

Abstract of thesis entitled

**“Hong Kong in the Sino-Japanese War:
The Logistics of Collective Security in South China, 1935-1941”**

Submitted by

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When the Japanese commenced military operations in China in July 1937 few thought the ensuing conflict would last until 1945 but one of the major reasons it did so was because Chinese military forces kept their ground based lines of communication open through southern China until the United States of America entered the war. Victory in the Sino-Japanese War was elusive but this military quagmire became useful to other nations such as Great Britain and the Soviet Union since a protracted war in China impeded the Japanese army's ability to threaten their interests elsewhere. At a time of great strain, however, the Chinese grew increasingly weary of war. To ensure continued Chinese resistance large quantities of military supplies were transported into the country and most of this was transhipped from Hong Kong along the newly constructed railway between

Kwangtung [Guangdong] and Hunan. The Hankow-Canton [Hankou-Guangzhou] railway became the most vital lifeline of China's military logistical network and this made Hong Kong the primary strategic objective in southern China for all sides. Because of this railway, Hong Kong and southern China must be considered as a single theatre of operations as the Japanese themselves demonstrated by combining operations in Hunan with the attack on Hong Kong. Once the war in Europe was underway the struggle for control of Hong Kong and southern China helped escalate a regional conflict into a war of global significance.

By examining the war in southern China within the context of Allied grand strategy the full geopolitical significance of the region has been reassessed. The war in China served as a useful vehicle for third powers to influence others. The British leveraged their support to China as a means of inducing Soviet cooperation against Hitler while Stalin acted in a similar manner to influence the Japanese. Following the German invasion of the USSR in June 1941, Allied cooperation in southern China grew stronger as the Red Army faced destruction in the West. The high-water mark of Allied collective security in Asia was reached with the Canadian reinforcement of Hong Kong. This gesture of Allied support to China was designed to boost Chinese morale and because of these factors Hong Kong became more than just an outpost or a British imperial backwater; by 1941 it was a globally strategic logistical base essential to Allied military victory. As a demonstration of Anglo-American commitment, however, it resulted in a disastrous military tragedy.

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
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at The University of Hong Kong.

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This thesis is dedicated to those who defended Hong Kong in December 1941.

Declaration

I declare that the thesis and the research work thereof represents my own work, except where due acknowledgement is made, and that it has not been previously included in a thesis, dissertation or report submitted to this University or to any other institution for a degree, diploma or other qualifications.

Signed _____

Franco David Macri

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Note on Romanization

Due to language constraints people and places have been identified by following the most commonly found spellings within the primary source material consulted. Where possible the more modern Chinese pinyin equivalent has been inserted following the first usage of the name in each chapter.

Chapter 1

Collective Security and the Global Significance of Hong Kong

The fall of Hong Kong on Christmas Day 1941 was a disastrous first step in Britain's retreat from Asia which soon thereafter was compounded by the loss of Malaya, Singapore, and Burma to Japanese military forces. Although the battle of Hong Kong at first appeared to herald Japanese victory, when combined with the attack on Pearl Harbor, one of the greatest strategic blunders of the war was committed as Japanese forces engaged an array of enemies possessing enormous potential power. Once this power was harnessed the destruction of Japan was assured, but nevertheless, the price paid by Britain during the opening stages of the conflict ensured that the country's ultimate victory in 1945 was a Pyrrhic one. The global significance of how the Allies compensated for their material shortcomings with collective action and entered into conflict with the Japanese in southern China and Hong Kong is the subject of this study.

Since the Second World War most of the English language material written on the war in southern China has centred on the battle of Hong Kong in December 1941, but this study is not merely another narrative of that event. The purpose here is to determine the larger strategic significance of southern China as well as Hong Kong and how this eventually affected the formulation and execution of Allied grand strategy. The battle of Hong Kong was primarily a regional military issue and will be examined in chapter nine to place it within the larger context of the war in China. The reinforcement of Hong Kong, however, was the most significant geopolitical manoeuvre of 1941 in China and was of much greater consequence than the battle itself as the deployment impacted both China and the

USSR. This has not yet been explained by previous historians. Hong Kong has been considered almost exclusively as a British imperial problem while its geopolitical role has been largely overlooked, and as a result, the colony has not yet been adequately positioned within the context of the Sino-Japanese War. The rise of Anglo-Japanese antagonism prior to December 1941 was partly the result of Britain's support for China from Hong Kong, combined with the corresponding escalating level of aggression across southern China on the part of the Japanese armed forces. This escalation of the Far Eastern crisis will be examined in detail. Significant questions persist concerning the events leading up to the battle of Hong Kong, and these require greater attention in order to gain a better understanding of how escalating geopolitical tensions in the region impacted the course of the Second World War as a whole.

Southern China and Hong Kong have been relegated to a position of low importance in the Sino-Japanese War as it has amongst factors considered in the origins of the Pacific War, and this is a significant weakness within the current historiography of the Far Eastern conflict. The Sino-Japanese War underwent a series of dangerous escalations across the southern portion of the country, as was seen with the invasions of Kwangtung [Guangdong], Hainan and Kwangsi [Guangxi], and the level of friction between the Japanese and third powers continuously rose as a result. Nevertheless, several reasons account for the lack of attention paid to southern China. Japanese military forces were not very numerous in the region compared with other areas, and this produced less combat south of the Yangtze River than was seen further north. Yunnan especially was far from Japanese reach and the province had to contend with Japanese airpower for the most part only after the invasion of southern Kwangsi late in 1939.

Kwangtung had been invaded a year before but due to the lack of troops the Japanese 21st Army did not venture very far from Canton [Guangzhou]. Hong Kong itself was also not attacked until December 1941. In Hunan, however, great efforts were made on several occasions by the Japanese 11th Army based at Hankow [Hankou – now part of Wuhan] to secure a military victory that could bring a final end to the war. To maintain resistance the defence of Hunan was essential for the Chinese central government headed by Generalissimo Chiang Kai Shek, but the battles for control of Changsha have likewise attracted little notice. What has yet to be considered is how all of these events were a direct result of the Japanese failure to blockade southern China.

Southern China was an important theatre of operations because it sustained Chinese resistance, and because of the existence of the railroad linking the strategic city of Changsha to both Hong Kong and Kweilin [Guilin], third power interest and influence within this region was strong. Because of the Hunan-Kwangtung railroad, Hong Kong and southern China must be viewed together as a single military zone and the primary reason behind the conflict's escalation in the south was due to the Japanese inability to stem the flow of military supplies entering the country along this line. This condition remained equally true even after the occupation of Canton. Failure to block the movement of war supplies in the Pearl River Delta caused the Japanese armed forces to attack or occupy other Chinese lines of communication such as existed in Kwangsi. Study of military logistics is therefore necessary to understand the war in China as the presence of transportation infrastructure was minimal, and the struggle for control of what existed brought the Japanese into conflict with other countries. The war in southern China was a war aimed at reducing China's logistical capacity as the

railroad became the country's vital line of supply to the outside world. Being the main point of entry for China's military supplies Hong Kong attracted considerable Japanese hostility and a condition of low intensity conflict also enveloped the British colony as a result. As the conflict spread across southern China, Hong Kong itself became a dangerous flashpoint that threatened to ignite an Anglo-Japanese war. Attention needs to be directed on wartime events in this region to show how these issues led to the start of the Pacific War. Defence of the south China front was of great strategic significance in keeping the Sino-Japanese War from ending and this was important for several other states aside from China and Japan.

The war years marked the period in which the geopolitical significance of Hong Kong and southern China was greatest. With overlapping interests in the Far East, both the British and the Soviets found common cause in supporting the Chinese central government under Generalissimo Chiang Kai Shek in order to neutralize a large segment of the Japanese army and thereby place a check against further aggressive expansion. Because of military limitations the British also sought to leverage their support of the war in China, which was sustained unbroken until the summer of 1940, as a means of inducing greater diplomatic and military cooperation from Soviet Premier Josef Stalin against Germany. Despite the failures of the League of Nations during preceding years, many in London within the House of Commons and the Foreign Office continued to place great faith in the efficacy of collective security as a doctrinal solution towards stemming the aggression of dictatorship regimes, and China appeared to be a region where such a policy could be validated with potential benefits extending towards the establishment of a European security arrangement aimed against

German Chancellor Adolf Hitler. Although the British had hoped to establish a collective security arrangement in China, what they ended up with was a dangerous proxy war against Japan.

China, however, was a weak reed and the country was weary of war. No other theatre of war, such as the Balkans for example, was as politicized as China, and the ever-present possibility of peace emerging between the Chinese and the Japanese was an issue of concern amongst third powers. To prevent such a scenario from developing material support was regularly extended to Chungking [Chongqing]. Over time, demonstrations of Anglo-American commitment had to be augmented in scale in order to strengthen the position of Chiang against those within the government who wished to arrange peace with the Japanese. Consequently, the deployment of Canadian troops to Hong Kong in the fall of 1941 became the most significant symbol of Western support to China prior to the outbreak of the Pacific War. The reinforcement of the garrison was undertaken by Ottawa as a diplomatic gesture aimed at bolstering Chinese morale but this was done primarily as a means of providing indirect support to the Soviet Far Eastern flank at a time when the Red Army was facing destruction in the West.

Collective security served as a doctrinal foundation for the foreign and military policies of several Western countries but its basic tenets and pitfalls are described here to provide some clarification with respect to its use in this study. Collective security was often described by its proponents as a defensive arrangement adopted by countries to cooperate in military affairs somewhat like an alliance but theoretically as equal partners.¹ A problem with this traditional

¹ John Foster Dulles, *War or Peace* (London: George G. Harrap, 1950), pp. 98-99, 119. Eleanor Rathbone, *War can be Averted: The Achievability of Collective Security* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1938), pp. 13-15, 88-89, and Arthur Salter, *Security: Can we Retrieve it?* (London: MacMillan, 1939), pp. 99-100, 164-166.

view was that the potential destabilizing impact of intervention in regional crises was frequently underestimated, and what was often left unconsidered was the possibility that intervention could be construed by others as an act of aggression itself. Moreover, great powers were drawn into conflict over relatively minor issues that they would otherwise have avoided or minimized, or conversely, weaker states continued to serve as great power clients but only under the illusion of maintaining sovereignty.² Predictably, some countries were more equal than others during the establishment of such security arrangements and by mid 1941 in China, the United States had already displaced Great Britain as the most influential foreign power. Collective security has also usually been identified as an arrangement between democratically aligned states working in full cooperation but these principles were undermined during the Second World War by Sino-British-Soviet mistrust, by official Soviet repression, and by Stalin's lack of reciprocity.³ Ideological factors such as an antipathy towards nationalistic governments or economic considerations such as the desire by Western officials to expand and dominate neo-liberal trading blocs also impeded cooperation.

In this study collective security is viewed as a policy that contributed to the escalation of the global crisis towards war. Moral and ideological considerations encouraged many British officials to act as global policemen and challenge an excessive number of potential enemies from a position of military weakness in the hope of rallying larger powers against Germany. This was eventually accomplished but only at an unsustainable cost. Collective security failed to deter the Axis and it failed to promote global security, but nevertheless, many officials in London maintained their faith in its validity despite its many inherent dangers.

² Correlli Barnett, *The Collapse of British Power* (London: Eyre Methune, 1972), pp 354-356.

³ Rathbone, *War can be Averted*, pp. 90-91, 174-178.

The reinforcement of Hong Kong demonstrated how subordinate members in such arrangements could have a significant impact on larger events but they did so in the interests of others. The decision to augment the Hong Kong garrison was undertaken by Ottawa in order to maintain Chinese resistance in the Sino-Japanese War at a crucial period during the battle for Moscow. The deployment also kept Japanese attention fixed on China and southern operations thereby allowing Stalin to transfer a sizeable percentage of Soviet Far Eastern forces to the West. Until now it has been widely assumed that Canada was simply a loyal British Dominion following instructions issued from London but this is a far from accurate view. Although Canadian military policy remained wedded to that of Great Britain due to organizational and logistical considerations, after the fall of France Canadian foreign policy was shifted into line with that of America. This has been demonstrated by several Canadian historians but the larger ramifications of such a transformation on Allied Far Eastern strategy still remains to be explained.⁴ Canada's involvement in China did little to serve the interests of Canadians, but nevertheless, to determine the importance of Hong Kong on Allied strategy Canada's geopolitical role in the region must be clearly understood – Canada's China policy originated within the White House. Instead of demilitarization the decision had been made in London previously to defend Hong Kong against Japanese attack even though the odds of success in battle were known to be remote at best. Hong Kong was a military liability yet men were sacrificed ostensibly to maintain Britain's position in the Far East. That the garrison was reinforced with Canadian infantry instead of British indicates,

⁴ Jack Granatstein, *How Britain's Weakness Forced Canada into the Arms of the United States* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), and Galen Roger Perras, *Franklin Roosevelt and the Origins of the Canadian-American Security Alliance, 1933-1945: Necessary, but Not Necessary Enough* (Westport: Praeger, 1998).

however, that there were several factors behind the decision of a non-military nature, but since the war geopolitical reasons have been officially clouded from view. Documents uncovered during the research for this study have shown that American influence was behind Canada's decision to involve itself in China and Hong Kong, and these will be dealt with in detail.

The battle of Hong Kong also serves to remind us that the cost in terms of lives made collective security in Asia an expensive proposition, especially to weaker powers such as Canada. Furthermore, adherence to such a policy undermined the democratic principles on which Western civilization was based. Dangerous pitfalls await democratic societies that push an aggressive foreign policy from a position of military weakness and by adopting such a course in Europe and the Far East Allied casualties were bound to have been high and easy victories few once the fighting began. With the onset of the Pacific War Canada paid part of the bill in China because of Anglo-American diplomatic recklessness in challenging numerous enemies at once. A significant problem that became evident at Hong Kong, and was hoped to be minimized in the public eye, was the negligence of Western governments during the pre-war years in allowing military forces to degrade which resulted in the poor combat performance of armies from the democratic states during the early years of the war. Western armies only became more effective over time after the acquisition of hard-won battle experience and the development of an effective combined arms warfare doctrine that was only fully implemented by 1943. This augmentation of military capabilities only came to pass, however, after initial early reverses such as occurred at Hong Kong were absorbed. Until then, official attempts to downplay or conceal military deficiencies, as was seen during the Canadian Royal

Commission of Inquiry headed by Sir Lyman Duff, consequently helped to undermine governmental credibility and legitimacy. Thus, political and diplomatic problems concerning the battle of Hong Kong have been considered jointly with military affairs in this study, so that a more accurate measure of the cost of applying collective security in the Far East can be assessed both in terms of the lives lost and in the damage inflicted upon the democratic process in the West.

Our understanding of the significance of Hong Kong and southern China during the war has remained limited for a variety of reasons. Most historians have looked at the wartime history of Hong Kong largely from a military perspective and less attention has been devoted to questions of foreign policy. Much research has been based upon Cabinet or military documents, primarily from the War Office and the Admiralty. This helps us understand Hong Kong's role as an element of the Singapore Strategy and why the War Office was eager to limit British military commitments to the Far East, but it fails to explain fully why Hong Kong was reinforced in the fall of 1941. Researchers have also often overlooked the role of both the Soviet Union and Canada in China. The maintenance of Soviet security was a primary objective of many of the powers involved in the region but this aspect of the war has not been thoroughly examined. Soviet influence in southern Chinese military operations varied in strength as the war progressed, but direct Anglo-Soviet cooperation was evident. Another problem is the widespread perception that Asian language proficiency is a vital necessity in studying the Sino-Japanese War. Although language skills are certainly an asset, the assumption that these are prerequisites has likely impeded potential research and consequently, a full exploration of English language source

material still remains incomplete. There are great quantities of documents available from the national archives of Canada for example, that have not yet been sufficiently examined, although in fairness many important documents in both Britain and America have remained officially classified as secret for over fifty years by both governments.

English language source materials are used exclusively here due to language constraints, and Chinese names are written as they commonly appeared in official documents relating to Hong Kong and Kwangtung at the time, but this does not present great difficulties. How the war was viewed and manipulated by third powers is of the greatest relevance to this study as opposed to the actions of the Chinese central government. Ultimately, this is less a history of China than it is a history of the Second World War. The question of whether or not the Chinese would have arranged peace in the fall of 1941, for example, is of less importance to the Allied decision to reinforce Hong Kong than was the willingness of President Franklin Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston Churchill to risk this eventuality. To answer the question of why Hong Kong was reinforced with Canadian infantry and why this was significant, Anglo-American Far Eastern policy must be better understood and this is accomplished with English language documents, the most important of which for this issue are found in Ottawa.

Countless books have been written about the war in the Pacific, but less is available on the Sino-Japanese War. Some early narratives have been provided by authors such as Dick Wilson and Roy Stanley, and they provide a useful foundation about the most significant military events of the war.⁵ Soo too does Martin Brice, from a British naval perspective, but books such as these are

⁵ Roy Stanley, *Prelude to Pearl Harbor* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1982); and Dick Wilson, *When Tigers Fight: The Story of the Sino-Japanese War, 1937-1945* (New York: Viking Press, 1982).

focused primarily on events that occurred solely within China.⁶ There are several insightful sources that deal with British and United States foreign affairs during the conflict and how the Sino-Japanese War led to the outbreak of the Pacific War, two of which were written by Peter Lowe and Jonathan Utley, but essential documents remained unavailable at the time many of these books were published and it was not therefore possible to establish a full picture of Anglo-American policy.⁷ Books on military grand strategy have been helpful in explaining how Great Britain and the United States both reacted to the threat posed by Japan but these do not adequately explain the geopolitical issues that were behind the formulation of foreign policy. Two examples of military analyses used in this study include books written by Brian Farrell and Henry Gole but the war in China does not feature prominently in most of the literature pertaining to grand strategy.⁸

The battle of Hong Kong has attracted more attention, but thus far very few authors have attempted to include the British colony as an integral component of the Chinese war effort. Many popular histories of the battle of Hong Kong have been written and these tend to focus on the prisoner of war experience while others such as those written by Tim Carew, for example, have provided sensationalist accounts of battlefield events.⁹ More recent narratives tend to be better researched such as the second book on the subject written by Oliver Lindsay.¹⁰ Two of the best operational analyses are found in the scholarly works

⁶ Martin Brice, *The Royal Navy and the Sino-Japanese War* (London: Ian Hallan, 1973).

⁷ Peter Lowe, *Great Britain and the Origins of the Pacific War: A Study of British Policy in East Asia, 1937-1941* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), and Jonathan Utley, *Going to War with Japan, 1937-1941* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1985).

⁸ Brian Farrell, *The Basis and Making of British Grand Strategy: Was There a Plan?* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1998), and Henry Gole, *The Road to Rainbow: Army Planning for Global War, 1934-1940* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2003).

⁹ Tim Carew, *Fall of Hong Kong* (London: Pan Books, 1963).

¹⁰ Oliver Lindsay, *The Battle for Hong Kong, 1941-1945: Hostage to Fortune* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005).

of George Endacott and Terry Copp.¹¹ Some autobiographies provide detailed firsthand accounts of events but these are naturally limited in scope by the author's field of view on the ground. One good example portraying the sharp end of battle is George MacDonell's account of his service as a company sergeant major in the Royal Rifles of Canada.¹² Histories written by veterans such as MacDonell can often provide helpful insights into battlefield conditions but larger geopolitical questions related to their experience are often insufficiently addressed. Reference works by authors such as Tony Banham are also similarly useful in providing additional details, but information on the higher direction of the war and the formation of policy are usually found elsewhere.¹³

Several categories of secondary source material have provided insight into some of the important geopolitical considerations that affected the war in China and Hong Kong in particular. Yu Maochun and Hans Van de Ven have both added valuable contributions to the literature on the Sino-Japanese War by detailing the efforts of the Kuomintang and central government forces in fighting the war as an Allied partner.¹⁴ Their work has provided much needed balance to a subject that has often been politically skewed against the Chinese central government. Despite their efforts, however, important battles in the south, such as those that occurred within Hunan during 1939 and 1941, battles that were connected to events at Hong Kong, still require attention. Some eyewitness material written by Edward Hume and Robert Payne partially helps explain the

¹¹ Terry Copp, 'The Defence of Hong Kong, December 1941', *Canadian Military History*, 10 (4) 2001: 5-20. George Endacott, *Hong Kong Eclipse* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978).

¹² George MacDonell, *One Soldier's Story 1939-1945: From the fall of Hong Kong to the Defeat of Japan* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2002).

¹³ Tony Banham, *Not the Slightest Chance: The Defence of Hong Kong, 1941* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2003).

¹⁴ Hans Van de Ven, *War and Nationalism in China, 1925-1945* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), and Yu Maochun, *The Dragon's War: Allied Operations and the Fate of China, 1937-1947* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2006)

war in Hunan, but primary sources such as US and British military intelligence reports remain essential in addressing this topic.¹⁵ Somewhat more obscure is research found within doctoral dissertations written by Catherine Baxter, William Grieve and Kim Nossal; these to varying degrees have dealt with the earliest forms of British, American and Canadian intervention in China respectively.¹⁶

A few historians have explored the regional wartime importance of Hong Kong as it fits within southern China. Chan Lau Kit Ching has partially dealt with the military logistical significance of Hong Kong and this has served as a starting point for research that follows in this study.¹⁷ Christopher Bell and Kent Fedorowich have also illustrated how British actions at Hong Kong were motivated towards supporting higher geopolitical objectives vis-à-vis the United States and China respectively, and these too helped construct a foundation to build upon. Where this study continues, however, is to show how Western support for China from Hong Kong was an element of Allied grand strategy that had a significant impact on the war in the USSR.¹⁸

The Second World War in southern China and Hong Kong cannot be adequately understood without consideration of Anglo-Sino-Soviet relations, but in conducting their research most authors have relied largely upon military records or upon files from the Colonial Office in CO 129. These documents are

¹⁵ Edward Hume, *Dauntless Adventurer: the Story of Dr. Winston Pettus* (New Haven: Yale-in-China Association, 1952), and Robert Payne, *Chinese Diaries, 1941-1946* (New York: Weybright and Talley, 1970).

¹⁶ Catherine Baxter, ‘Britain and the War in China, 1937-1945’ (University of Wales, unpublished PhD Dissertation, 1993). See also William Grieve, ‘Belated Endeavor: The American Military Mission to China (AMMISCA) 1941-1942’ (University of Illinois, unpublished PhD Dissertation, 1979), and Kim Richard Nossal, ‘Strange Bedfellows: Canada and China in War and Revolution, 1942-1947’ (University of Toronto, unpublished PhD Dissertation, 1977).

¹⁷ Chan Lau Kit Ching, *China, Britain and Hong Kong, 1895-1945* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1990). See also Antony Best, *British Intelligence and the Japanese Challenge in Asia, 1914-1941* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), p. 140.

¹⁸ Christopher Bell in, ‘“Our Most Exposed Outpost”: Hong Kong and British Far Eastern Strategy, 1921-1941’, *The Journal of Military History*, 60(1) 1996: 61-88, and Kent Fedorowich, ‘“Cocked Hats and Swords and Small, Little Garrisons”: Britain, Canada and the Fall of Hong Kong, 1941’, *Modern Asian Studies*, 37(1) 2003: 111-157.

necessary to help shape our understanding of British military and Far Eastern policies but for greater international scope other sources are required. Fedorowich has therefore correctly emphasized the need to examine documents from the British Foreign Office in order to gain a better understanding of the global significance of wartime Hong Kong.¹⁹ Accordingly, in addition to archival military correspondence pertaining to China, this examination of the Far Eastern conflict is based heavily upon diplomatic records found within FO 371 at the British National Archives. These underutilized sources are essential to understanding how Hong Kong and the war in China were important in British attempts to influence Soviet foreign policy. Many important files from this group have also become more widely accessible after being released on microfilm in 2001. Another reason why the history of Hong Kong and south China needs to include both diplomatic and military perspectives is because of the divergent objectives that existed between the Foreign Office and the British military services. Until September 1939 the War Office and the Cabinet were still determined to keep British commitments to China at a minimum. In general, the Foreign Office intermittently viewed the Soviet Union as a potential ally while the military services did not. The lack of uniformity in policies did little to ease tensions in the Far East.

United States military and naval intelligence files relating to China found in RG 165 and RG 38 respectively have also required additional attention, and together with British Foreign Office documents these have helped position Hong Kong as an essential supply base within the Sino-Japanese War. Intelligence reports of the Military Intelligence Division in RG 165 have also been helpful in

¹⁹ Fedorowich, ‘Cocked Hats and Swords and Small, Little Garrisons’, p. 116.

shedding light on the course and impact of the battles that occurred at Changsha in 1939 and 1941. As with the Foreign Office documents many of the American reports are available in microfilm format. A body of records found to be surprisingly revealing was also located within RG 84. These are US Army documents generally related to administrative matters of military attaches but within these records, reports were found that identified high level US involvement in Hong Kong during 1941 that included the participation of President Roosevelt's son.

The most underutilized repository of material, however, has been the National Archives of Canada in Ottawa. Some correspondence from the Canadian Department of National Defence in RG 24 and the Department of External Affairs in RG 25 have remained classified as secret since the war, but many of these files have been recently released due to requests made while conducting research for this study. Unfortunately, a considerable volume of army documents were poorly reproduced into microfilm and the originals have been destroyed, but files originating with External Affairs also contain many duplicate copies of important army correspondence and reports thereby alleviating the problem to a small degree. Online diaries of Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King have also proven to be quite useful. When combined, the most important of these documents have identified the reinforcement of Hong Kong by Canadian soldiers as an element of Allied efforts to provide indirect support for the Soviet Far East. It was because of these sources and those of the Foreign Office that American influence has also become evident in the deployment of Canadian troops to Hong Kong. Without such influences they would likely not have been sent. The United Church of Canada archive in Toronto is another organization holding useful

documents related to the war in China. Correspondence between the church and missionaries working in Kwangtung has been most helpful in illustrating the scale of military operations in the province as well as the impact of the war on society.

The enormous amount of primary source material used in this study has required the development of a data management system that was created at the beginning of this project. This database (Microsoft Access) contains over 16,000 notations with reference to almost 4,000 archival documents, over 1,300 individuals, and approximately 250 secondary sources. Although there were initial delays associated with building a database, and its creation was the most difficult stage, the effort proved to be a most worthwhile endeavour. The benefit of retrieving information using a variety or combinations of parameters made the writing process much more efficient as it transformed an unwieldy mass of material into an easily accessible archive. By referencing over forty-five gigabytes of digitized material, documents from several repositories relating to specific topics, dates, persons or places could be quickly linked or compared and evidence was rapidly verified. The use of such a tool has prevented crucially important details from being lost or overlooked, and without it, many assertions would not have been as well developed as they were. A database is not a substitute for accumulated understanding and the possibility exists that researchers utilizing one may still be swamped with information, but nevertheless, with practice and prudence this kind of software can be of considerable assistance to historians.

Before proceeding forward it is useful to note at this point that the material presented here has been structured chronologically. Chapters two and three lay the foundation of the thesis by illustrating how the strategic value of southern

China rose substantially following the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War. This was a result of the completion of the Hunan-Kwangtung railroad in 1936. Chapters four to six detail the Japanese response to Great Britain's support for China from Hong Kong and how the war escalated by spreading across Kwangtung, Hainan, Hunan and Kwangsi. The development of low intensity conflict at Hong Kong is also thoroughly described. Chapter seven is largely concerned with the divergence in British and Soviet foreign policies and objectives in China that developed in the wake of the Nazi-Soviet Pact, and how this almost brought the war in China to a close. It is in chapters eight and nine, however, where the main weight of the argument is found. These chapters deal with the geopolitical significance of Hong Kong and southern China following the German invasion of the Soviet Union. The reinforcement of Hong Kong is addressed in chapter eight while the crescendo of violence in southern China during the battles at Changsha and Hong Kong is examined in chapter nine. These final sections also emphasize how the region was treated as a fully integrated theatre of war.

This study was conducted to form a clearer picture of the global significance of Hong Kong and southern China as a single region affecting Allied grand strategy. In doing so, Hong Kong can now be seen as a vital component sustaining Chinese resistance against Japan when the Soviet Union was facing defeat in the West. But before the arguments and evidence of this study are unfolded a final comment should be made to clarify one of the underlying themes. In examining British and American objectives and policies, and in uncovering how Hong Kong became significant in the provision of indirect support for the Soviet Union, difficult questions are raised in connection to Anglo-American war

aims. The garrison at Hong Kong was destroyed in providing aid to Premier Josef Stalin but the USSR had effectively been an ally of Nazi Germany until just a few months before the deployment. The situation that developed at Hong Kong during the latter half of 1941 indicates that Western governments were willing to sacrifice their own forces to aid a totalitarian dictatorship that operated using methods on par with their enemies. This brings the necessity of the war into question. War aims are not the focus of this study but as Hong Kong was reinforced under these circumstances and those making the decision knew well that the mission had virtually no chance of success, the value of such an enterprise then becomes an issue of debate. This is especially so when the truth behind the reinforcement and the battle was kept from public scrutiny by their governments. It is a contention of this study that although the Western allies likely helped prevent an end of Chinese and Soviet resistance in 1941 by maintaining the transhipment of military supplies into China from Hong Kong, Allied strategy failed to provide long term global security and the decision to reinforce the colony was an unnecessary, ignoble event; the ends did not justify the means.

It is hoped that the evidence presented in this examination will provide clarity to an important element of the Second World War that has thus far received insufficient attention. From 1937 to 1941 Hong Kong was effectively integrated with southern China into a single theatre of operations as the British facilitated the transhipment of military supplies into the country in an effort to stem further Japanese aggression. Instead of deterrence, the opposite effect was produced. During the Sino-Japanese conflict Hong Kong contributed greatly to the transformation of southern China into a zone of escalating violence that helped produce the Pacific War. In the process several third powers found this region to

be a useful arena in which to influence other international crises. As the doctrine of collective security was applied in southern China by Whitehall it was hoped to establish a similar arrangement with Stalin against Hitler. Under a continuous flow of military supplies into China the geopolitical significance of Hong Kong thus steadily grew until reaching its apogee with the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941. Ultimately, when these issues led to the Japanese offensive in southern China during December 1941, against both Changsha and Hong Kong, Japanese defeat in Hunan only stiffened Chinese resolve and prevented a termination of the war. This made China a continuing element of the Pacific War.

With this expansion of the war against Britain and America, Hong Kong remained an important Allied strategic objective and research conducted for this study should also serve as a useful basis for further examination of the military significance of southern China from the years 1942 to 1945. Although occupied by the end of December 1941, Hong Kong remained militarily important because if recaptured, its port capacity would have enabled a re-forging of the Chinese army into a much stronger force. The implications of such a development in Tokyo were clear, whereas the potential post-war impact on the USSR remains more obscure, but as events transpired the Japanese surrender in August 1945 made a planned Allied assault on the British colony unnecessary. Nevertheless, until the summer of 1945 the air war over southern China and the South China Sea was a most damaging campaign against both Japanese airpower and shipping that likely helped shorten the duration of the conflict. These issues also deserve further examination as they indicate that the strategic value of Hong Kong was greater during the Pacific War than is currently accepted. In light of the evidence

that is presented in this study, it is hoped that the reinforcement of Hong Kong in the fall of 1941 will continue to be a subject of further investigation by others.

Chapter 2

Clearing the Decks: Preparing for War in South China,

1935 to July 1937

Chinese resistance during the Sino-Japanese War (1937-41) was surprising to many Far Eastern observers but was encouraged by third powers with the provision of military equipment and training. By supplying the Chinese army with large quantities of weapons during the conflict, the USSR used the Chinese to fight a proxy war against the Japanese. Similarly, but less aggressively, Great Britain followed suit by allowing the use of Hong Kong as a transhipment point for munitions arriving from abroad. Hong Kong thus became a militarily strategic centre in East Asia in the war against Japan. This situation was a product, in part, of the pre-war Chinese consolidation of power into the hands of the Chinese central government under Generalissimo Chiang Kai Shek, as well as a divergence of British Far Eastern strategic goals between the Foreign Office and the military. In preparation for war the Chinese central government improved its logistical network in southern China, and the region became a bastion of resistance in order to maintain the movement of war supplies northward in 1937.

In 1936 the Chinese greatly enhanced their military capabilities by completing major infrastructure improvements such as the Hankow-Canton Railway, which served as the only all rail link between central and south China. The completion of this railway also increased the Chinese central government's authority over Kwangtung to a degree which allowed Chiang Kai Shek to control military operations within the province, and fight the war in an area of British economic and military interest. This was a similar strategy as he employed at Shanghai in

1937. For their part, the British Foreign Office encouraged Chinese resistance by allowing Hong Kong to be used as the primary Chinese military supply source once the war began. Prior to the outbreak of war, however, diplomatic and economic steps were taken as early as 1935-36 to stiffen Chinese resolve in order to challenge Japanese expansion in North China, and in the process, British foreign policy began to exceed the level of support which could be provided by British military forces. The British began to adopt a confrontational diplomatic posture from a position of military weakness, and in turn this eventually brought a Japanese military attack upon Hong Kong in 1941. Although Japanese aggression had the greatest impact on upsetting the established order in Asia, British and Chinese geopolitical manoeuvring also contributed to the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War, as well as its subsequent escalation into a war of global consequence.

The Canvas of War: Geography and Politics in South China

One of the most important ways in which the Chinese government prepared for war was by improving their transportation networks.¹ In 1934 the total length of rail lines in China amounted to 18,000 kilometres, two thirds of which were national railways; 2,400 km were private railways and 3,300 km were foreign owned. Two years later hard surfaced highways totalled 43,521 kilometres in length and there was 65,979 kilometres of dirt roads.² Most of this was to fall under Japanese control soon after the start of the war but the establishment of the Hankow-Canton railway in 1936 was a signal event which gave the Chinese their

¹ The National Archives (UK) [hereafter TNA], FO 371/22150 E 724 (1/12h/1938), *Foreign Office General Correspondence -- Political, 1938-1966*; Report by Commercial Counselor A.H. George, 7 September 1938.

² Hu Pu Yu, *A Brief History of the Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945)* (Taipei: Chung Wu Publishing Co., 1974), pp. 42, 45.

only all-rail link to the sea through the south. For the first time, central and north China were now directly linked by a rapid transportation system to south China's most important commercial region at Canton and the British colony of Hong Kong.³ It was a most impressive engineering feat and it proved to be commercially successful, partly by offering travellers some remarkable scenery cutting through difficult mountainous terrain. The American missionary R.D. Rees described in early January 1937 how, 'the journey is a most picturesque one, especially on the new section over the border between the two provinces. The line runs for hours up a deep gorge, the track being cut out of the side of the gorge and the river running down below.'⁴ A trip from Changsha to Canton took approximately thirty-three hours and passenger trains southward ran twice a week on Tuesday and Friday nights at 2300 hours.⁵ The primary significance of the Canton-Hankow Railway, however, was that it was to become the core military lifeline of the south China front.

