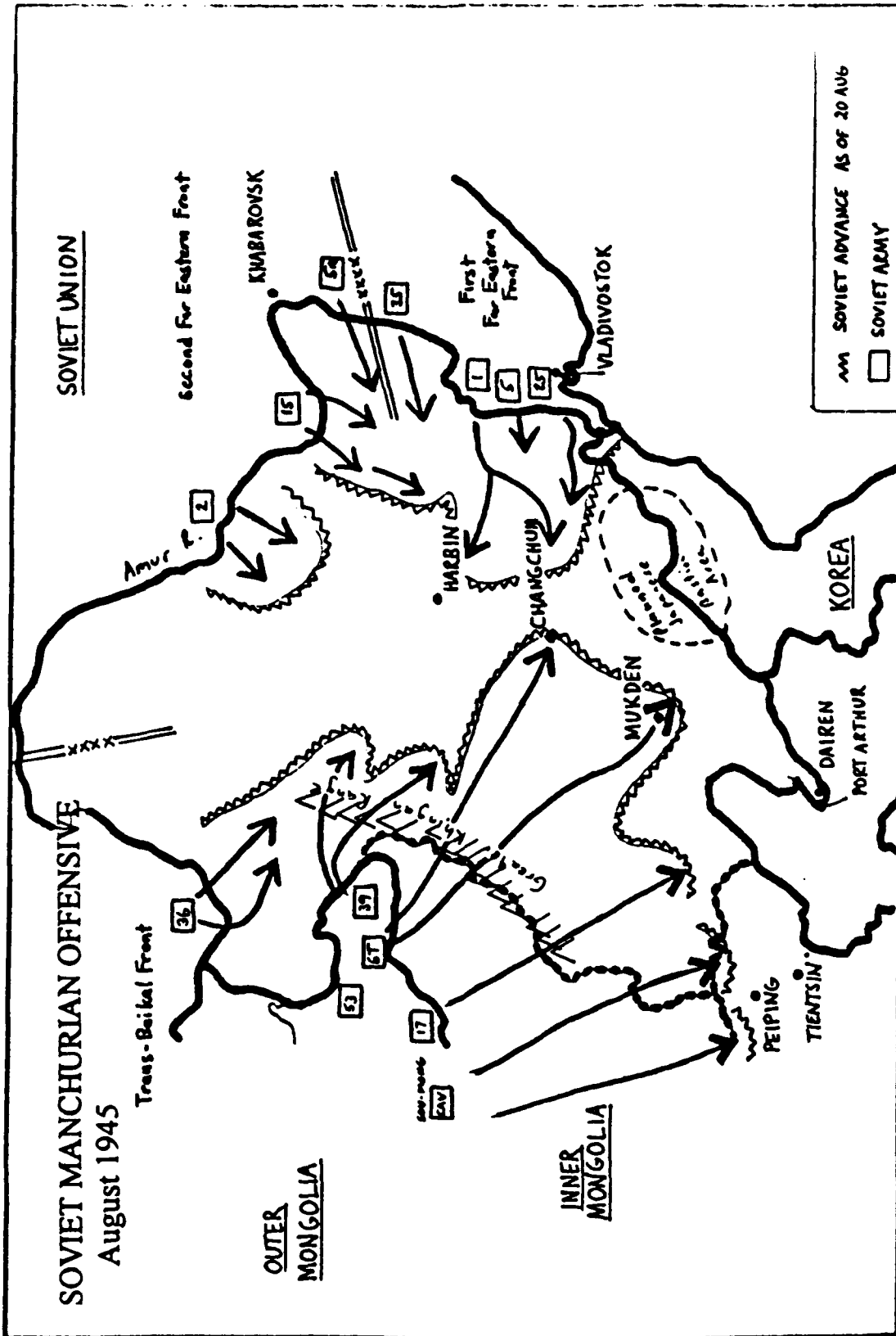
ICHIGO TOGO I;  
June - August 1944





ICHIGO TOGO 3;  
November 1944 - February 1945





INTERNATIONAL STRATEGY CONFERENCES (Selected Participants)

SYMBOL - January 1943 (Casablanca)

UNITED STATES

President Roosevelt  
General George C. Marshall  
Admiral Ernest J. King  
Lt. Gen. Henry H. Arnold  
Brig. Gen. Albert C. Wedemeyer  
Rear Adm. Charles M. Cooke, Jr.

