

Grave of a Dozen Schemes

By H. P. WILLMOTT



Naval Historical Center

The British Chiefs in January 1943 at the Casablanca conference (seated, from left): Air Chief Marshall Sir Charles Portal, Chief of Air Staff; Admiral of the Fleet Sir Dudley Pound, First Sea Lord; the Prime Minister; Field Marshall Sir John Dill, Head of the British Joint Staff Mission to Washington; and General Sir Alan Brooke, Chief of the Imperial General Staff (and Chairman, Chiefs of Staff Committee).

Over the last decade or so a number of impressive works have added to our knowledge of the formation of Allied strategy and the functioning of the anti-Axis alliance during World War II. Callahan, Hayes, Homer, and Thorne¹ have rolled back the frontiers of knowledge, although the role of Britain in the war against Japan remains largely neglected and little understood. This lack of appreciation is partly because of the way in which British policy evolved. The strands of continuity and clarity have been lost amid the interminable intricacies of Combined Chiefs of Staff meetings, the adagio rustle of forms in triplicate, and the baffling list of unpronounceable place names spread across the Pacific. But one suspects with regard to Britain's role in the Pacific that another factor is at work: the death of those involved and decrease in British power and influence in the Far East which have resulted in an accompanying contraction of interest.

The following article is divided into two parts: a definition of problems which beset the development of British policy and an examination of the main features of policy as it evolved. But to define such problems one must begin by noting that in the evolution of British policy there are two distinct phases, the watershed between them being September 1943. In the first

phase, between December 1941 and September 1943, the British were forced to respond to events beyond their control and to fight where they were rather than where they would. This meant, in effect, the border between India and Burma. In the next phase, during and after September 1943, the element of choice entered into British calculations because the surrender of the Italian fleet and the crippling of *Tirpitz* freed British naval forces from home waters and the Mediterranean for service in Asia as Britain turned its attention to the questions of when, in which theater, and with what forces she should expand efforts against Japan. (In so doing, these questions revolved around the issue of employing the fleet, the element of choice in British policy proved not as great as first appeared, partly as a result of residual commitments made prior to September 1943.)

despite a global presence
Britain lacked global power

With respect to this first phase, from December 1941 to September 1943, the basic terms of reference for the British in settling policy were determined by the events of the first six months. Between December 1941 and May 1942, Britain suffered a series of defeats in Asia: specifically, in Borneo, Hong Kong, the southwest Pacific, Malaya, and Burma. The defeats carried home certain in-

escapable facts: that despite a global presence Britain lacked global power, that her operational timetable for the war

against Japan had to wait on events in the German war, that the Mediterranean theater had second claim on resources and attention, that the Indian Ocean and southeast Asia by extension held no more than a tertiary position among priorities, and that the Pacific in effect had no standing whatsoever. It is in this context that the negative British view of Burma took shape. For the high command in London, Burma had no political, military, or economic value that made reconquest mandatory. The British view, ironically, was a mirror image of that of the enemy. For Britain and Japan alike the Chindwin River and Bay of Bengal formed a line of mutual exhaustion, convenient to both. Neither had the means to undertake offensive operations in these theaters, and both protagonists would have preferred—if left to their own devices—to have accepted a stand-off there in order to devote resources and attentions to other, more important theaters. However, Burma had value for the Allies that demanded the commitment which the British did not want. But Britain was one of the real losers at Pearl Harbor: the United States entered the war as the dominant influence in Asia and had the means to lead with respect to prosecuting the war. The United States, of course, entered the war with a two-fold agenda regarding China: to prepare the Chinese for a large-scale offensive on the mainland, and to ready southwest China as a base for air operations against territories occupied by Japan on the