Southern geographic features presented many construction challenges and this explains why so few road and rail systems had previously been built in this region. The two great arterial lines in China that served as principal routes of commerce were the West and Yangtze rivers terminating in the deltas near Canton and Shanghai respectively. Between these areas lay a distinct region dominated by a series of southwest to northeast ridges culminating westward in a high axial range. The mountainous area north of the West River forms the watershed for both the West and Yangtze Rivers. Spurs from the ridges near the

³ The National Archives of Canada [hereafter NAC], RG 25, Volume 8517, File 6605-40; Foreign Office. Biography of Pai Ch'ung-shi, 16 April 1943.

⁴ United Church of Canada Archives, Toronto (Canada) [hereafter UCC], Accession 83.046C, Box 3, File 53, U.C.C. Board of Overseas Missions, South China [hereafter BOMSC]; Letter by R.D. Rees, 29 January 1937.

⁵ *Ibid.*

coast run towards the sea, with low areas appearing at various river mouths such as at Swatow [Shantou], Amoy [Xiamen], Foochow [Fuzhou] and Wenchow [Wenzhou]. The coastal provinces are thus physically isolated on the landward side by sharply mountainous and forbidding terrain. These areas of China were largely undeveloped, with little or no lines of communication existing between them. People in areas separated by relatively few miles spoke dialects so different that mutual understanding was sometimes made difficult or impossible.⁶

Because the mountainous terrain presented serious transportation problems it also proved to be a formidable military barrier resulting in political divisions between the Central Government and the provinces of Kwangtung and Kwangsi [Guangxi].⁷ Ralph E. Collins, first secretary of the Canadian Embassy to Chungking described the situation in 1944:

Despite the fact that one province speaks Cantonese and the other a dialect of mandarin, geographical factors have imposed a practical unity upon Kwangsi and Kwangtung that was long ago recognized for administrative purposes in the Imperial Viceroyalty of Liang Kwang.

This unity is largely a result of the Nanling Mountains forming the watershed between the Yangtze provinces and the South, and of the transportation facilities afforded by the West River, which has made economic cooperation almost axiomatic.

The net result has been that these two provinces have been intimately associated in the role which they have played as the main base of the “official opposition” to Nanking since the early days of Chiang Kai-shek’s national regime. With regard to internal administration and provincial aims, each has gone its own, individualistic way. But in terms of the broader political scene, they must be considered together.⁸

The completion of the Hankow to Canton railway greatly improved China’s physical infrastructure and in time it proved invaluable to the Chinese army’s

⁶ National Archives and Records Administration (USA) [hereafter NARA], RG 165, Entry 421, Box 407, File China Campaign Plan, OPD; Operational Planning Division, Combined Staff Planners, A Plan of Campaign Within China, C.P.S. #107 D, 24 April 1944, p. 74.

⁷ David Bonavia, *China's Warlords* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 119, 125.

⁸ NAC, RG 25, Volume 3277, File 6669-G-40 – Kwangsi; Memorandum, ‘Liang Kwang’ by First Secretary Ralph E. Collins, 17 May 1944.

logistical network, but it was first viewed as a political and economic threat to the independence of the Kwangtung General Chen Chi Tang as well as the Kwangsi generals, Li Tsung Ren [Li Zongren], and his Muslim second-in-command, General Pai Chung Hsi [Bai Zhongxi]. The Kwangsi government was considerably more efficient, responsible and popular with the people than the central government of Chiang Kai Shek and this helped fuel a strong spirit of political independence across the region.⁹ These southern Chinese leaders are often described as the ‘Kwangsi Clique’.

Later during the war a message sent by Mr. Weightman of the Indian government to the British embassy in Chungking helps to illustrate how Chinese political factions such as the Kwangsi Clique made centralized political control and unified military resistance against Japan difficult to achieve. Political and military divisions between the central government and the Cantonese would also eventually have a significant impact on the security of Hong Kong. According to Mr. Weightman:

A Clique in China is unlike a Western party; it is more fluid and has less organisation, is little concerned with ideologies and resembles most nearly the military factions of Japan. It hinges on personalities rather than on principles; indeed, politics in China, more perhaps than in any other modern country, are governed by personal relationships, the principal cement in an otherwise almost chaotic situation being the quasi-feudal loyalty binding followers to their chief. The power of the cliques is derived variously from the possession of solid support such as given by an army or party machine, or from the personal prestige of their members. No clique can hope to secure unlimited power. Its aim rather is to secure control of a part of the governmental machine--of an army here, or a ministry there. And the warfare of the cliques is tempered by a survival of the old Chinese tradition of compromise, of never pressing too far, of being willing to share power, of shrinking from the arbitrary, of sparing the ‘face’ of the opponent--a tradition which in some ways compensates the notable absence from the Chinese polity of the rule of law. Acts of violence and

⁹ Eugene W. Levich, *The Kwangsi Way in Kuomintang China, 1931-1939* (London; East Gate, 1993), pp. 164, 255.

unbridled aggression do, it is true, take place in this warfare, and send a shock through all the political organism, but they do not occur very frequently, and when they do they excite surprise that, since violence when it is practised is so successful, it is not used more often.¹⁰

Although the Chinese government was authoritarian, it was not generally considered to pose an ideological threat to regional leaders because power was somewhat diffused throughout the ruling upper class. Weightman added:

A peculiarity of the struggle of the cliques is that it is conducted in a kind of half light. The foreign observer never knows what is really happening. Every now and then the personal stock of some leading figure rises or falls sharply; there is a sensational dismissal; political power tilts sharply in one direction. But it is seldom clear what precisely has happened. All is a half secret, and speculation is clogged by the number of varying rumours which are precipitated by every change, however small, in political relations ...

Chiang is not an all-powerful dictator of the Hitler type. His position resembles much more nearly that of a Caesar or Pompey in Rome, or the tyrant of an Italian medieval State. He must juggle, manoeuvre, balance groups, conciliate individuals by the gift of patronage. His orders may be obeyed, but if they are inconvenient, and unless they are in matters of the first magnitude, they are sometimes lost or forgotten ...¹¹

China was still immersed in a period of civil strife, and during the revolution many of the institutions which commanded obedience by the tradition which they embodied had vanished. It was the personal prestige and individual power of Chiang Kai Shek which kept the central government functioning.¹² Weightman went on to note: 'China's need of some such form of dictatorship can hardly be questioned. Yet its disadvantages should not be overlooked ... Chiang insists on centralisation to an almost bizarre degree ... the pillars of Chiang's power are ... the army and the secret police.'¹³ After years of conflict with Nanking [Nanjing]

¹⁰ NAC, RG 25, Volume 4717, File 50055-40 Part I, Political Situation in China; Report F 6046/1689/10 by Weightman, 27 August 1942.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

the southern generals defended their autonomy to the utmost extent possible and concentrated their efforts on maintaining the region's economic and political stability which soon made Kwangsi the best-governed province in China.¹⁴

Central government authority was also resisted in southern China because of the rich deposits of strategic minerals located there and the revenue generated from them for provincial governments. Many of these metals were found in the southern portion of Hunan with the most important being tungsten (wolfram) amounting to ninety per-cent of Chinese production; antimony accounted for approximately sixty per-cent to seventy per-cent of global production, of which half was exported to the United States.¹⁵ Manganese and molybdenum were also present in substantial quantities.¹⁶ Large tin deposits were mined by General Lung Yun in Yunnan (combined with Hunan these equalled eight thousand tons per year), while Manganese was located in Kwangsi and Kwangtung. Kiangsi [Jiangxi] and Kwangtung likewise contained a great deal of tungsten.¹⁷ These strategic materials helped to provide southern provincial governments with necessary resources to run relatively effective and popular administrations.

During the mid 1930s General Chiang Kai Shek made increased efforts to consolidate his control over various tungsten rich regions and his first objective was to occupy Kiangsi after the ejection of the communists. This was accomplished with the installation of General Yu Han Mou from Kwangtung as

¹⁴ Robert L. Jarman, (ed.), *China: Political Reports, 1911-1960, Volume 6, 1937-1941* (London: Public Record Office, 2001), pp. 103, 109.

¹⁵ NARA, RG 165, M1444, *Correspondence of the Military Intelligence Division Relating to General, Political, Economic, and Military Conditions in China, 1918-1941* (Washington: National Archives and Records Administration, 1986), Reel 15; Report No. 8480 by Lieutenant-Colonel W.S. Drysdale, 13 January 1933.

¹⁶ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 15; Report No. 9518 by General Joseph W. Stilwell, 19 February 1937. NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 15; Report No. 9343 by Captain Bernard A. Tormey, 22 April 1936.

¹⁷ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 15; Report No. 9151 by Major S. V. Constant, 27 June 1935. NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 15; Report No. 7258 by First Lieutenant Helmar W. Lystad, 25 April 1928.

his representative. The Long March of the Chinese Communist Party under Chairman Mao Tse Tung [Mao Zedong], lasting from 1934 to 1935, began in this region.¹⁸ While General Yu was in control of the Kiangsi tungsten mines he amassed great personal wealth and cemented his loyalty to the Kuomintang and to Chiang Kai Shek personally. It was not long before he became a very prominent and controversial Chinese government officer in the future of Kwangtung and Hong Kong.¹⁹

Another factor raising Kwangsi and Kwangtung disaffection with the central government was Chiang's inaction in countering the steady expansion of Japanese control over North China. Japanese officers such as General Itagaki Seishiro, chief of the Mukden Special Service Agency, and Major General Doihara Kenji, also of the Kwantung Army's military intelligence arm, were able to consolidate their position in Manchuria, and by 1935 began work to establish the puppet Hopei [Hebei]-Chahar Political Council over the provinces of Jehol [Rehe], Chahar, Shantung [Shandong], Hopei and Suiyang.²⁰ The Japanese strategy of playing northern regional warlords against each other often succeeded by utilizing bribery, subversion, and terror.²¹ They were able to maintain 'a measure of control over North China by the instigation of incidents with resultant military intervention or threat of such intervention'.²² Doihara also built up a considerable opium distribution network throughout northern China as well as

¹⁸ Chang Jung and Jon Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story* (London: Vintage Books, 2006), pp. 159, 203.

¹⁹ NAC, RG 25, Volume 3277, File 6669-G-40 – Kwangsi; 'Liang Kwang' by Collins, 17 May 1944.

²⁰ Hata Ikuhiko, 'Marco Polo Bridge Incident', in *Japan's Road to the Pacific War: the China Quagmire, Japan's Expansion on the Asian Continent, 1933-1941*, James Morley and David Lu (eds.), (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), pp. 243-244.

²¹ Shimada Toshihiko, 'Designs on North China', in *The China Quagmire*, pp. 50, 103-107, 121-122.

²² NARA, RG 165, *U.S. Military Intelligence Reports: China, 1911-1941* [hereafter USMIR], (Frederick: University Publications of America, Inc., 1983), Reel 13; Report No. 9058 by Lieutenant Colonel W.S. Drysdale, 25 February 1935.

Manchuria.²³ One example of the intimidation tactics used to threaten the Chinese included the construction of a Japanese army barracks and armoured fighting vehicle (AFV) motor pool in the Chapei district of Shanghai; a facility from where regular armed patrols were dispatched throughout the city. A Canadian diplomatic report made note of this facility:

In the very heart of the most densely populated quarter the Japanese have raised a four-storied barracks of heavy steel and concrete construction. This building which is some 400 feet in length provides living quarters for a considerable garrison and houses in addition a formidable fleet of armoured cars, mobile guns, and tanks. On all sides a fire-area has been cleared and machine gun emplacements are reported to have been constructed to enable the defenders to cover every angle of approach. Solid steel doors and shutters add to the defensibility of the barracks. Issuing from this building the Japanese troops hold periodical manoeuvres, particularly for their mechanized units, through the crowded Chinese streets. Needless to say the necessity of avoiding Japanese tanks and of watching Japanese troops practice bayonet charges in their business streets does nothing to reconcile the Chinese inhabitants to the presence of their detested enemies.²⁴

Because of Japanese expansion and intimidation in North China, anti-Japanese sentiment had grown strong across China but the Kwangsi and Kwangtung leadership were perhaps the most vocal on this issue in Chinese political circles and they wanted Chiang to take a more confrontational approach. Chiang, however, continued to bide his time with the Japanese in order to finish the destruction of the communists first.²⁵

²³ Martin H. Brice, *The Royal Navy and the Sino-Japanese Incident, 1937-41*, (London: Ian Allan, 1973), p. 14.

²⁴ NAC, RG 25, Volume 1687, File 1934 80-H, ‘Report on a Trip to the Philippine Islands and the China Coast – 1935’ by Hugh L. Keenleyside, 13 May 1935.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

Chinese Strategy: Military Logistics and the Dismantling of Southern Independence

In late 1935 and early 1936 two events engineered by Chiang Kai Shek precipitated a political crisis which seemingly threatened to wreck his government and fragment the country, yet the opposite effect was produced.²⁶ In response to ongoing international criticism Chiang began to suppress China's opium trade as an element of the New Life Movement, and this act heightened the political friction already existing between the Central Government and many provincial leaders.²⁷ Reporting on conditions in the north, United States Military Attaché Lieutenant Colonel Nelson Margetts noted, 'The traffic in narcotics in China is enormous ... Travellers from Shensi Province reported seeing poppy fields reaching clear to the horizon ...'²⁸ In March 1936 US Military Attaché Colonel Joseph Stilwell reported that, 'Jehol is one vast poppy field', and it was estimated that ninety per-cent of the global opium supply originated in China.²⁹ Opium was grown mostly in outlying provinces so Chiang introduced his anti-drug campaign as a measure designed to increase centralized power by taking revenue out of the hands of provincial officials.³⁰ The impact on Kwangsi and Kwangtung was tremendous because great quantities of opium were shipped through the region into Burma, Indochina, Thailand, Hong Kong and the Malay States. General Lung Yun was the independent general in charge of Yunnan and as such he made a fortune dealing in opium.³¹ Opium use was also common amongst Yunnan's

²⁶ Shimada, 'Designs on North China', p. 188.

²⁷ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 15; Report No. 7258.

²⁸ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 15; Report No. 7967 by Lieutenant Colonel Nelson E. Margetts, 13 March 1931.

²⁹ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 15; Report No. Report No. 9316 by Stilwell, 5 March 1936.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Dick Wilson, *When Tigers Fight: the Story of the Sino-Japanese War, 1937-1945* (New York: The Viking Press, 1982), p. 9.

regiments although this was not the case in Kwangsi.³² The redirection of the opium trade hit the Kwangsi and Kwangtung provincial leaders hard as it destroyed much of their revenue, and thus, threatened their autonomy.

The second factor impacting on Chiang's relations with Chen, Pai and Li was the completion of the Hankow-Canton Railway as seen in figure 2.1. A primary reason for its construction was to facilitate the transportation of military supplies for the Chinese national army but it presented a problem to Kwangsi and Kwangtung leaders. Over a period of several years the German Military Mission had achieved some remarkable results in training part of the Chinese army, but as this transformation progressed, southern leaders grew more concerned about how these improvements would impact the spread of central governmental authority. Completion of the railway meant that good quality troops could be rapidly deployed against Kwangsi and Kwangtung, and thus, the railway was a direct military threat to their independence. Consequently, the redirection of Yunnan opium to the Yangtze River in 1935 and the establishment of the Hankow-Canton Railway in 1936 caused the Kwangsi and Kwangtung generals to embark upon a war with Nanking. Chiang Kai Shek immediately sent 600,000 troops into Hunan to counter them in June 1936.³³

The 1936 Kwangtung-Kwangsi rebellion was a watershed event in the political consolidation of power by the central government over China's southern provinces. It also laid the foundation in south China for Chiang's future successful strategy of escalation and entanglement of third powers in the war against Japan. During the first half of the 1930s, Chen Chi Tang was the political

³² Diana Lary, *Warlord Soldier: Chinese Common Soldiers, 1911-1937* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 40.

³³ NAC, RG 25, Volume 3277, File 6669-G-40 – Kwangsi; ‘Liang Kwang’ by Collins, 17 May 1944.

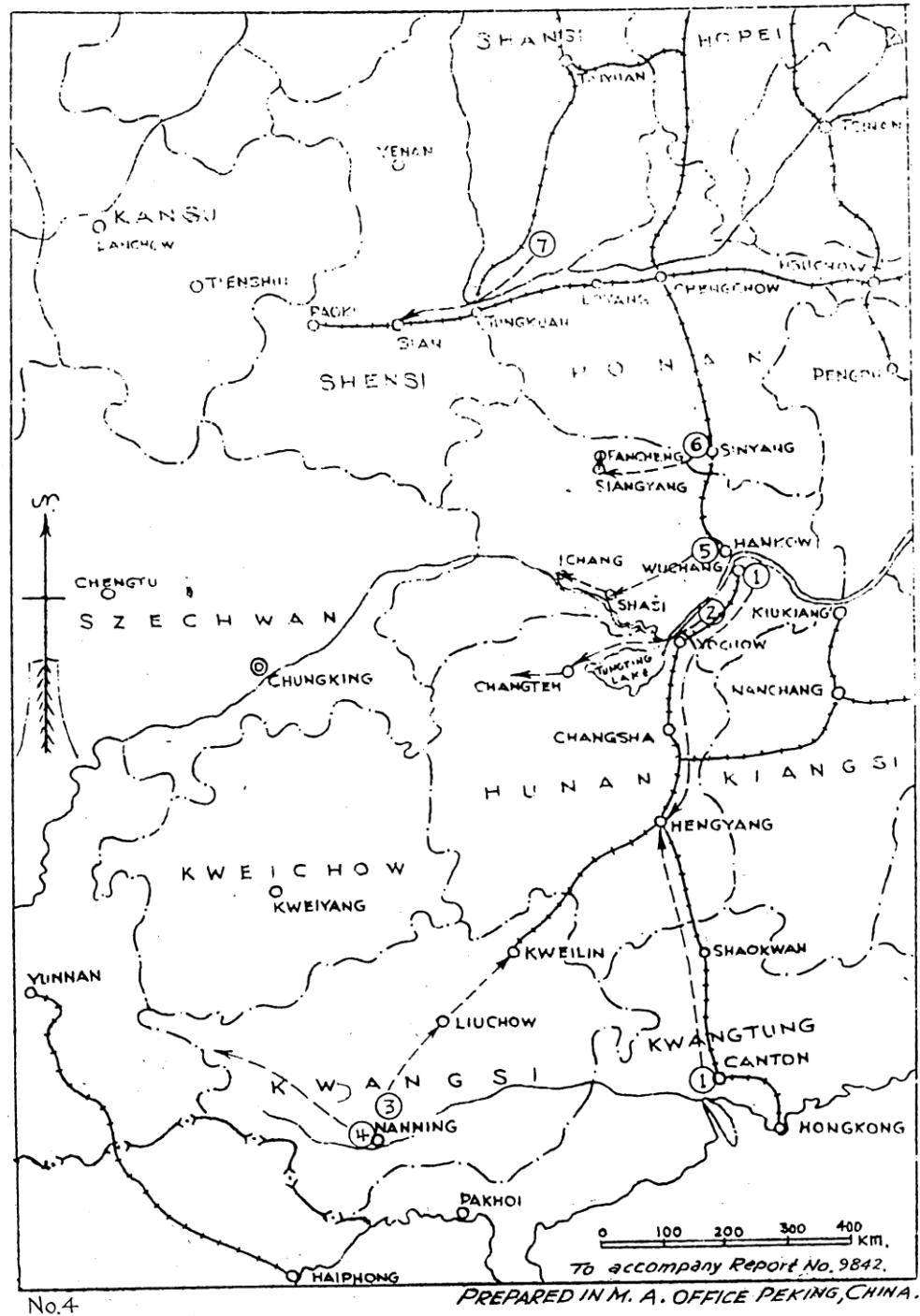


Figure 2.1: South China Railways (1940) [Source: NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9842 by Captain F. P. Munson].

and military leader of Kwangtung, and up until 1936 he worked with Chiang Kai Shek, but according to one British official:

the co-operation had always to be purchased, for he was not so much Chiang's supporter as his rival ... he was only half-hearted in

co-operating with the Central Government troops, his one determination being to retain hold over Kuangtung against his rivals and equally to prevent Chiang's domination from being extended to Kuangtung.³⁴

In 1935 the double threats posed by Japanese expansion and the increase in Chinese central government authority caused much attention to be given to 'the question of defence, and on the completion in the summer of 1936 of the track of the Hankow-Canton Railway, the clash between Canton and Nanking became inevitable'.³⁵ On 10 June 1936 Chen Chi Tang issued a circular telegram denouncing Chiang Kai-shek, calling the nation to embark upon a war against Japan, and his forces subsequently invaded Hunan. By 25 June both General Pai and General Li sided with Chen and they soon dispatched Kwangsi armies to join his rebellion. There was no such favourable response from Yunnan, Szechwan [Sichuan] or elsewhere as Chen's financial position was weak and it was difficult to buy the additional support needed to render the rebellion a success.³⁶

Chiang Kai Shek had deeper pockets and this tipped the balance in his favour.³⁷ General Yu Han Mou, who was born in the Kwangtung town of Kaoyao, was originally part of this group of southern generals, but on 9 July he flew to Nanking with several Kwangtung air units and defected to the central government.³⁸ Yu's betrayal of Chen Chi Tang destroyed the southern coalition and it ended any chance for Kwangtung's independence. His defection, however, was generally considered to be 'the greatest single factor in the avoidance of civil

³⁴ Jarman, *China; Political Reports*, pp. 82-83.

³⁵ *Ibid.* p. 83.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.* p. 104. See also Hallett Abend, *My Life in China, 1926-1941* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1943), pp.197-198.

³⁸ *Ibid.* p. 128. See also NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 6; Report No. 9864 by Captain F. P. Munson, 3 April 1940.

war between Canton and Nanking in 1936'.³⁹ For about another month the Kwangsi armies still faced the central government forces in Hunan and some minor skirmishes were reported, but by 8 August General Li and General Pai ended their challenge and agreed to support the central government.⁴⁰

Chiang sought a relatively bloodless peace with Kwangsi and Kwangtung because of the ever present threat posed by the Japanese army, but he helped ensure the two provinces remained politically disunited by showing leniency towards the Kwangsi leadership and somewhat harsher treatment towards Kwangtung officers. Generals Li Tsung Jen and Pai Chung Hsi retained their positions in Kwangsi following this incident as Chiang sought to maintain national unity. Reconciliation talks proceeded during September and Kwangsi remained a quasi-independent region.⁴¹ Following the outbreak of war with Japan these officers continued to support the government, and both Li and Pai became prominent generals. Pai eventually became Chiang's 'right hand man' as Deputy Chief of the General Staff.⁴² Throughout 1938 Kwangsi troops fought in the north in defence of Hankow, and Kwangsi leaders were paid two million dollars per month in exchange. Railway construction from Hunan to Kwangsi also began.⁴³ Despite these developments, other Kwangsi leaders remained distrustful of the central government until the war's end.

³⁹ Howard L. Boorman and Richard C. Howard (eds.), *Biographical Dictionary of Republican China, Volume 4* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), p. 61.

⁴⁰ Jarman, *China; Political Reports*, p. 104.

⁴¹ Shimada, 'Designs on North China', p. 188.

⁴² NAC, RG 25, Volume 8517, File 6605-40; Biography of Pai Ch'ung-shi, 16 April 1943.

⁴³ TNA, WO 106/5303 No. 293; Report on Visit to South China by Captain J. V. Davidson-Houston, 5 August 1938.

Kwangtung: Origins of a Combat Zone

Kwangtung officers were dealt with somewhat less benevolently by Chiang and the continued presence in the province of national army troops deepened Cantonese disaffection with the central government. For his loyalty to Chiang, General Yu was made head of military forces and Pacification Commissioner in Kwangtung after General Chen fled temporarily to Hong Kong.⁴⁴ Chen remained in Hong Kong until after the start of the war in July 1937 when he was rehabilitated in another effort by Chiang to strengthen Chinese unity against the Japanese invader.⁴⁵ Chiang took additional punitive steps to reduce Kwangtung's independent power by further cutting provincial revenues. One example was the suppression of Cantonese casino operations in Shumchun [Shenzhen] at the border with Hong Kong. Shumchun had been home to a luxury gambling resort which had easy access to Canton via the Kowloon-Canton Railway and had captured a good percentage of Macao's gambling revenue.⁴⁶ Underpinning these events in Kwangtung was a current of popular regional separatism and resentment that in time produced a degree of political apathy amongst some Cantonese following the Japanese invasion and occupation of Canton in October 1938.

Under the custody and administration of his loyal Cantonese subordinate General Yu, Chiang derived several military and diplomatic advantages by taking direct control over Kwangtung. First, regional defence considerations were subordinated to national interests and thus all military supplies coming into China from Hong Kong remained in Chiang's hands. Powerful regional officers would have kept for themselves a considerable amount of the material entering China

⁴⁴ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 6; Report No. 9864. See also NAC, RG 25, Volume 3277, File 6669-G-40; 'Liang Kwang' by Collins, 17 May 1944.

⁴⁵ NAC, RG 25, Volume 3277, File 6669-G-40; 'Liang Kwang' by Collins, 17 May 1944.

⁴⁶ TNA, WO 106/5356, H.K.I.R. No. 2/39 by Captain J. M. Sturgeon, 17 January 1939.

and challenged his authority yet again. In later years this is what happened with General Lung in Yunnan.⁴⁷ Second, relatively good quality Cantonese military forces could be deployed elsewhere during important campaigns. In the fall of 1938, four Cantonese divisions proved their worth in the Hankow campaign during combat operations at Tengan south of the Yangtze River near Nanchang.⁴⁸ The Japanese 101st and 106th Divisions were both badly hurt in their battles with Kwangtung forces.⁴⁹ The deployment of Cantonese troops to central China also made it easier for Chiang to maintain control of their home with weaker units of limited combat value.⁵⁰ Third, the central government could deploy its own troops into Kwangtung and thereby ensure that the province became a greater international concern by maintaining the Pearl River Delta as an active war zone adjacent to Hong Kong for a protracted period of time. After the Japanese invasion of south China began in the fall of 1938, Chiang ordered his military forces to withdraw north into the Kwangtung mountains and the smuggling of war supplies into China was temporarily disrupted by the occupation of Canton. War supplies from Hong Kong soon continued moving, however, through Mirs Bay up to Waichow [Huizhou], and then on to the Hankow-Canton Railway at Kukong [Shaoguan, Shiuchow or Shuikwan] where Yu re-established his base. Consequently, a constant state of war was maintained near and within the British colony with the aim of straining Anglo-Japanese relations. The resulting tension escalated the war by directly involving Britain militarily in a low intensity

⁴⁷ Wu T'ien Wei, 'Contending Political Forces', in *China's Bitter Victory: the War with Japan, 1937-1945*, eds. James C. Hsiung and Steven I. Levine (London: M.E. Sharpe Inc. (East Gate), 1992), p. 61.

⁴⁸ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 10; Report No. 9686 by Major David D. Barrett, 12 October 1938. See also NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 10; Report No. 9700 by Major David D. Barrett, 8 December 1938. See also TNA, WO 106/5303 No 289; Report on Visit to War Zone IV by Captain Charles R. Boxer and Captain H. Chauvin, 20 May 1939. See also TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 22/38, 25 October 1938.

⁴⁹ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 10; Report No. 9700 by Barrett, 8 December 1938.

⁵⁰ TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 22/38, 25 October 1938.

conflict with Japan for a period of over four years. Major General F.S.G. Piggot of the British Embassy in Tokyo noted that it was fairly well understood, even amongst Japanese officers, that Chiang Kai Shek was not displeased to have the Japanese army posted on Hong Kong's doorstep.⁵¹ Fighting the war in areas of international economic interests was the strategy Chiang employed successfully wherever possible, and this was demonstrated at Shanghai in the summer and fall of 1937, and in Kwangtung until 1941.⁵²

Japanese Strategy: Stumbling Off to War

In contrast to Chiang, Japanese strategy in China was much less focused and sometimes counter-productive. Inter-service rivalry was a problem within the military command structure of most countries at that time, but nowhere was this more pronounced than between the Imperial Japanese Army and Navy. Japanese army officers such as General Itagaki of the Kwantung Army and Tojo Hideki, Kwantung Army Chief of Staff, considered war with the USSR to be inevitable within five years and were eager to consolidate their country's expanded position in north China quickly.⁵³ They did not wish to see a protracted war develop in China.⁵⁴ Japanese naval officers were more eager to seek objectives in the south. Captain Nakahara Yoshimasa, a cruiser captain who was later promoted to admiral as head of the War Guidance Office of the Navy General Staff (in 1940), was one of those pressing for a strategic advance south even at this early stage.

⁵¹ NAC, RG 24, Reel C-8301, File 5147, Report No. 33 on Canton by Major General F.S.G. Piggott, 18 November 1938.

⁵² John W. Garver, 'China's Wartime Diplomacy', in *China's Bitter Victory*, p. 11.

⁵³ John H. Boyle, *China and Japan at War, 1937-1945: the Politics of Collaboration*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1972), pp. 44, 48-49. See also Shimada, 'Designs on North China', pp. 197-198.

⁵⁴ Hata, 'Marco Polo Bridge Incident', pp. 244-250.

According to author Tsunoda Jun his future moniker was ‘King of the South Seas’.⁵⁵

One of three significant crises in China during the last half of 1936 showed how the lack of a unified Japanese strategy was a contributing factor in starting the Sino-Japanese War, and how Japanese actions easily involved third powers. These events included an attack on a Japanese consulate at Chengtu in August, anti-Japanese riots and subsequent deaths at Pakhoi [Beihai] in western Kwangtung in September, plus the rout of Japanese puppet Mongolian cavalry in the ‘Suiyuan Incident’ later that year.⁵⁶ The ‘Pakhoi Incident’ was the most serious of these, however, because it occurred in an area of British and French economic interest. In response to several riots and killings, the Japanese navy landed marines and temporarily occupied Hainan Island which positioned them along the lines of communication between the British in China, and the French in Indochina. Anglo-French shipping passed through this area between Haiphong and Hong Kong and in addition to provoking war with China, the presence of Japanese naval and air units at Haikow raised international concern as they had the potential to interfere with international maritime traffic. Tensions were eased only after the Japanese army forced the navy to withdraw from Hainan so that they could remain focused on checking Soviet influence in the north.⁵⁷ The Pakhoi Incident was one early example of how the Japanese lack of a unified strategy had the potential of involving Britain and France in the Sino-Japanese dispute unnecessarily when Japan’s primary interests lay elsewhere. This

⁵⁵ Tsunoda Jun, ‘The Navy’s Role in the Southern Strategy’, in *The Fateful Choice. Japan’s Road to the Pacific War: Japan’s Advance into Southeast Asia, 1939-1941*, trans. Robert A. Scalapino, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), p. 241.

⁵⁶ Hata, ‘Marco Polo Bridge Incident’, pp. 244. See also Shimada, ‘Designs on North China’, pp. 184, 190-194.

⁵⁷ David Evans and Mark R. Peattie, *Kaigun: Strategy, Tactics, and Technology in the Imperial Japanese Navy, 1887-1941* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1997), p. 602n. See also Shimada, ‘Designs on North China’, pp. 190-194.

counterproductive problem would emerge again in Kwangtung once the war began.

British Foreign Policy: Choosing Sides

British Far Eastern foreign policy and military strategy prior to the Sino-Japanese War was originally based on a position of diplomatic neutrality and remained largely defensive, but Japanese expansion into north China caused the British Foreign Office and Treasury to adopt a more interventionist approach in support of China than was the case previously. Primarily for economic reasons a stronger China was considered to be more agreeable with British interests than an unrivalled Japan, and a gradual improvement in Sino-British relations developed.⁵⁸ Initial steps were limited, however, as important British strategic priorities were identified elsewhere and the country was militarily weak. Europe was the primary area of interest followed by the Middle East.⁵⁹ In the Far East, however, the British were still motivated to protect imperial and economic interests. British investment in China totalled \$1.8 billion and accounted for fifty seven per-cent of the total foreign commitment. The USA had investments equalling \$220 million while France and Germany had invested \$180 million and \$140 million respectively.⁶⁰ The Colonial Office, the War Office and the Admiralty similarly prepared for a defensive posture in the Far East and their plans were based upon the Singapore Strategy, but unlike the Foreign Office and Treasury their efforts remained rooted on a more neutral foundation. Two major

⁵⁸ Imperial War Museum (UK) [hereafter IWM], Conservation Shelf; 'Thunder in the East' (1947) by Major General Gordon E. Grimsdale, p. 5.

⁵⁹ Brian P. Farrell, *The Basis and Making of British Grand Strategy; Was There a Plan?* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1998), pp. 11, 35.

⁶⁰ Usui Katsumi, 'The Politics of War', in *Japan's Road to the Pacific War, The China Quagmire: Japan's Expansion on the Asian Continent, 1933-1941*, eds. James W. Morley and David Lu (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), p. 338.

events marked a point of divergence in policy between these departments of government: the Chinese currency crisis of 1935 and the Sian [Xian] Incident of 1936.

In September 1935 the British made one of their first cautious moves to counter Japanese advances in China when senior Treasury official Sir Frederick Leith-Ross arrived in Shanghai to become economic attaché to the British Embassy in Peking and head of the British Economic Mission to China. This was also one of the first instances linking Hong Kong to the Sino-Japanese dispute. Leith-Ross was sent to China to help solve the Chinese currency crisis and to improve the British trade position at Japanese expense.⁶¹ Because of British military unpreparedness, however, avoidance of war with Japan still remained a fundamental principle of British Foreign policy.⁶²

The Chinese silver shortage was a result of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's failed attempts to dampen the effects of the Great Depression in America.⁶³ His silver policy wrecked the previously favourable Chinese exchange rate and exports subsequently plummeted, but this crisis provided the British with an opportunity to influence Sino-Japanese affairs.⁶⁴ Silver flowed out of Chinese ports such as Shanghai and Canton as the United States government became the metal's largest purchaser. Hugh Keenleyside, a Canadian diplomat posted to Japan, had visited China and explained how the crisis impacted Sino-Japanese relations:

⁶¹ Baxter, Britain and the War in China, pp. 260-261. See also Shimada, 'Designs on North China', pp. 137-139.

⁶² Baxter, Britain and the War in China, pp. 2-3, 6.

⁶³ V.H. Rothwell, 'The Mission of Sir Frederick Leith-Ross to the Far East, 1935-1936', *The Historical Journal*. 18(1) 1975: 147-169, p. 149.

⁶⁴ NAC, RG 25, Volume 1687, File 1934 80-H; 'Report on a Trip to the Philippine Islands and the China Coast – 1935' by Keenleyside, 13 May 1935, pp. 18-19, 28.

The silver policy of the United States Government has been the last and one of the most severe blows from which the financial and commercial structure of China is suffering and this action of the President and Congress of the United States may very possibly have the ironic result of forcing China to bow more quickly and more completely to the tremendous pressure that is now being exerted upon that unhappy country by Japan. Even Canton, the centre of the most peaceful and most prosperous districts of China, and the centre also of the Anti-Japanese Movement has been forced to recognize the inevitable and to abate the southern Government's official policy of antagonism to Japan.⁶⁵

The Japanese were eager to exploit the situation and stepped in to offer financial relief in the form of a currency loan in exchange for a transfer of additional sovereignty in provinces such as Shantung.⁶⁶ In an effort to quell the rising level of anti-Japanese propaganda emanating from Kwangtung and Kwangsi over these and other issues, General Doihara visited officials in Canton in April 1935 to threaten them into line.⁶⁷ This had the added effect of creating a public war scare in Hong Kong as residents thought the city was about to be attacked along with Canton.⁶⁸ Keenleyside noted the impact of the problem on Hong Kong's residents.