GREAT BRITAIN

Prime Minister Churchill  
General Sir Alan Brooke  
Lord Louis Mountbatten

TRIDENT - May 1943 (Washington)

UNITED STATES

President Roosevelt  
Admiral William D. Leahy  
General George C. Marshall  
Admiral Ernest J. King  
Lt. Gen. Joseph W. Stilwell  
Maj. Gen. Claire L. Chennault  
Rear Adm. Charles M. Cooke, Jr.  
Brig. Gen. Albert C. Wedemeyer.

GREAT BRITAIN

Prime Minister Churchill  
General Sir Alan Brooke  
Field Marshal Sir Archibald Wavell

QUADRANT - August 1943 (Quebec)

UNITED STATES

President Roosevelt  
Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson  
Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox  
Admiral William D. Leahy  
General George C. Marshall  
Admiral Ernest J. King  
General Henry H. Arnold  
Rear Adm. Charles M. Cooke, Jr.  
Brig. Gen. Albert C. Wedemeyer

GREAT BRITAIN

Prime Minister Churchill  
General Sir Alan Brooke  
Vice Adm. Lord Louis Mountbatten  
Brigadier Orde C. Wingate

SEXTANT - November-December 1943 (Cairo)

UNITED STATES

President Roosevelt  
Admiral William D. Leahy  
General George C. Marshall  
Admiral Ernest J. King  
General Henry H. Arnold  
Lt. Gen. Joseph W. Stilwell  
Maj. Gen. George E. Stratemeyer  
Maj. Gen. Albert C. Wedemeyer  
Maj. Gen. Claire L. Chennault  
Maj. Gen. John R. Deane  
Rear Adm. Charles M. Cooke, Jr.

GREAT BRITAIN

Prime Minister Churchill  
General Sir Alan Brooke  
Vice Adm. Lord Louis Mountbatten  
Lt. Gen. Sir Adrian Carton de Wiart

CHINA

Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek  
Mme. Chiang Kai-shek  
General Shang Chen

EUREKA - November-December 1943 (Tehran)

UNITED STATES

President Roosevelt  
Admiral William D. Leahy  
General George C. Marshall  
Admiral Ernest J. King  
General Henry H. Arnold  
Rear Adm. Charles M. Cooke, Jr.  
Brig. Gen. Patrick J. Hurley

GREAT BRITAIN

Prime Minister Churchill  
General Sir Alan Brooke

SOVIET UNION

Marshal Joseph V. Stalin  
Marshal K. E. Voroshilov

OCTAGON - September 1944 (Quebec)

UNITED STATES

President Roosevelt  
Admiral William D. Leahy  
General George C. Marshall  
Admiral Ernest J. King  
General Henry H. Arnold  
Rear Adm. Charles M. Cooke, Jr.

GREAT BRITAIN

Prime Minister Churchill  
General Sir Alan Brooke

## GLOSSARY

### Code-Names and Nicknames

**ALPHA** Stilwell/Wedemeyer plan to defend Kunming and Chungking by reconstituting and re-equipping 30-36 Chinese divisions in 1944/45.

**ANAKIM** Allied plan to retake Burma and the port of Rangoon to re-open the Burma Road to China in 1943/44.

**ANVIL** Plan for amphibious assault on southern France.

**ARCADIA** U.S./British strategy conference in Washington, Dec 1941-Jan 1942.

**AXIOM** Mission sent to Washington and London in Feb 1944 by SEAC to urge CULVERIN/British strategic plan for Far East.