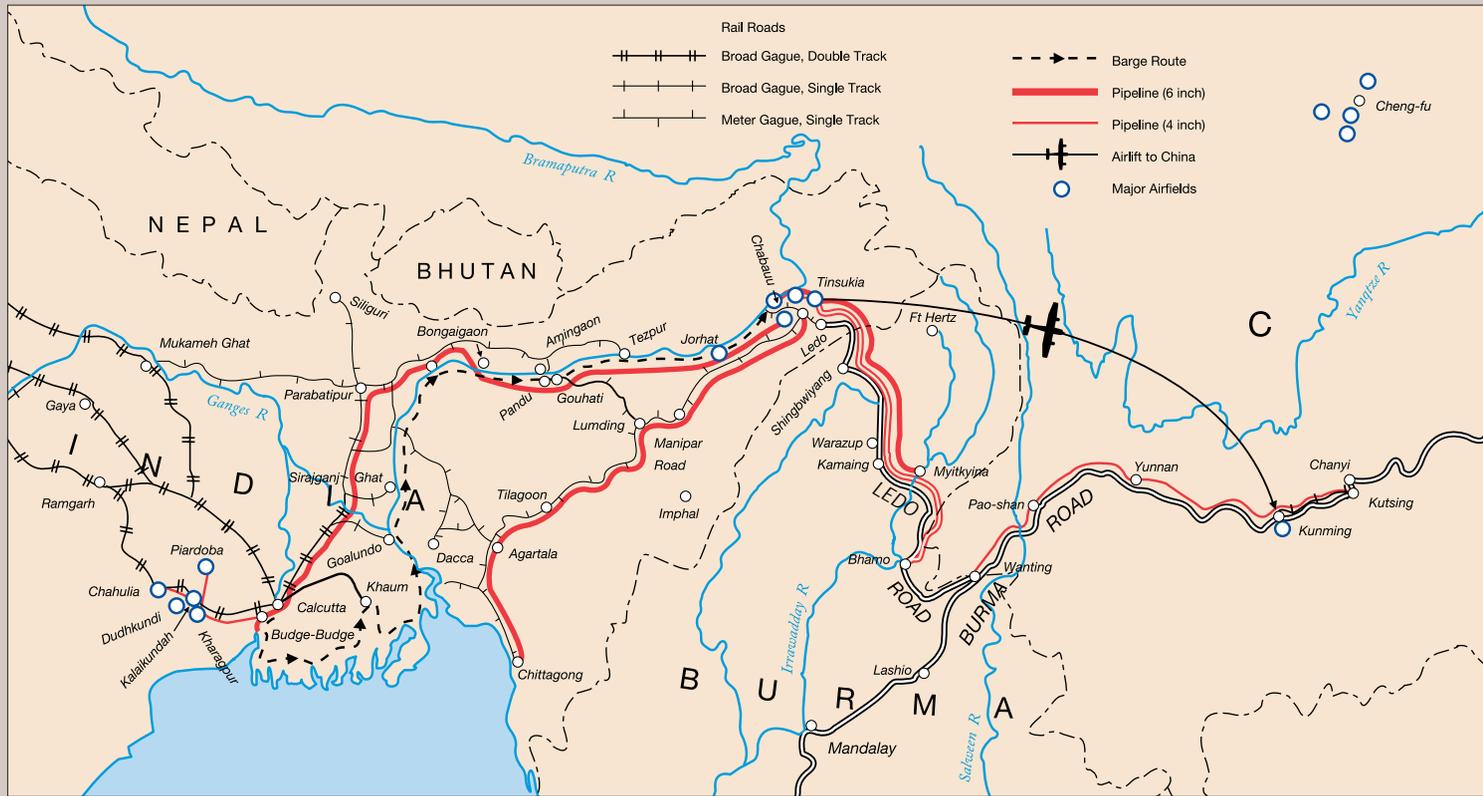
mainland and against Japan's home islands. To Washington, China was essential to the Allied war effort, and it was therefore critical to restore overland communications with Chungking. These communications could only be through Burma, and thus Burma had to be reconquered for this very reason.

Leaving aside the obvious fact that Britain did not agree with America's view of the value of China to the war effort, American attitudes gave rise to three sets of related problems. The two strands of U.S. policy—ground and air designs for China—were supposedly complementary, but they were in fact in rivalry. There were also problems in ordering priorities and difficulties directly associated with reestablishing overland communications. The second and third problems had their basis in geography and conditions in northeast India and Burma. In terms of priorities, northeast India lacked the administrative infrastructure for maintaining an invasion of Burma or an airlift to China. The needs of both an offensive into Burma and an airlift to China were mutually exclusive, but efforts to develop northeast India for either or both could not take precedence over them since both initiatives had to be taken immediately and simultaneously. This constituted, in brief, a clash between political imperatives and military necessity that was never to be properly resolved.