It is difficult to understand upon what basis the apprehensions of the people of HongKong are founded unless it is due merely to a realization of the fact that in the event of such a war their territory would be the first point of attack and that their imaginations have been so excited by this fact that balanced judgement has become impossible. This war atmosphere was not apparent in any other city visited.⁶⁹

Fear of invasion was as yet premature.

Although an Anglo-Japanese war was not imminent, Hong Kong soon became a nexus to the Sino-Japanese dispute. United States Consul-General, Mr. C. Hoover, reported to United States Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 30-35.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

that it was the Chinese who were to blame for the situation because of their illegal smuggling of silver into the colony.⁷⁰ This was in violation of an earlier agreement signed between the British and Chinese in April to end the export of silver from China, but Chinese banks in Hong Kong continued to engage in this business.⁷¹ Hong Kong thus served as a useful financial centre which helped aggravate the Chinese silver crisis and thereby provided the British Treasury, with Foreign Office approval, an opportunity to intervene as China's quiet ally by offering credit against Japanese economic and diplomatic pressure. By November, Leith-Ross was largely successful in his efforts to increase British intervention and the Chinese accepted his assistance to stabilize the currency.⁷² In retaliation, the Japanese navy began smuggling operations from Hong Kong and Formosa in order to undermine the authority of the Chinese Maritime Customs service and cut Chinese government revenue by up to one third.⁷³ Hong Kong thus became a centre for Sino-Japanese economic warfare as early as 1935 and this ultimately served to impact Anglo-Japanese diplomatic relations in a negative manner.

Another opportunity for the British to strengthen their growing partnership with the Chinese presented itself in late 1936 during the Sian Incident. The Young Marshal Chang Hsueh-liang [Zhang Xueliang], kidnapped Chiang Kai Shek during his visit to Sian in December in an attempt to destabilize the central government for the benefit of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).⁷⁴ Mao had

⁷⁰ Franklin Delano Roosevelt Presidential Library (USA) [hereafter FDR], Morgenthau Papers, Box 268, File Correspondence 1933-1945 Hong Kong; Economic Situation in Hong Kong by Consul-General C. L. Hoover, 21 August 1935.

⁷¹ *Ibid.* See also NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 2; Report No. 9108 by Lieutenant-Colonel W. Drysdale, 28 April 1935.

⁷² Shimada, 'Designs on North China', pp. 145-146.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 167.

⁷⁴ Chang and Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story*, pp. 214- 219. See also NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 15; Report No. 9316.

encouraged the Young Marshal to kidnap Chiang in order to strengthen his own position, but unfortunately for Mao, Stalin was eager to use China as a means of tying down the Japanese army and thus prevent a Japanese attack upon Siberia.⁷⁵ As the threat to Chiang Kai Shek's life was quite real, Minister of Finance, H.H. Kung therefore summoned the Russian charges d'affaires to inform him that if Chiang Kai Shek was killed, China would side with Japan and help in any invasion of Russia they wished to conduct.⁷⁶ Kung's threat had the desired effect as Stalin soon exerted his influence over the CCP to help end the incident, but he did not act alone. William H. Donald, the Australian adviser to Chiang Kai Shek also played an important role in securing his release. Several years after the incident B.E.F. Gage, who was consul-general at Nanking in 1937, noted that:

Those who were in China in 1937 & 1938 remember with gratitude his patriotism and helpful attitude towards H.M. Embassy. He has played a big part in the life of the Chiang Kai-shek's & it should not be forgotten that it was mainly his influence with the Young Marshal (Chang Hsueh-liang) that enabled Chiang Kai-shek to get away with his life from Sian in 1936.⁷⁷

The Foreign Office made the decision to present Donald with an award for his role in the affair.⁷⁸ The Sian Incident was an important event where Sino-British relations were improved by the covert action of a British Foreign Office asset.

British Military Strategy: False Security

In the military sphere, cooperation was established between the two countries and this too helped improve Sino-British relations but only on a limited scale. British Far Eastern military strategy was defensive, and still somewhat in step with the

⁷⁵ Chang and Halliday. *Mao: The Unknown Story*, p. 223.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* p. 226.

⁷⁷ TNA, FO 371/27679 F 919/327/10; Report by Consul-General Berkeley E.F. Gage, 13 February 1941.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

country's foreign policy, but it was similarly flawed in that it potentially encouraged Japanese aggression. Plans for operations north of Singapore were centred upon Hong Kong but these were to serve imperial defence only, not for any role the colony might have to play within China. Military policy of the 1930s was formed within a climate of disarmament and could not support a strong defence of the Far East, nor could it support an aggressive foreign policy. Germany was assumed to be England's primary threat, and because of this, any future European war meant Britain would require military support from her empire rather than the reverse. The Empire was militarily overstretched and the 'Singapore Strategy' was developed to compensate for British military weakness.⁷⁹ Singapore was established as the primary naval base in the Far East and deployment of sizeable British naval forces from home waters in the event of a crisis were to follow.⁸⁰ The primary objective remained the protection of Australia and New Zealand, but ultimately the Singapore Strategy proved hollow for the defence of Far Eastern interests.

The more permanent elements of Britain's South China fleet based at Hong Kong were not very strong and included five gunboats of the West River Flotilla and the 2nd Motor Torpedo Boat Flotilla with *HMS Tamar* serving as naval headquarters. Until 1940, Hong Kong also served as base for a cruiser squadron but the function of the Royal Navy in China was largely diplomatic.⁸¹ In May 1935, Royal Navy units at Hong Kong and Chinese naval units conducted joint anti-piracy action near the colony's territorial waters. Chinese naval patrols

⁷⁹ Farrell, *The Basis and Making of British Grand Strategy*, pp. 11, 35-37.

⁸⁰ Peter Lowe, 'Retreat From Power: British Attitudes Towards Japan, 1923-1941', in *War and Diplomacy Across the Pacific, 1919-1952*, eds. Barry D. Hunt and A. Hamish Ion (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1988), p. 48.

⁸¹ NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 39; Naval Intelligence Report by Commander J.M. Creighton, 29 March 1941. See also Brice, *The Royal Navy and the Sino-Japanese Incident*. pp. 153-157.

at Bias Bay, with the *Hai Chi* serving as flagship for three cruisers and two hundred Chinese marines, worked jointly with British destroyer patrols.⁸² Further military cooperation of a minor nature was also begun with the attachment of Lieutenant Colonel W. Dawson to instruct at the Chinese School of Military Mechanisation at Nanchang.⁸³

In the event of war with Japan an unrealistic period of relief for the garrison at Hong Kong was established in 1939 at ninety days after arrival of the main battle fleet at Singapore. This period was raised to one hundred thirty days by 1941.⁸⁴ The Singapore Strategy was maintained because there were few military alternatives to address what was essentially a diplomatic problem. The British were drifting to war with too many enemies and military weakness only encouraged the country's adversaries.⁸⁵ Britain thus had several options to adequately defend the Empire: 1) confront fewer enemies in Europe and strengthen military forces in the Far East, 2) demilitarize Hong Kong, or 3) deter the Japanese with the illusion of strength provided by the Singapore Strategy. The third option was selected but proved to be counterproductive as it contained little deterrent value. A false sense of security stemmed from British overconfidence and an underestimation of Japanese military capabilities; views that were commonly held by many in London. These were later reinforced by the lack of Japanese success in achieving victory in China.⁸⁶ Instead of deterring Japanese aggression the Singapore Strategy potentially invited attack since it

⁸² NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 2; Report No. 9117 by Lieutenant-Colonel W. Drysdale, 10 May 1935.

⁸³ Baxter, Britain and the War in China, p. 145.

⁸⁴ TNA, CAB 121/718, File G/Hong Kong/1. (Vol. 1); Telegram No. 444 by Air Ministry to C in C Far East, 14 January 1941. See also Peter Lowe, *Great Britain and the Origins of the Pacific War: A Study of British Policy in East Asia, 1937-1941* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), p. 95.

⁸⁵ Brice, *The Royal Navy and the Sino-Japanese Incident*, p. 110.

⁸⁶ IWM; 'Thunder in the East' by Grimsdale, p. 10. See also Douglas Ford, *Britain's Secret War against Japan, 1937-1945* (New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 37-38.

maintained a weak British military presence at Hong Kong, and southern Kwangtung was a region where the possibility of conflict could only grow stronger. The actual result in late 1941 and early 1942 was the loss of Hong Kong followed by Singapore and the deaths of tens of thousands. The only military force that deterred the Japanese from attacking until that time was the United States Navy's Pacific Fleet.

Hong Kong was not demilitarized in order to maintain British prestige even though the colony was expected to become a battleground.⁸⁷ Between 1934 and 1937 the British Chiefs of Staff decided that air and ground forces for operations north of Singapore were unavailable and the growth of Japanese airpower only served to reinforce opinion on the unlikelihood of relieving Hong Kong.⁸⁸ Although the Singapore Strategy had become less viable, the utility of defending Hong Kong was still seen in its role as an outpost that could draw away forces that might otherwise be used against Singapore itself.⁸⁹ Thus, the Admiralty and the War Office took some measures to strengthen Hong Kong's fixed defences but did not address the real problem of increasing the size of the ground forces or their mobile firepower to a satisfactory level. Improvements were made largely in anticipation of naval attack.⁹⁰ The General Officer Commanding (GOC) British forces in China, Major General A.H. Bartholomew, estimated that the garrison needed to be raised to seven battalions of infantry and still required five fighter squadrons to augment RAF No. 715 Reconnaissance

⁸⁷ NAC, RG 24, Volume 20310, File 951.003 (D23); Report on the Policy for the Defence of Hong Kong, Committee of Imperial Defence, 15 July 1938.

⁸⁸ Ford, *Britain's Secret War against Japan*, p. 17.

⁸⁹ Christopher Bell, “Our Most Exposed Outpost”: Hong Kong and British Far Eastern Strategy, 1921-1941’, *The Journal of Military History*, 60 (1) 1996: 61-88, pp. 70-73.

⁹⁰ Canadian Armed Forces Directorate of History and Heritage Archive (Canada) [hereafter DHH], File 352.019 (D1); Statement by Brigadier General John Price, 27 January 1948.

Squadron.⁹¹ Approved defence expenditures by the end of 1936 included £20 million (\$97 million USD) for facilities such as a new headquarters and barracks construction at Stanley.⁹² Naval fortification construction and gun improvements began in late 1936 after the expiration of the Washington Naval Agreement.⁹³ One thousand mines were unloaded at the Hong Kong dockyard during June 1937 and this was the first shipment of such material to be received in many years. More ten inch guns were also landed.⁹⁴ Construction on Stonecutter's Island provided gas and bomb proof subterranean shelters for three thousand people. There was also a small but insufficient increase in the size of the field artillery.⁹⁵ By the time Governor Caldecott had left Hong Kong in April 1937 (succeeded by Governor Sir Geoffry Northcote), the cost of defence improvements had amounted to £8 million but serious deficiencies remained in the event of a landward attack from the north. Nevertheless, with these limited improvements Hong Kong remained an imperial outpost and the first line of defence in the Far East.⁹⁶

Aside from physical deficiencies there was also a lack of understanding amongst some officers serving in the colony as to the seriousness of Britain's situation at Hong Kong, and this too served to encourage future Japanese antagonism. One example of this occurred during the colony's military manoeuvres held in March 1937; an event which undermined the value of newly constructed defence works. Much of the exercise was directed against a possible

⁹¹ DHH, File 593.013 (D20); Report by Major General A.H. Bartholomew, 20 August 1937.

⁹² NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 39; Report No. 0420, 11 December 1936.

⁹³ NAC, RG 25, Volume 1687, File 1934 80-H; 'Report on a Trip to the Philippine Islands and the China Coast – 1935' by Keenleyside, 13 May 1935, p. 24. See also NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 39; Report No. 478 by Consul Howard Donovan, 5 February 1937.

⁹⁴ NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 39; Report No. 579 by Donovan, 2 July 1937.

⁹⁵ NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 39; Report No. 478 by Consul Howard Donovan, 5 February 1937.

⁹⁶ NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 39; Report No. 165 by Naval Attaché (Peking), 24 April 1937.

naval assault and four infantry battalions of Hong Kong's ground force also participated.⁹⁷ These units included the Welsh Fusiliers, the Royal Irish Rifles, the Seaforth Highlanders, and the Kumaon Rifles.⁹⁸ They were supported by the Royal Artillery, Singapore Artillery Brigade, plus men from the Royal Engineers, and the Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corps (HKVDC). All of these units participated but they were inadequate in number to fully man the main defence line in the New Territories known as the Gindrinkers' Line, and this problem was compounded by the requirements of simultaneously defending against the possibility of an attempted amphibious landing.⁹⁹ Just one month after the annual defence exercise was held, the Chiefs of Staff in London recommended a continuation of the policy of defending Hong Kong in case of attack but they also recommended sending ground reinforcements; the latter suggestion was not acted upon.¹⁰⁰ The main problem with the manoeuvres, however, was the presence of a certain Major Ohira, of the Imperial Japanese Army, who had been invited to attend by a Colonel Harrison. Colonel Lance Dennys at the War Office noted that an official Chinese request for their own observers to be included was refused. This created unnecessary friction with the Chinese government as it caused them to question British intentions in the region, especially as the reason given for the refusal was connected to issues of security.¹⁰¹ Ohira was allowed to attend because of the persistence of Colonel Harrison and because the British did not wish to offend the Japanese army and create additional problems by cancelling

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ Galen R. Perras, "Our Position in the Far East would be Stronger Without this Unsatisfactory Commitment": Britain, and the Reinforcement of Hong Kong, 1941', *Canadian Journal of History*, 30 (2) 1995: pp. 231-259, p. 237.

¹⁰¹ TNA, WO 106/5357, File Attendance of Chinese at Hong Kong Combined Defence Exercise; Letter by Major General Lance Dennys (War Office) to Colonel Burkhardt in Hong Kong, 14 May 1937.

the invitation. Prior to the start of the manoeuvres, Captain Charles R. Boxer of army intelligence was so concerned about the looming breach of security that he informed Major General F.S.G. Piggott, military attaché in Tokyo, that Major Ohira was to attend the annual defence exercise and that he was to have access to almost all defence installations. Ohira's invitation was not cancelled despite the security threat it entailed. Boxer noted in frustration that the Japanese would never let a British language officer see their fortified defences situated around Japan or Formosa.¹⁰² Despite Boxer's protests it was because of the 1937 military manoeuvres that the Japanese had a full understanding of how the British intended to defend Hong Kong against any possible attack.

Conclusion

Up to the outbreak of war in July 1937, the Japanese continued to extend their influence in China and the British and Chinese governments responded in a variety of ways. The Chinese prepared for war with infrastructure expansion projects and political coercion of regional governments. Railroad construction opened rapid direct ground transportation to south China and Hong Kong for the first time. This in turn precipitated a political crisis engineered by the central government which allowed Chiang Kai Shek to consolidate his grip on south China.¹⁰³ Increased control over Kwangtung meant that in any future Japanese military operations near Hong Kong, Chiang Kai Shek could control the pace of Chinese logistical operations in the region to better his chances of involving England directly in the war. For their part, the British sought to protect their interests by slowly and quietly improving diplomatic and economic relations with

¹⁰² TNA, WO 106/5357, File Attendance of Chinese at Hong Kong Combined Defence Exercise; Letter by Captain Charles R. Boxer to Major General F.S.G. Piggott, 16 March 1937.

¹⁰³ Shimada, 'Designs on North China', p. 188.

the Chinese, but also by avoiding direct conflict with the Japanese. The Singapore Strategy provided the illusion of security and British Far Eastern policy remained ineffective due the lack of appreciation of Japanese military capabilities. Hong Kong's landward defences thus remained weak. Ultimately, however, the strategic importance of Hong Kong did not rest in its role as an imperial outpost. Hong Kong was strategically important because of its large port facilities, and because of the new railway connection to central China via Canton. With strengthened Sino-British relations, and as a source of military supply for the Chinese army, Hong Kong would become a vital lifeline for Chinese survival in the Sino-Japanese War.

Chapter 3

The Sino-Japanese War Begins: July 1937 to October 1938

Proxy War in China

With the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War in July 1937 China and Hong Kong assumed greater significance on the world's diplomatic stage, but aside from the Soviet Union most other countries lacked clear objectives or policies with which to respond to events. For several powers China became a significant bulwark against further Japanese expansion and material aid was extended by the Soviet Union in support of the Chinese army and air force. In this way Stalin used Chinese military forces to fight a proxy war of attrition against the Japanese army. In Great Britain the Foreign Office also began to see the Chinese army as a means of waging a proxy war against Japan. With the war in Spain still ongoing, some in the Foreign Office under the leadership of Anthony Eden saw China as another useful vehicle to promote the establishment of a collective security agreement with the Soviet Union, and thus, vast amounts of war supplies were allowed to be transhipped from Hong Kong into free China. From the outset of the Sino-Japanese War the Hankow-Canton Railway was the most vital Chinese military lifeline, while the port of Hong Kong served as the primary source of the country's war materials from abroad.

In contrast to the Foreign Office, Britain's military services remained focused on the preservation of imperial security and endeavoured to limit commitments by maintaining Hong Kong's status simply as an outpost of empire. These contradictory policies led to a discussion in Whitehall during August 1938 on a Chinese inspired scheme to encourage greater British intervention with the

purchase of the New Territories. This plan ultimately stalled, but it remains useful in demonstrating how conflicting organizational Far Eastern objectives amongst various governmental departments in London impeded the formulation of a useful strategy to meet the challenge posed by Japan. In short, after years of disarmament Foreign Office objectives increasingly outdistanced military capabilities, and as the country's foreign policy became more confrontational its Far Eastern military strategy became less effective.¹

Japanese strategic planning also lacked uniformity. From the battle of Shanghai onwards Japanese army commanders continued to expand the scale of the war on their own initiative while a variety of simultaneous diplomatic efforts were mounted to impose peace. Because of the threat posed by the USSR it had been originally hoped to limit military commitments in China but the strength of resistance had surprised many senior officials. To end the war quickly the navy conducted an aggressive aerial and naval interdiction campaign along China's lines of communication to neighbouring areas. Although southern Chinese ports were blockaded, foreign shipping was still able to enter and depart from Hong Kong and so the colony became the warehouse through which the greater part of all munitions and supplies to the central government passed.² Chinese resistance continued despite the grave losses sustained largely because of this constant flow of supplies.

The transhipment of military supplies from Hong Kong to the Chinese army was a significant factor which contributed to the outbreak of the Pacific War. To secure greater international support, especially from Great Britain, Chiang Kai Shek fought the war in areas of foreign economic interest and the use

¹ Correlli Barnett, *The Collapse of British Power* (London: Eyre Methune, 1972), pp. 505, 518.

² National Archives of Canada, Ottawa (Canada) [hereafter NAC], RG 25, Volume 3233, File 5548-40C; Memorandum by Lieutenant Colonel Hiram Wooster, 20 May 1944.

of Hong Kong as a strategic military logistical centre was an element of this strategy. Its port capacity and connection to central China by rail caused Japanese officers to look upon the British colony as a significant obstacle to victory. Strained Anglo-Japanese relations were the result and preliminary moves to effect Hong Kong's isolation were begun with the political destabilization of Kwangtung [Guangdong]. Chinese morale was often under great strain and during 1938 the Japanese strove to eat away at the Chinese central government's legitimacy by neutralizing the province of Kwangtung both politically and militarily. In doing so they hoped to sever Chinese lines of communication. Violence was also spread across the province by air and by sea and a state of low intensity conflict with Britain blanketed the region surrounding Hong Kong. Japanese frustration over their growing military difficulties led to an increasingly violent blockade, and as the war progressed, Hong Kong's military function as the primary Chinese supply depot helped escalate the conflict from a regional problem into a devastating war of global destruction. Upon its conclusion, Japan lay prostrate while British exhaustion led to a forfeiture of empire. Southern China was the trap that ensnared them both.

Chinese Strategy: Escalation and Third Power Intervention

Hong Kong's transformation from peacetime entrepôt to military supply base was not accidental, but came as a result of the shift in British foreign policy in support of China against Japan and a separate planned consolidation of power by the Chinese central government over Kwangtung. With British cooperation during the summer of 1937 and the fall of 1938, the Chinese transformed the Pearl River Delta into a vital conduit of military supply. Japanese military forces were quick

to respond by attacking Chinese supply lines both from the air and at sea. Over time the escalation of violence across the Pearl River Delta produced a corresponding increase in friction within Anglo-Japanese relations, and eventually the operation of this logistical network from Hong Kong provoked a Japanese invasion of the region in October 1938. The Japanese occupation was not unforeseen by the Chinese, however, nor was it entirely undesired.³ By invading Kwangtung, Japanese and British military forces came into close proximity and the potential for direct conflict between the two powers steadily grew. Bringing this about was a Chinese strategic objective, and in order to drag the British into the war, Kwangtung was purposely kept in a state of military unpreparedness as this encouraged the Japanese to invade.

Throughout the course of the war Generalissimo Chiang Kai Shek sought to meet the threat posed by Japan with the employment of foreign military experts to train and equip his inadequate forces. The Chinese army varied in quality from unit to unit but was generally inferior to the Japanese army and was only capable of limited offensive operations under the most favourable conditions.⁴ Many problems plagued the Chinese army but the most serious of these were the ineptitude of much of its leadership compounded by a lack of modern equipment and doctrine. Much of it was a nineteenth century malnourished force that was largely incapable of combined arms operations until 1943-1944, and then only on

³ NAC, RG 24, Reel C-8301, File 5147; Report No. 33 by Major General F.S.G. Piggott, 18 November 1938. See also NARA, RG 165, M1513, The Military Intelligence Division Regional File Relating to China, 1922-1944, Reel 39; Report No. 86 by Commander H.E. Overesch, 3 December 1938.

⁴ National Archives and Records Administration, College Park (USA) [hereafter NARA], RG 165, U.S. Military Intelligence Reports: China, 1911-1941 (Frederick: University Publications of America, Inc., 1983) [hereafter USMIR], Reel 6; Report by Major David Barrett, 1 August 1940. See also Diana Lary, *Warlord Soldiers: Chinese Common Soldiers, 1911-1937* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 20-23.

a very limited scale.⁵ Opium addiction was another problem that destroyed the fighting ability of many Chinese military forces. Provincial leaders required large numbers of troops for the collection of opium (as a form of taxation) but these men often served as their own best customers due to the drug being regularly used as pay. In 1936 U.S. Military Attaché Colonel Joseph Stilwell wrote, ‘This intimate connection between opium and militarism is a cause of two of China’s great sorrows – the tremendous size of her so-called armies and their utter worthlessness for national defense.’⁶ Almost every account of the Sino-Japanese War describes this dismal state of Chinese military affairs, but some units trained by the German Military Mission under General Baron Alexander von Falkenhausen were of good enough quality to fight the horrendous battle of Shanghai in 1937 until finally destroyed by superior Japanese firepower.

Chiang Kai Shek fought the Japanese partly to legitimize the authority of his national government but also because Japanese militarists had become too aggressive and arrogant in China to be left unchecked. The battle of Shanghai, however, was a very costly affair.⁷ It was the first major clash following the Marco Polo Bridge incident and began in August 1937 after the Japanese landed a brigade at the city in order to protect their economic and political interests. To drive them from their initial lodgement the Chinese army attacked with nine of its best trained divisions.⁸ The Japanese reinforced their position by landing two additional divisions supported by heavy artillery and naval gunfire and these were

⁵ NAC, RG24, Reel C-8301, File 5147; Memorandum by Colonel W. Murray, 13 October 1943.

⁶ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Correspondence of the Military Intelligence Division Relating to General, Political, Economic, and Military Conditions in China; 1918-1941, Reel 15; Report No. 9316 by Colonel Joseph Stilwell, 5 March 1936.

⁷ John W. Garver, ‘China’s Wartime Diplomacy’, in *China’s Bitter Victory, The War with Japan, 1937-1945*, eds. James C. Hsiung and S. I. Levine (London: M.E. Sharpe Inc. (East Gate), 1992), pp. 6-7.

⁸ Billie K. Walsh, ‘The German Military Mission to China, 1928-1938’, *The Journal of Modern History*, 46 (3) 1974: 502-13, pp. 509-510.

augmented with large numbers of tanks and aircraft.⁹ The battle lasted about two and a half months involving a total of eighty-five Chinese divisions against ten Japanese. Chinese and Japanese military forces became locked in a struggle that eventually cost the Chinese army approximately 400,000 men and about 10,000 well trained junior officers; seventy nine divisions out of the total one hundred eighty in the army's order of battle had been smashed.¹⁰ Much of China's heaviest weapons including 150 mm artillery were also destroyed and when losses are compared with Japanese dead numbering 40,000 the impact of Japanese naval transport and gunnery advantages becomes clear.¹¹ Chinese losses at Shanghai made it essential to import great quantities of weapons if resistance was to continue and the British Foreign Office obliged by allowing the weapons trade at Hong Kong to proceed.

Chiang Kai Shek fought at Shanghai partly in hope of gaining international support.¹² Caught in a salient at Shanghai were a number of British troops stuck in the Chapei district; many of these had been bombarded and about twenty had been killed.¹³ Although officially neutral, British forces had become involved in the struggle by sustaining casualties. Some of the troops at Shanghai included volunteers living within the city that were called out to man barricades around the British concession but they also included the Royal Welch Fusiliers who had been

⁹ Brigadier General J.M. Calvert, 'Shanghai (1937)', in *The Mammoth Book of Battles: The Art and Science of Modern War*, ed. Jon E. Lewis (New York: Carroll & Graff Publishers, Inc., 1995), pp. 124-125.

¹⁰ Chang Jung and Jon Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story* (London: Vintage Books, 2006), pp. 246-247. See also Dick Wilson, *When Tigers Fight: The Story of the Sino-Japanese War, 1937-1945* (New York: The Viking Press, 1982), pp. 36-38, 46.

¹¹ The National Archives, Kew (UK) [hereafter TNA], WO 106/5303 No. 293; Report on Visit to South China July 1938, by Captain J. V. Davidson-Houston, 5 August 1938.

¹² Garver, 'China's Wartime Diplomacy', p. 11.

¹³ Calvert, 'Shanghai (1937)', pp. 124-127.

rushed north from Hong Kong aboard the French Blue Funnel liner *Maron*.¹⁴ Six Royal Navy vessels escorted them on their journey.¹⁵ Hong Kong thus served as a relatively secure base for British military forces to deploy from. Although Chiang's strategy of involving foreign powers had the potential to escalate the war at an early date, direct overt military intervention by other nations was not yet forthcoming.

The Japanese lacked an effective strategy for dealing with determined resistance and this problem was a fundamental factor in expanding the war. The Japanese General Staff did not wish to fight a protracted war in China because their primary concern was still the Soviet Union and the containment of communism.¹⁶ They wanted to secure a rapid victory using a limited force of only fifteen divisions so that readiness could be maintained for operations in Siberia.¹⁷ According to the US Naval Attaché in Tokyo, 'Japan aimed at and hoped for a quick and decisive victory, to overthrow the government of China without need of a long campaign embittering to the Chinese people themselves', but 'the plan for a quickly terminated action failed'.¹⁸ Prime Minister Prince Konoye Fumimaro had been assured by the army that China could be beaten and forced to negotiate within three months but Shanghai was an exceedingly difficult battle. Hence, the subsequent advance along the Yangtze River by General Matsui Iwane and the Central China Expeditionary Army was conducted with utter ruthlessness largely because of Japanese embarrassment at not concluding

¹⁴ Martin H. Brice, *The Royal Navy and the Sino-Japanese Incident, 1937-41* (London: Ian Allan, 1973), p. 36.

¹⁵ United Church of Canada Archives, Toronto (Canada) [hereafter UCC], Accession 86.046C, Box 1, File 4, Margaret H. Brown Collection; Notes by Margaret Brown, 12 August 1937.

¹⁶ Hata Ikuhiko, 'Marco Polo Bridge Incident', in *Japan's Road to the Pacific War, The China Quagmire: Japan's Expansion on the Asian Continent, 1933-1941*, eds. David Lu and James Morley (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), pp. 243, 269-277.

¹⁷ Van de Ven, *War and Nationalism in China*, p. 218.

¹⁸ NARA, RG 38, M975, Reel 2, File Probability of an Outbreak of War Documents N, Naval Attaché Tokyo, Volume 1; Report No. 153, 14 July 1938.

peace.¹⁹ The China Expeditionary Army marched farther upriver without a clear idea of how to achieve victory and the subsequent occupation of Nanking was meant to terrorize the Chinese into submission.

Terror and genocide proved to be counterproductive substitutes for the lack of strategic planning. Atrocities were committed throughout the region between Shanghai and Nanking resulting in widespread devastation.²⁰ Millions of people were driven from the area and many were killed.²¹ A US naval intelligence report from Tokyo noted how:

Atrocities have been numerous ... the conduct of the hostilities has been such as to arouse Chinese hatred and resistance, have in a degree of intensity [been] surprising to Japanese plans [and] its methods have been unnecessarily frightful ... Chinese hatred [has] largely escaped the Japanese mind.²²

The slaughter and mayhem in Nanking during December 1937 and January 1938 was the result of several factors but one of the most significant was the propensity of officers in the field to exceed their authority with independent action that widened the scope of the war.

Nanking exemplified how the lack of coordination over strategy amongst field commanders and other officials, combined with outright insubordination to render Japanese efforts self-defeating. General Matsui did not restrain officers such as Prince Asaka Yasuhiko who ordered the savagery at Nanking, although it was his duty and responsibility to enforce discipline. US Assistant Military Attaché Major David Barrett also explained that the only beneficiaries of Japanese barbarism were the communists.

¹⁹ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 2; Report No. 9623 by Barrett, 12 January 1938. See also John Toland, *The Rising Sun: The Decline and Fall of the Japanese Empire, 1936-1945* (New York: Random House, 1970), p. 46.

²⁰ Lu Suping, *They Were in Nanjing: the Nanjing Massacre Witnessed by American and British Nationals* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2004), pp. 275-277.

²¹ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 2; Report No. 9633 by Barrett, 1 February 1938.

²² NARA, RG 38, M975, Reel 2, File Probability of an Outbreak of War Documents N, Naval Attaché Tokyo, Volume 1; Report No. 153, 14 July 1938.

... the net result of Japan's "holy war" to insure the peace of the Orient by stamping out communism in China has apparently been to place the Chinese Reds in a position many times more favorable than they could ever have hoped to attain ... before the outbreak of hostilities.²³

Incidents such as the strafing and wounding of British Ambassador Sir Hugh Knatchbull-Hugessen while driving from Nanking to Shanghai in August 1937, in addition to the attacks on *HMS Ladybird*, *HMS Bee* and the *USS Panay* in December, were similarly inspired.²⁴ These actions, however, threatened to ignite war with Britain and America. Ultimately, the net result of Japanese barbarity was to produce strategic failure as Chinese resistance was encouraged and the war eventually bogged down into stalemate.

Major Barrett also reported on dangerous Japanese army attitudes after comments were made by Matsui in January 1938 regarding the transhipment of munitions from Hong Kong:

... the Japanese Government has requested its officials, both at home and abroad, to moderate anti-British utterances ...

Among several extremely interesting, if not startling, statements made by General Matsui ... was the following: "Considering the growth and development of our own country, it is inevitable that Japan should expand in China. Lack of appreciation of this situation on the part of Great Britain may, I am afraid, lead to unnecessary conflict between the two countries."

General Matsui pointed out that no doubt of Great Britain's ardent support of the Kuomintang regime could be entertained in view of the way she had supplied China with arms and supported the Chinese currency in such an effective manner that the exchange rate continued to hold up ...

General Matsui did not hesitate to imply that to all intents and purposes he was the Japanese Government in Central China at the present time, as is indicated by his statement concerning the Customs. "Originally I had it in mind," said the General, "to take over the Shanghai Customs right away, but as the Panay and Ladybird incidents occurred, I thought it better to treat the question on more moderate lines, and to have the matter talked over with the

²³ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 2; Report No. 9623 by Barrett, 12 January 1938.

²⁴ Imperial War Museum (London) [hereafter IWM], Conservation Shelf; 'Thunder in the East' by Major General G.E. Grimsdale, 1947, pp. 8-9. See also Hallett Abend, *My Life in China, 1926-1941* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1943), pp. 271-272.

Customs authorities on a more conciliatory basis. Negotiations have been going on, but it seems to me that they are taking too much time and, if so, I may have to revert to my original attitude..."

The significance of General Matsui's interview with Mr. Woodhead lies not in what he said, but in the fact that a military commander of a nation in which the civil is supposed to maintain at least a shadow of power could make such statements and get away with it.²⁵

This kind of undisciplined bravado was compounded by a lack of organizational uniformity in objectives and policy, and these twin problems were mimicked in southern China where Japanese naval aggression eventually proved to be even more counterproductive.

By 1938 Chiang Kai Shek adopted a longer range strategy of gradual withdrawal and the spread of guerrilla warfare was intensified. Space was traded for time as the army retreated north and west while the defence of Hsuchow [Xuzhou] was prepared.²⁶ The danger with this strategy, however, was to withdraw into political irrelevance. A year into the war Colonel Stilwell wrote,

On the Chinese side, the spirit to fight to the last is of the utmost importance, but to an observer it appears that coupled with this spirit should go the determination to make a stand before the Chinese armies are driven back to the point where the Japanese can afford to ignore them. After all, a government maintained with difficulty in the mountain fastnesses of Szechuan and Kweichow or in far-distant Yunnan can very easily lose the aspect of a real China, and assume the appearance of a rebel faction fighting against a country, even though Japan-dominated, which because of its size and population must be considered as the real China by most of the world.²⁷

Chiang had few good alternative options and the Chinese delegation to the League of Nations appealed for international assistance.²⁸ During the first half of 1938 Chinese morale plummeted as the Japanese army continued its advance but Chiang issued a statement that the country was determined to resist the

²⁵ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 2; Report No. 9633 by Barrett, 1 February 1938.

²⁶ Wilson, *When Tigers Fight*, p. 89.

²⁷ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 2; Report No. 9667 by Colonel Joseph Stilwell, 25 June 1938.

²⁸ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 2; Report No. 9639 by Major David Barrett, 20 February 1938.

Japanese.²⁹ For resistance to continue the Chinese army had to avoid total destruction, buy time for the redeployment of China's industrial base, and prepare other defensive strongholds such as at Hankow.³⁰ To accomplish these goals the continued importation of weapons was essential.