**BETA** Stilwell/Wedemeyer plan to use the Chinese ALPHA divisions to take the Canton-Hong Kong port area.

**BUCCANEER** SEAC plan for Andaman Islands amphibious assault in 1944.

**CAPITAL** SEAC Offensive to recapture north Burma, late 1944/45.

**CARBONADO** Wedemeyer's revised RASHNESS (BETA) plan.

**CAUSEWAY** Nimitz plan for operations against Formosa in 1944/45.

**CHAMPION** SEAC plan for Burma operations as of Dec 43.

**CHINDITS** British Long-Range Penetration Groups.

**CULVERIN** SEAC plan for attack against Sumatra and Netherlands East Indies in 1945.

**DIXIE** U.S. Army observer group sent to Communist China in 1944.

**DRACULA** SEAC plan for airborne and amphibious assault on port of Rangoon, 1945.

**EUREKA** U.S./British/Soviet conference at Tehran, November 1943.

**GALAHAD** U.S. Long-range penetration group, 1944. 5307th Composite Unit (Provisional), "Merrill's Marauders."

**GRANITE** Nimitz plan for operations in Pacific in 1944.

**HUMP** India-China air ferry route over Himalaya Mountains.

**ICHIGO** Japanese offensive in east China, 1944.

**KOGO** Phase One of ICHIGO, Apr-Jun 1944. Japanese plan to capture Peking-Hankow railway to build up supplies at Hankow for follow-on ICHIGO phases.

**MARS** 5332d Brigade (Provisional). Follow-on to GALAHAD.

**MATTERHORN** U.S. plan to conduct B-29 strategic bombing campaign against Japan, using bases in India and China, 1944.

**MILEPOST** Project to build up stocks in the Far East in preparation for the entry of the USSR into the war against Japan.

**OCTAGON** U.S./British strategy conference at Quebec, Sep 1944.

**ORANGE** U.S. pre-war plan of operations in event of war with Japan.

**OVERLORD** Plan for invasion of northwest Europe in spring 1944.



Code-Names and Nicknames (Continued)

**PEANUT** Code-name for Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, later used disparagingly by Stilwell.

**QUADRANT** U.S./British strategy conference at Quebec, Aug 1943.

**RAINBOW** U.S. plans prepared between 1939 and 1941 to fight more than one Axis enemy at the same time.

**RASHNESS** Operational code-name for Wedemeyer's BETA plan, 1945.

**SAUCY** Limited offensive to reopen land route from Burma to China. Scaled-down version of ANAKIM.

**SETTING SUN** Proposed U.S. plan to bomb Japan from Chinese airfields.

**SEXTANT** U.S./British/Chinese strategy conference at Cairo Nov-Dec 1943.

**SHO** Japanese plans for decisive operation to defeat U.S. penetration of western Pacific, summer-fall 1944.

**SYMBOL** U.S./British strategy conference at Casablanca, Jan 1943.

**TARZAN** Allied land-offensive in northern Burma, 1944.

**TOGO** Phase two of ICHIGO. Japanese plans to capture Hengyang, capture U.S. airfields at Kweilin and Liuchow, capture Nanning, open land-route to Indochina, open Canton-Hankow railroad and overrun U.S. airfields at Suichuan and Nanhsiung.

**TRIDENT** U.S./British strategy conference in Washington, May 1943.

**TWILIGHT** Stilwell/Stratemeyer modification of SETTING SUN. Basis for final MATTERHORN strategic bombing plan.

**U Operation** Japanese attack on Imphal, India from Burma, Mar 1944.

**X-FORCE** X-ray Force. U.S.-trained Chinese Army in India.

**Y-FORCE** Yoke Force. U.S.-equipped Chinese divisions in Yunnan.

**Z-FORCE** Zebra Force. U.S. plan to equip Chinese divisions in east China.

## BIBLIOGRAPHIC ESSAY

Reviewing the literature dealing with this period of Chinese history is a challenge that requires an open mind. The "loss" of China to the Communists, the disagreements between General Stilwell and General Chennault over the proper role of airpower, and the recall of Stilwell in October 1944, were all emotionally charged events which resulted in polarized bodies of opinion. Analytic works on this period are therefore sometimes less than objective.

Although there is a vast amount of print on this period, many works focus on national political strategy, rather than military or individual service strategies. Most of the remainder are biographical or anecdotal accounts of the war. In addition, many military records of this period, such as the records of Naval Group China, were not declassified until the mid and late 1970's. As a result, there is no single concise accounting of the full range of interaction between the U.S. service chiefs, the theater commanders, the theater service "component" commanders, and other Allied representatives in the formulation of joint and combined military strategy to support U.S. national interests.