The problems associated with the reestablishment of overland communications with China crystallized at various levels. As far as the British high command was concerned there was not any prospect of significant deliveries to China being possible before 1946 or 1947, by which time the impact of China on events would be marginal. With only some 6 percent of Allied ground troops in southeast Asia in the engineers (compared with 16 percent in the southwest Pacific), the service support needed for a Burma offensive was unavailable. Aside from support to develop resources for the airlift in northeast India, the engineers required for an advance into Burma were the same needed to develop lines of communication that would support the advance itself. Moreover, as British staffs made their calculations, it transpired that if a road through Upper Burma was secured but the enemy remained intact in Central Burma, then the logistical requirements of the forces guarding the road to China would

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China-Burma-India Line of Communications (July 1945)



The line stretched from dockside in Calcutta to unloading stands at Chinese airfields.

Source: Charles F. Romanus and Riley Sunderland, *Time Runs Out in CBI. The China-Burma-India Theater. U.S. Army in World War II* (Washington: U.S. Army Center for Military History, 1985).

equal the carrying capacity of the road itself. Such considerations convinced the staffs that the idea of pushing a road south from Ledo to join the old Burma Road near Bhamo was nonsense,² but that was as much a rationalization as a reason since they had no real interest in a campaign in Burma *per se*. For the high command Burma represented a hazardous and uncertain undertaking because it would involve a long, exhausting approach through mountains and forests of the border area against an enemy which could choose where, when, and how to counterattack as well as make choices based on good and secure lines of communication.

Operation Anakim

To counter this Japanese advantage of position, the U.S. high command argued that conveying attacks should be mounted to convene along external lines of communication.

But Britain noted that the success of this solution depended on the Chinese in Yunnan, and they could only contribute effectively if first supplied by the very road their efforts were intended to open. This Catch-22 situation was just one case of the phenomenon whereby for each American solution there was an unanswerable British objection,³ a conundrum that was only one aspect of an insoluble Allied dilemma. If Britain moved into Upper Burma and went on the defensive, then the resultant commitment would be greater than their commitment in Assam and Manipur and could not be sustained based on current or planned resources. Moreover, the alternative to a long-term defensive commitment in Upper Burma was to attempt the reconquest of Burma overland from the north. Until October 1944 this was rejected by the Allied planners as unrealistic. Even if a road south from Ledo to Bhamo was opened, it would extend no further than 250 of the 750 miles to



CODE WORDS

- ANAKIM** Plan for recapture of Burma.
- CULVERIN** Plan for assault on Sumatra.
- DRACULA** Plan for assault on Rangoon.
- QUADRANT** U.S.-British conference at Quebec, August 1943.
- OCTAGON** U.S.-British conference at Quebec, September 1944.
- OVERLORD** Allied cross-Channel invasion of northwest Europe, June 1944.
- SEXTANT** International conference at Cairo, November–December 1943.
- TRIDENT** U.S.-British conference at Washington, May 1943.

landing at Rangoon followed by an advance through the Irrawaddy and Sittoung valleys and a battle of encirclement and annihilation in Central Burma (Operation Anakim). But the conceptual problem here was that if Britain indeed acquired the means to conduct

Rangoon and Allied planners accepted that an advance of 500 miles without an effective line of communication was not feasible.⁴ Given this calculation, the British believed the only way that Burma could be retaken was by a campaign involving holding operations in Upper Burma, securing the Arakan for its airfields, and an assault

Anakim then she had every incentive not to do so. For Britain there were other, more prestigious and valuable targets than Rangoon to attack in southeast Asia, and if the Japanese held Burma in strength—as indeed they did—then there was every reason to bypass rather than to reconquer it. This was the gist of the Culverin alternative with landings in northern Sumatra and Malaya that were to end with the recapture of Singapore. But that idea, although sound, was never practical. The army in India, at least prior to February 1944, was of uncertain quality and could not be reinforced from Europe.⁵ Neither amphibious nor naval forces were available on the necessary scale until Germany and Italy were defeated, and crucially the Americans would not accept any strategy that left the Burmese situation unchanged.⁶ Moreover, India could not maintain either the amphibious shipping or naval forces required for the operation; also, India was fully committed to the needs of the Chinese airlift and support operations from Assam and Manipur into Upper Burma. By any standard, however unexacting, when it came to policy, Britain found itself snookered.