Infrastructure problems in some ways made the implementation of Chiang's strategy difficult. After 1937 the number of internal land routes remaining to the Chinese for the transportation of munitions and equipment decreased greatly. Many railways and roads were lost to the advancing Japanese or were washed out during periods of heavy rain.³¹ Road and rail transportation in central and western China were virtually non-existent, making the early movement of China's industrial plant to Chungking an almost impossible task.³² The logistical problems in moving industries out of Hankow farther inland during 1938 were aggravated by the lack of available shipping capacity. Equipment and workers piled up on docks while awaiting transport or air attack, yet despite these problems, one hundred thirty four factories had been moved west by September 1938.³³ Most of these were for the production of mechanical equipment, metal goods, chemicals, and electrical equipment.³⁴ Water transportation allowed for seventeen per-cent of China's industry to be salvaged after shipment to Szechuan [Sichuan] and Hunan.³⁵ River transportation also had an impact on battlefield tactics as it was often the only efficient way to move men and material around the

²⁹ TNA, WO 106/5303 No. 293; Report by Davidson-Houston, 5 August 1938.

³⁰ Hans Van de Ven, *War and Nationalism in China, 1925-1945* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), pp. 211, 225.

³¹ Hu Pu Yu, *A Brief History of the Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945)* (Taipei; Chung Wu Publishing Co., 1974), p. 45.

³² Annalee Jacoby and Theodore White, *Thunder Out of China* (New York: William Sloane Associates, 1961), pp. 56-57, 70, 281-282.

³³ TNA, FO 371/22150 E 724 (1/12h/1938); Report by Commercial Counsellor A.H. George, 7 September 1938.

³⁴ TNA, FO 371/22150 No. 727.E. (13/71/1938); Report by Sir Archibald Clark Kerr, 1938.

³⁵ Hu, *A Brief History of Sino-Japanese War*, pp. 39-41.

country and because of this, the control of railways and rivers dominated Japanese operational planning.³⁶

Although China's infrastructure was poorly developed in many regions this was especially so in the south. Hong Kong was a valuable exception and access to its port facilities was a distinct advantage. Oil installations included large facilities for companies such as Standard Oil, Texaco and Asiatic Petroleum. First class roads ran to the Chinese border and several important factories had been built along the western route. Kai Tak aerodrome was also economically and logically significant.³⁷ Air transportation in and out of Hong Kong had grown rapidly since 1936 with many airlines making it a gateway city to the Far East.³⁸ The most important factor making Hong Kong so vital to Chinese survival, however, was its connection to the only direct rail line running across the south China front to Hankow.

Without the railway it is unlikely that the Chinese would have been able to continue the war. The amount of material transhipped along this network was immense and Sino-British relations grew stronger as a result of their cooperation. In June 1938 a US Army officer reported how,

... the Chinese are bringing more munitions and war supplies into China than ever before. The Hong Kong Harbor has never in its history berthed so many steamers ... Notwithstanding the recent intensive bombing ... of Canton and other sections of the Hong Kong-Hankow Railway, traffic continues to move over this important artery'.³⁹

³⁶ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9799 by Captain Edwin M. Sutherland, 29 September 1939. See also Van de Ven, *War and Nationalism in China*, pp. 225-226.

³⁷ TNA, FO 371/22159 F 7617/4847/10; Report by Governor Sir Geoffry Northcote, 14 July 1938.

³⁸ NARA, RG 165, Entry 77, NM 84, Box 1738, MID Regional File, Islands Hong Kong; Report by Consul General Addison Southard, 13 December 1937.

³⁹ NARA, RG 18, Entry 300, Box 934, File Misc A, USAAF Decimal Files, Oct 1942-44; Memorandum by Captain John Griffith, 23 June 1938.

Many sympathetic foreign civilians also understood the importance of the railway and could see its impact on Chinese morale. One missionary noted in December 1937 how, ‘China would be helpless if she did not possess this line which now ... has its southern terminus in the great port of Hong Kong.⁴⁰ During the first sixteen months of the war 60,000 tons per month were brought in through Hong Kong and over 700,000 tons reached Hankow.⁴¹ British Ambassador Sir Horace Seymour reported in 1944 that a central government spokesman had told him how China imported one and a half million gallons of gasoline through Hong Kong during 1938 before the invasion of south China, whereas one million came through Burma in 1940.⁴² To put this volume of traffic into context 2,500 tons of aviation fuel was required to keep 100 aircraft in the air for combat operations each month (360,000 gallons of aviation fuel being approximately equal to 1,000 tons).⁴³ This rate of supply was maintained despite being subject to the ubiquitous corruption in China made worse by the Military Affairs Commission and the South-West Transportation Commission. The latter agency, run by Chiang Kai Shek’s brother-in-law Dr. T.V. Soong, was responsible for the Chinese portion of the railway north of Canton.⁴⁴ Despite this, the Hong Kong to Hankow supply line surpassed all other logistical networks in terms of the amount of material that was delivered to the Chinese army almost to the end of the war. In contrast,

⁴⁰ UCC, Accession 83.046C, Box 3, File 55, U.C.C. Board of Overseas Missions, South China [hereafter BOMSC]; Canton Committee for Justice to China [hereafter CCJC] Pamphlet, 10 December 1937.

⁴¹ NARA, RG 59, M1221, General Records of the Department of State, Intelligence Reports, 1941-1961; OSS Research and Analysis Report No. 112.

⁴² NAC, RG 25, Volume 2661, File 6045-40C; Summary of News in China (January 1944), F 1003/34/10 by Ambassador Sir Horace Seymour, 7 February 1944.

⁴³ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3; Report No. 14 by Major David Barrett, 1 March 1941.

⁴⁴ TNA, FO 371/22150 E 724 (1/12h/1938); Report by George, 7 September 1938.

construction on the highly famed Burma Road was only begun in October of 1937 and was not completed until late 1938.⁴⁵

An often unappreciated problem by the Japanese was how their attacks on the railway helped strengthen Sino-British relations. By 1938 Japanese air strikes against the line north of the colony were commonplace occurrences. Damaged engines and wagons could be found periodically along the line and most of the bomb damage was on the southern portion. An air defence early warning network was established to help protect trains while in transit, and during alarms trains were often shunted into forested areas which provided overhead concealment.⁴⁶ To help keep the railway operational the Colonial Office and the Foreign Office approved a Chinese request in May 1938 to build a locomotive repair yard within the New Territories.⁴⁷ Because of the assistance afforded by Great Britain through Hong Kong, China was able to continue the war and Sino-British relations grew stronger. This feeling was expressed during a visit to Hong Kong on 2 September 1938 by Kwangtung Governor Wu Teh Chen, otherwise known as Iron City Wu for his prior service as mayor of Shanghai. In a speech at the Hong Kong Hotel Roof Garden delivered in October 1938 Wu stated that, ‘Great Britain and China are like brothers’.⁴⁸ In time, this growing collaboration eventually brought a Japanese response.

Although the British provided important support to China from Hong Kong, the scale of direct Soviet military aid between August 1937 and June 1941 was more substantial and much less covert. Stalin wanted a protracted war in

⁴⁵ Chan Lau Kit Ching, *China, Britain and Hong Kong, 1895-1945* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1990), pp. 276-277.

⁴⁶ TNA, WO 106/5303 No. 293; Report by Davidson-Houston, 5 August 1938.

⁴⁷ TNA, FO 371/22150/53730/38; Colonial Office Telegram to Governor Sir Geoffry Northcote, 26 May 1938.

⁴⁸ TNA, FO 371/22157 F 12885/2796/10; Telegram No. 192 by Consul General A.P. Blunt, 7 October 1938.

China in order to keep the Japanese army engaged and to prevent an invasion of Siberia.⁴⁹ Unlike the British, however, he directly furnished the Chinese with the necessary weapons to fight it. In April 1937 Stalin had promised Chiang military hardware and assistance in the event of a Japanese attack on China and the Sino-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact was signed that August.⁵⁰ A barter agreement was also negotiated and the trade in munitions for strategic materials such as tungsten and antimony was quickly begun.⁵¹ Sun Fo, Chairman of the Legislative Yuan and son of Sun Yat Sen, travelled to Moscow via Hong Kong in January 1938 to arrange for increased aid and the barter agreement itself was formalized in June 1940.⁵²

The principal method of bringing Soviet supplies into China was from Turkistan through Sinkiang [Xinjiang] to Lanchow [Lanzhou] and Chinese raw materials returned the same way or between Hong Kong and Vladivostok.⁵³ There were five routes altogether from the Trans-Siberian Railway that brought material in and out of China starting in 1937. On these were approximately 20,000 camels making two to three trips per year. The number of camels reportedly increased to 50,000 by 1940 and each beast could carry about nine, five gallon cans of gasoline or just under three hundred pounds for a distance of twenty four miles each day.⁵⁴ Several hundred trucks eventually augmented this

⁴⁹ Chang and Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story*, p. 247.

⁵⁰ Yu Maochun, *The Dragon's War: Allied Operations and the Fate of China* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2006), p. 12.

⁵¹ TNA, ADM 1/9568, File West River Flotilla; W.R. 124/38, H.M.S. *Tarantula*, Report No. 38/181.A/38, 14 April 1938. See also TNA, FO 371/22150 E 724 (1/12h/1938); Report by George, 7 September 1938, and WO 106/5303 No. 293; Report by Davidson-Houston, 5 August 1938.

⁵² NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 2; Report No. 9623 by Barrett, 12 January 1938. See also NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 2; Report No. 9633 by Major David Barrett, 1 February 1938. See also TNA, CO 852/324/6, File War Trade Commodities, Wolfram; Notation by B. Perry, 1 July 1940.

⁵³ TNA, WO 106/5303 No. 293; Report by Davidson-Houston, 5 August 1938.

⁵⁴ NARA, RG 18, Entry 300, Box 914, File 300 B, USAAF Decimal Files, Oct 1942-44; Report on Land Routes Between India and China, 12 April 1943.

camel capacity raising the average amount of material brought into China by this route to approximately 2,000 to 3,000 tons per month.⁵⁵

From 1937 to 1941 the level of Soviet supplies imported into China remained substantial, and these included light and heavy artillery in addition to hundreds of aircraft.⁵⁶ Soviet air units were also committed to the war and the initial group of November 1937 included four fighter squadrons and two bomber squadrons.⁵⁷ By the end of December China had received approximately 250 aircraft and 400 more had been ordered.⁵⁸ Two hundred Soviet airmen arrived at Nanchang on 12 January 1938 and two weeks later, on 26 January, an all-Soviet air raid on Japanese airbases at Nanking was credited with the destruction of over thirty Japanese aircraft.⁵⁹ Three hundred additional air and ground personnel arrived by 15 April 1938.⁶⁰ Soviet air units usually operated independently of the Chinese air force and they established their own aircraft factory in Kansu [Gansu], but the problem for the Chinese central government was the politically subversive activity Soviet personnel engaged in while stationed within the country.⁶¹ Chiang deemed this a price worth paying and with the support already provided up to May 1938 some Chinese officials felt that direct Red Army ground intervention

⁵⁵ TNA, FO 371/27715 F 4787/3653/10; Report by Ian Morrison on Situation in China, 3 June 1941.

⁵⁶ Yu, *The Dragon's War*, p. 13.

⁵⁷ Major General Claire L. Chennault, *Way of a Fighter: The Memoirs of Claire Lee Chennault, Major General, U.S. Army (Ret.)* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1949), p. 61.

⁵⁸ NARA, RG 38, M975, Selected Naval Attaché Reports Relating to the World Crisis, 1937-1943, Reel 2, Estimate of Potential Military Strength Documents G, Naval Attaché Tokyo, Volume 1; Report No. 91.

⁵⁹ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 2; Report No. 9623 by Barrett, 12 January 1938. See also NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 2; Report No. 9633 by Barrett, 1 February 1938.

⁶⁰ NARA, RG 38, M975, Selected Naval Attaché Reports Relating to the World Crisis, 1937-1943, Reel 2, Estimate of Potential Military Strength Documents G, Naval Attaché Tokyo, Volume 1; Report No. 91.

⁶¹ NARA, RG 18, Entry 300, Box 934, File Misc A, USAAF Decimal Files, Oct 1942-44; Memorandum by Griffith, 23 June 1938. TNA, WO 208/722, File Hong Kong Fortnightly Intelligence Reports January 1940 to October 1941; H.K.I.R. No. 4/40 by Major R. Giles, 31 March 1940.

might also become a possibility.⁶² This was already an established fact in China's air war and Chinese hopes for increased Soviet involvement on the ground were indeed fulfilled during the 1939 battle at Nomonhan along the Mongolian border.

During 1937 and 1938 Chiang was successful in gaining limited international assistance and he already managed to gain a degree of direct military intervention from the USSR. With British and Soviet support Chiang was able to continue the war despite the initial devastating losses suffered at Shanghai. Amidst a deteriorating diplomatic situation in Europe, Anglo-Soviet support remained strong as the possibility of peace in China was a constant worry to British and Soviet foreign policy makers alike.⁶³ To increase British involvement, however, Chiang took steps to exploit the rising level of violence and destruction then occurring within Kwangtung to transform the Pearl River Delta into a more dangerous war zone.⁶⁴

The Destabilization of Kwangtung and the Question of Chinese Morale

Japanese intensification of military operations in China paralleled unsuccessful regional and bilateral political efforts aimed at bringing the war to an end. Because of surprise over the unexpected determination and ability of the Chinese army to resist at Shanghai, the military logistical situation in Kwangtung and Hong Kong soon became a problem for the Japanese to confront.⁶⁵ The struggle waged between the Chinese central government and the Japanese armed forces to control the ground lines of communication between Hong Kong and mainland

⁶² NARA, RG 38, Entry 98A, Box 705, F-6-c 23213 to F-6-e 22379, Naval Intelligence, May 1940 to 1 December 1941; Report No. 342 by Leland Harrison, 4 May 1938.

⁶³ Michael Share, *Where Empires Collided: Russian and Soviet Relations with Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Macao* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2007), p. 100.

⁶⁴ NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 39; Report No. 86 by Overesch, 3 December 1938.

⁶⁵ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 2; Report No. 9623 by Major David Barrett, 12 January 1938.

China thus led to great political instability and civil strife. Divide and rule through puppet administrations was already established policy in many parts of occupied China and an attempt to replicate another such government in Kwangtung was the objective of a failed coup d'état in February 1938.⁶⁶ Soon thereafter, the Japanese intensified their aerial and naval interdiction operations and these led to the terror bombing of Canton in the spring. Combined with this escalation, Japanese political machinations created a power vacuum that successfully undermined popular morale for the war.

The Chinese government was faced with a difficult situation in Kwangtung, but through ruthless calculation Chiang was able to turn the tables on both his enemies and potential allies alike. By purposely keeping Kwangtung militarily weak, while maintaining political control, he was able to erode provincial autonomy and simultaneously raise the level of Anglo-Japanese friction. This served the dual strategies of eliminating Kwangtung's independence forces and increasing Britain's involvement in the war. The price, however, was Kwangtung's destabilization and an increase in social disorder. This in turn served to encourage a Japanese invasion of the province in the fall of that year as the ability to resist such a move was greatly undermined, but it was a price Chiang was willing to pay.

Kwangtung's morale was eroded throughout 1938 by a series of threats which increased the sense of isolation amongst many within the province. The most obvious of these was the threat of invasion and the Japanese had already contemplated such a move in January 1938. Fifty thousand troops had been loaded onto naval transports for an assault at Bias Bay but events at Tsingtao

⁶⁶ Usui Katsumi, 'The Politics of War', in *Japan's Road to the Pacific War, The China Quagmire: Japan's Expansion on the Asian Continent, 1933-1941*, eds. David Lu and James W. Morley (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), p. 333.

[Qingtao] interrupted the operation and the troops were redirected northward instead.⁶⁷ To keep the Chinese off balance, the Japanese navy made a small landing north of Macau on 16 January 1938 with a force of about six hundred men, but this was merely a reconnaissance of coastal defences. Their arrival stoked invasion fears amongst many in the region until the unit was withdrawn on the 20th.⁶⁸

Invasion anxiety was justified according to US Naval Attaché Commander H.E. Overesch. During a tour of the province with the British and French military attaches in May, Overesch estimated 100,000 Chinese troops to have been present within Kwangtung but official claims to have strengthened Bocca Tigris defences with artillery were proven false. Bocca Tigris guarded the approach to Canton on the east side of the Pearl River Delta but the fortifications were only equipped with a few old French 75 mm guns.⁶⁹ British Captain J.V. Davidson-Houston of the Shanghai military intelligence section also traveled to Bocca Tigris in July 1938 and noted how Chinese defences consisted of conspicuous casements for guns located on the eastern shore and on an island to the west but these were unsupported by infantry fortifications.⁷⁰ The general conclusion among foreign observers was that physical installations in Kwangtung were inadequate to defend against a Japanese invasion.

As a military solution for Kwangtung had been postponed the Japanese navy chose to deal with their problems using political methods, and one approach was an attempted coup set for March 1938. Japanese commanders established puppet governments in other parts of China to administer occupied areas while

⁶⁷ NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 39; Report by Major E.W. Raley, 2 March 1938. Brice, *The Royal Navy and the Sino-Japanese Incident*, p. 92.

⁶⁸ NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 39; Report No. 29 by Major Truman Martin, 3 February 1938.

⁶⁹ NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 39; Report No. 86 by Overesch, 3 December 1938.

⁷⁰ TNA, WO 106/5303 No. 293; Report by Davidson-Houston, 5 August 1938.

enhancing their own personal power and autonomy from higher authority. In 1938 the North Chinese Provisional Government was based in Peking while another puppet regime governed Manchuria. The new Reformed Government of the Republic of China was also established in Nanking.⁷¹ This administration was eventually amalgamated with the Provisional Government to form a larger puppet regime under the leadership of Wang Ching Wei in 1940.⁷² In 1939 Wang would use Cantonese nationalist sentiment to increase support for his administration in Kwangtung by promising limited political and military autonomy under his leadership.⁷³ His National Government ultimately failed because the Japanese continued to ignore the growing importance of nationalism within the rest of China and their limited support for Wang only pushed Chiang Kai Shek further into the arms of third powers, thereby increasing his credibility amongst many Chinese.⁷⁴

Nevertheless, a Kwangtung coup attempt held great potential to wrest the province from central governmental control and thereby disrupt the movement of war supplies from Hong Kong. On 3 February the British were informed of the closure of the Pearl River by Japanese naval officers and the next day several warships sailed past Hong Kong to bombard Bocca Tigris, but these efforts were in support of a coup that had already failed. The nucleus of the revolt was within the Peace Preservation Corps, and the entire operation was foiled on the night of 2/3 February by the actions of an individual named Li Fook Lam.⁷⁵ Aside from Li the primary coup agents in Canton were Chen Chung Fu and Hsi Chao Tzu, and

⁷¹ TNA, FO 371/22158 F 5194/3376/10; China Summary No. 3 by Clark Kerr, 5 April 1938.

⁷² Catherine Baxter, ‘Britain and the War in China, 1937-1945’, (University of Wales, unpublished PhD Dissertation, 1993), p. 78.

⁷³ John H. Boyle, *China and Japan at War, 1937-1945: the Politics of Collaboration* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1972), pp. 250-251.

⁷⁴ Peter Lowe, *Great Britain and the Origins of the Pacific War: a Study of British Policy in East Asia, 1937-1941* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), p. 105.

⁷⁵ TNA, FO 371/22157 F 3889/3376/10; China Summary No. 2 by Clark Kerr, 7 March 1938.

they had been supplied by the Japanese with six million dollars to organize and instigate the revolt.⁷⁶ With Li's defection the Japanese lost their money and a chance to establish a puppet government in Kwangtung.⁷⁷ In response, martial law was declared in Canton, the Pearl River was closed for over a week, and the coup was violently suppressed by General Yu Han Mou.⁷⁸ The most loyal leader to Chiang Kai Shek remaining in Kwangtung at that time was General Yu and he controlled all of the regular central government military forces within the province.⁷⁹ Hundreds were arrested and several individuals were executed along with a Japanese national.⁸⁰ Swift retribution thus ended the plot but the resultant political instability caused many military, political and social problems to fester for the remainder of the war.

Kwangtung's political situation had already worsened with the start of the Sino-Japanese War and existing ideological divisions were driven deeper throughout society as a result of the coup. Many wished to fight the Japanese but a large number still desired to resist central governmental authority even though the coup had essentially dashed hopes for future independence. Some pragmatists were willing to make a political or economic arrangement with whoever could provide security and a modicum of order. Watching events closely were the Hakka minority living near Hong Kong and within the New Territories whose sympathies were with the communists. The violence and uncertainty created by the coup had a long term demoralizing affect upon the population as a power vacuum was created in some areas and lawlessness became widespread; a

⁷⁶ TNA, ADM 1/9568, File West River Flotilla; W.R. 124/38, H.M.S. *Tarantula*, Report No. 20/181.A/38, 15 March 1938.

⁷⁷ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 2; Report No. 9639 by Barrett, 20 February 1938.

⁷⁸ TNA, ADM 1/9568, File West River Flotilla; H.M.S. *Tarantula*, Report No. 20/181.A/38, 15 March 1938.

⁷⁹ TNA, WO 106/5303 No. 293; Report by Davidson-Houston, 5 August 1938.

⁸⁰ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 2; Report No. 9639 by Barrett, 20 February 1938.

situation made worse with the withdrawal of 20,000 Kwangsi troops through Wuchow [Wuzhou].⁸¹ Japanese disinformation further sowed seeds of discord by publicizing Chinese disunity. Disturbances in Canton were said to be the result of a power play between General Yu Han Mou and Governor Wu Teh Chen and that the coup was an attempt by Generals Li Chi Shen and Chen Chi Tang to eliminate General Yu.⁸² With the province fractured politically there was little cohesion or effective leadership to resist a Japanese invasion when it finally came in the fall.

Following the failed coup the three men in charge of government in Canton were Governor Wu, Mayor Tseng Yang Fu and General Yu, and they more or less ensured that most of Kwangtung remained politically reliable to the central government for the remainder of the war but with the province loosely under the control of these men the economy suffered greatly. Over time corruption and inflation soared while the people justifiably became more apathetic towards fighting the war.⁸³ The Governor of Kwangtung and the Mayor of Canton were described by Captain J.V. Davidson-Houston as unscrupulous men primarily interested in self-enrichment. Personal jealousies between themselves and General Yu thus prevented the establishment of strong or cohesive provincial political leadership and this further diminished the military readiness of the province.

On a national level contact between the central government and the Japanese was never completely severed and the prospect of a negotiated settlement was kept alive by the Chinese peace movement. Those who wished to

⁸¹ TNA, ADM 1/9568, File West River Flotilla; W.R. 124/38, H.M.S. *Tarantula*, Report No. 11/181.A/38, 12 February 1938. See also TNA, ADM 1/9568, File West River Flotilla; H.M.S. *Tarantula*, Report No. 20/181.A/38, 15 March 1938.

⁸² NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 2; Report No. 9639 by Barrett, 20 February 1938.

⁸³ TNA, WO 106/5303 No. 293; Report by Davidson-Houston, 5 August 1938, and TNA, WO 106/5356, File Hong Kong Fortnightly Intelligence Reports, November 1938 to May 1939; H.K.I.R. No. 22/38, 25 October 1938.

arrange peace had a varying degree of influence with Chiang throughout the course of the war. Discussions were renewed after the Kwangtung coup when Kao Tsung Wu and Tung Tao Ning, of the Chinese Foreign Ministry's Asian Bureau, were sent to Nagasaki to meet with Japanese officials.⁸⁴ In March they again met with Nishi Yoshiaki at the Repulse Bay Hotel in Hong Kong along with Matsumoto Shigeharu; a personal friend of Prime Minister Prince Konoye Fumimaro.⁸⁵ Another significant individual of this group was Finance Minister H.H. Kung and in June 1938 he also sent his personal secretary Chiao Fu Sa to Hong Kong to meet with the Japanese Consul General Nakamura Toyokazu.⁸⁶ These talks lasted until September but failed because of Japanese insistence on Chiang's resignation. Chiang held fast despite the poor state of Chinese morale because he still had combat forces in the field and a continuous supply of material arriving from Hong Kong and French Indochina.⁸⁷ He continued to fight in the north and regrouped his armies for the defence of Hankow.⁸⁸

A few Japanese officers such as the former Governor General of Korea, General Ugaki Kazushige, understood that the best way to end the war was with a political solution and peace negotiations had to be conducted with Chiang Kai Shek's representatives directly instead of by propping up a collection of unpopular satrapies.⁸⁹ So too did potential allies. With Japanese consent Hitler ordered Ambassador Oscar Trautmann to try and secure a peace arrangement between China and Japan in December 1937. Hitler's concern was to avert any improvement in Sino-Soviet relations but Trautmann's efforts came to nothing. In

⁸⁴ Usui Katsumi, 'The Politics of War', pp. 379-380.

⁸⁵ Boyle, *China and Japan at War*, p. 179.

⁸⁶ Usui Katsumi, 'The Politics of War', p. 333.

⁸⁷ TNA, WO 106/5303 No. 293; Report by Davidson-Houston, 5 August 1938.

⁸⁸ Wilson, *When Tigers Fight*, pp. 84-85.

⁸⁹ Usui Katsumi, 'The Politics of War', p. 333.

February 1938 General Matsui was ordered home because of the embarrassment caused by Chiang's rejection of the peace terms, as well as for his failure to pursue the routed Chinese army after Nanking.⁹⁰ He was replaced by General Hata Shunroku.⁹¹

Prime Minister Konoye also began to see the destruction of the Kuomintang and the establishment of puppet regimes as unrealistic objectives, and consequently, a change was also made with the Cabinet and General Ugaki assumed the post of Foreign Minister on 26 May 1938. It was a job he would hold for four months.⁹² Ugaki wished to secure better relations with Great Britain because he knew that continued prosecution of the war would further damage Japan diplomatically while it would also stretch the country's resources.⁹³ To accomplish his goal Ugaki held numerous discussions with British Embassy officials in Tokyo and elsewhere including Ambassador Sir Robert Craigie and Major General F.S.G. Piggott, the British military attaché and Ugaki's personal friend.⁹⁴ One of the main Japanese demands during these meetings was for Great Britain to stop the transhipment of war supplies from Hong Kong.⁹⁵ Craigie had also previously recommended a termination of the war supplies trade at Hong Kong but by September the Craigie-Ugaki talks had not produced a successful agreement.⁹⁶

⁹⁰ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 2; Report No. 9618 by Major David Barrett, 20 December 1937. See also NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 2; Report No. 9623 by Barrett, 12 January 1938. Wilson, *When Tigers Fight*, pp. 84-85.

⁹¹ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 2; Report No. 9639 by Barrett, 20 February 1938.

⁹² TNA, FO 371/22153/464/132/70K/38; Report by Piggott, 27 June 1938. See also Boyle, *China and Japan at War*, pp. 139, 146.

⁹³ Boyle, *China and Japan at War*, pp. 149-150.

⁹⁴ TNA, FO 371/22153/464/132/70K/38; Report by Piggott, 27 June 1938. See also Usui Katsumi, 'The Politics of War', p. 336.

⁹⁵ TNA, FO 371/22153/410/123/70K/1938; Report by Major General F.S.G. Piggott, 15 June 1938.

⁹⁶ NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 39; Report No. 86 by Overesch, 3 December 1938. See also Chan, *China, Britain and Hong Kong*, p. 277.

Disunity on objectives and strategy amongst Japanese leaders undermined Ugaki's efforts. In May 1938 Ishii Itaro, Chief of the War Ministry's Asian Bureau, released a report outlining reasons in favour of pursuing direct negotiations with the Kuomintang and the report had been adopted by Ugaki. Ishii felt that army commanders in China were the main obstacle to peace because they acted for their own interests and saw China as a colony simply to be exploited.⁹⁷ Most wished to continue fighting and while Ugaki was negotiating for peace, subversion and assassination were expanded in scale. Chinese puppet hit squads were dispatched from Hong Kong on missions to kill Chinese central government officials in Shanghai and other cities. Some army commanders in China intensified their military operations and became overtaxed in their commitments.⁹⁸ Ugaki ultimately failed in his efforts to arrange peace because army hardliners pushed for military solutions as an end to their problems. In June Konoye reported to the Emperor that there was no unity amongst Japanese commanders or within the Cabinet. A few months later the new Ambassador Sir Archibald Clark Kerr found himself in agreement with his French counterpart in Chungking when he commented on how the Japanese army was running its own foreign policy, and that the Japanese Embassy in China had shifted from its role as an honest peace-broker between third powers and the Japanese military to a position of subordination. International diplomatic tensions in China increased accordingly.⁹⁹ General Ugaki quit his office shortly after the breakdown of his discussions with Craigie and the Japanese adjusted their efforts towards the

⁹⁷ Boyle, *China and Japan at War*, pp. 153-154.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.* pp. 134, 137-138.

⁹⁹ TNA, FO 371/22164 F 12289/12289/10; Telegram No. 399 by G.P. Young, 21 September 1938.

establishment of a puppet National Government at Nanking.¹⁰⁰ The invasion of south China was then launched in October 1938 and a new dangerous stage in the war was begun.

Within this diplomatic cloud it was the Chinese central government that emerged the victor in Kwangtung as control was generally maintained over most of the province and continued transhipment of war supplies from Hong Kong was assured. Yet, because of the political instability and increased lawlessness in Canton some of the imported war material had to be diverted around the city. Minor delays were experienced as weapons were moved in an overland direction to the east through Waichow before being loaded onto trains in northern Kwangtung, but by taking such a circuitous route supplies passed through General Yu's 12th Group Army in areas firmly under the control of the central government. The amount of supplies transiting Kwangtung remained high but what mattered most was that the new routes established east of Canton would serve the Chinese army well following the Japanese invasion and occupation of the city later that year. With the movement of weapons continuing under their noses after that time Japanese frustration and anger only deepened and the strain placed upon relations with Britain increased accordingly. Stirring Anglo-Japanese animosity, however, would be one of Chiang Kai Shek's main objectives in Kwangtung.

During 1938 several interrelated military events transpired which also threatened to make resistance in Kwangtung more tenuous. These began with the losses suffered by the Chinese air force in the battle for air superiority over the Yangtze River. The air force started the war with twenty three squadrons or

¹⁰⁰ FO 371/22153/464/132/70K/38; Report by Piggott, 27 June 1938. Boyle, *China and Japan at War*, pp. 156-158, and Usui Katsumi, 'The Politics of War', pp. 337-338.

approximately 250 obsolete aircraft, but by September 1937 they had acquired additional planes from the United States so that 600 were ready for operations.¹⁰¹ To maintain a supply of replacement pilots an air force training school at Liuchow [Liuzhou] was moved to Mengtze after being bombed, but there was also another school in operation at Yunnanyi.¹⁰² Soviet airpower in China by this time amounted to about 300 aircraft and many of these were I-15 and I-16 fighters.¹⁰³ In contrast, the Japanese could deploy over 2,100 and produce another 300 per month.¹⁰⁴ Of these, 1,223 were from the army while the navy possessed 860.¹⁰⁵ As the army tended to concentrate on the north it was the Japanese navy that conducted the majority of air operations in central and south China.¹⁰⁶

Air dominance was ceded grudgingly and the Chinese initially achieved a measure of success in defeating Japanese long range naval bombers operating from Formosa and Japan. The navy was responsible for most of the strategic bombing at this stage of the war because army air units, which were largely used for air superiority or for the provision of tactical ground support, lacked the necessary aircraft and doctrine for such missions.¹⁰⁷ Starting in July 1937 the Japanese bombed a Chinese city for the first time at Hangchow [Hangzhou] and the Chinese shot down six Japanese bombers. Each year thereafter Air Force Day was observed in commemoration of the event.¹⁰⁸ After the fall of Shanghai Japanese naval air units based themselves at captured airfields near the city and

¹⁰¹ RG 165, M1444, Reel 15, Memorandum by Col E.R.W. McCabe, 15 September 1937. See also TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 2/39, 17 January 1939.

¹⁰² TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 4/39 by Captain C. Edwards, 14 February 1939.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.* Mark Peattie, *Sunburst: the Rise of Japanese Naval Air Power, 1909-1941* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2001), p. 114.

¹⁰⁴ RG 165, M1444, Reel 15, Memorandum by Col E.R.W. McCabe, 15 September 1937.

¹⁰⁵ TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 2/39. NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 15, Memorandum by Col E.R.W. McCabe, 15 September 1937.

¹⁰⁶ Peattie, *Sunburst*, p. 103.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 106, 116.

¹⁰⁸ WO 208/722; HKIR No. 10/40 by Giles, 30 September 1940. TNA, WO 208/722; HKIR No. 8/41 by Giles, 1 September 1941.

concentrated on the destruction of Chinese air defence centres near the Lower Yangtze such as at Nanchang in December 1937. Casualties mounted as operations shifted west towards Hankow.¹⁰⁹ On 29 April 1938 a relatively large air battle occurred over the city involving approximately forty-eight Japanese aircraft (eighteen bombers and thirty fighters) against sixty to eighty Chinese and Soviet I-15 and I-16 fighters. Many losses were inflicted on both sides but exact numbers are difficult to arrive at.¹¹⁰ In later years Major General Claire Chennault wrote how in this particular battle the Soviets and Chinese had ambushed the Japanese and destroyed over fifty aircraft.¹¹¹ During the summer of 1938 the Chinese Air Force managed to check the Japanese air offensive in central China and Chennault noted that he considered the air campaign to have been a significant Japanese disaster. The cost to the Chinese, however, was unsustainable and operations were curtailed from midsummer to October 1938.¹¹² An aerial war of attrition was a contest that the Chinese could not win.

The Yangtze ground offensive also had a negative impact on national morale, as well as in Kwangtung, and this campaign was significant in that it greatly eroded Chinese military power. Through the summer and fall of 1938, the Japanese army continued with its western drive in central China, and during the course of this offensive the political wedge between Kwangtung and the central government was driven deeper. Cantonese soldiers were committed to a difficult battle north of Nanchang and although many casualties were given, many were also sustained resulting in sharp criticism from Kwangtung.¹¹³ Military readiness

¹⁰⁹ NARA, RG 18, Entry 300, Box 934, File Misc A, USAAF Decimal Files, Oct 1942-44; Memorandum by Griffith, 23 June 1938.

¹¹⁰ Peattie, *Sunburst*, pp. 111-115.

¹¹¹ Chennault, *Way of a Fighter*, pp. 64-65, 68, 79.

¹¹² NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 10; Report No. 9686 by Major David Barrett, 12 October 1938.

¹¹³ TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 22/38, 25 October 1938.

in the province was further eroded because of this offensive and a Japanese army invasion of southern China was only encouraged at a time when the central front at Hankow was collapsing. The subsequent occupation of Canton, coinciding with the fall of Hankow, was thus a serious blow to Chinese morale and was also a dangerous escalation as war conditions near Hong Kong only worsened.¹¹⁴

Hankow was politically significant as Chiang Kai Shek was attempting to build a coalition government in the city during 1938 in order to strengthen central governmental authority. He also sought to unify the country by restoring normal relations with southern Chinese officials and towards this he met with a measure of success. A Foreign Office report noted that Kwangsi leaders ‘are still working in the closest harmony with General Chiang Kai-shek’.¹¹⁵ In turn, Generals Li Tsung Ren and Pai Chung Hsi tended to limit some of the more autocratic tendencies of the Kuomintang. Open political debate was encouraged as was a free press and General Tai Li’s [Dai Li] secret police directed most of their attention onto Japanese sympathizers.¹¹⁶ It was at Hankow where a chance for the formation of a more democratic form of government inclusive of China’s many political factions promised to take root.¹¹⁷ This new united front produced a sense of political optimism across the country and many provincial soldiers were deployed along the Yangtze River to defend the new capital. Kwangsi and Kwangtung forces had already been sent north by the spring of 1938 with Cantonese troops under the command of Generals Hsueh Yueh and Ou Yang Chen being committed to battle in Kiangsi near the town of Tehan from June until October. These troops had already been replaced at home by weaker units of the

¹¹⁴ Brice, *The Royal Navy and the Sino-Japanese Incident*, p. 92.