The best documentary sources for determining official U.S. and Allied national interests and objectives in China are the U.S. State Department publications in the Foreign Relations of the United States Series, particularly those volumes devoted to wartime Allied conferences (Cairo, Tehran, Quebec, etc.), and volumes dealing exclusively with China. In addition, the State Department's China White Paper, which deals extensively with the 1944-45 period, is an invaluable source of documentation, particularly in light of the close linkage of military and foreign policy during World War II. Numerous interpretations of America's China policy are available to suit virtually any political persuasion. The relatively recent (1979) U.S. Crusade in China: 1938-1945 by Michael Schaller, makes use of declassified material to present a very interesting though somewhat revisionist account. Eric Larrabee's Commander-in-Chief provides substantial insight into President Roosevelt's China policy and his role in affecting military strategy.

U.S. military objectives and strategy were determined primarily by the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), in conjunction with the theater commanders. A fine source on the wartime workings of the JCS is Grace Hayes' History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff: the War Against Japan, originally written in 1953 with significant input from actual participants, but which was not declassified until the late seventies and first published in 1982. Hayes' work is very good covering the period leading up to Stilwell's recall, but there were some issues affecting China dealt with by the JCS in early 1945 that are not covered fully, such as the dispute between the Army and the Navy over the independent status of the Navy's Sino-American Cooperative Organization

(SACO). Maurice Matloff's three volumes on Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare in the official U.S. Army in World War II series are invaluable basic references.

Biographical and autobiographical works on the service chiefs lend insight into their views on China. Some of the best of these include Forrest Pogue's George C. Marshall: Organizer of Victory and Statesman, General Arnold's Global Mission, Admiral King's A Naval Record, and Admiral Leahy's I Was There.

Within the China-Burma-India Theater, the bedrock account is Romanus and Sunderland's three volume series, Stilwell's Mission to China, Stilwell's Command Problems, and Time Runs Out in CBI, which are part of the official U.S. Army in World War II series. Although authoritative on Army activity, these volumes left the Navy and Air Force to tell their own stories. Stilwell's own diary and papers have also been published and provide significant insights. Building on Romanus and Sunderland, and making extensive use of Stilwell's own papers, Barbara Tuchman's Stilwell and the American Experience in China: 1911-1945, is one of the best, and certainly most widely read works on the period, which presents a very favorable view of Stilwell. An interesting counter-point to Tuchman (and deliberately intended to be so) is Liang Chin-tung's General Stilwell in China, 1942-1944: the Full Story, which purports to use previously unavailable Nationalist Chinese documentation to present the Chinese side. Although it is difficult to gauge accuracy without access to the same documentation, it is clear that the Nationalist Chinese perception of reality was very much different than that of Stilwell. Stilwell's successor, General Wedemeyer, published his own account of the China Theater in Wedemeyer Reports!

Basic documentation on the contribution of the U.S. Army Air Force is found in two volumes of the official Army Air Forces in World War II. Chennault's autobiography, Way of a Fighter, tells his side of the dispute with Stilwell. Other works on Chennault tend to border on the hagiographic, or to concentrate on the colorful "Flying Tigers," at the expense of overall Army Air Force strategy.

Although for a variety of reasons the U.S. Navy activities in China had a disproportionately large impact, relatively little has been published. Admiral Samuel Eliot Morison's massive semi-official History of U.S. Naval Operations in World War II only devotes a few pages to the activities of Naval Group China (NGC). NGC's commander, Admiral Milton Miles, published a somewhat controversial autobiographical account, A Different Kind of War, which presents an extremely pro-Nationalist view.

The best documentation from the Japanese perspective is unfortunately still in Japanese. However, an interesting work by Chi Hsi-Sheng, Nationalist China at War: Military Defeats and Political Collapse, 1937-1945, cites numerous Japanese language and Chinese language sources and provides excellent insight into Japanese plans and objectives for the ICHIGO offensive. Another superb source on the Nationalist Chinese is Frederick Liu's A Military History of Modern China, 1924-1949.

An extremely well documented work which provides both the British perspective and a balanced portrayal of U.S. and British wartime cooperation in the Pacific is Mark Thorne's Allies of a Kind.

A Fascinating work on U.S. and Soviet wartime cooperation (or frequently, lack of cooperation) is John Deane's The Strange Alliance which is a personal account of his time as head of the U.S. Military Mission to Moscow.

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