In the second phase of policymaking, after September 1943, the British high command was to find that its attitude toward America was thrown into confusion, and strategic deliberations were all but wrecked, by a quickening of the war that presented Britain with mutually exclusive options. Churchill feared the uses to which U.S. power could be put in the post-war world, and he clearly resented dependence on and loss of the power of decision to America. Much of his behavior at this time conformed to the de Gaulle syndrome, the penchant for increasingly divisive activity as the power of decision diminishes. Churchill believed that, because the Americans could defeat Japan and could do it without the support of an ally, and because American primacy in the Pacific left Britain without a role in the theater, Britain had to turn to southeast Asia to expunge the shame of defeat. Britain had to recover her colonies and not by depending upon American largesse. The British Chiefs of Staff, on the other hand, saw in the United States an ally to be supported rather than a power against which provisions had to be made. The chiefs believed that the priority had to be putting an end to the war against Japan quickly and that recovering

British 14th Army Offensive
(December 1944–May 1945)



Source: Charles F. Romanus and Riley Sunderland, *Time Runs Out in CBI. The China-Burma-India Theater. U.S. Army in World War II* (Washington: U.S. Army Center for Military History, 1985).

colonies after the hostilities was as good as fighting for them. They also believed that an effort in the main theater held the best chance for ending the war, that a naval commitment in the Pacific would be cheaper in manpower, and that an all-out effort in the Pacific would stand Britain well in securing post-war American aid.

The views of Churchill and the chiefs were mutually exclusive because there were no bases from which their forces could operate in both the Indian and Pacific Oceans.

But as both sides considered options they were compelled to admit the imperial connection. It was increasingly recognized that India was at the end of her tether and could not shoulder an increased commitment; that Canada had no interest in an imperial venture as she pursued her own bilateral arrangements in the Pacific with the United States; that New Zealand was unable to provide effective support for a British effort. In short, both Churchill and the chiefs knew that there was a reversal of the traditional relationship whereby Britain relied on imperial support: instead India and the dominions looked to Britain for forces to lighten their loads. But, while the high command was sympathetic to India,⁷ prepared to indulge Canada, and willing to support New Zealand, Australia was in a category by itself.

The View from Down Under

The exchanges between Britain and Australia were ambiguous, but the ambiguity was laced with suspicion and disdain. There can be little doubt that Churchill viewed all things Australian with disdain. This antipathy toward Australia extended to refusing to inform the dominion of the Sextant agreement, to enter into policy discussions with Australia, and even, at the dominion prime ministers' conference in May 1944, to pass relevant discussion papers to the Australians until it was too late for them to be read before the meetings. Fueling this animosity was a British Treasury that insisted that Australia pay through the nose for everything and denied terms that were available to Canada and New Zealand.

The Chiefs of Staff and Royal Navy were not beyond trying to treat Australia as a colony that would do what it was told. The most obvious example of this condescending attitude was the attempt to send a mission to Australia to report on that country's reception facilities without any reference to the Australian government, an effort that was vigorously resisted by a dominion which resented the slur on its civil service and the reports it had already forwarded to London. Moreover, the Royal Navy had little regard for the Royal Australian Navy which it regarded as crippled by the Australian Treasury and plagued by an appalling staff. Only the ordnance branch was regarded as competent, and the general view of Australia and its

naval administration on the part of Royal Navy liaison teams was somewhat jaundiced, amusingly so to anyone but an Australian.

In strategic policy, moreover, Anglo-Australian relations were somewhat schizophrenic. While Australia resented being excluded from policymaking and ensured MacArthur's South West Pacific Command against any attempted takeover by the British, some members of the Australian high command saw a British return to the Pacific as a counter to

the sheer scale of American air power in the Pacific meant that the RAF in effect was discounted

being discarded by America as the battle moved away from Australian shores.⁸ These Australians believed their country had carried the imperial banner in the Pacific since 1942

and wanted a British and imperial effort to compensate for Australia's progressive weakening as World War II entered its fifth year.