¹¹⁵ TNA, FO 371/22158 F 5194/3376/10; China Summary No. 3 by Clark Kerr, 5 April 1938.

¹¹⁶ Stephen MacKinnon, ‘The Tragedy of Wuhan, 1938’, *Modern Asian Studies*, 30 (4) 1996: 931-943, p. 934.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 936-937.

12th Group Army under the command of General Yu Han Mou near Kukong.¹¹⁸

In early September, 90,000 of Yunnan's troops had also been trained and made ready to fight while a slightly larger number remained in the south.¹¹⁹ By upholding this Chinese version of collective security these provincial troops represented increased regional commitment for national unity.

The battle of Tehan, fought amongst the mountains north of Nanchang, was one of the few military events of the Japanese offensive that gave the Chinese reason for optimism. In supporting the drive on Hankow Japanese units on the south bank of the Yangtze River attempted to isolate Chinese forces in the region west of Lake Poyang but it was in October 1938, amidst difficult rough terrain, that the Japanese 2nd, 101st and 106th divisions were badly hurt in battling Cantonese divisions. A map for this battle can be seen in figure 3.1. Because of their own logistical limitations, the use of rail lines and waterways normally constrained Japanese operations and when fighting at a distance from these fixed lines of supply the Chinese were often provided with excellent opportunities to stage damaging counter-offensives against overextended lines of communication.¹²⁰ These were usually not well exploited, but in this instance Generals Ou and Hsueh were credited with the destruction of two regiments by employing large scale flank attacks as the Japanese advanced south from the river in two parallel columns.¹²¹ Specifically, General Ou's 4th Army was responsible for the destruction of the Japanese 147th Regiment of the 106th Division, and the use of such attacks against Japanese lines of supply at Tehan foreshadowed how

¹¹⁸ TNA, WO 106/5303, No. 289, Report on Visit to IV War Zone Headquarters by Captain Charles Boxer and Captain H. Chauvin, 20 May 1939.

¹¹⁹ TNA, FO 371/22150 E 724 (1/12h/1938); Report by George, 7 September 1938.

¹²⁰ Marvin Williamsen, 'The Military Dimension, 1937-1941', in *China's Bitter Victory: The War with Japan, 1937-1945*, eds. James C. Hsiung and S. I. Levine (London: M.E. Sharpe (East Gate), 1992), pp. 136-137.

¹²¹ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 10; Report No. 9686 by Barrett, 12 October 1938. See also TNA, WO 106/5303, No. 289, Report by Boxer and Chauvin, 20 May 1939.

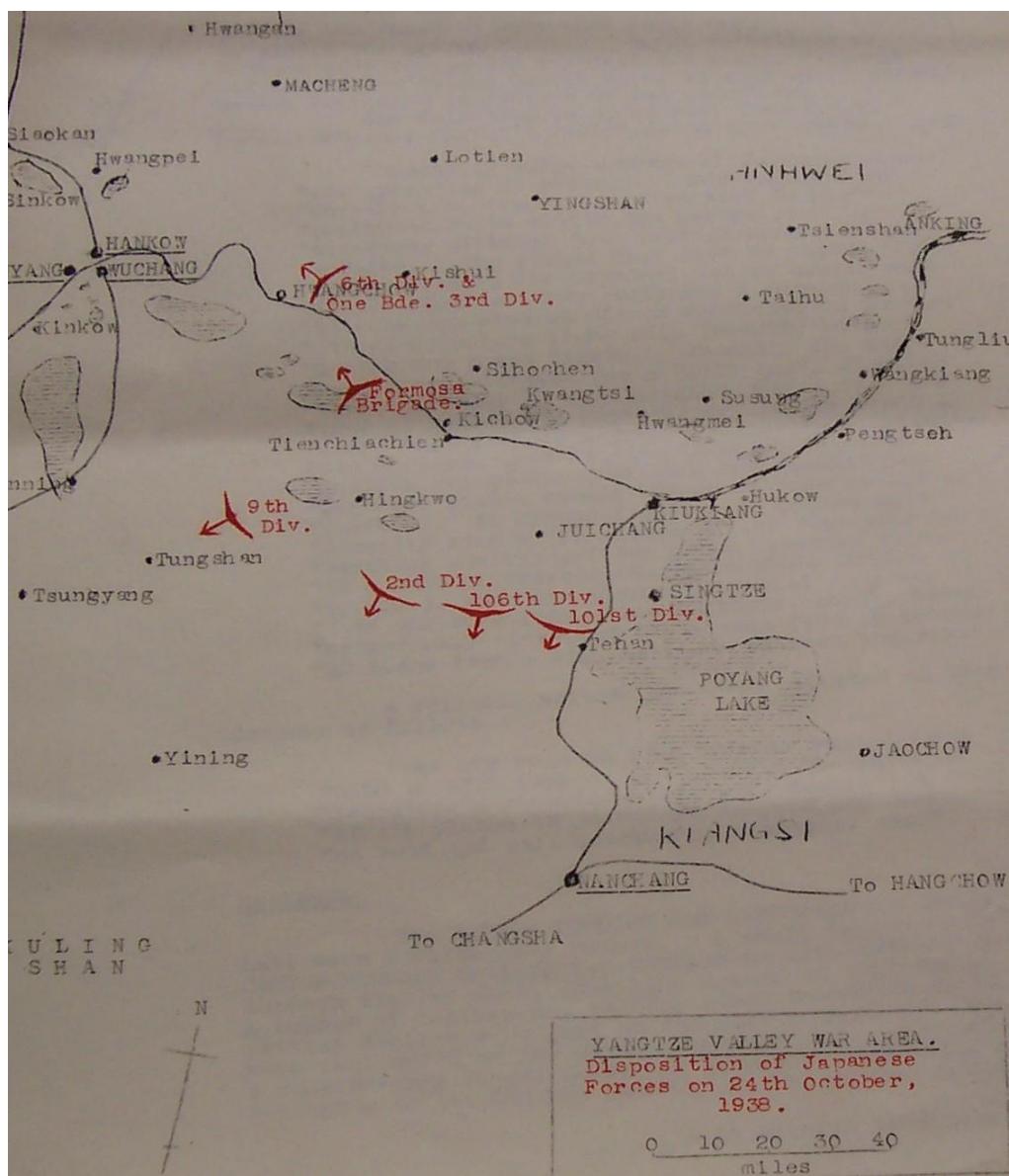


Figure 3.1: Japanese Army Positions at Tehan, October 1938. [Source: TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 22/38]

future victories for China would also be won on a larger scale in the important

battles for Changsha.¹²²

Foreign military observers took note of these events and reported cautiously optimistic appraisals of Chinese military capabilities back to their respective governments. British military intelligence officers at Hong Kong noted

¹²² TNA, WO 106/5303, No. 289, Report by Boxer and Chauvin, 20 May 1939.

how the Japanese ‘encountered much stiffer opposition and the capture of Tehan was only effected after very heavy fighting, with correspondingly severe losses on both sides’.¹²³ Captain Charles Boxer and Captain H. Chauvin confirmed initial reports of victory during a visit with the 4th Army in the spring of 1939. Boxer described the 4th Army as having a fighting spirit and morale somewhat greater than a Japanese reserve division and noted that General Ou ‘was the most impressive Chinese senior officer I had yet met, and gave the impression of being a real fighting soldier’.¹²⁴ They were invited to examine many captured weapons in addition to the 147th’s Regimental War Diary. Colonel Poon was a Japanese speaking officer of the Chinese 4th Army’s military intelligence section, and he informed the British officers that the Japanese 13th Regiment (of the 6th Division) had likewise been destroyed near the Yangtze River and he had seen their captured regimental flag as proof. Boxer subsequently wrote that the Japanese had never lost a battle flag in either the first Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895 or during the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905.¹²⁵ After inspecting this material Boxer and Chauvin admitted how ‘the Chinese claims for a victory on the “double tenth” at the Teian front last year possess more substance than this office and G ‘I’ Shanghai were willing to admit at that time’.¹²⁶ According to Japanese documents the use of chemical weapons at Tehan did not prevent their defeat, but nonetheless, this evidence prompted warnings by Boxer and Chauvin about the possible use of gas against Hong Kong in any future attack. US officials such as Major Barrett also commented on the victory at Tehan: ‘This office has long been

¹²³ TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 22/38, 25 October 1938.

¹²⁴ TNA, WO 106/5303, No. 289, Report by Boxer and Chauvin, 20 May 1939.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

of the opinion that Japanese tactics in the present hostilities constantly invite major disaster and one may have occurred in this instance.¹²⁷

At Tehan the Chinese achieved a rare military victory, and because of this, the battle had the potential to restore some measure of political confidence within Kwangtung for acceptance of central government authority. Political divisions between the central government and Kwangtung only worsened, however, as many casualties were sustained without preventing the fall of Hankow. Moreover, while Cantonese troops fought and died south of the Yangtze River, it was perceived by many that Chiang Kai Shek had used provincial troops at Tehan in order to preserve the strength of his own units. A Hong Kong military intelligence report noted how:

He has been freely accused of sacrificing provincial troops to keep his own divisions intact, and a growing antagonism to him has been noticed in Kwangtung. The four Cantonese divisions have been fighting very gallantly on the Tehan front but are liable to be suborned by defeatist propaganda spread by reinforcements from their native province.¹²⁸

To be fair, Canton was the centre of the anti-Japanese movement in south China and Chiang fought the war partly at the insistence of many regional leaders, especially those from Kwangtung. This left Cantonese officials with little cause for complaint about the losses incurred, but nevertheless, widespread sentiment against central authority spiked yet again in Kwangtung.¹²⁹ In the end, Tehan was overshadowed by larger events and with only a few weak divisions under the command of General Yu to defend Kwangtung there was little to oppose the Japanese invasion of the province when it came on 12 October 1938.

¹²⁷ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 10; Report No. 9686 by Barrett, 12 October 1938.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 22/38, 25 October 1938.

By then the fall of the capital had also become imminent. Firepower and mobility advantages accounted for the success of the Japanese offensive, and Hankow's fate was sealed with the loss of the fortress city of Tienchiachen to the 6th division on 29 September 1938.¹³⁰ By 21 October 1938 the Chinese army began to withdraw from the Hankow region and the capital was eventually moved to Chungking. Units north of the Yangtze retreated upriver and along the road to Shasi. Those further south retreated west upriver or towards Changsha with the Chinese General Headquarters establishing itself at Hengshan, Hunan. Chiang Kai Shek left Hankow on 24 October 1938 and the city fell to Japanese forces the following day.¹³¹ At this point it was decided to defend Hunan with the greatest determination in order to protect what remained of the lines of communication to the south.¹³² Surviving Cantonese troops from Tehan had been withdrawn into Hunan while General Yu maintained control in Kwangtung with weak central government forces.¹³³

The fall of Hankow was a Chinese political and military disaster. During the offensive the Chinese army had suffered over one million casualties and this included eighty per-cent of the officer corps. These were higher casualties than those absorbed over the next seven years combined. No medical treatment was available for wounded men and the Chinese army was permanently affected by these losses. The central government never again recovered the same level of military strength or political cohesion it held during 1938 and political figures as

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 10; Report No. 9694 by Major David Barrett, 8 November 1938.

¹³² NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 39; Report No. 86 by Overesch, 3 December 1938.

¹³³ Wilson, *When Tigers Fight*, pp. 130-131.

prominent as Wang Ching Wei defected soon afterwards to form the puppet

National Government in another attempt to arrange peace.¹³⁴

Throughout 1938 several political and military events had a detrimental effect upon Cantonese morale and the ability of Kwangtung to resist the impending Japanese assault was diminished. Japanese attacks on Chinese lines of communication brought the war onto Hong Kong's doorstep and low intensity conflict with Britain began to spread across the Pearl River Delta. The failed coup in February produced civil strife across the province and led to a government more corrupt than its predecessor. Disaffection with central authority grew stronger, and Chiang's attempt to alleviate provincial grievances with a more democratic form of government at Hankow failed as military setbacks mounted along the Yangtze River. Compounding this problem was the deployment of Cantonese ground forces to Tahan, north of Nanchang. Although they acquitted themselves well losses were heavy and many Cantonese felt that Chiang had sacrificed their troops while safeguarding his own. The net result of these problems was to elevate fear of the Japanese and disaffection with the Chinese central government. Kwangtung's possible defection had already become sufficiently apparent to raise concerns amongst British authorities at Hong Kong such as Governor Sir Geoffry Northcote. Thus, during July Northcote travelled to Canton in an effort to shore up morale and demonstrate British diplomatic support for Chiang Kai Shek.¹³⁵

¹³⁴ MacKinnon, 'The Tragedy of Wuhan', p. 933.

¹³⁵ TNA, ADM 1/9568, File West River Flotilla; H.M.S. *Tarantula*, July Report, 12 August 1938.

Blockade and Low Intensity Conflict in the Pearl River Delta

Japanese strategy in the Sino-Japanese War was often uncoordinated between the military services and the government in Tokyo, and this caused an escalation of the conflict towards the disastrous war of annihilation with Britain and America. Until 1941, south China was the incubator where this problem metastasized. The Japanese did not officially declare war on China in 1937 because the United States Neutrality Act would have resulted in a termination of trade; this included the importation of necessary war materials such as oil. Had they done so foreign vessels would have been barred legally from entering Chinese waters.¹³⁶ A blockade was nonetheless established by the Japanese navy as they saw an opportunity to participate more fully in the war by patrolling the coastal waters of south and east China in search of Chinese war supplies. Seeking victory with blockade, which included aerial interdiction of lines of communication from Hong Kong into China, the navy adopted a more aggressive posture and in doing so contributed greatly to the creation of low intensity conflict in and around Hong Kong. The colony thus became a focal point of Anglo-Japanese confrontation and another step was taken towards igniting the Pacific War.

Japanese anger towards Great Britain mounted after the British took the lead in condemning their actions at the League of Nations. Officials in Tokyo and China, however, worked at cross purposes as the navy intensified hostilities near Hong Kong while some elements within the army tried to reach a diplomatic understanding with British officials. On 16 January 1938 Japanese Navy Minister Admiral Yonai Mitsumasa made public in Tokyo his demand for Cabinet unity in

¹³⁶ NAC, RG 24, Reel C-8301, File 5147; Telegram No. 41 by Randolph Bruce to External Affairs, 31 January 1938.

an all out war within China.¹³⁷ This was followed by a proclamation by Home Minister Admiral Suetsugu Nobumasa who wished to see his government officially declare war against the Chinese in order to strengthen the blockade of south China. The Canadian Minister to Japan reported to Ottawa how it was:

known that the Home Minister, Admiral Suetsugu, and other high naval officers, advocate this step, mainly for the purpose of blockading more effectively the China coast especially in the vicinity of Hong Kong.¹³⁸

The admiral was also reported by Major Barrett to have said:

China in the present struggle was relying on British aid through Hongkong, and as Japan could not stand indefinite resistance from China, the sources of resistance must be cut off.¹³⁹

He went on to add that, ‘If Japan comes to clash with Great Britain, that cannot be helped. If the British were to cease to assist China, it would be a very good thing for the Orient.’¹⁴⁰ In February 1938 Japanese press attacks began to label the British as merchants of death, compelling Anthony Eden to respond in the House of Commons that British exports of munitions to China between June 1937 and January 1938, had only amounted to £134,338.¹⁴¹ This did little to ease tensions.

During the period from July 1937 to October 1938, the war was brought to the Pearl River Delta as the Japanese navy began to isolate Hong Kong through aerial and naval interdiction. This onslaught against Kwangtung was much less dangerous geopolitically than a full invasion of Hong Kong, but it still resulted in the deaths of the colony’s residents and it raised the level of Anglo-Japanese friction. The primary objective in Kwangtung from August 1937 until October 1938 was the disruption of the Chinese logistical network and the most important

¹³⁷ Hata, ‘Marco Polo Bridge Incident’, p. 286.

¹³⁸ NAC, RG 24, Reel C-8301, File 5147; Telegram No. 41 by Bruce, 31 January 1938.

¹³⁹ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 2; Report No. 9623 by Barrett, 12 January 1938.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 2; Report No. 9639 by Barrett, 20 February 1938.

element was the railway system. Air operations were also politically motivated as was witnessed during the terror bombing of Canton during the spring of 1938.

Conducted by long range naval bombers operating from Formosa and by aircraft from the fleet carrier *Kaga*, the damage inflicted on the city was substantial.¹⁴²

Attacks throughout the rest of Kwangtung also grew in frequency, and reciprocal anger directed against the Japanese by British nationals mounted as the level of casualties rose along with a disruption of commerce. Over time this contributed greatly towards building British resentment and a forging of local determination to retaliate.

Tactics of the aerial interdiction campaign emphasized the use of unescorted bombers directed against hard targets on land such as railway bridges, in addition to attacks on soft targets including civilian aircraft, junks and trains. In 1937 Japanese air crews were still inexperienced and tactics were not well developed, so squadrons often missed hitting their targets. Aircraft regularly over-flew the city of Kongmoon [Jiangmen] northwest of Macau on their way to bomb Canton or the Canton-Hankow Railway as it served as a useful navigation point but it also gave the Chinese valuable advance warning. On 6 October 1937 one typical raid comprised of three squadrons over-flew Kongmoon at an altitude of 3,000 feet at 10:00 am and by 10:30 reports from Canton confirmed they had continued north to attack the railway. One of the squadrons returned an hour later to its carrier near the coast.¹⁴³ Due to fear of Chinese antiaircraft fire, as limited as it was, the Japanese also frequently bombed from higher altitudes with much imprecision.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² Brice, *The Royal Navy and the Sino-Japanese Incident*, p. 110. Peattie, *Sunburst*, p. 116.

¹⁴³ UCC, Accession No. 83.046C, Box 3, File 51, BOMSC; Letter by Dr. T.A. Broadfoot to Reverend J.H. Arnup, 6 October 1937.

¹⁴⁴ NAC, RG 24, Reel C-8301, File 5147; Memorandum by Craigie, 8 June 1938.

The primary type of aircraft used in these attacks was the carrier-based seaplane operating from one or two small carriers patrolling along the Chinese coast. These vessels approximated the size of a cruiser and could usually carry about a dozen biplanes somewhat similar in design to an RAF Swordfish.¹⁴⁵ Methods employed by these vessels were to anchor for several days, often at Hainan or Weichow Island (25 miles south of Pakhoi), and a relatively protected beach would be selected as a refuelling and rearming point for the planes unloaded at the beginning of the first day's missions.¹⁴⁶ About one hundred men would be landed as ground crews and defence forces to service the aircraft. Seaplanes conducted several missions each day and were usually armed with one hundred pound bombs; crews provided mission reports to the senior officer ashore after landing.¹⁴⁷ By operating from Weichow and Hainan these carriers positioned themselves astride the shipping lanes between Hong Kong and French Indochina and the threat to third powers was also made clear.¹⁴⁸

One of the most important targets of the campaign was the large bridge at Sheklung, located about half way between Canton and Hong Kong, as was another bridge situated about one hundred twenty miles north of Canton at the town of Kukong.¹⁴⁹ A map for these can be seen in figure 3.2. The first strike launched against the Kukong bridge was made on 31 August 1937, but this mission ended in failure as only the town was hit resulting in many civilian casualties. Many attempts were to follow throughout the fall and winter with

¹⁴⁵ TNA, WO 208/721, File Hong Kong Fortnightly Intelligence Reports January 1939 to December 1939; H.K.I.R. No. 26/39 by Giles, 19 December 1939.

¹⁴⁶ TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 1/39 by Edwards, 3 January 1939.

¹⁴⁷ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 13/39 by Edwards, 20 June 1939.

¹⁴⁸ TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 1/39 by Edwards, 3 January 1939.

¹⁴⁹ NAC, RG 24, Reel C-8301, File 5147; Memorandum by Craigie, 8 June 1938.

equally poor results.¹⁵⁰ Kowloon-Canton Railway (KCR) trains were also attacked and in one example during October 1937 at Nam Sheh, about five miles south of Sheklung, a squadron of eight Japanese seaplanes killed two people; one soldier and a small girl. One hundred passengers aboard the train ran for cover before strafing and bomb attacks wounded another two of their number.¹⁵¹



Figure 3.2: Railway Lines (1938) and Supply Lines (1939) in Kwangtung. [Source: TNA, WO 106/5303 No 289; Report on Visit to IV War Zone.]

Bombing of the KCR became a regular occurrence, and although loss of life continued, the air war against Kwangtung produced some unexpected results on civilian morale. One Canadian missionary wrote that, ‘Great credit is due to

¹⁵⁰ NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 39; Report No. 27, 20 January 1938, and NARA, RG 306, Boxes 944-1000; Photographs, 1937-1949. See also UCC, Accession No. 83.046C, Box 3, File 55, BOMSC; CCJC Pamphlet October/November 1937, No 1.

¹⁵¹ TNA, CO 129/564/1; Sir Geoffry Northcote to Colonial Secretary W.G.A. Ormsby-Gore, 9 November 1937.

repair crews and train crews ... Such courage on the part of workmen in China would not have existed a few years ago.¹⁵² A few months later in Canton, Royal Navy officers were surprised by the self sacrifice and efficiency displayed by the city's fire brigade and rescue personnel who remained on duty throughout.¹⁵³ In general, air strikes against Chinese rail lines were not very effective in slowing the movement of supplies to points farther north but the Japanese were persistent.

During October 1937 frequent attacks were launched across the West River region especially in the area surrounding Kongmoon.¹⁵⁴ It was not long before many towns south of the city along the Sunning Railway also became targets.¹⁵⁵ Government facilities and bridges were usually singled out for attention but terror bombing was also conducted. Train attacks were regular occurrences but still remained largely ineffective with delays usually limited to several hours.¹⁵⁶ Farther south towards the coast, the town of Toishan was bombed in December. Toishan was a rather prosperous area since many overseas Chinese in America and Canada originated from this part of Kwangtung and family remittances accounted for a great deal of the region's wealth. Because of this, the Japanese navy occupied Toishan using marines on more than one occasion over the next several years.¹⁵⁷ Attention was also often directed against the Kwangsi road network running northeast from French Indochina.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵² UCC, Accession 83.046C, Box 3, File 55, BOMSC; CCJC Pamphlet, 10 December 1937.

¹⁵³ TNA, ADM 1/9568, File West River Flotilla; H.M.S. *Tarantula*, July Report, 12 August 1938.

¹⁵⁴ UCC, Accession No. 83.046C, Box 3, File 51, BOMSC; Letter by Broadfoot to Arnup, 28 September 1937.

¹⁵⁵ UCC, Accession No. 83.046C, Box 3, File 51, BOMSC; Letter by Reverend D. McRae to Arnup, 29 October 1937. See also UCC, Accession No. 83.046C, Box 3, File 55, BOMSC; CCJC Pamphlet Oct./Nov. 1937.

¹⁵⁶ UCC, Accession No. 83.046C, Box 3, File 55, BOMSC; CCJC Pamphlet November 1937.

¹⁵⁷ UCC, Accession No. 83.046C, Box 3, File 51, BOMSC; Letter by McRae to Arnup, 23 December 1937.

¹⁵⁸ TNA, ADM 1/9568, File West River Flotilla; W.R. 124/38, H.M.S. *Tarantula*, Report No. 11/181.A/38, 12 February 1938. See also TNA, ADM 1/9568, File West River Flotilla; H.M.S. *Tarantula*, Report No. 20/181.A/38, 15 March 1938.

Strangely, Kongmoon was one of the few cities to avoid initial bombardment and one missionary, Reverend Duncan McRae, speculated that the reason might have been due to the fact that two of the characters used in spelling Kongmoon were also used in the name of Emperor Hirohito. Kongmoon was also a source of vegetables for the Japanese navy, and so at this stage of the war cholera remained more of a problem in that particular city than Japanese bombers.¹⁵⁹

After the aborted Japanese invasion of Kwangtung and the failed coup d'état in February, the Japanese Consul in Hong Kong, Nakamura Toyokazu stated in April 1938 that intensive air raids formed the only means by which Japan could prevent importation of war materials into China and that, ‘Chiang will never sue for peace and Japan must use stronger measures to defeat his government.’¹⁶⁰ The terror bombing of Canton from May to June was greatly intensified during this period with the Japanese Navy long range Mihoro Air Group pounding Canton regularly from bases in Formosa along with units of the *Kaga*.¹⁶¹ Large numbers of civilian casualties were a shock to many foreign nationals. The Japanese bombing of Canton was primarily meant to terrorize the population and this charge was brought before the League of Nations as early as March but the international reaction remained limited.¹⁶²

Civilian targets were most commonly hit and as the death toll climbed, sympathy grew for the Chinese amongst many foreigners. In an earlier raid a United Church of Canada missionary reported how, ‘At one, thirty in the

¹⁵⁹ UCC, Accession No. 83.046C, Box 3, File 53, BOMSC; Report by Dr. Jack Lind to UCC, 31 December 1937.

¹⁶⁰ NARA, RG 38, M975, Reel 2, Estimate of Potential Military Strength Documents G, Volume 1; Report No. 91.

¹⁶¹ Brice, *The Royal Navy and the Sino-Japanese Incident*, p. 92. See also Peattie, *Sunburst*, p. 116.

¹⁶² NAC, RG 24, Reel C-8301, File 5147; League of Nations Memorandum, 3 March 1939. See also UCC, Accession No. 83.046C, Box 3, File 55, BOMSC; CCJC Pamphlet Oct/Nov 1937, No I, 10 December 1937. See also Hsu Shu-hsi, *Three Weeks of Canton Bombings* (Shanghai: Kelly & Walsh, Limited, 1939), pp. 71-72.

afternoon (in clear daylight) ... Japanese planes dropped six bombs on a residential area killing not less than three hundred persons, mostly women and children. When the bombing stopped Dr. Bates ... brought out wounded and dying.¹⁶³ Dr. F. Bates ran a hospital in the eastern part of Canton near Tien Ho airfield which had been heavily bombed for several days. Many dead and wounded from nearby residential areas were discovered shortly after.¹⁶⁴ In mid June 1938 the YMCA was targeted repeatedly and during one of these raids hundreds were killed just outside its doors. Several thousand had been killed in Canton not only to the bombing but also because of low level strafing. Many more had been wounded. Passenger boats plying the West and Pearl Rivers were likewise strafed. On another occasion a sewing factory was hit killing scores of young women. Incendiary munitions were used and KCR stations were also attacked frequently killing many others. Canadian doctors Victoria Cheung, Jack Lind and Richard Cockfield treated many of the wounded and sent reports of these incidents to the United Church in Toronto; four hundred air strikes were identified throughout Kwangtung up to that time.¹⁶⁵ Air raids on Canton continued into July, and of the original 1.3 million people who had previously lived in the city, only 600,000 remained by summer's end.¹⁶⁶ Many had moved to the relative safety of Hong Kong, creating additional security problems for the colonial government.

During air raids in Canton many people tried to move close to the Anglo-French concession of Shameen Island ('Sand Bank') to avoid being hit, but this

¹⁶³ UCC, Accession No. 83.046C, Box 3, File 55, BOMSC; CCJC Pamphlet, October/November 1937, No. 1.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ UCC, Accession No. 83.046C, Box 3, File 57, BOMSC; Letter by Dr. J. Oscar Thomson to the McGill News, 18 June 1938.

¹⁶⁶ TNA, WO 106/5303 No. 293; Report by Davidson-Houston, 5 August 1938.

often proved futile as the Japanese navy demonstrated its willingness to attack third power targets with regularity. Shameen was often hit by bombs and machinegun fire. Many Chinese were strafed in the canal between the concession and the city.¹⁶⁷ To prevent people from seeking refuge within the concession, gates were often kept closed.¹⁶⁸ On 8 June 1938 Ambassador Sir Robert Craigie protested about Japanese belligerency and the numerous over-flights of Shameen.

The Japanese attacking aircraft have in many cases flown over Shameen, and on one occasion an aeroplane passed directly over the British Consulate-General, at a height of barely 600 feet. Moreover when the locomotive sheds at Wongsha Station were hit from over 10,000 feet on 5th June the bombs passed directly over Shameen.¹⁶⁹

Japanese naval commanders were not greatly concerned about British complaints.

Craigie also expressed his government's displeasure at the large loss of life amongst civilians but again, Japanese authorities were not greatly worried.¹⁷⁰ A news article reported how in one response to diplomatic protests the Japanese, 'agreed to pay the French government approximately \$100,000 for damage caused to the French cathedral at Canton during air raids last week' but observers estimated the damage to have been four times the sum the Japanese were willing to pay.¹⁷¹

Not all of the raids launched against Canton were made indiscriminately. Directed attacks against specific rail facilities such as Wongsha Station were carried out with the aim of causing destruction to military infrastructure. Colonel Stilwell noted that some of the most severe bombing in Canton was designed to interrupt rail supplies from Hong Kong, so that the Japanese did not have to

¹⁶⁷ UCC, Accession No. 83.046C, Box 3, File 57, BOMSC; Letter by Thomson to the McGill News, 18 June 1938.

¹⁶⁸ TNA, WO 106/5303 No. 293; Report by Davidson-Houston, 5 August 1938.

¹⁶⁹ NAC, RG 24, Reel C-8301, File 5147; Craigie Memorandum, 8 June 1938.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁷¹ NAC, RG 25, Volume 1866, File 226-A; Ottawa Citizen News Article, 10 August 1938.

‘commit themselves to land operations in South China, operations which cannot but further strain the already … tired resources of Japan’.¹⁷² These attacks usually met with failure and although Wongsha Station itself was partially damaged, railway operations were not significantly disrupted further. Nor were supplies impeded in Hunan or Kiangsi to any great degree and the branch line south of Chuchow [Zhuzhou] remained in use to the forward battle areas near Nanchang.¹⁷³ To compensate, the Japanese navy bombed Swatow in June 1938 while the port of Amoy was seized during May.¹⁷⁴ Namao Island (near Swatow) was also occupied as a springboard for future operations in Kwangtung.¹⁷⁵

The Japanese Navy’s air assault on Canton was designed to aggravate political divisions between the central government and the Kwangtung independence faction, and in this they were successful.¹⁷⁶ As most of the Chinese Air Force was busy over Hankow there were conspicuously few air units available to defend against Japanese attacks. The lack of Chinese air defences greatly worsened the rift between north and south. Those few air units available in Kwangtung were also of very mixed quality as one example provided by Hong Kong military intelligence well illustrates.

Colonel Ng, who was shot down and killed while flying a ‘Gladiator’ early in October, 1938, at Namyung (North-East Kwangtung) was at the time leading a flight of three aircraft, but as soon as they met the Japanese formation the other two aircraft turned back and their pilots ‘bailed out’. Colonel Ng accounted for two Japanese aircraft before he himself was shot down.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷² NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 10; Report No. 9667 by Stilwell, 25 June 1938.

¹⁷³ TNA, WO 106/5303 No. 293; Report by Davidson-Houston, 5 August 1938.

¹⁷⁴ TNA, FO 371/22150 E 724 (1/12h/1938); Report by George, 7 September 1938. See also Chang Ming Kai and Hsu Long Hsuen, *History of the Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945)* (Taipei: Chung Wu Publishing, 1971), p. 262.

¹⁷⁵ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 10; Report No. 9667 by Stilwell, 25 June 1938.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 2/39, 17 January 1939.

Aside from the lack of fighters, anti-aircraft guns and ammunition also remained scarce in Canton because of the earlier coup attempt. Chiang's lack of trust in local Kwangtung commanders (excepting General Yu) prevented any strengthening of air defence units. The city had three batteries of four 3 inch guns, several Soviet 37 mm guns, and one battery of three 120 mm guns, but all of these lacked sufficient ammunition due to rivalries amongst the civil and military leadership in addition to the distrust of the central government.¹⁷⁸ Chiang's statement that, 'today's sacrifices will pave the way for tomorrow's victories' did little to help improve matters.¹⁷⁹ Many grievances were expressed in Kwangtung newspapers about this state of affairs as well as the hollow sounding promises issued by Chiang that southern air defences were to be strengthened.

While the air war in Kwangtung intensified many were dismayed at the limited British official response, as the country's foreign policy remained based upon the avoidance of open war with Japan. In May, Oscar Thomson, a Canadian doctor in Canton wrote to a colleague that,

... even the Japs must be amazed themselves and British prestige is at zero. The Japs would not have dared bomb the Kowloon (Hongkong) Canton railway. Partly British owned and British financed-had Britain showed some spirit.¹⁸⁰

Japanese air attacks against railways continued and when conducted close to Hong Kong, it became a potential source of military conflict. Hong Kong's growing isolation raised the anxiety of British residents and officials alike, and it was not long before the intrusion of the conflict into areas closer to Hong Kong began to cause a divergence in outlook amongst British officials in the region to those making policy in London. In time this divergence caused Hong Kong

¹⁷⁸ TNA, WO 106/5303 No. 293; Report by Davidson-Houston, 5 August 1938.

¹⁷⁹ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 10; Report No. 9667 by Stilwell, 25 June 1938.

¹⁸⁰ UCC, Accession No. 83.046C, Box 3, File 57, BOMSC; Letter by Thomson to Dr. Stephenson, 10 May 1938.

officials to begin acting independently both diplomatically and militarily.

Henceforth, this problem was a significant factor contributing to the slow escalation of Anglo-Japanese conflict.

The air war against south China also included attacks against aircraft flying out of Hong Kong with Japanese air units occasionally violating the colony's airspace. These events caused alarm amongst residents and provoked additional protests by Ambassador Craigie in Tokyo. In one incident a Royal Navy aircraft from *HMS Eagle* was fired upon by Japanese naval anti-aircraft fire off the coast of Hong Kong in November 1937. The attack was described as a legitimate accident by the Japanese as they stated that the officers aboard the vessel in question thought they were firing in self defence.¹⁸¹ In December 1937 fifteen Japanese bombers overflew Lantau Island and the Taikoo Docks. A protest was lodged in Tokyo and more antiaircraft guns were delivered to Hong Kong in response.¹⁸² Air action against civilian aircraft also caused great indignation amongst Hong Kong's residents. The two prominent airline companies flying out of the colony were the China National Aviation Corporation (CNAC) and Eurasian Aviation Corporation.¹⁸³ In August 1938 Japanese naval aircraft shot down a CNAC plane near Macau and sixteen out of nineteen occupants were killed.¹⁸⁴ The Japanese were attempting to assassinate a prominent Chinese official whose life was saved by a last minute change in travel

¹⁸¹ TNA, CO 129/564/1; Newspaper clipping, 1 December 1937.

¹⁸² Michael Share, *Where Empires Collided: Russian and Soviet Relations with Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Macao* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2007), p. 101.

¹⁸³ Hu, *A Brief History of the Sino-Japanese War*, pp. 46-47.

¹⁸⁴ NAC, MG 26 J1, Reel C-3732, Volume 247, No. 211153; Telegram No. 566 by Bruce to Mackenzie King, 8 September 1938.

plans.¹⁸⁵ The following month two Eurasian aircraft were forced down; one in Kwangtung and the other near Hankow.¹⁸⁶

Ultimately, the Japanese air campaign was successful in creating greater political divisions in China, but the cost was to raise the level of diplomatic friction with Great Britain and France, which in turn pushed both of these powers closer towards Chiang Kai Shek. Japanese air attacks on military depots in Canton again caused the Chinese army to rely on alternate lines of communication that by-passed the city. As with the earlier coup attempt, these routes proved strategically useful since the Chinese refined their ability to move large quantities of material around Canton to the railroad in northern Kwangtung. More importantly, once the Japanese army invaded south China in October 1938, the disruption of these supply lines from Hong Kong intensified and the potential for conflict between British and Japanese military forces increased over time.

The Japanese were loud in their criticism of British aid, and in conjunction with the air campaign, naval interdiction operations also began against Chinese vessels plying the waters near Hong Kong.¹⁸⁷ Attacks were conducted against junks carrying military supplies from Hong Kong to coastal China. Aside from merely impeding supply, however, another objective was to secure British agreement in terminating their support altogether. Ultimately, Japanese officials hoped to intimidate the British into recognizing greater Japanese authority within China.

During the first year of the war attacks on Hong Kong junks and other vessels were limited in frequency compared with later years, but they were

¹⁸⁵ Brice, *The Royal Navy and the Sino-Japanese Incident*, p. 81 (photo caption).

¹⁸⁶ NAC, MG 26 J1, Reel C-3732, Volume 247, No. 211153; Telegram No. 566 by Bruce, 8 September 1938.

¹⁸⁷ NAC, RG 25, Volume 3233, File 5548-40C; Military Situation Memorandum by Lieutenant Colonel Hiram F. Wooster, 20 May 1944.

nonetheless violent and were a direct provocation to British authorities. The first of these recorded were in September 1937 when a Japanese submarine sank eleven junks. Most of the people aboard these vessels were killed, including many women and children and almost all of them lived in Hong Kong. The Japanese claimed that the junks had attacked their ships and they were forced to return fire.¹⁸⁸ On 11 December 1937 a Japanese destroyer fired on a Chinese customs cruiser inside Hong Kong's territorial waters. This violation of British sovereignty was followed by the intrusion of two additional destroyers which entered the area to tow the vessel away. Japanese sailors also landed on a British controlled island and property was stolen. Diplomatic pressure failed to produce any noticeable results and an armed Japanese motor trawler again violated Hong Kong's waters to attack four more junks on 11 February 1938. Representations were nonetheless made by Ambassador Craigie in Tokyo throughout the winter.¹⁸⁹

In February 1938, the *SS Asian* was seized and taken to Bako in the Pescadores (west of Formosa) but the ship was eventually released.¹⁹⁰ There was a temporary lull during March and April but large numbers of Japanese vessels appeared near Hong Kong in May to coincide with the terror bombing of Canton.¹⁹¹ In May 1938 a Chinese sampan was destroyed by an armed Japanese motor trawler in Hong Kong territorial waters and a junk was also seized. In these attacks one of the sampan's crewmen was decapitated and the entire junk crew was killed.¹⁹²

Smaller patrol vessels such as destroyers, Motor Torpedo Boats (MTBs) or trawlers were used by all sides in the Kwangtung naval war because of their better

¹⁸⁸ TNA, CO 129/570/8; File cover notation.

¹⁸⁹ NAC, RG 24, Reel C-8301, File 5147; Telegram No. 27 by Craigie, 26 February 1938. See also NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 2; Report No. 9623 by Barrett, 12 January 1938, and TNA, FO 371/27675 F 2616/317/10; Memorandum No.1035 by Craigie, 25 January 1939.

¹⁹⁰ NAC, RG 24, Reel C-8301, File 5147; Telegram No. 35 by Craigie, 8 March 1938.

¹⁹¹ TNA, CO 129/570/7; Admiralty Telegram, 25 May 1938.

¹⁹² TNA, FO 371/27675 F 2616/317/10; Memorandum No.1035 by Craigie, 25 January 1939.

speed and mobility, and because of the unnecessary risk posed by deploying larger ships near the coast. Small vessels were also more suited for stopping and boarding junks and could remain better concealed in coastal inlets. Japanese main force units sometimes deployed to south China from the Marianas in support of coastal operations and these usually consisted of one or two cruisers accompanied by a destroyer flotilla of four or five destroyers. One or two carriers, plus four or five fleet auxiliaries would also be on station at such times.

Chinese tactics used in the Hong Kong junk war were well suited to advancing their strategy of involving Great Britain in the conflict. The topography of the Kwangtung coast enabled the Chinese to utilize their meagre naval forces to the fullest, and thereby provoke Japanese retaliation near and within Hong Kong waters. While being interviewed by a British newspaper reporter a Portuguese Air Force officer stationed at Macau stated that the Japanese began their naval attacks because Chinese MTBs had been using the junks as cover to approach Japanese warships. This officer further stated that one Chinese MTB sank a Japanese seaplane carrier near Macau with a quick torpedo shot using these tactics. The Chinese MTB and all of the accompanying junks were then sunk by the destroyer escort.¹⁹³ Regardless of the actual outcome, by simply attempting an attack of this kind near Hong Kong the Chinese strategy was advanced by bringing the war into areas of British military and economic interest. Attacks on junks effectively extended the blockade to include Hong Kong's food supply and recklessly damaged Anglo-Japanese relations because it was the most likely way in which British and Japanese naval forces could come into direct conflict. Of all the three military services stationed at Hong Kong it was the

¹⁹³ TNA, CO 129/570/7; Extract from newspaper article, 22 May 1938.

Royal Navy, as limited in size as it was, that had the only real capability to project power outside of the colony's boundaries. The violence of these attacks held the greatest potential for triggering an Anglo-Japanese confrontation at sea should Royal Navy forces intervene in defence of Hong Kong junks. Protection of the Hong Kong fishing fleet became such a serious problem that it almost led to open warfare during the summer of 1941.

As with the bombing campaign of the railroads and Canton, the attacks on Hong Kong junks created a great deal of anger amongst residents living in the colony as well as in Kwangtung. Some of the criticism regarding the lack of official reaction was expressed by missionaries working in the region. Doctor Thomson wrote of this in May 1938:

Foreigners and Chinese here cannot understand why Britain allows the Japs to persecute and destroy the Hongkong fishing fleet-the personnel of which were born in Hongkong territory-live there, are there registered and pay taxes.¹⁹⁴

A month later he added that the Japanese navy,

... seems to delight in destroying the South China and HongKong fishing fleets ... Many foreigners have watched the Japanese warships attack, sink or set the junks on fire. Why? Why are they given no protection by the British warships in HongKong?¹⁹⁵

One reason for British restraint was a lack of clarity as to who the Hong Kong government was responsible for. Many of the fishermen and traders plying the waters between Hong Kong and Macau were residents of Hong Kong but they were also Chinese nationals. Where did the British government's responsibilities start and end? Questions of governmental responsibility were intertwined with questions of nationality and identity. Over time, these attacks caused the Chinese

¹⁹⁴ UCC, Accession No. 83.046C, Box 3, File 57, BOMSC; Letter by Thomson to Dr. Stephenson, 10 May 1938.

¹⁹⁵ UCC, Accession No. 83.046C, Box 3, File 57, BOMSC; Letter by Thomson to the McGill News, 18 June 1938.

government to become more involved in Hong Kong's internal affairs and by 1941 they insisted upon the establishment of a Consulate within the colony.¹⁹⁶

From the outset of the Sino-Japanese War, Hong Kong served as the most significant source of supply for the Chinese army and the Japanese were quick to respond. Aerial interdiction of Chinese lines of communication both in Kwangtung and at sea resulted in a state of low intensity conflict being established in the Pearl River Delta between Japanese and British military forces. Anglo-Japanese diplomatic relations worsened as British sympathies amongst residents and officials became strong in support of the Chinese. In time, frustration amongst colonial officials grew over the inability to protect Hong Kong Chinese against what was considered to be Japanese piracy. Hong Kong officials began to assume greater initiative and independence of action in countering Japanese aggression, but in 1937 and 1938 they continued to follow London's lead. They limited the use of their resources to help rescue Chinese crews when possible and continued to monitor Japanese naval activity closely. For four and a half years, however, the transhipment of war supplies from the colony was never interrupted by British officials and much of this traffic was carried in Hong Kong junks. Bringing an end to this practice was one of the reasons why the Japanese attacked the colony with a direct ground assault in December 1941, and the invasion of Kwangtung in October 1938 was one of the major steps taken towards this cataclysmic result.

¹⁹⁶ TNA, FO 371/27674 F 9062/287/10; Letter by Northcote, 14 May 1941.

British Far Eastern Policy: Collective Security in East Asia

British Far Eastern foreign policy during 1937 and 1938 was not well defined and the resulting policy vacuum over China also helped escalate Anglo-Japanese tensions. This ultimately contributed to the diminution of British power.¹⁹⁷ Problems in China were often regarded as an unwelcome diversion from what were considered more important events in Europe.¹⁹⁸ Although British policy seemed to be based upon the protection of imperial interests there were ideological considerations shared by many government officials and parliamentarians in London that were inimical to the formulation of sound strategy in China.

During the 1930s many held expectations that only through disarmament would the establishment of a new world order be peacefully imposed upon nations, and more specifically, that collective security should be maintained without arms.¹⁹⁹ Many idealists, often found within the House of Commons, increasingly shared propinquity with influential personages more closely aligned to private policy councils such as the Royal Institute of International Affairs; an organization pursuing the centralization of global economic and political power under Anglo-American control.²⁰⁰ Sir John Brenan was another such senior official at the Foreign Office who viewed Japanese exhaustion in China as making the rise of a socialist regime in Tokyo both possible and desirable.²⁰¹ Being anti-nationalistic in their worldview, the USSR had started to become seen as a

¹⁹⁷ Correlli Barnett, *The Collapse of British Power*, pp. 237-240, 298-299. See also Keith Neilson, *The Permanent Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, 1854-1946* (London: Routledge, 2009), p. 244.

¹⁹⁸ Keith Neilson, *The Permanent Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs*, p. 244.

¹⁹⁹ Correlli Barnett, *The Collapse of British Power*, pp. 237-240, 422-423. See also R.A. Butler, *The Art of the Possible* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1971), pp. 63, 68.

²⁰⁰ Carroll Quigley, *The Anglo-American Establishment: from Rhodes to Cliveden* (San Pedro: GSG & Associates, 1981), pp. 10-11, 235-236, 253, 292-293.

²⁰¹ Greg Kennedy, *Anglo-American Strategic Relations and the Far East, 1933-1939: Imperial Crossroads* (London: Frank Cass, 2002), p. 81.

potential ally in the looming war with Germany despite the shared tactics of the Nazi government and the damage inflicted upon millions of people by Stalin and the NKVD.²⁰² A good number of officials also held strong communist sympathies, and according to Major Barrett, British Embassy and consular officials in China, including Ambassador Clark Kerr, were strongly pro-Soviet throughout their tenure, and they encouraged all possible assistance to China be approved.²⁰³ Others such as Donald Maclean of the Cambridge Five, along with John Cairncross and Captain J. King at the Foreign Office were outright Soviet agents or assets.²⁰⁴

Under the leadership of Anthony Eden from 1935, the Foreign Office began pushing the government towards adopting a more confrontational posture against the fascist dictatorships even though the country was still militarily weak.²⁰⁵ Britain was being steered into a period of protracted warfare it could not afford against enemies too numerous to contain.²⁰⁶ In February 1938 Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain reasserted some Cabinet control over foreign policy causing Eden's replacement by Lord Halifax and a renewed emphasis was placed upon conciliation with Germany.²⁰⁷ A notable observer of international relations during this period, who would play a role in the fate of Hong Kong during the war, commented on the significance of the changes taking place within the British

²⁰² Walter Krivitsky, *I Was Stalin's Agent* (London: The Right Book Club, 1940), pp. 19, 29-32, 37-38. See also Graham Ross, *The Foreign Office and the Kremlin: British Documents on Anglo-Soviet Relations, 1941-45* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p.4, and Nikolai Tolstoy, *Stalin's Secret War* (London, Jonathan Cape, 1981), pp. 115, 172.

²⁰³ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3; Report No. 14 by Barrett, 1 March 1941.

²⁰⁴ Genrikh Borovik, *The Philby Files: The Secret Life of Master Spy Kim Philby*, ed. Phillip Knightley (Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1994), pp. 11-13. Donald Gillies, *Radical Diplomat: The Life of Archibald Clark Kerr, Lord Inverchapel, 1882-1951* (London: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 1999), p. 145. Walter Krivitsky, *I Was Stalin's Agent*, pp. 87-88. See also Nikolai Tolstoy, *Stalin's Secret War*, p. 123.

²⁰⁵ Barnett, *The Collapse of British Power*, p. 447. See also Lynne Olson, *Troublesome Young Men: the Rebels who Brought Churchill to Power and Helped Save England* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008), p. 83.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 237-240.

²⁰⁷ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 2; Report No. 9639 by Barrett, 20 February 1938.

government. In London for the Imperial Conference of May 1937, and just before his visit with Hitler, Canadian Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King noted how:

This is indeed a moment of change in British politics. We are crossing the Great Divide,- whether into storms and disaster or into a re-ordering of world affairs, no one can say; one can only pray that it may not be the former.²⁰⁸

British High Commissioner to Ottawa Sir Francis Floud reported Mackenzie King's views to London following Eden's departure in 1938.

He was solidly in support of Mr. Chamberlain's policy of seeking agreement with Italy and Germany. He naturally regretted Mr. Eden's resignation but he said that he had realised when in London last summer that there would be little hope of any agreement with Mussolini or Hitler so long as Mr. Eden was at the Foreign Office.²⁰⁹

By challenging the Japanese in China, British Far Eastern policy makers accepted the inherent risk to imperial security but they did so with the aim of influencing Soviet foreign policy in Europe.

Eden was just one of many officials who chose to ignore the incongruity of selecting Stalin as a potential ally, and those who were paying attention to the Far East, especially within the Foreign Office, continued to push for increased British support to China even after Lord Halifax assumed duties as Foreign Secretary in February. Informal collective security in China was a precursor to what was hoped by many to become a more structured arrangement in Europe. Thus, during 1938 while most of the government was focused on Germany the Far Eastern section of the Foreign Office quietly brought British China policy into line with that of the USSR. Over time, a de facto Anglo-Soviet collective security arrangement developed in East Asia as each used China to wage a proxy war

²⁰⁸ NAC, <http://king.collectionscanada.gc.ca/EN/default.asp>; The Diaries of William Lyon Mackenzie King, 27 May 1937, p. 3.

²⁰⁹ TNA, FO 954/4; Anthony Eden Papers, Francis Floud Letter to Edward Harding, 28 February, 1938.

against Japan. This kept the Japanese army away from more vital areas of economic or military interest such as Vladivostok.

The problem Whitehall faced was that military weakness rendered diplomatic confrontation much less effective, but at least in Europe British foreign policy rested upon the combined strength of the French army and the Royal Navy. To compensate for military weakness in China, the British also attempted to parallel their diplomatic efforts with those of the United States in order to maintain the appearance of wider collective action even when it was still in its infancy. In this way the Japanese were kept guessing as to the actual level of international support Britain possessed.²¹⁰ Conversely, the extension of aid to China was also considered useful to increase American involvement in Far Eastern affairs.²¹¹ Without substantial military forces in place, however, Anglo-Japanese antagonism was the likely outgrowth of such an ambiguous Far Eastern strategy that transformed Hong Kong from an imperial outpost into a strategic Chinese logistical base. So long as Germany was considered to be Britain's primary threat, Empire defences could not be strengthened. The result of this unaltered situation at Hong Kong was likely to be the ensnarement of Britain's limited military forces in south China and the exhaustion of British power in an enlarged conflict. British foreign policy provided indirect support to the Soviet Union in China but the weapons trade from Hong Kong threatened to enlarge the war.

Thus, British assistance to China started covertly after such battles as Shanghai and Taierhchuang encouraged the Foreign Office to continue their support. J. Thyne Henderson wrote of the Chinese evident determination to fight:

²¹⁰ TNA, FO 371/24667 F 3568/43/10; File Cover, 8, July 1940.

²¹¹ S. Olu Agbi, 'The Pacific War Controversy in Britain: Sir Robert Craigie Versus the Foreign Office', *Modern Asian Studies*, 17 (3) 1983: 489-517, p. 504.

‘The Chinese Government have shown themselves capable of putting up a much better defence than was expected. It is also now clearer that our interests in China have better chances of favourable treatment under a Chinese regime than under a Japanese.’²¹² To uphold the appearance of neutrality, however, and because of rearmament difficulties at home, direct British arms sales were kept to a minimum and military supplies transported on American or British vessels could not be transhipped along the KCR; weapons carried on third power vessels such as those from Germany were able to proceed unhindered.²¹³ Since a declaration of war had not been made, the British saw no need to place an embargo against either side and so the weapons trade was allowed to continue in Hong Kong without interference. Eden was supported in this by Chamberlain as early as 6 October 1937.²¹⁴ Aid to China was also encouraged by officials in the region including the Acting Governor of Hong Kong N.L. Smith and Consul General Robert Howe at Shanghai.²¹⁵

Alternatives to maintaining covert support for China were few but present. One option would have been to terminate the flow of war supplies from Hong Kong into China in an attempt to improve Anglo-Japanese relations. This is what Ambassador Sir Robert Craigie recommended in Tokyo. It was his considered opinion that relations with China could be salvaged at a later date.²¹⁶ Those in the Foreign Office such as Henderson and Permanent Under-Secretary Sir Alexander Cadogan, however, thought Craigie was too optimistic about maintaining peace in the long term, especially in the face of continued Japanese military success.²¹⁷

²¹² TNA, FO 371/22157 F 4832/3284/10; Notation by J. Thyne Henderson, 13 June 1938.

²¹³ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 15; Report by Colonel E. McCabe, 15 September 1937.

²¹⁴ Baxter, ‘Britain and the War in China’, p. 21.

²¹⁵ Chan, *China, Britain and Hong Kong*, pp. 274, 278-279.

²¹⁶ Lowe, *Great Britain and the Origins of the Pacific War*, pp. 39-40.

²¹⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 38-40.

Another alternative for Hong Kong was to withdraw military forces from the region altogether. This was considered prudent by Colonel Gordon E. Grimsdale as early as 1934 when the Far Eastern Combined Intelligence Bureau was established.²¹⁸ Like Grimsdale, future G.O.C. China, Major General Arthur Edward Grasett had also determined that it was unsound to defend Hong Kong with the limited forces available. He came to this conclusion while at the Imperial Defence College in Camberley. After his assumption of duty in the colony in November 1938 Grasett's opinion reversed dramatically but until that time demilitarization was still considered by some to be viable.²¹⁹ Demilitarization, however, was not a very popular idea in London as it was seen to be an unnecessary and dishonourable sacrifice of British prestige.²²⁰

A third course of action would have been to strengthen British Far Eastern military forces and concentrate on the defence of the Empire and the Dominions. This could only have been accomplished following a diplomatic realignment towards neutrality in Anglo-German relations. Martin Brice reflected on this problem in his memoirs of Royal Navy service in China.

It was all very well for the Foreign Office to explain that ships were needed to back up foreign policy: it would help if the Foreign Office could reduce the number of our enemies. In the meantime we must cut our cloth according to our limited pocket.²²¹

To challenge Japanese expansion preparations for war in the Far East would also have had to include full Chinese military cooperation to be most effective. A joint Sino-British defence plan for operations in the Pearl River Delta, and southern

²¹⁸ IWM, Conservation Shelf; 'Thunder in the East' by Grimsdale, 1947, pp. 6, 16.

²¹⁹ Toronto Reference Library (Canada) [hereafter TRL]; Biographical Scrapbook; 'Biographies of People', Volume 1, No. 457. Paul Dickson, 'Crerar and the Decision to Garrison Hong Kong', *Canadian Military History*, 3 (1) 1994, p. 98. Brereton Greenhous, 'C' Force to Hong Kong: a Canadian Catastrophe, 1941-1945 (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1997), p. 7.

²²⁰ Galen Perrin, "Our Position in the Far East would be Stronger Without this Unsatisfactory Commitment": Britain, and the Reinforcement of Hong Kong, 1941', *Canadian Journal of History*, 30 (2) 1995: 231-259, p. 235.

²²¹ Brice, *The Royal Navy and the Sino-Japanese Incident*, p. 110.

China in general, might have been a useful deterrent to Japanese aggression if it had been formed without delay. In the event of war it might have also made a defence of Hong Kong more tenable. Instead of these options, however, it was decided to simply continue supporting the Chinese army by allowing the transhipment of supplies at Hong Kong.²²²

British Far Eastern policy gradually became more confrontational but military strategy was never sufficiently adjusted to either deter Japanese aggression or to provide for an adequate defence of the Empire. China was starting to become seen as a potential ally yet Hong Kong was still largely considered to be an outpost of Singapore; an encumbrance to be held as long as possible in the event of war. In July 1937 the Committee of Imperial Defence (CID) did take some initial steps in forming another appreciation of Hong Kong that better addressed the colony's new function as a Chinese military supply base but demilitarization was still discounted primarily because of the impact it would have had on British prestige. Significantly, the effect such a move would have had on Chinese morale was also discussed and a CID memorandum noted how:

We wish to emphasize the importance which we attach in the event of war against Japan, to the co-operation of the Chinese, which is likely to be forthcoming only if we maintain our position at Hong Kong.²²³

This position was again re-affirmed by the CID in a meeting one year later in July 1938, but without reinforcements for the Far East, British military strategy in Asia remained inadequate to maintain the security of the Empire.²²⁴

The Chiefs of Staff had determined by mid 1938 that so long as munitions and supplies continued to move from Hong Kong into China and its military

²²² Chan, *China, Britain and Hong Kong*, p. 268.

²²³ NAC, RG 24, Volume 20310, File 951.003 (D23); CID, Memorandum by the Chiefs of Staff Sub-Committee, Policy for the Defence of Hong Kong, 15 July 1938.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*

defences remained weak, the situation virtually compelled the Japanese to stage an operation with a view to the colony's neutralization or capture. Nevertheless, optimism prevailed since it was thought that even in this scenario Hong Kong,

... would fulfill the proper function of an outpost by drawing off forces which might otherwise be used against Singapore. Moreover, operations by our Fleet in support of the invested garrison might offer the best chance of bringing on a Fleet action against the Japanese Navy, which would be all to our advantage.²²⁵

Although the CID recognized the likelihood of a Japanese attack on the colony, British army forces at Hong Kong were not strengthened until November 1941 with the arrival of two Canadian infantry battalions. It was hoped that the Japanese would be deterred from attacking by the potential power of the US Pacific Fleet.

The limited strength of Royal Navy forces stationed in Hong Kong reflected this reality and most vessels were withdrawn by the end of 1940. The China Station order of battle included the 5th Cruiser Squadron with the cruiser *HMS Cumberland* arriving at Hong Kong in April 1938. This vessel was replaced by *HMS Kent* in September.²²⁶ The 21st Destroyer Flotilla and the 4th Submarine Flotilla were also present in addition to a handful of gunboats of the West River Flotilla and the 2nd MTB Flotilla.²²⁷ In March 1938 Hong Kong's gunboats were comprised of *HMS Tarantula*, *Robin*, *Seamew*, *Cicala*, and *Moth*. These generally patrolled the West River and their main ports of call were Hong Kong, Canton, Kongmoon, Wuchow, Samshui [Sanshui], and Macau.²²⁸ Royal Navy activity in south China was primarily concerned with the protection of British economic

²²⁵ *Ibid.*

²²⁶ Brice, *The Royal Navy and the Sino-Japanese Incident*, p. 90.

²²⁷ TNA, ADM 1/9568, File West River Flotilla; H.M.S. *Tarantula*, Report No. 38/181.A/38, 14 April 1938. See also <http://www.naval-history.net/index.htm>

²²⁸ TNA, ADM 1/9568, File West River Flotilla; H.M.S. *Tarantula*, Report No. 20/181.A/38, 15 March 1938.

interests and the suppression of piracy but gunboats also assisted diplomatic officials in the course of their duties and hoisted the Union Jack during official functions such as the annual Flotilla Pulling Regatta at Canton from 18 to 21 March 1938 or for Empire Day on 24 May.²²⁹ Chinese Gunboats and the French Gunboat *Argus* also participated in British celebrations at Canton and the Royal Navy responded in similar fashion.²³⁰ By December 1941 only the destroyer *HMS Thracian* plus a few gunboats and MTBs remained in Hong Kong ready for battle.²³¹ The most useful naval units employed by the British to investigate Japanese attacks and conduct patrols in and around Hong Kong were the faster vessels such as destroyers and MTBs, but the paucity of warships throughout the Far East greatly limited the overall deterrent value of the navy against Japanese aggression.

In the event of war British strategy called for the relief of Hong Kong by sea within ninety days from the commencement of hostilities, but the strength of Japanese air power eventually caused a change of opinion which resulted in the time of relief being raised to one hundred thirty days.²³² Hong Kong lacked the capability to provide for its own air defence because there was insufficient room to build an airstrip free from potential Japanese ground bombardment. The Gindrinkers' line was the basis of British defence plans for the New Territories but Kai Tak airfield and Kowloon were both within artillery range from many

²²⁹ TNA, ADM 1/9568, File West River Flotilla; H.M.S. *Tarantula*, Report No. 38/181.A/38, 14 April 1938.

²³⁰ TNA, ADM 1/9568, File West River Flotilla; W.R. 124/38, H.M.S. *Tarantula*, Report No. 923/2302, 7 June 1938.

²³¹ TNA, ADM 1/9568, File West River Flotilla; H.M.S. *Tarantula*, Report No. 38/181.A/38, 14 April 1938. Also <http://www.naval-history.net/index.htm>

²³² TNA, CAB 121/718; Air Ministry Telegram No. 444, 14 January 1941. See also Christopher Bell, 'Our Most Exposed Outpost': Hong Kong and British Far Eastern Strategy, 1921-1941', *The Journal of Military History*, 60 (1) 1996: 61-88, p. 70.

points along that position.²³³ Several large airfields existed at Canton that could have been supplied overland from Burma but use of these required overt Sino-British military cooperation which was never fully developed.

After the arrival of Governor Sir Geoffrey Northcote in October 1937, the defence plan for Hong Kong was reviewed and G.O.C. Major General A.H. Bartholomew made the decision not to request additional reinforcements for the colony. A new battle plan was adopted instead.²³⁴ By July 1938 the Gindrinkers' line had been abandoned as a defensive position and the only resistance to be offered in the New Territories was sabotage and demolitions along the Japanese line of advance for a period of up to forty eight hours after the commencement of hostilities. Defence of the colony was to be made only on the island itself but the main problem went unresolved.²³⁵ Lack of troops and mobile artillery meant the garrison was unable to defend Hong Kong against a determined assault.²³⁶ Ground forces in Hong Kong included only four infantry battalions plus the Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corps (HKVDC) which approximated in strength another reinforced battalion. In January 1938 the HKVDC was comprised of about 70 officers and 1,000 men.²³⁷ If one kilometre per battalion is taken as a measure of the maximum frontage that could reasonably be covered by infantry at a basic level of training and experience, then the number of battalions defending Hong Kong was less than half the number needed just to man the eleven kilometre Gindrinkers' line; let alone the requirements in manning a perimeter defence of Hong Kong Island against amphibious assault or to provide for an operational

²³³ NAC, RG 24, Volume 20310, File 951.003 (D23); CID, Policy for the Defence of Hong Kong, 15 July 1938.

²³⁴ Lindsay Oliver, *The Battle for Hong Kong 1941-1945, Hostage to Fortune* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005), p. 49.

²³⁵ George Endacott, *Hong Kong Eclipse* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 57.

²³⁶ Sir Martin Farndale, *History of the Royal Regiment of Artillery: the Far East Theatre, 1939 – 1946* (London: Brassey's, 2002), pp. xxiii-xxv.

²³⁷ NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 38; Report on HKVDC, 1938.

reserve. Overconfidence based on the lack of Japanese success in defeating the weaker Chinese army resulted in an underestimation of Japanese military capabilities, and this was a significant factor behind the decision not to adjust the garrison's strength or to seek greater military cooperation with Chiang.²³⁸

Besides lack of numbers, defensive oriented tactical training was another factor that handicapped the garrison. Hong Kong military forces were ultimately defeated in December 1941 because few officers fully appreciated the combat advantages of coordinated fire and movement that benefited an attacker in modern war. Colonel Lindsay Ride, future head of the British Army Aid Group (B.A.A.G.), felt that the garrison never practised for realistic operations. Only defensive exercises of withdrawal were conducted and the idea of employing counterattacks against high ground positions captured by enemy forces was not fully considered.²³⁹ This helped to build a fatalistic outlook and sapped any latent offensive spirit that may have existed within the garrison. Consequently, an aggressive defence was never really contemplated or prepared for prior to the attack, and in December 1941 the defenders had great difficulty retaking all-important higher level terrain whenever it was lost to the Japanese.²⁴⁰ As Colonel Ride commented at the time, 'Hong Kong never got down to real war until it was too late.'²⁴¹ Ride also noted that the Government was 'rotten' and failed to provide the necessary impetus to prepare the colony for war.²⁴² Despite the inadequate defence situation at Hong Kong, the colony was still expected to

²³⁸ IWM; 'Thunder in the East' by Major General G.E. Grimsdale, p. 10.

²³⁹ University of Hong Kong Archive [hereafter HKU], B.A.A.G. Series, Volume II, Capture, Escape and the Early B.A.A.G.; Colonel Lindsay Ride Report, Conditions in Hong Kong After Surrender, January 1942.

²⁴⁰ Endacott, *Hong Kong Eclipse*, pp. 95, 108.

²⁴¹ HKU, B.A.A.G. Series, Volume II; Colonel Lindsay Ride Report, January 1942.

²⁴² *Ibid.*

function as a logistical base for Chinese military supplies. Over time, this provoked a Japanese attack.

The lack of uniformity between British Far Eastern foreign and military policies was also due to conflicting organizational aims and objectives.²⁴³ After Governor Northcote's arrival in the colony, confusion surfaced both in Hong Kong and London over an issue of great future significance that highlighted the ambiguous quality of Britain's wartime strategy in China.²⁴⁴ Early in 1938 the British were presented with the possibility of purchasing the New Territories from China, which would have negated the requirement of handing the colony back at the termination of the lease agreement in 1997. This development was important in 1938 for several reasons. First, it showed how the divergence in strategic planning within Whitehall was mirrored with a split in political objectives between London and colonial officials at Hong Kong. The lack of consensus with Hong Kong officials on strategy only deepened as time progressed and this divergence became a factor in escalating the Sino-Japanese War. Second, this issue also reaffirmed that the level of British wartime support for China was to be limited in scale. Over time, the hypocrisy of proffering moral encouragement for continued Chinese resistance without substantial corresponding overt military aid caused Sino-British relations to strain to the breaking point. Third, the decision not to purchase the New Territories shows that British strategy in China was not greatly influenced by imperial concerns.

The idea to purchase the New Territories was first broached by Sir Shouson Chow who, in December 1937, was head of the Chinese National Bonds

²⁴³ Barnett, *The Collapse of British Power*, pp. 505, 518.

²⁴⁴ NARA, RG 165, Entry 77, NM 84, Box 1738, MID Regional File, Islands Hong Kong; Consul General Addison Southard Report, 18 February 1938. Russell Spurr, *Excellency: the Governors of Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: FormAsia Books Limited, 1995), p. 171.

Subscription Branch Society in Hong Kong. This organization was headed by T.V. Soong for the purpose of raising war revenue for the Chinese central government. Between January and February 1938, Madame Chiang Kai Shek (Soong Mei Ling), and her siblings Soong Ai Ling (wife of Finance Minister H.H. Kung), Soong Ching Ling (wife of Sun Yat Sen) and T.V. Soong had all gathered in Hong Kong at about the same time as the attempted coup in Kwangtung had failed and peace talks with the Japanese had begun.²⁴⁵ At some point between February and early April, Chow approached Governor Northcote to discuss the idea of a purchase agreement or lease extension being made between Great Britain and China with regards to the New Territories. Although British sovereignty over Hong Kong Island was already established in perpetuity, the lease expiry date set for the New Territories was 1997 and it was felt impossible to retain control of the island without controlling the New Territories.²⁴⁶ On 13 April 1938 Northcote informed Secretary of State for the Colonies William Ormsby-Gore about the proposition and noted his reasons why it should have been approved. He wrote,

The new territories are essentially necessary to Hong Kong from the economic as well as the defensive point of view. Retention of Hong Kong is essentially necessary to Great Britain – and, indeed, to the Empire – economically speaking; and all the more so in view of Shanghai's jeopardy: it is equally necessary to China from a standpoint of defence, as the present hostilities have demonstrated. China in her present mood would recognize the latter point: when the renewal of the lease comes up she may not be so disposed.²⁴⁷

Nigel Ronald at the Foreign Office commented in mid May that Ambassador Clark Kerr recently recommended the provision of some form of concrete material

²⁴⁵ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 2; Report No. 9633 by Barrett, 1 February 1938. See also NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 2; Report No. 9639 by Barrett, 20 February 1938.

²⁴⁶ TNA, FO 371/22159 F 7617/4847/10; Memorandum by Northcote to Colonial Secretary Malcolm MacDonald, 11 June 1938.

²⁴⁷ TNA, FO 371/22159 F 4847/4847/10; Letter by Northcote to Ormsby-Gore, 13 April 1938.

assistance to the Chinese as their losses had been heavy and they desperately needed money to shore up their currency and purchase additional munitions.²⁴⁸

During the spring of 1938, the purchasing scheme gathered momentum in Hong Kong and interest was expressed by the Foreign Office in London. The plan was strongly supported by the Commander-in-Chief China Station, Vice-Admiral Sir Percy Noble, and enthusiasm for a lease extension was also expressed by Ambassador Clark Kerr.²⁴⁹ Governor Northcote was the most enthusiastic about the proposal from the beginning and wrote to the new Colonial Secretary Malcolm Macdonald on 11 June 1938 in full support of it. He wrote:

The volume of trade along the Hong Kong – Hankow railway is certain to grow steadily when China is again in a position to develop her south-western provinces. Moreover, it may be asserted safely, I think, that Great Britain's prestige in this part of the world rests to a very large extent upon the fortunes of this colony.²⁵⁰

He also noted why the opportunity needed to be seized at that time.