The British chiefs and even Churchill were aware of the immense effort that Australia had made and the manpower and financial problems which she faced in 1944.⁹ That year opened with the British staff planning to send six divisions, lift for three divisions, a fleet with fifteen carriers and eight battleships,¹⁰ and 140 RAF squadrons to the Pacific, some 675,000 military personnel plus labor and support workers pencilled in for movement to Australia. Inevitably, the British saw such forces as the means to take over South West Pacific Command, a view that revealed first a misunderstanding of MacArthur's position within the American high command and then a misunderstanding of the American willingness to discard this command with its problems in the final phase of the war. No less inevitably, but unfortunately, for much of 1944 London saw Australia as a land of plenty, which it simply was not. It was true that Australia was so chaotically organized that she built her first combat aircraft before her first motor car, but it was the shortages that finally so impressed London in the course of 1944.

Australia was, of course, hopelessly placed as a base for forces the British planned to send to the Pacific, and one notable exchange was over a statement that Britain could not supply 5,000 dockyard workers needed to service and maintain British ships sent to the Pacific: Australia replied that failing to send workers would have unfortunate

consequences for the warships concerned. As 1944 unfolded it became clear in London that if British forces were to proceed to Australia then everything—from building materials and prime movers to hospital equipment and workers of every description—would have to be sent to Australia, and such resources were not available. At the same time the Royal Navy calculated that shortages of air groups meant that no more than three fleet carriers could be maintained in the Pacific,¹¹ and it was forced to deal with the difficulties presented by the lack of an oceanic fleet train. But to pre-stock an Australian base in readiness for the arrival of the fleet and have an oceanic fleet train on hand, merchant vessels would have to be taken from service—for refitting and the run to Australia—when Britain could not meet minimum import requirements. This was also a time when the demands on the merchant fleet would increase with the invasion of Europe, and when it was realized for the first time that paradoxically demands on British shipping would increase still further with the surrender of Germany.¹² To compound matters, British plans in 1944 assumed that it would take between 11 and 18 months to prepare an Australian base; yet in the course of 1944 Britain was caught between a lengthening of the war with Germany into 1945 as plans to end the war with Japan were moved forward at least into 1946.

Thus the shortage of Australian resources was only one aspect of the problems that in 1944 resulted in a major change in British policy. In the course of that year the army commitment all but vanished: it appeared MacArthur would not accept Indian army divisions in the southwest Pacific and the British high command realized that post-war occupation duties in Europe would preclude any significant reinforcement of the Far East. The sheer scale of American air power in the Pacific meant that the RAF in effect was discounted from serious consideration. A fleet train was improvised but only at the cost of abandoning amphibious ambitions which was in part unavoidable: amphibious shipping was largely shore-to-shore rather than ship-to-shore in the Pacific. Postponing Overlord, failing to secure a working port until November, and lacking 125,000 sailors for a corps-sized lift

conspired to kill the amphibious option.¹³ During 1944, therefore, the navy changed from being the first of the services that were to arrive in the Far East to being the only one likely to arrive before the defeat of Japan was brought about, with all the political and psychological overtones that entailed. This fact, combined with the absence of a common basis for an Indian Ocean strategy and a Pacific strategy, explains why the struggle within the high command was so difficult, bitter, and protracted.¹⁴

In terms of unfolding events, the period between May 1942 and May 1943 was marked by a frantic build-up in northeast India and start of the airlift, acceptance of the Anakim plan by both the United States and China as a basis of strategic policy in February 1943, and the disaster of the first Arakan offensive. The latter is the dominant event and it is often argued that it was the

failure of first Arakan that pushed Britain into Culverin. This was partly true, but in reality the Culverin proposal was on the table in September 1943 prior to the first

Arakan offensive. It had taken shape and commanded considerable support well before disaster overwhelmed the 14th Indian Division in the Arakan. Culverin gained support on a number of counts: a realization that the Arakan offensive would fail; a desire to cut communications between Singapore and Rangoon; a belief that Culverin would involve fewer resources; and least credibly, an idea of the double envelopment of resources. The landings in Sumatra and Malaya were to be accompanied by landings on Timor.