It is unlikely that at any future time China will be more deeply impressed by the advantage accruing to her through Hong Kong being possessed by a strong foreign and friendly Power than she is at present; and, secondly, although sixty years of the lease's currency have still to run, the injurious effect upon British trade and capital of a prospect of non-renewal of the lease would be operative many years before the actual date of expiry of the lease.²⁵¹

The price being considered was £20,000,000.²⁵² Governor Northcote continued to press urgently for acceptance of the proposal following his visit to Canton aboard *HMS Tarantula* on 23 July 1938, noting that Sir Shouson Chow and Sir Robert Kotewall had both agreed to act as intermediaries with the Chinese Government in order to help facilitate any agreement, and time was likely running short for the

²⁴⁸ TNA, FO 371/22159 F 4847/4847/10; Letter by Nigel Ronald to Under Secretary Gerard E. Gent, 19 May 1938. TNA, FO 371/22159 F 7617/4847/10; Letter by Northcote to MacDonald, 8 June 1938.

²⁴⁹ TNA, FO 371/22159 F 5994/4847/10; Letter by Northcote to Ormsby Gore, 7 May 1938.

²⁵⁰ TNA, FO 371/22159 F 7617/4847/10; Memorandum by Northcote to MacDonald, 11 June 1938.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*

²⁵² *Ibid.*

chance of attaining a favourable response from the Chinese.²⁵³ By July 1938 the greatest pressure for a purchase agreement or lease extension was coming from British officials in China, especially Governor Northcote, while those in London outside the Foreign Office remained cautiously observant of further developments.

In London, Foreign Secretary Lord Halifax agreed with Macdonald on the need to have an interdepartmental meeting to settle this issue and on 26 August 1938 the Colonial Office hosted such a meeting but the result did little to improve Britain's position in East Asia.²⁵⁴ In attendance were H.R. Cowell (Chairman), F.J. Howard and P. Rogers of the Colonial Office, Sir John F. Brenan of the Foreign Office, D.J. Wardley and E.G Compton of the Treasury, Captain G.K. Bourne of the War Office, Major G.W.M. Grover and C.G. Jarrett of the Admiralty and Wing Commander R.M. Foster from the Air Ministry. Arguments for and against the deal were made but ultimately it was rejected on several grounds. The chief concern was that any such deal would provoke a Japanese response and a previous loan for China had already been rejected for the same reason. In addition, it was thought that in the event of Chinese capitulation to Japan, a puppet Chinese government would not recognize the agreement. The Air Ministry, War Office and Colonial Office representatives were essentially neutral or cool to the scheme while the Admiralty appeared somewhat lukewarm. The Foreign Office expressed a measure of greater interest.²⁵⁵

The War Office and the Air Ministry were well aware of the lack of resources available to defend Hong Kong and were not inclined to push for an

²⁵³ TNA, ADM 1/9568, File West River Flotilla; H.M.S. *Tarantula*, July Report, 12 August 1938. See also TNA, FO 371/22159 F 9184/4847/10; Letter by Northcote to MacDonald, 4 August 1938.

²⁵⁴ TNA, FO 371/22159 F 7617/4847/10; Memorandum by Foreign Office to Gent, 19 July 1938.

²⁵⁵ TNA, FO 371/22159 F 9516/4847/10; Notes of meeting held at the Colonial Office, 26 August 1938.

increase in their commitments to the region. Without greater resources to defend Far Eastern possessions it was logical that they would not fully endorse the proposal. Foreign Office support was expressed not because of any imperialist ambitions but because it presented an opportunity to strengthen Chinese resistance. The final decision was made by the Treasury, however, as they simply stated the sum to be paid was excessive for what the colony was worth. With the conclusion of the meeting the deal was shelved and any immediate material assistance to China remained an unlikely prospect. Nigel Ronald succinctly summarized British policy following the meeting: 'I am sceptical as to whether pusillanimity, tempered with hypocrisy, pays as a policy in the long run.'²⁵⁶ It was still hoped that the Chinese would maintain their war effort as best as they could but Sino-British relations were not improved as a result of this outcome. Similarly, the decision did nothing to improve Anglo-Japanese relations as British objections to Japanese expansion in north China continued to lack credibility so long as their own colonial presence was maintained at Hong Kong.

This issue remained on the back burner until just after New Year's Day in 1939 when the Governor again wrote to the Colonial Office urging the matter be reconsidered. The fall of Canton to Japanese forces in October 1938 seemed to have shut the door to any further likelihood of the proposal being received positively in Chungking, but Northcote thought there was still a chance for its acceptance. One of the principle reasons he revived the proposal was because of the military factor involved.

I have throughout this correspondence kept to the economic argument and kept off that of defence but I feel that I should add this. If Inquiry goes to show that the commercial importance of Hong Kong does not justify the expenditure that would be

²⁵⁶ TNA, FO 371/22159 F 9184/4847/10; File Cover notation by Nigel Ronald, 26 August 1938.

necessary to procure a long extension of the lease, then this Colony must be regarded as a wasting asset; for it is undeniable that it cannot continue to exist into the next century as a British Colony without the extension. In that case surely the following questions arise as riders:-

- (1) Is it worth H.M.G's while to spend many millions of pounds fortifying a wasting asset?
- (2) Would it not be wiser to demilitarize the Colony at once?

Northcote summarized his position and that of the scheme's supporters as follows:

- (1) Hong Kong's survival into the next century is of prime importance to the future of British trade in China:
- (2) Unquestionably that survival depends upon retention by Great Britain of at least part of the New Territories:
- (3) The whole issue is one which demands instant consideration.²⁵⁷

Sir Shouson Chow continued in his efforts for about another month or two and Northcote noted that Chow had been ... 'in the employ of the Chinese Government for some 30 years, I believe, and rose to high rank. His unsought advice on this matter has always impressed me as significant.'²⁵⁸ But after the fall of Canton, the chances that London would approve an official approach to the Chinese government were virtually nil.²⁵⁹ Brenan indicated his altered position on 23 February 1939: 'The Governor is asking the Government to be a good deal more farsighted than it is in the nature of democratic governments to be.'²⁶⁰ Essentially, this was the problem affecting British foreign policy overall. On 8 March 1939 he added, 'If anything was to be done it should have been while the Chinese were still in control of Kwangtung. It is too late now.'²⁶¹

For the same reason Northcote thought it wise to demilitarize Hong Kong, the military services also did not wish to purchase the New Territories. There were insufficient military forces available to defend the Empire so long as

²⁵⁷ TNA, FO 371/23513 F 1515/1515/10; Letter by Northcote to Sir Henry Moore, 6 January 1939.

²⁵⁸ TNA, FO 371/23513 F 3280/1515/10; Letter by Northcote to Moore, 27 February 1939.

²⁵⁹ TNA, FO 371/23513 F 1515/1515/10; File Cover Notation by Sir John Brenan, 23 February 1939.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁶¹ TNA, FO 371/23513 F 2195/1515/10; File Cover Notation by Sir John Brenan, 8 March 1939.

Germany was considered to be England's primary threat. That being the case there was not much point in increasing commitments to defend the colony. Again Northcote wrote,

As I view it, the issue is in no sense of the term a domestic issue but in every sense an imperial one. Hong Kong has no material interest other than the furtherance of British trade; as a fortress she is a liability and she has no territorial assets. If the Treasury's attitude is such as you appear to suggest then we may as well close this file finally.²⁶²

With that, the scheme to purchase the New Territories was dead.

Had foreign policy objectives been more focused on defending the Empire, then Britain's position in the Far East and China may have been made much stronger than it actually was, especially with the establishment of an overt military agreement with the Chinese. This would have in turn helped direct Japanese ambitions north against the USSR but this was not a Foreign Office objective. Furthermore, Hong Kong's political future may have developed differently. But in 1938 and 1939 a demonstration of British resolve to defend Hong Kong such as this scheme provided, if combined with real military strength, at least had the potential to provide a deterrent against further Japanese aggression and impose a salutary effect on the Sino-Japanese War.

Instead, Hong Kong continued to function as a transhipment point for Chinese war supplies while the colony's ground forces remained weak. These policies were the result of divergent organizational objectives in Whitehall and only encouraged the Japanese in the view that 'our army is very good at Tattoos and displays, but not at much else'.²⁶³ The Compulsory Service bill signed by Governor Northcote in the spring of 1939 was an attempt to show resolve, and this is seen in a letter written to Sir Henry Moore during May.

²⁶² TNA, FO 371/23513 F 3280/1515/10; Letter by Northcote to Moore, 27 February 1939.

²⁶³ TNA, FO 371/23513 F 6050/1515/10; File Cover Notation, 21 June 1939.

I am convinced that the more that we shew our determination not to be driven off our perches in China the more respectful the Japanese will become: and Hong Kong is among the bigger of the local perches. Why should not the announcement of the intention to introduce compulsory service here be as effective vis-à-vis the Japanese as the announcement of that policy for Great Britain was in Europe?

Even Chiang Kai-shek, as the Foreign Office can tell you, was not sure until Clark-Kerr's recent visit that we meant to defend Hong Kong 'a l'outrance' and he derived much comfort from the assurance that we were. Is it not possible that the Japanese are thinking along the same lines?²⁶⁴

Ultimately, the Compulsory Service legislation at Hong Kong could only accomplish so much because it was a band-aid solution at best. A few more troops without much greater firepower did not alter the fact that the garrison and the colony had become sacrificial pawns in an increasingly dangerous game.

By allowing the transhipment of military supplies at Hong Kong Chinese resistance was encouraged and the British were able to keep the Japanese engaged and away from other areas of greater strategic importance. Their actions closely followed those of the Soviet Union, albeit less aggressively, and the Chinese army effectively became a proxy military force that was used against Japan. The decision taken in London not to purchase the New Territories meant that direct British assistance to China at this stage of the war would remain limited, but nonetheless, several military and diplomatic incidents that followed had the effect of raising Anglo-Japanese friction and ultimately expanded the scale of the war. One of the most significant of these was the invasion of Kwangtung in October 1938. Military weakness at Hong Kong did not deter the Japanese from taking this step, but the colony was not yet attacked due in part to the fluid diplomatic situation in Europe and the potential threat of retaliation posed by the United States. Armed with this hope, the British transformed Hong Kong into an

²⁶⁴ TNA, FO 371/23513 F 6050/1515/10; Letter by Northcote to Moore, 25 May 1939.

important Chinese military supply point but this was an escalation of the Sino-Japanese conflict towards a wider war the British would be unable to fight.

Alternative Lines of Communication: French Indochina and Macau

During the first year of the war the only real alternative to Hong Kong as a southern point of entry for Chinese military supplies was Haiphong in French Indochina. This was due to its connection to Yunnan along the railway to Kunming. By mid 1938 the Chinese had already begun several large scale infrastructure construction projects in south China including the extension of rail lines from Hunan through Kwangsi to branch lines of the French railway running north from Hanoi. Improvements on the Yunnan portion of the Burma Road were also finished on 29 December 1938.²⁶⁵ The Indochina-Yunnan Railway, however, remained the most significant artery aside from the route through Hong Kong. The railway had been in operation for over thirty years, and the line's construction had taken nine years to complete with many deaths adding to the cost.²⁶⁶ Yet, the main problem with the line was that it only extended as far as Kunming. From there material had to be transported by a variety of means over a very poor transportation network before reaching its final destination. Later in the war General Chennault commented how American Volunteer Group (AVG) supplies delivered via Burma and the Himalayan Hump air route took six weeks for mules to carry between Kunming and Kwangnan.²⁶⁷ Despite the existing transportation problems in Yunnan and Kwangsi in 1938, two hundred tons of munitions and fuel travelled north daily over some of the most difficult terrain in China; regions

²⁶⁵ TNA, FO 371/22150 E 724 (1/12h/1938); Report by George, 7 September 1938. See also Baxter, 'Britain and the War in China', pp. 276, 319.

²⁶⁶ TNA, FO 371/22150 E 724 (1/12h/1938); Report by George, 7 September 1938.

²⁶⁷ Chennault, *Way of a Fighter*, pp. 81-82.

which included tropical forests, forbidding mountains and large swift moving rivers.²⁶⁸ By way of comparison the Hankow-Canton Railway hauled ten times as much material over the same period. Even after the occupation of Canton the amount of useful supply brought in through Hong Kong and Waichow after bypassing Canton ranged between 1,500 and 5,000 tons per month.²⁶⁹

The main difference between these two routes was that the railway from Haiphong ceased to carry any war material at all once the Japanese occupied north Indochina in September 1940 whereas Hong Kong remained a source of supply until the outbreak of the Pacific War. Until its occupation, however, the volume of material transiting Indochina remained substantial and a US Army report noted that Haiphong ‘is breaking all incoming cargo tonnage records.’²⁷⁰ The majority of supplies consisted of petroleum, oil, lubricants (POL), trucks, cotton yarn and piece goods.²⁷¹ At the outbreak of war in July 1937 the French Government had originally ordered Haiphong closed to the shipment of arms under pressure from the Japanese, but delayed its implementation until after the fall of France in June 1940.²⁷² One reason for this were the terms of the original Sino-French railway agreement signed in 1903 which stipulated, ‘If China is at war with a foreign country, the railway will not observe the rules of neutrality but will be entirely at the disposal of China.’²⁷³ The problem for France was that the Indochina line was entirely owned by French interests up to Kunming. An attack upon it at any point could be considered an attack upon a third power.²⁷⁴ Another political concern

²⁶⁸ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 10; Report No. 9709 by Barrett, 6 January 1939. TNA, FO 371/22150 E 724 (1/12h/1938); Report by A.H. George, 7 September 1938.

²⁶⁹ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3; Report No. 13 by Major David Barrett, 31 January 1941.

²⁷⁰ NARA, RG 18, Entry 300, Box 934, File Misc A, USAAF Decimal Files, Oct 1942-44; Memorandum by Griffith, 23 June 1938.

²⁷¹ TNA, FO 371/22150 E 724 (1/12h/1938); Report by George, 7 September 1938.

²⁷² Yu, *The Dragon’s War*, pp. 5-6.

²⁷³ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 5/40 by Giles, 30 April 1940.

²⁷⁴ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 3/40 by Giles, 29 February 1940.

limiting its value to Chiang Kai Shek was that the railway also helped support the independent position of General Lung Yun, as the head of the government in Yunnan, from central governmental authority.²⁷⁵

The railway was useful in other ways as it helped establish some of the air defence infrastructure which made Yunnan an important base of operations for Chinese and American air units later in the war. A French staffed pilot school was first established in the spring of 1938 at Kunming in order to help train Chinese pilots and provide some degree of defence for the railway. Personnel from a training unit based at Hangchow were assigned there along with twelve to fifteen large Dewoitine fighters, but the program met with limited success.²⁷⁶ By June 1938 a Curtis Wright aircraft assembly plant in Canton had also been moved to Yunnan.²⁷⁷ Curtis Wright's agent in China, Mr. William Pawley, had requested to build an assembly plant in Hong Kong for Chinese production but approval was repeatedly rejected in London as late as June 1940 so as to avoid antagonizing Japan.²⁷⁸ Pawley therefore established a plant at Loiwing, in Yunnan, near the Burmese border in early 1939.²⁷⁹ These facilities required their own airfields, logistical network and skilled personnel to operate them effectively, most of which remained available for later use.

Closer to Hong Kong, the Portuguese colony of Macau served as another limited conduit of supplies due its proximity to the West River but lacking a sufficiently large harbour it remained in a subsidiary role to Hong Kong. Under these circumstances junks carrying war supplies routinely travelled between the

²⁷⁵ TNA, FO 371/22150 E 724 (1/12h/1938); Report by George, 7 September 1938.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁷ NARA, RG 18, Entry 300, Box 934, File Misc A, USAAF Decimal Files, Oct 1942-44; Memorandum by Griffith, 23 June 1938.

²⁷⁸ TNA, FO 371/22157 F 3284/3284/10; Memorandum by Northcote to Ormsby Gore, 5 February 1938. Chan, *China, Britain and Hong Kong*, pp. 283-284.

²⁷⁹ TNA, FO 371/22157 F 13118/3284/10; Telegram to Colonial Office, 9 December 1938.

two colonies. Attacks on junks transiting the western side of the Pearl River Delta, however, were motivated by other considerations apart from the interdiction of munitions. Japanese efforts to destabilize Kwangtung civil society and to limit potential military resistance against invasion were facilitated by the distribution of opium via Macau.

The Kwangtung opium trade was an additional problem for the British because it encouraged the Japanese to escalate hostilities. Much of the global opium production in 1937 and 1938 came from Korea, Manchoukuo, Persia and northern China but Macau was a major conduit within the Japanese distribution network.²⁸⁰ By way of example, in April 1938 an armed Japanese military vessel transported 80,000 kg of raw opium from Persia to Macau where it was escorted by Portuguese troops through the city to the Banco Nacional Ultramarino.²⁸¹ Opium use was already widespread elsewhere in occupied China and the practice was greatly encouraged by Japanese employers who often paid workers partially or wholly in opium; those workers who complained were routinely fired.²⁸² Japanese naval officers were engaged in the smuggling of opium in addition to other commodities and the attacks on Hong Kong junks constituted part of their efforts to discourage competition.²⁸³ With limited military forces at their disposal Portuguese officials at Macau had little choice but to accede to Japanese pressure for cooperation whether they wished to do so or not.

Outside of the opium trade, the presence of Japanese naval forces in southern China created anxiety amongst Portuguese officials so contact between

²⁸⁰ TNA, FO 371/22206 F 7930/5217/87; Minutes of Ninth Meeting of the League of Nations Advisory Committee on Traffic in Opium and Other Dangerous Drugs, Twenty-Third Session by Colonel C.H.L. Sharman, 23 July 1938.

²⁸¹ TNA, FO 371/22194 F 7214/27/87; Memorandum, 4 July 1938.

²⁸² TNA, FO 371/22194 F 8056/27/87; Memorandum by R.A. Butler, 20 July 1938.

²⁸³ TNA, FO 371/27653 F 5296/188/10; Letter by Gent to Northcote, 17 June 1941.

Hong Kong and Macau authorities was increased with the aim of presenting a more united front amongst third powers. Shortly after the failed Kwangtung coup in February 1938 the British Senior Naval Officer of the West River Flotilla paid a visit to Macau and met with Governor Artur Tamagnini de Sousa Barbosa. Courtesies were also exchanged with Commodore Rebello and a twenty-one gun salute was fired from *HMS Tarantula*. This was returned by the colonial fort. Luncheons and dinners were held over several days and relations between the two colonies were strengthened.²⁸⁴ Governor Barbosa was enthusiastic about improving Anglo-Portuguese collaboration within the region and a subsequent visit by Lieutenant Commander D.L.C. Craig aboard *HMS Seamew* was carried out in May. On this occasion Royal Navy officers again met with the Governor along with several of their opposite numbers and Commissioner of Police Captain Carlos de Souza Gorgulho.²⁸⁵ In the end no long lasting defence arrangements were completed but the Portuguese did pledge to encourage Macanese traders to continue transporting foodstuffs from the West River into Hong Kong.

Conclusion: Anglo-Japanese Low Intensity Conflict at Hong Kong

From the start of the Sino-Japanese War, the colony of Hong Kong increasingly drew the attention of the great powers as military conflict escalated throughout the Pearl River Delta. This was due to the continuous flow of weapons and war material from Hong Kong into Free China via Kwangtung. Several factors combined to help spread the war from central China into the south.

²⁸⁴ TNA, ADM 1/9568, File West River Flotilla; H.M.S. *Tarantula*, Report No. 20/181.A/38, 15 March 1938.

²⁸⁵ TNA, ADM 1/9568, File West River Flotilla; H.M.S. *Tarantula*, Report No. 923/2302, 7 June 1938.

Political intrigue in Kwangtung weakened governmental authority and damaged popular morale which in turn encouraged the Japanese to invade. Public anxiety had grown in the province over this eventuality due to a series of destabilizing incidents including a failed coup, the withdrawal of effective Cantonese military forces, and Japanese interdiction campaigns which culminated in the terror bombing of Canton. Amongst the wreckage of the Cantonese political battles with both Chiang Kai Shek and the Japanese were the crushed regional aspirations for independence. This did no harm to Chiang, however, as the cost of losing Canton to Japanese occupation was greatly reduced. Moreover, the benefits of deepening Great Britain's involvement in the south China logistical war more than offset the estrangement of any limited, but more likely non-existent, Cantonese readiness to accept centralized political authority.

The British for their part helped escalate the conflict by reacting to the war without a uniform strategy as was reflected in the decision not to purchase the New Territories. Military authorities understood the limitations of the power they could expect to exert in East Asia but the Foreign Office opted to pursue a more aggressive foreign policy than could reasonably be sustained. Seeking to promote collective security with the Soviet Union, Foreign Office officials allowed the movement of military supplies from Hong Kong into Free China in order to fight a proxy war aimed at impeding Japanese military incursions elsewhere. In bringing British foreign policy into line with that of the Soviet Union, albeit less aggressively, the British still wished to avoid direct military conflict with the Japanese. Lacking military strength at Hong Kong, however, this became an increasingly difficult scenario to manage as the Japanese were roused to respond. The result of this strategy was the loss of military forces and prestige in the Far

East and the prolongation of global war. Upon its conclusion the Japanese Empire was destroyed but British power had also been sacrificed to the USA and the USSR.

Prior to the invasion of southern China the Japanese continued to stumble into a wider war because they too lacked a clear unified strategy between the navy, the army, and the government in Tokyo. The army generally sought to limit the conflict to the north so they could concentrate on their primary enemy: the Soviet Union. The navy looked for glory by advancing in a southerly direction and many naval commanders were eager to spread the war into Kwangtung. But there was no unanimity within the Japanese armed forces or with the government on the crucial question of how to settle the war politically; whether to negotiate with Chiang Kai Shek or establish a set of puppet governments. In Kwangtung they tried to do both and accomplished neither. Hence, the state of low intensity conflict established between Great Britain and Japan steadily deteriorated in and around Hong Kong making the war in China, and Kwangtung in particular, a greater international problem as time progressed.

Control of southern China was the key to victory for both sides in the Sino-Japanese War because it contained the lifeline that enabled the Chinese to continue their struggle. The major components of the vital logistical system within this region were the Hankow to Canton Railway, the KCR, and the British Crown Colony of Hong Kong. Without Hong Kong it is doubtful that the losses suffered at Shanghai could have been recouped or that a strong defence along the Yangtze River towards Hankow could have been sustained. Because of this supply network the Chinese were able to exact a steep price from the Japanese army and were able to continue the war. Consequently, China became a quagmire

that sapped Japanese military strength but the ensuing stalemate only spurred them into embarking on a suicidal war against Anglo-American forces in December 1941.

Chapter 4

The Trap is Sprung, October 1938 to March 1939

In October 1938 the Sino Japanese War underwent a significant escalation with the Japanese invasion of Kwangtung. This move was designed to cut British support for China but instead it had the opposite effect of provoking a semi-unified Anglo-American economic response. The invasion of south China brought the war to Hong Kong's door and the potential for conflict between British and Japanese military forces rose dramatically as a result. After the simultaneous fall of Hankow, the occupation of the rest of south China emerged as the next Japanese strategic objective, and with Chinese armies defending Hunan from their base at Changsha, Hong Kong remained the vital source of supply for continued Chinese resistance. The Canton-Changsha railway was the primary link to the south, and because of Hong Kong it was the most significant military transportation system left in free China. This logistical situation continued even after the fall of Canton; an event which was anticipated by Chiang Kai Shek as part of his effort to fight the war in areas of foreign interest. Hong Kong was the most suitable place for this strategy to be implemented as the transit of military supplies through the Pearl River Delta was a provocation the Japanese army could not ignore. Their response created several crises in Anglo-Japanese relations with incidents such as the Lo Wu bombing in February 1939 being one such example. Although the occupation of Canton appeared to be a grave military setback, it was an essential element of Generalissimo Chiang Kai Shek's strategic

plan to involve Great Britain directly as an overt co-belligerent against the Japanese.¹

Third power involvement in the Sino-Japanese War increased during this period and a chance for peace in late 1938 was discarded. In addition to the shipment of German and American weapons through Hong Kong, loans were again extended to China as part of a coordinated Anglo-American Far Eastern effort to challenge the Japanese more aggressively. Anglo-American cooperation began to coalesce following the fall of Canton and Hainan partly because of the growing threat that was posed to their Asian interests, but early collaboration also coincided with the resumption of Anglo-Soviet discussions for the establishment of a collective security alliance in Europe against Hitler. Stalin's support for Chiang Kai Shek was maintained to ensure Soviet Far Eastern security, and one of the more important functions of British assistance to China remained the provision of indirect support to the USSR. Because of these factors the Anglo-Soviet proxy war against Japan was intensified with Hong Kong serving as its primary base of supply.

The Invasion of Kwangtung and Occupation of Canton: October to December 1938

As summer turned to fall in 1938, Japanese military operations reached a crescendo along the Yangtze River, and the southern plan to isolate Hong Kong was implemented. By invading Kwangtung, however, the Japanese became ensnared in a dangerous trap. The Japanese decision to invade southern China

¹ National Archives of Canada, Ottawa (Canada) [hereafter NAC], RG 24, Reel C-8301, File 5147; Report No. 33 by Major General F.S.G. Piggott, 18 November 1938. See also National Archives and Records Administration, College Park (USA) [hereafter NARA], RG 165, M1513, The Military Intelligence Division Regional File Relating to China, 1922-1944, Reel 39; Report No. 86 by Commander H.E. Overesch, 3 December 1938.

was made after the Munich Agreement was signed and hostilities with the Red Army were terminated in the border clash at Changkufeng near Vladivostok. With Manchuria apparently secure Soviet intervention during Japanese southern operations appeared less likely to materialize.² Preliminary military action against Kwangtung began with aerial bombardment of Chinese lines of communication. An unopposed landing at Bias Bay commenced on 12 October 1938 followed by a rapid march across the Weiyeung District north of Hong Kong. The virtual isolation of Hong Kong was completed once Canton was occupied less than two weeks after operations began. General Yu Han Mou, commander of the 12th Group Army, was held responsible for the military defeat by both Chinese and foreigners alike, but to better understand Chiang's strategy it is necessary to examine Yu's role during the course of events closely.³ Ignominies surrounded General Yu following his rapid withdrawal from Canton; yet sufficient evidence exists to demonstrate that statements of cowardice and treason made against him were made without a full appreciation of the facts.

Early in October 1938, air operations in Kwangsi and Kwangtung, which comprised most of the 4th War Zone under the overall command of General Chang Fa Kwei, were stepped up against Chinese lines of communication. The most frequent targets were rail and road bridges along the Hankow-Canton Railway as well as the Kowloon-Canton Railway (KCR). The most valuable of these bridges was the new large structure located at Sheklung [Shilong] about half

² NARA, RG 165, M1444, Correspondence of the Military Intelligence Division Relating to General, Political, Economic, and Military Conditions in China; 1918-1941, Reel 10; Report No. 9694 by Major David Barrett, 8 November 1938.

³ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 10; Report No. 9694 by Barrett, 8 November 1938.

way between Canton and Hong Kong.⁴ Although these raids were frequent and severe, initial bombing results were ineffective largely because Chinese anti-aircraft fire, as weak as it was, caused attacks to be made at high altitude.⁵

Persistence produced results, however, and by 11 October the KCR was forced to suspend traffic. Air strikes continued and on the following day a Hong Kong military intelligence officer reported that ‘nearly the whole of Kwangtung’s communications were bombed – a total of 115 planes in 14 relays dropped 246 bombs on road and rail junctions, stations, etc.’⁶ With the railway thus disrupted the potential for Chinese reinforcements arriving from Hunan to assist in the defence of Canton was diminished.

On the night of 11/12 October 1938 the Japanese invasion convoy of at least sixty transports was first sighted as it entered Bias Bay by the Chinese Watching Service and by the merchant vessels SS *Lalita* and *Sagres*.⁷ Some large scale naval activity was expected in the region because many transports had been reported previously further northeast along the coast.⁸ Japanese naval forces of the South China Fleet (5th Fleet) had been augmented for this operation with the aircraft carriers *Kaga*, *Ryujo*, and *Soryu*. The cruiser *Jintsu* was also attached along with the 2nd Destroyer Squadron. An additional seaplane carrier was dispatched to Bocca Tigris and the Pearl River along with the 8th Cruiser Squadron. The Japanese Combined Fleet, minus destroyers and carriers assigned to the 5th Fleet, was also in the region.⁹

⁴ NARA, RG 59, Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files: China, Internal Affairs, 1940-1944 (Frederick: University Publications of America, Inc., 1984) [hereafter USSDCF], Reel 10; Report No. 893.00 P. R. Canton/129 by Consul General Irving N. Linnell, 10 November 1938.

⁵ The National Archives, Kew (UK) [hereafter TNA], WO 106/5356, File Hong Kong Fortnightly Intelligence Reports, November 1938 to May 1939; H.K.I.R. No. 22/38, 25 October 1938.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 10; Report No. 9686 by Major David Barrett, 12 October 1938.

⁹ TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 22/38, 25 October 1938.

On 12 October 1938 the Japanese began the invasion of south China at Bias Bay with a 04:00 a.m. bombardment of Outaokang [Aotou] and Hachung. Japanese ships owned by the OSK and NYK lines carried the men and equipment of the 5th, 18th, and 104th Divisions, with unopposed landing operations commencing at 04:30 a.m. One beachhead was established at Outaokang by elements of the 18th Division along with two regiments of the 5th Division. From Outaokang a good road ran to Tamshui [Danshui]. A second beachhead was secured at Hachung by elements of the 104th (Reserve) Division where a cart track led to the Canton-Swatow road farther inland. Plans were also made for one regiment of the 5th Division to land northwest of Hong Kong near Bocca Tigris and join the remainder of the division after their westward move across the region north of Hong Kong via Sheklung. Initial forces landed at Bias Bay totalled about 30,000 men and were quickly followed up by an additional 20,000. Overall, it was a small invasion force for such an ambitious undertaking.¹⁰

Japanese movement through the province was swift due to a lack of Chinese resistance, and by the evening of 12 October the 18th Division had already advanced ten kilometres inland. Only two Chinese divisions, the 151st and 153rd, plus attached local militia, remained in Kwangtung as part of the Chinese 12th Group Army under the command of General Yu Han Mou. The paucity of forces in Kwangtung was due to the fact that Cantonese divisions had been previously sent north to fight at Tehan. It was not possible to reinforce Kwangtung rapidly as the only troops available were located in Kwangsi and they had to march on foot or arrive by slow river transport.¹¹ Poor communication and

¹⁰ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 10; Report No. 9694 by Barrett, 8 November 1938.

¹¹ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 10; Report No. 9694 by Barrett, 8 November 1938. See also TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 22/38, 25 October 1938.

a lack of coordination greatly contributed to the 12th Group Army's ineffectiveness.

The first potential points of defence were located at Tamshui and Pingshan but the Japanese met with no opposition. A British officer commented on the overall lack of Chinese resistance:

Pingshan where the Sai Kong River is deep and broad, and the bridge is of flimsy construction was wholly undefended. There were some entrenchments at Tamshui held by regular troops who bolted at the first signs of the enemy's approach.¹²

Tamshui was occupied on 13 October, and aside from some sniping there was little significant combat. While the main Japanese force occupied Tamshui the flank guard seized the transportation hub at Lungkong which cut the main road network between Hong Kong, Waichow, and Tungkunghsien.¹³

Japanese forces continued their advance on Canton without pause and Waichow was severely bombed from the 12th to 14th. One Japanese aircraft was lost during these attacks and a few days later anti-aircraft fire brought down four other planes over Kukong and Canton (two at each city). But by this stage there was virtually nothing left of the meagre Chinese air forces that had remained in 4th War Zone and Japanese losses were minimal.¹⁴ For months the Waichow region had been prepared with trenches and concrete pill-boxes, but as at Tamshui, most of the Chinese 151st Division retreated quickly as soon as the Japanese approached. One unit that did not receive its withdrawal orders in time was the 12th Group Army's armoured battalion and it was destroyed along the

¹² TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 22/38, 25 October 1938.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.* See also TNA, WO 106/5303, No. 289, Report on visit to IV War Zone Headquarters by Captain Charles Boxer and Captain H. Chauvin, 20 May 1939.

road at Waichow.¹⁵ The loss of this valuable unit was a frustrating blow as few armoured fighting vehicles (AFVs) were available to rebuild it.¹⁶ Waichow was occupied on 15 October and its airfield was quickly put into service as a Japanese forward base.¹⁷

The Japanese continued onwards and soon crossed the East River unopposed at three points. Their eastern column crossed at Wonglik and continued west past Poklo on the 16th. The bulk of the 5th Division marched cross country to Sheklung and captured the town on 19 October, but the important railway bridge located there had already been blown up by the Chinese in retreat the day before.¹⁸ After more than a year of air strikes, it was the Chinese that delivered the final blow. A good road ran from Sheklung to Tungkunhsien past the Bocca Tigris forts to Namtau. The 5th Division continued their march southwest along this road to capture Bocca Tigris on 21 October and these moves can be seen in figure 4.1. The forts surrendered without firing a shot and the remaining Japanese regiment scheduled to assault the area the following day was landed without incident.¹⁹ A few smaller Chinese units attempted to defend strong points along the railway with some determination but the Japanese bypassed these positions without difficulty.²⁰

Chinese forces withdrew quickly from Canton on the night of 20/21 October and in accordance with Chiang's scorched earth order they destroyed

¹⁵ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 10; Report No. 9694 by Barrett, 8 November 1938. See also NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 39; Report No. 86 by Commander H.E. Overesch, 3 December 1938.

¹⁶ TNA, WO 106/5303, No. 289, Report on visit to IV War Zone by Boxer and Chauvin, 20 May 1939.

¹⁷ NARA, RG 59, USSDCF, Reel 10; Report No. 893.00 P. R. Canton/129 by Linnell, 10 November 1938. See also TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 22/38, 25 October 1938.

¹⁸ NARA, RG 59, USSDCF, Reel 10; Report No. 893.00 P. R. Canton/129 by Linnell, 10 November 1938.

¹⁹ TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 22/38, 25 October 1938.