Culverin and the Middle Strategy

With or without the Timor absurdity, the Culverin concept was total nonsense. If northern Sumatra had been occupied Britain would have had two open-ended commitments when she could not handle one. Securing northern Sumatra as a base for air operations made little sense if no heavy bombers were available. The plan could not be effected before the war in Europe ended and did nothing vis-à-vis Burma. Critically, the Culverin plan left no proposal for 1943-44 campaigning in Burma which was patently obvious between May 1943 (Trident) and August 1943

(Quadrant): in fact between the conferences London abandoned Culverin as impracticable. But the conferences were critical in formulating Allied policy for the war against Japan, and the British held a weak hand. They had no proposals to make and only traditional standbys to disguise their position: appearing to act (such as in creating South East Asia Command), observing the consent-and-evade principle, and putting on center stage a light-weight irrelevance from the royal family to distract attention.

The finesse failed. British histories point out that Americans were favorably impressed by Mountbatten and Wingate, but that did not stop the United States from getting a higher priority for the war against Japan. With regard to the Chindits the Americans argued that if the British did so much with so little what might they not achieve if they really tried, especially if a second Chindit operation in the 1943-44 campaigning season had U.S. air support. The British accepted the offer without realizing the consequences. From the time the offer was accepted America controlled the operational timetable and Britain could not avoid an Upper Burma commitment in 1943-44.

There was, however, a twist or more accurately three twists. At Quadrant the United States proposed and Britain accepted—under the consent-and-evade principle—that future Allied planning should be based on the premise of the defeat of Japan being achieved within twelve months of that of Germany, the latter set for October 1944. Thereafter Churchill offered a fleet for immediate service in the Pacific, trying to withdraw the offer when it became apparent that the fleet could not be sent. Moreover, as the British considered the implications of the Twelve-Month Plan it became clear that if the Americans were to arrive in the western Pacific in early 1945, then China ceased to have any relevance. If China could be discounted from serious consideration so too could Burma. Thus within three months of discarding Culverin as impracticable the high command rediscovered the operation as its only option in southeast Asia—not that America agreed. Even more strangely, as British and American plans considered the little known WXYZ Options, the U.S. Navy came to view that the

the Americans offered the British a real part in the Pacific war



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British inspection party visiting the Solomons.

Royal Navy was “considered necessary . . . to improve the prospects of destroying the Japanese fleet, of capturing the Mandates . . . and of taking the Marianas.” So it offered to support a British fleet with bases, aircraft, and common-user supplies and to maintain any British amphibious force sent to the Pacific as long as a carrier force was on station in the central Pacific by mid-1944. In effect, the Americans offered the British a real part in the Pacific war as part of a coordinated Allied strategy. Yet the British turned down or, more accurately, did not respond to the offer. America kept the offer open until withdrawing it on November 2, 1943, never to make it again. It would seem, however, that the Chiefs of Staff, for whom matters in the Pacific were very much small change at this hectic time but who seem to have belatedly realized what happened, set about trying to secure the role that they were offered. At Sextant they appear to have given an unofficial undertaking to the United States that the fleet would be sent to the Pacific.

The period January–August 1944 saw the British high command hopelessly divided on this and related issues. The chiefs sought the Upper Burma and Pacific commitments on the basis that one was unavoidable and the other desirable; Churchill sought an amphibious strategy in the Indian Ocean, specifically Culverin. By April, after four months of deadlock, there emerged the Middle Strategy, which would use western Australia as a base for an offensive into the Lesser Sundas and then against Singapore from the east or to

the western Pacific for a rendezvous with the Americans. To this writer’s knowledge only three histories or papers have ever given any consideration to the Middle Strategy, which has been portrayed as an attempt to split the difference between two views. It was no such thing. The Middle Strategy was a quite deliberate attempt by planners, specifically the Strategic Planning Section of the Joint Planning Staff (JPS), to break Churchill’s opposition to a Pacific strategy by trapping him into a commitment to send forces to Australia thereby killing the Indian Ocean option. The rationale was the forthcoming imperial conference and the need for a policy to set before the dominion prime ministers. Churchill and the chiefs provisionally accepted the Middle Strategy on this basis, and set about selling it to Australia and New Zealand even as the JPS suppressed reports confirming the Middle Strategy as a non-starter. With the Antipodes having endorsed the Middle Strategy, JPS then abandoned it demanding a Modified Middle Strategy that, based in eastern Australia, could in turn be dropped in favor of a full-fledged Pacific commitment. The result was perhaps predictable. Churchill violently repudiated the Middle and Modified Middle Strategies and swung back to Culverin, despite the fact it had been abandoned as impracticable for a second time in the interim. To boost his position Churchill recalled Mountbatten, but in a series of decisive meetings in August 1944 Mountbatten refused to back Culverin and said that the Burma commitment was unavoidable and that the fleet should go to the Pacific—exactly as the chiefs had demanded for seven months. There was, however, a catch. To clear Burma, Anakim was revived, and this was wholly unrealistic because it called for a landing at Rangoon with seven divisions which was as large as Normandy, with all that implied. Moreover, India could not despatch seven assault divisions, and if Mountbatten tried to counter this objection by suggesting that the assault divisions could be despatched directly from Liverpool, the idea of a Rangoon landing (Dracula) went against the basic premise of British planning that simultaneous naval and amphibious commitments could not be met, and most certainly not in different oceans.

The question is why the chiefs accepted this nonsense. The answer is obvious: with the Octagon conference one month off London had to have something and this plan provided a Pacific commitment. The real reason, however, became clear en route to Quebec for the conference when the Directors of Plans sent a memo to the Chiefs of Staff that indicated that while Dracula had been proposed to distract the Prime Minister from Istria and Vienna they had not anticipated that it would ever be authorized. Now that it had, how was it to be implemented? In fact the directors already had made certain arrangements.

A series of highly classified signals to Washington had instructed the Joint Staff Mission to explain Dracula to the Americans and to ask for air support and assault shipping but on no account to raise the issue of force requirements. Their intention was to secure an American endorsement of Dracula and ensure U.S. involvement in the operation and then, with the

commitment firm, to request troops. If America agreed Britain would be off the hook, and if they refused Dracula would duly fall by the wayside. In either case the British would be safe. It is clear that Dracula was never intended to be implemented.

Where the fleet would serve in the Pacific was the last aspect of policy to be decided. The chiefs wanted the fleet to operate in the central Pacific, but the Americans made it clear they wished to see the British fleet employed in the southwest Pacific. But the British would not be confined to what amounted to a side show. Thus when the Americans stated their position, the British had the advantage. As the minutes of meetings conducted en route to the Octagon conference record, once the American chiefs formally stated their wish, the British chiefs were prepared to pass the matter to Churchill to ensure that their views prevailed, but things never came to that. British policy was settled: a commitment to Upper Burma that no one

in the high command really wanted, a landing at Rangoon that was included in the plan because it would not be carried out, and a central Pacific commitment that was beyond Britain's means.

The postscript was full of irony. Between November 1944 and August 1945 Burma was reconquered by means of an overland advance from northeast India. A British carrier fleet served off Okinawa and the Japanese home islands with credit. Dracula was carried out. All those things that could not have been attempted were accomplished, but it was Dracula that provided final and appropriate comment on British policy, and for two reasons. The operation was executed not with seven divisions but with seven battalions, and it was directed not against the main Japanese base in Burma but a city abandoned by the enemy. Nothing better illustrated the chasm between intentions and capabilities, or between purpose and result, than Dracula. But perhaps more appropriate is the fact that the operation was the last British amphibious operation of World War II. And there can be little doubt that it was wholly right and fitting to carry out Dracula against Rangoon—a city whose name is an Anglicized corruption of the Burmese *Yan Gon* meaning “end of strife.”

JFQ



U.S. Navy (Wayne Miller)

Naval officers questioning Japanese prisoner of war.

NOTES

¹ The works include: Raymond Callahan, *Burma, 1942–1945* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1979); Grace Person Hayes, *The History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in World War II: The War Against Japan* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1982); D.M. Horner, *High Command: Australia and Allied Strategy, 1939–1945* (Sydney: Allen and Urwin, 1982); and Christopher Thorne, *Allies of a Kind: The United States, Britain, and the War Against Japan, 1941–1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979).

² American engineers confounded British calculations by pushing to Yunnan much faster than estimated, but given the quickened pace of U.S. advances across the Pacific to little avail—not that Chungking had any intention of exerting itself against the Japanese when the resumption of the civil war in China was at hand.

³ It should be noted that part of the problem was that these emerged in succession: there was never an occasion when all matters could be seen and settled, but policy took the form of a series of *encounter battles*. Undoubtedly, this type of Anglo-American difficulty was serious in that successive difficulties bred mutual exasperation.

⁴ In the author's view the argument that air supply could and did square the circle falls on two counts: that the advance of 1945 was primarily the result of Japanese resistance being previously broken and not in the course of the advance on Rangoon, and that the advance is notable for its avoidance of major engagements other than

at Mandalay and Meitkina. Air supply proved effective in the advance on Rangoon in large measure because the set-piece battle was fought and won around Kohima and Imphal in India, not within Burma.

⁵ While the 4th Indian Division was perhaps the best British empire unit of World War II, the effectiveness of Indian army units largely depended upon local, village, and personal loyalties. Dilution of these loyalties given the tenfold expansion of the army between 1939 and 1942, plus disastrous defeats in 1941 and 1942 that were continued with the first Arakan debacle, cast doubt on the Indian army which lasted until the Japanese were defeated in early 1944.

⁶ Preparing amphibious operations in the Indian Ocean could only proceed if specialist troops were diverted from northeast India, and the Americans were always wary of endorsing any amphibious proposal for fear that a closing-down of Upper Burma options in order to provide for an amphibious operation would be followed by the latter being abandoned at some stage with the result that no offensive operation would be staged in this theater.

⁷ The severe industrial and economic exhaustion of India by early 1944 was compounded by the Bengal famine which claimed about 1,500,000 lives (as opposed to *usual* annual loss of about 400,000) and disastrous floods in eastern India. To make matters worse, Australia suffered one of the worse droughts on record in 1943–44 and could not make good India's food shortages.

⁸ As for their American opposite numbers, most Australians admired the Navy and Army Air Force and came to hold a quiet regard for the Army and Marine Corps. But they had what can only be described as contempt and loathing for MacArthur, personally and professionally, that was exceeded only by their feelings for his staff.

⁹ By 1944 half of Australia's male population of 18 to 40 year-olds had volunteered and some 73 percent of all males over the age of 14 engaged directly in the war effort which exhausted the nation. Along with New Zealand, with more or less similar statistics, Australia made perhaps the greatest relative effort of the Allies in terms of manpower. Britain was only slightly behind her dominions, but involved a greater part of the female population than Australia and New Zealand. By 1944, however, and mainly due to faltering production, Australian forces were reduced as the demand in the southwest Pacific meant using three divisions to maintain one on the line.

¹⁰ Even including the Free French *Richelieu* in the planned British order of battle the totals of eight capital ships and fifteen carriers were never realistic though on September 2, 1945—as the British gathered forces in readiness for a now-canceled invasion of southern Kyushu—there were five fleet, four light fleet, and seven escort carriers on station. Ironically these plans were prepared in February 1944 just as the high command, in response to the Japanese fleet's move to Singapore as a result of American carrier raids in the western Pacific, was obliged to ask America for carrier support and to release *Richelieu* for service in the Indian Ocean. See the author's "Reinforcing the Eastern Fleet: 1944" in *Warship*, no. 39 (London: Conway Maritime Press, 1986), pp. 191–98.

¹¹ These calculations, based on U.S. Navy reporting for 1942 and 1943, were erroneous, in part because group losses were heavier—20 percent per month—than those in 1945. But air losses by British carriers did meet the calculations: one carrier realized them on one day alone.

¹² The extent of demands with the end of the European war were not realized until spring 1944 when the needs of the British zone of Germany, liberated countries, American forces moving to the homefront for re-deployment to the Pacific, and repatriation of British imperial forces, as well as the normal demands of British forces in northwest Europe, the Mediterranean, and Asia were realized.

¹³ Illustrative of the problems is that postponing the Normandy invasion from May to June 1944 threatened to end all amphibious options in the Bay of Bengal in January–April 1945, the only period outside the monsoon for such operations. Lead-times for European amphibious forces were long indeed, and Overlord's postponement, not to mention continuous supply over the beach due to the failure to secure working ports, would have been enough to end the Indian Ocean options had they not already been discounted.

¹⁴ At a meeting on February 21, 1944, the chiefs decided to resign *en masse* if Churchill insisted on a southeast Asia commitment for political reasons. In effect, they were claiming to be better judges of the national interest than the head of government—an interesting state of affairs given the long-standing tradition of civilian control of the military. Two lessons can be drawn from this little-known episode: the danger of seeing Churchill and the chiefs as one in the same, and more generally the confusion of political, military, and economic issues that blurs distinctions among these aspects of governance so as to be meaningless at this level of command.