²⁰ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 10; Report No. 9694 by Barrett, 8 November 1938.

much of their equipment and many facilities. The provincial capital was soon transferred to Kukong along with Canton's civilian administration.²¹ As an

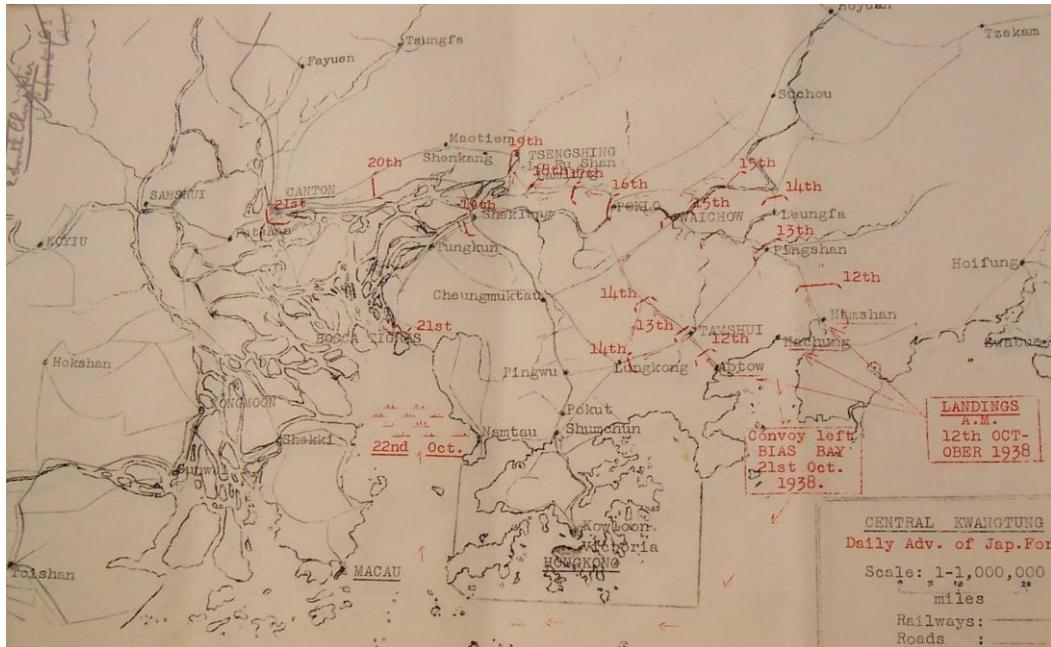


Figure 4.1: Japanese Army Positions in Kwangtung, October 1938. [Source: TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 22/38]

indication of the relative ease with which the invasion forces were able to advance through Kwangtung, Japanese tanks passed through Canton without infantry support on the afternoon of the 21st while the infantry arrived the following day.²² What they found were the burning hulks of empty buildings and rubble. The entire city had been evacuated and government buildings and installations that were not destroyed by Japanese planes were instead blown up by retreating Chinese soldiers.²³ United States Consul General Irving N. Linnell commented on the situation:

²¹ NARA, RG 59, USSDCF, Reel 10; Report No. 893.00 P. R. Canton/129 by Linnell, 10 November 1938.

²² *Ibid.* NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 10; Report No. 9694 by Barrett, 8 November 1938.

²³ TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 22/38, 25 October 1938.

The Chinese withdrawal from Canton was so hurried that stores, munitions, anti-aircraft guns, and railway rolling stock had to be left behind in the yards of the Wongsha station, the terminal of the Canton-Hankow line.²⁴

The station had been completely destroyed on 21 October but fires there continued to burn soon spreading the damage elsewhere.

Fires and ensuing explosions of carloads of munitions, ammunition dumps and aviation gasoline destroyed the whole Wongsha area ...
Fires ... broke out in other areas. They burned ... unchecked for days, destroying most of the wholesale district of Canton.²⁵

Linnell added, 'Canton will not recover for years from the damage it has suffered through fire, looting, and the destruction of the livelihood of its people.'²⁶ Chinese troops did not engage in much looting but many of the twenty to thirty thousand civilians that remained did so as they were the poorest of the city's population.

With about 50,000 Japanese troops in Kwangtung there were only enough units to hold Canton and sections of the East and West Rivers.²⁷ After securing the city, Japanese forces spread out towards Kongmoon in the south, and west into Samshui which was situated at the confluence of the West and North Rivers. In doing so they were able to control all inland water traffic and trade. Samshui was occupied on 30 October and West River communications with Kwangsi were cut off.²⁸ Chinese civilians now had to move overland to avoid Japanese forces. To the north and east of the city, both Tsungfa and Waichow were also occupied but some of the troops posted to these areas were quickly withdrawn.²⁹ When the

²⁴ NARA, RG 59, USSDCF, Reel 10; Report No. 893.00 P. R. Canton/129 by Linnell, 10 November 1938.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 10; Report No. 9694 by Barrett, 8 November 1938.

²⁸ NARA, RG 59, USSDCF, Reel 10; Report No. 893.00 P. R. Canton/129 by Linnell, 10 November 1938.

²⁹ NAC, RG 25, Volume 3233, File 5548-40C; Military situation memorandum by Lieutenant Colonel Hiram F. Wooster, 20 May 1944.

operation had ended the bulk of the 5th Division was positioned from Sheklung to Bocca Tigris, the 18th Division occupied the Canton area and the 104th Division (reserve) was based between Waichow and Pingshan.³⁰ By mid November most of the Japanese naval vessels that had taken part were withdrawn to the Marianas after regrouping at Amoy [Xiamen] but the *Kaga* remained in the Gulf of Tonkin to continue bombing targets in Kwangsi.

The rapidity of the Chinese collapse surprised many foreign observers and reinforced the widely held view that the Chinese were of limited value as a potential ally. General Yu Han Mou in particular was also widely accused of being grossly incompetent. Ambassador Sir Archibald Clark Kerr noted how the Chinese abandonment of Canton, ‘without any resistance caused considerable surprise and speculation, especially as the … [terrain] … is naturally favourable to the defense and … elaborate preparations’ had been made.³¹ Captain Charles Boxer placed blame for the debacle upon, ‘the inept Yu Han Mau and his still more incompetent Chief-of-Staff (who was directly responsible for the faulty troop dispositions which resulted in the loss of that city).’³² Captain H. Chauvin was less critical of Yu noting that his genuine concern for the welfare of his men was an indication of competent leadership and he suggested it was his subordinates who were more likely the problem.³³ Six years later these events were still commented upon by the Canadian Assistant Military Attaché to China, Lieutenant Colonel Hiram Wooster.

There was little opposition from the very sparse Chinese forces encountered on the way, and General Yu Han-mou (now military

³⁰ TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 22/38, 25 October 1938.

³¹ TNA, FO 371/22158 F 13833/3376/10; China Summary No. 10 by Ambassador Sir Archibald Clark Kerr, 22 November 1938.

³² TNA, WO 106/5303, No. 289, Report on visit to IV War Zone by Boxer and Chauvin, 20 May 1939.

³³ *Ibid.*

governor of Kwangtung) who was in command at Canton, evacuated the city without firing a shot, and retreated rapidly to the north.³⁴

The Chinese army's reputation for ineptitude was not improved as a result of the fall of Canton.

United States Assistant Military Attaché Major David Barrett commented further that the presence of Prince Chichibu as part of the invasion force indicated widespread political divisions in Kwangtung had already been successfully exploited to eliminate resistance. Chichibu's accompaniment of the troops in south China strongly suggested that it was known in advance that there would be no real fighting.³⁵ United States Naval Attaché to China Commander H.E. Overesch also surmised that Canton was set up to fall. He wrote:

2) The thrust of the Japanese Expeditionary Force into South China may be given a place as one of the most swiftly executed attacks in history. The speed with which the main objectives were reached, the fall of Canton, after a completely unexpected lack of resistance, left everyone, including military observers, gasping in astonishment. It is honestly believed by this office that the whole situation can be summed up in the statement that only two people knew that South China was not going to be defended. One of these was General Chiang Kai-shek and the other – the Japanese Intelligence Service! In no other way can the sudden and unexpected withdrawal of the Chinese forces be explained.

3) In no other way can the decisive thrust of an intentionally small Japanese force be explained. If major resistance had been expected in South China, Japan would never have embarked upon the invasion with the limited force that is now known to have been assembled. Nor would this force, after landing, have proceeded so rapidly, disregarding the dangers of tremendously extended lines of communication, unless it was known beforehand exactly what was to be expected.³⁶

British officers at Hong Kong reported in similar tones:

The Japanese accepted the risks of landing with a comparatively small force on an open beach. Before them was a march of 150 miles through difficult country with several serious river crossings. At

³⁴ NAC, RG 25, Volume 3233, File 5548-40C; Memorandum by Wooster, 20 May 1944.

³⁵ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 10; Report No. 9694 by Barrett, 8 November 1938.

³⁶ NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 39; Report No. 86 by Overesch, 3 December 1938.

Waichow it was known that elaborate concrete fortifications existed and that ... a formidable fighting force could have opposed them. Yet they confidently expected to capture Canton at one swoop, and were not disappointed.³⁷

Clearly, it was widely understood that the Chinese abandoned Canton.

Subversion and the employment of fifth columnists played a role in the collapse. The Japanese spent a great deal of money and time on buying the support of many disaffected local junior officials, in addition to ordinary fishermen in the Bias Bay region to act as guides. The Japanese navy knew the location of minefields in Bias Bay and swept them in advance.³⁸ Fishermen in this area often resorted to piracy when the opportunity presented itself having little compunction in helping the Japanese provided the price was right.³⁹ Several Kwangtung officials had also attempted a coup at the outset of the invasion by naming Marshal Li Chai Sum as the new provincial commander for Kwangtung, but Governor Wu Teh Chen sided with General Yu who in turn remained steadfastly loyal to Chiang Kai Shek throughout. Yu's 12th Group Army remained solidly within the central government's camp even though they failed to fight the Japanese in any meaningful way.⁴⁰ Foreigners such as Consul General Linnell, however, were disappointed that Li had not assumed command in place of General Yu.⁴¹

Speculation was widespread that corruption was a factor in weakening morale prior to the invasion. A military intelligence officer in Hong Kong reported on this state of affairs.

³⁷ TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 22/38, 25 October 1938.

³⁸ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 10; Report No. 9694 by Barrett, 8 November 1938.

³⁹ NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 39; Report No. 86 by Overesch, 3 December 1938.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ NARA, RG 59, USSDCF, Reel 10; Report No. 893.00 P. R. Canton/129 by Linnell, 10 November 1938.

The first really serious blow to Chiang Kai Shek's prestige was struck by the farcical collapse of the Cantonese defence ... The methods employed by the Japanese showed that they were fully aware of the complete rottenness of the Provincial administration. The crookedness of the officials is typified by the horns of the emblem of their capital, the city of Rams.⁴²

Prior to the assault, Governor Wu made many public denials about the impending invasion despite evidence originating in Shanghai as to the reality of events. The invasion was an open secret and over forty troop transports were known to have sailed loaded with men.⁴³ In previous weeks authorities assured the people of Kwangtung that there was no possibility of an attack as they stated the Japanese did not have enough troops available in China to stage such an offensive. As a result, many people in the region were caught unprepared.⁴⁴ More public denials regarding the threat to Canton were made by Governor Wu even after the assault had begun, because he and others had embezzled more than forty per cent of the money earmarked for munitions and they needed political cover. Corruption affected popular morale and the attitude of many junior public officials grew hostile. From Hong Kong Commander J.M. Sturgeon reported how,

There was a very strong anti Chiang Kai Shek feeling in Canton which was not being checked by those in authority. People had contributed generously to the war chest, both voluntarily, and by salary cuts, and yet not a single aeroplane appeared for the defence of Canton.⁴⁵

Much of the defence fund found its way into the pockets of government officials. Their invasion denials were meant to conceal the issue and to buy time until the evacuation north was completed. The impact on popular morale was strong following the disaster with those Cantonese remaining in unoccupied Kwangtung

⁴² TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 22/38, 25 October 1938.

⁴³ NARA, RG 59, USSDCF, Reel 10; Report No. 893.00 P. R. Canton/129 by Linnell, 10 November 1938. See also TNA, WO 106/5356, File Hong Kong Fortnightly Intelligence Reports, November 1938 to May 1939; H.K.I.R. No. 24/38 by Commander J.M. Sturgeon, 22 November 1938.

⁴⁴ TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 22/38, 25 October 1938.

⁴⁵ TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 24/38 by Sturgeon, 22 November 1938.

refusing to cooperate with further revenue collection schemes.⁴⁶ Canton's rapid fall was thus partly a product of corruption, a lack of munitions, and a lack of troops.⁴⁷

The most serious issue however, was the suspicion of treason on the part of General Yu Han Mou himself; a feeling shared by many Chinese and foreign officials which created a further serious negative drain on morale. One of the first to vent their anger was Major Barrett and he reported that opinion on this issue was unanimous. 'The ease with which the Japanese took Canton was due to a sell-out on the part of Yu Han-mou, Pacification Commissioner of Kwangtung and supposedly in charge of its defense'.⁴⁸ In condemning Yu as a traitor, he also cited Yu's earlier conduct against his former chief, General Chen Chi Tang in 1936, and the lack of readily available troops as evidence of his treachery. Barrett continued:

In the end no outside general appeared to save the day and such commanding as was done was done by Yu Han-mou. Since the debacle, Yu has at least had the decency not to attempt an explanation of his wretched showing, which is the only commendable thing he has done since the landing.⁴⁹

British officers in Hong Kong likewise noted their disgust. They felt Yu was a traitor because of his role in 1936 but also because they thought he had almost turned on Chiang in February 1938.

It is probable that only the fear of the Generalissimo's reprisals kept him from turning traitor at the moment of the abortive New Year Coup d'état. A Japanese garrison to protect him from his own countrymen was not too great a price to pay for continuance in office.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 10; Report No. 9694 by Barrett, 8 November 1938.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 22/38, 25 October 1938.

Adding to the speculation was the US naval attaché in Tokyo who reported the possibility of a ¥30 million payment having been paid by the Japanese to General Yu for his cooperation.⁵¹ Even missionaries were suspicious. A Canadian clergyman wrote: ‘It is all still a mystery. Someone sold out Kwangtung’.⁵² This rumour persisted for some time.⁵³

At first glance betrayal seems like a possible reason for the ease with which the Japanese took Canton but it does not adequately explain events even if Yu did accept money from the Japanese. Corruption was endemic throughout the Chinese army and trading with the enemy became a common state of affairs once a war zone became somewhat static. In the circumstances of the Sino-Japanese War being paid by the enemy to execute an existing plan would have been viewed as good business. As was seen elsewhere in China, discipline over lesser problems such as incompetence or simple gross stupidity was meted out frequently by Chiang Kai Shek. Many Chinese generals paid with their lives for failing to follow orders. One of the most serious offences a Chinese general could commit was to be disloyal to the Generalissimo and executions were commonplace amongst the Chinese high command. Generals executed in early October included Chan Shu Tang for his failure to bring the 81st Division into battle and for the fall of Techow in Shantung. General Fu Tso Yi of the 35th Army killed himself in anticipation of court martial and execution. Generals Feng Chan Hai, a division commander in the 53rd Army, and Wan Fu Lin, also of the 53rd Army were executed in September 1937 for their failure along the Peking-

⁵¹ NARA, RG 38, M975, Selected Naval Attaché Reports Relating to the World Crisis, 1937-1943, Reel 2, Estimate of Potential Military Strength Documents G, Naval Attaché Tokyo, Volume 2; Report No. 236, 28 November 1938.

⁵² United Church of Canada Archives, Toronto (Canada) [hereafter UCC], Accession 83.046C, Box 3, File 59, U.C.C. Board of Overseas Missions, South China [hereafter BOMSC]; Reverend A.J. Fisher to J.E. Fisher, 8 November 1937.

⁵³ Dick Wilson, *When Tigers Fight: The Story of the Sino-Japanese War, 1937-1945*, (New York: The Viking Press, 1982), pp. 132-133.

Hankow railway at Paotingfu. Li Fu Ying of the 61st Army was shot for losing control of north Shansi [Shanxi].⁵⁴ General Han Fu Chu was arrested on 11 January 1938 for cowardice and was executed for the disasters at Nanking and Shantung.⁵⁵ A US officer noted, ‘His death could be said to mark the complete liquidation of the troublesome Shantung situation, in addition to standing as a warning to the few remaining northern warlords’.⁵⁶ Others met a similar fate.⁵⁷ Chinese generals were executed for lesser setbacks than the loss of Canton, yet Yu was not disciplined for his retreat. He was instead given command of the Seventh War Zone following its creation in 1940. He also rose to very high rank during the post-war period. Clearly, general Yu did not act against Chiang Kai Shek’s instructions when he destroyed and abandoned Canton.

What Chiang Kai Shek sought in Kwangtung was the preservation of central government authority in the unoccupied areas of the province rather than a costly defence of Canton that he knew he could not win.⁵⁸ General Yu’s rapid withdrawal was ordered by the Generalissimo in order to limit the growth of regional political power and to keep Kwangtung’s defection contained to areas of Japanese occupation. Commander Overesch reported this.

Chiang Kai-shek, above everything else, knew that most of the Kwangtung and Kwangsi divisions, originally available in South China, had been sent North to the Yangtze Valley for the defense of the Wuhan area. He knew also that General Yu Han-mou, whom he

⁵⁴ TNA, FO 371/22150 F 794/794/10; Report No. 1119 (3/15L/1937), 30 November 1937.

⁵⁵ NARA, RG 165, U.S. Military Intelligence Reports: China, 1911-1941 (Frederick: University Publications of America, Inc., 1983) [hereafter USMIR], Reel 2; Report No. 9633 by Major David Barrett, 1 February 1938.

⁵⁶ NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 39; Report No. 29 by Major Truman Martin, 3 February 1938, and Report No. 9635 by Major David Barrett, 16 February 1938.

⁵⁷ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 10; Report No. 9700 by Major David Barrett, 8 December 1938. See also NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 2; Report No. 9633 by Barrett, 1 February 1938, and Report No. 9639 by Barrett, 20 February 1938. See also TNA, FO 371/23416 F 3704/14/10; H.M.S. *Sandpiper* Situation Report, 1 January 1939. See also Stephen MacKinnon, ‘The Tragedy of Wuhan, 1938’, *Modern Asian Studies*, 30(4) 1996: 931-943, pp. 934-935. See also Wilson, *When Tigers Fight*, p. 115.

⁵⁸ NARA, RG 59, USSDCF, Reel 10; Report No. 893.00 P. R. Canton/129 by Linnell, 10 November 1938.

had appointed to command the troops in South China, was neither a good politician nor a good general and hardly to be entrusted with the important work of organizing new armies or defending important areas. Chiang had apparently arrived at the decision that, for military and political reasons, the southern troops were of more importance under his own direct command, than they were in attempting to defend South China. The statement that political reasons may have been responsible is not to be lightly dismissed. One of Soong's henchmen admitted that with all forces concentrated in the North, the last possibility of anyone making a separate peace had been eliminated.⁵⁹

Overesch further added that General Yu had tried to secure reinforcements from other areas almost up to the time of the invasion. He was promised 150 trucks to help in his defence, but Japanese bombing of the Hankow-Canton railway had effectively limited rail traffic during early October.⁶⁰ By keeping military forces in being within Kwangtung under the control of the central government, any move by the Cantonese to create a new independent regime outside of Japanese control could be put down by force. A similar scenario arose in February 1945 following the collapse of south China during Operation Ichigo.⁶¹ On that occasion Yu stated publicly: 'Our mission in this War Zone is dual in nature; one is to strengthen the cooperation between the army and the party so as to match the new developments of the war.'⁶² According to an OSS report, Yu's loyalty to Chiang remained strong throughout the Sino Japanese War.⁶³

Of even greater importance, however, than maintaining Chinese political unity with Kwangtung, was Chiang's overall strategy for fighting the Japanese. The abandonment of Canton did not interfere with Chinese strategy as Japanese occupation forces remained in close proximity with the British. Over time,

⁵⁹ NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 39; Report No. 86 by Overesch, 3 December 1938.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ United States Army Center of Military History, *The War Against Japan* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 1998), Reel 51; Statement No. 512 by Lieutenant Colonel Okada Yoshimasa, 12 December 1951.

⁶² NAC, RG 25, Volume 3233, File 5548-40C; Dr. George Patterson to External Affairs, 14 March 1945.

⁶³ NARA, RG 226, Entry 92, Box 519, File 45; OSS Central Files Report, 2 March 1944.

Chinese war supplies such as petroleum, oil and lubricants (POL) would be transported into free China under Japanese noses from nearby Hong Kong, and the chances for military confrontation between the two were greatly increased. British Military Attaché to Japan, Major General F.S.G. Piggott, explained how Chinese resistance was being maintained with supplies from Hong Kong and this situation had become an embarrassment to Japan. Piggott added that it was widely understood, even in Tokyo, that Chiang Kai Shek wanted the Japanese army planted on Hong Kong's doorstep.⁶⁴ Chiang originally fought at Shanghai in order to bring the war into areas of foreign economic interest but in Kwangtung he lacked the necessary military forces and political control to wage another large scale battle. Thus, he withdrew from Canton to maintain the rest of the province as an active theatre of operations over a prolonged period of time. Chiang chose to abandon the city in order to drag Great Britain into the war.

Chiang was still disappointed to some degree with the way in which operations had unfolded, specifically with the tempo of events. Yu had not developed local militia or guerrilla forces sufficiently so that he might be able to delay the Japanese advance or at least provide the appearance of resistance.⁶⁵ Several months prior to the invasion General Tsai Ting Kai, ‘the hero of the 19th Route Army’ requested weapons and ammunition to equip 15,000 militia but he had only been given a motley collection of antiquated weapons for about 5,000 men just before the attack. When these finally arrived he refused to follow Yu. Instead of presenting a show of resistance, the rapidity of the Chinese withdrawal made Canton’s abandonment obvious. Overesch commented that, ‘it was apparently his [Chiang’s] intention to maintain the illusion of a strongly defended

⁶⁴ NAC, RG24, Reel C-8301, File 5147; Report No. 33 by Major General F.S.G. Piggott, 18 November 1938.

⁶⁵ NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 39; Report No. 86 by Overesch, 3 December 1938.

South'.⁶⁶ In this, the Chinese failed and the repercussions were felt at some distance from Kwangtung. Acting Consul General C.E. Whitamore reported how, 'the speedy loss of Canton and the conviction that the Japanese victory in the South had been secured by bribery had consequently a most damaging effect on morale in Hankow and undoubtedly accelerated the abandonment of the city's defences.'⁶⁷ Consul General Linnell felt the same way.⁶⁸

The impression left with foreign military officers also had far reaching repercussions. Captain Boxer and Captain Chauvin travelled through unoccupied Kwangtung during the spring of 1939 and visited the 4th War Zone's group armies. These included General Yu's 12th Group Army headquartered at Samma, in the mountains southeast of Kukong, and the newly attached 9th Group Army under General Ng Kei Wai. The 9th Group Army was headquartered at the recently vacated Swatow. It included General Ou Yang Chen's Cantonese 4th Army that fought with efficiency and skill at Tehan. General Hsia Wei and the 16th Group Army were not visited.⁶⁹ The Boxer-Chauvin report contrasted the combat capabilities of both the 9th and the 12th Group Armies, and their conclusions had a negative impact on Chiang's ability to forge closer military cooperation with the British. It was noted that Yu's 12th Army had lost all of its heavy equipment and artillery in the debacle at Canton (including 146 anti-tank guns). They had virtually no heavy weapons of any kind except for a handful of old 40 mm Vickers anti-aircraft guns but these lacked vital sighting equipment. The 12th Group Army's artillery battalion could not make effective use of these

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ TNA, FO 371/23415 F 508/14/10; Report No. 110 by Acting Consul General C.E. Whitamore, 16 November 1938.

⁶⁸ NARA, RG 59, USSDCF, Reel 10; Report No. 893.00 P. R. Canton/129 by Linnell, 10 November 1938.

⁶⁹ TNA, WO 106/5303, No. 289, Report on visit to IV War Zone by Boxer and Chauvin, 20 May 1939.

weapons because the brigade commander also refused to provide the battalion with necessary supplies. The few competent officers available, including those with foreign training, were not utilized to any great degree while most of the others devoted their time to the pursuit of graft. The 12th Group Army had virtually no discipline and there was little respect for the officers. One saving feature was a relatively high level of morale due to the fact that General Yu had sufficient leadership skill to make the welfare of his troops one of his primary concerns. In contrast, the 9th Group Army under General Ng was highly disciplined and this force included Cantonese and Hakka veterans of all ranks who fought on the Nanchang front.

Upon the conclusion of their visit through 4th War Zone, Boxer and Chauvin reported their observations. They also added recommendations with regard to future Sino-British military cooperation; a relationship that Chiang Kai Shek and many Chinese officers wished to develop.

If such a scheme of direct Chinese military co-operation ever does materialise, then our own authorities should have a decisive voice in the selection of what Chinese forces should be so employed. Of the Chinese troops in the IVth War Zone which borders on this colony, the 9th Group Army would probably be a valuable asset to the defence, but the 12th Group Army (with the exception of certain individual officers and units) would almost certainly be a dangerous liability.⁷⁰

Despite Yu's very friendly disposition towards British and American officers the fall of Canton caused British officials in Hong Kong to view the Chinese as ineffectual military partners.⁷¹ Undoubtedly, General Yu was loyal to Chiang Kai Shek and followed his orders without question. But Chiang's reliance on Yu in

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 39; Report No. 86 by Overesch, 3 December 1938. See also NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 6; Report No. 9864 by Captain F.P. Munson, 3 April 1940.

Kwangtung, and his decision to abandon Canton without a fight were both factors that impeded the development of overt military cooperation with the British.

Creating Anglo-Japanese Friction at Hong Kong: The Shataukok Incident

Following the loss of Hankow and Canton, Chiang Kai Shek hoped to increase third power intervention by demonstrating an improved capability to resist. Since the number of provinces remaining under central government authority had shrunk considerably, Chiang Kai Shek needed military victories to secure allies in order to justify his government's claim to lead, and to undercut the momentum of those wishing to make peace with Japan.⁷² In 1939 his two most important allies were Britain and the Soviet Union and southern China provided the best region for cooperative relations to develop further.⁷³ By this stage in the war retreat had become a less viable strategic option. Consequently, greater emphasis was placed on guerrilla warfare in occupied areas against Japanese lines of communication. But defence of the remaining railway transportation system bringing in valuable weapons and fuel from the south was of greatest importance in order to protect the rice growing region of Hunan. Thus, maintaining a conventional defence of northern Kwangtung had become a vital necessity as did the defence of Changsha. This situation was likewise well understood by the Soviets. Hence, significant collaboration with Red Army advisers during the first battle of Changsha in August 1939 was the result.⁷⁴ In order to increase British involvement the Chinese also endeavoured to fight the war as close to Hong Kong as opportunity would allow. With the Japanese stuck in Canton, and by continuing to use Hong

⁷² Hans Van de Ven, *War and Nationalism in China; 1925-1945* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), pp. 219-221.

⁷³ John W. Garver, 'China's Wartime Diplomacy', in *China's Bitter Victory: The War with Japan, 1937-1945*, eds. James C. Hsiung and S. I. Levine (London: M.E. Sharpe Inc., 1992), p. 11.

⁷⁴ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 10; Report No. 9700 by Barrett, 8 December 1938.

Kong as a supply source, greater strain was consequently placed upon Anglo-Japanese relations.

In the immediate aftermath of the fall of Canton and Hankow, China's military situation became desperate causing Chiang Kai Shek to take more drastic measures in dealing with foreign officials. Resistance was thought possible for an additional year as approximately forty percent of the available supplies already received from abroad had been cached in various locations around southern China.⁷⁵ Chinese military forces were still only self sufficient in the production of light infantry weapons. Many of these were produced in Chuchow [Zhuzhou] and Siangtan [Xiangtan] along the railway south and east of Changsha. Troops from Kwangsi also received weapons and munitions produced from their own arsenals.⁷⁶ But more supplies were needed and Chiang wasted no time in pressuring the British for increased assistance. On 6 November 1938 at the Chinese General Headquarters established at Changsha, Chiang met with Ambassador Clark Kerr after summoning him during the retreat.⁷⁷ After sixteen months of war Chiang demanded to know whether the British would begin supplying direct military or economic assistance, and if they did not, he threatened to end his cooperation.⁷⁸ This tactic became a regular feature of Chiang's diplomacy with third powers. Although the threat was often downplayed in London and Washington the time came in 1941 when it was not so easily

⁷⁵ NARA, RG 38, M975, Reel 2; Estimate of Potential Military Strength Documents G, Naval Attaché Tokyo, Volume 2, Report No. 236, 28 November 1938.

⁷⁶ TNA, FO 371/22153 F 2136/2136/10; Memorandum No. 5 by Consul General A.P. Blunt, 12 January 1938. See also TNA, WO 106/5303 No. 293; Report on Visit to South China July 1938, by Captain J. V. Davidson-Houston, 5 August 1938.

⁷⁷ Usui Katsumi, 'The Politics of War', in *Japan's Road to the Pacific War, The China Quagmire: Japan's Expansion on the Asian Continent, 1933-1941*, eds. David Lu and James W. Morley, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), p. 350. See also Yu Maochun, "In God we Trusted, In China we Busted": The China Commando Group of the Special Operations Executive (SOE)', *Intelligence and National Security*, 16 (4) 2001: 37-60, p. 38.

⁷⁸ Peter Lowe, *Great Britain and the Origins of the Pacific War: a Study of British Policy in East Asia, 1937-1941*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), pp. 59-60.

sidestepped.⁷⁹ But in late 1938, the forcefulness and anger of Chiang's ultimatum was a result of his genuine frustration over the grave military situation China immediately faced. More than ever Chiang needed weapons and allies. Although this was not an easy ultimatum for the British to ignore, Whitehall found little incentive in challenging the Japanese further at this stage of events. Their refusal of immediate overt assistance thus temporarily soured Sino-British relations.⁸⁰

Chiang's demands for increased British aid coincided with his forceful insistence for improvements in leadership amongst his own generals.⁸¹ Determined to fight, he soon confronted the leadership problems within the army. At the time of his meeting with Clark Kerr, coming as it did following the loss of Hankow, Chiang was not only visibly angry but also disgusted over the unwarranted burning of Changsha by General Feng Ti. Feng had panicked and destroyed the city prematurely due to the fear of a Japanese advance south from Hankow.⁸² The destruction of Changsha spurred Chiang into redoubling his efforts and evidence of his resolve was not only demonstrated with periodic court-martials and executions but also in his critical rebuke delivered to Chinese generals at the Nanyue military conference held in late November 1938.⁸³ Chiang demanded that commanders demonstrate greater professionalism as well as aggression. He also ordered staff officers had to improve the quality of their performance.⁸⁴

⁷⁹ Garver, 'China's Wartime Diplomacy', pp. 10, 19.

⁸⁰ Yu Maochun, *The Dragon's War: Allied Operations and the Fate of China* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2006), pp. 46-47.

⁸¹ Van de Ven, *War and Nationalism in China*, p. 228.

⁸² NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 10; Report No. 9700 by Barrett, 8 December 1938. See also TNA, FO 371/23416 F 3704/14/10; H.M.S. *Sandpiper* Situation Report, 1 January 1939. See also TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R No. 24/38 by Sturgeon, 22 November 1938.

⁸³ Van de Ven, *War and Nationalism in China*, p. 228.

⁸⁴ TNA, FO 371/23416 F 3704/14/10; H.M.S. *Sandpiper* Situation Report, 1 January 1939.

Within a month Chiang commenced military operations near Hong Kong in order to provoke an Anglo-Japanese diplomatic crisis. After the fall of Canton the Japanese consolidated their position in and around the city, but they lacked sufficient troops to fully garrison many areas at any significant distance further afield. It was a situation made worse by the withdrawal of the 5th Division to Tsingtao [Qingtao].⁸⁵ Thus, in November Chiang ordered the 12th Group Army to secure the region north of Canton near Tsungfa, and to maintain pressure along the East River near Waichow.⁸⁶ Samshui on the West River was also attacked by troops marching south from Yingtak.⁸⁷ More importantly, troops of the 151st Division headquartered in the Pingshan district were tasked with the resumption of logistical operations between Hong Kong and Waichow. Hence, the better part of a regiment (about 1,000 to 1,500 men in the Chinese army) under the command of Lo Kuan began moving large quantities of ammunition from Hong Kong into Kwangtung. The 151st Division was not comprised of Chungking's finest soldiers but they were adequate to cause problems for the Japanese and a consequent loss of face. Lo Kuan was better known for his earlier work as 'The Pirate King' of Kwangtung, but his troops were able to conduct guerrilla warfare and sabotage with some degree of competence.⁸⁸

On 26 November 1938 a serious incident tested Anglo-Japanese relations when Japanese ground forces marched to the colony in pursuit of another Chinese regiment, also of the 151st Division. After battling the Japanese north of the border this force retreated into the village of Shataukok on the far eastern end of

⁸⁵ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 10; Report No. 9694 by Barrett, 8 November 1938. See also TNA, WO 106/5356, File Hong Kong Fortnightly Intelligence Reports, November 1938 to May 1939; H.K.I.R. No. 3/39 by Captain C.J. Edwards, 31 January 1939.

⁸⁶ TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R No. 24/38 by Sturgeon, 22 November 1938.

⁸⁷ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 10; Report No. 9700 by Barrett, 8 December 1938.

⁸⁸ TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R No. 24/38 by Sturgeon, 22 November 1938.

Hong Kong's frontier but part of it ran into the colony itself across the KCR bridge at Shumchun [Shenzhen]. Japanese troops followed them in crossing the border (as well as the bridge) and in two different areas they hoisted a flag on British controlled territory. The 1st Battalion, Middlesex Regiment was immediately ordered to take up positions along the border.⁸⁹ The Japanese troops left about twenty minutes after being confronted by British military officers without further incident.⁹⁰ At Shataukok, however, the Japanese had paused since the village straddled the boundary. Due to the topography an attack would have involved crossing British territory. Negotiations ensued at the Shumchun casino between Brigadier Reeve and Japanese officers before being continued in Tokyo. Final agreement several days later brought a Japanese withdrawal and the internment of 850 Chinese soldiers under British control.⁹¹ The Shataukok Incident was soon defused in a professional manner but the Chinese troops remained in British custody at the expense of the Hong Kong Government until early 1941.⁹² This incident was resolved peacefully but there were many other border incidents to come that would unfold much less smoothly.

In response to these early border problems British authorities prohibited the transhipment of munitions from Hong Kong directly into China at the beginning of 1939 but these supplies were still allowed to be sent on to Haiphong and Rangoon. The Burma Road had been completed and munitions were able to

⁸⁹ TNA, FO 371/22164 F 12628/12582/10; Telegram No. 4726 by Lieutenant General Sir Arthur Grasett, 26 November, 1938.

⁹⁰ TNA, FO 371/22164 F 12638/12582/10; Telegram No. 342 and Telegram No. 343 by Governor Sir Geoffry Northcote, 26 November 1938. See also TNA, FO 371/22164 F 12641/12582/10; Telegram No. 4728 by Lieutenant General Sir Arthur Grasett. 26 November 1938.

⁹¹ TNA, FO 371/22164 F 12993/12582/10; Telegram No. 4747 by Lieutenant General Sir Arthur Grasett, 1 December 1938. See Also TNA, FO 371/22164 F 13124/12582/10; Telegram by Governor Sir Geoffry Northcote. 3 December 1938.

⁹² TNA, FO 371/27647 F 1783/178/10; Telegram No. 406 by Ambassador Sir Robert Craigie, 9 March 1941.

proceed from there.⁹³ Fuel, trucks, and spare parts were also quite important, however, and they continued to be sent into China directly from Hong Kong much to the annoyance and anger of Japanese officers. Chiang's efforts to create trouble in Anglo-Japanese relations had minimal early results but the potential for greater friction increased greatly as the war progressed through 1939. It would still take another three years before Britain became a full participant in the war as a Chinese ally, and although the British were well aware of Chiang's strategy to involve them directly in the war, limited support at Hong Kong continued nonetheless. It would not be long before American involvement was also forthcoming.⁹⁴

Lines of Communication: Hong Kong, Burma and French Indochina

With the opening of the Burma Road in late 1938 it is useful at this stage to examine the relative strengths and weaknesses of the various lines of communication into China. In doing so, the significance of Hong Kong with respect to increasing Britain's involvement in the Sino-Japanese War can be better understood. When the actual tonnage for each route is examined it becomes clear that Hong Kong remained the most prominent supply centre available to the Chinese army. At the end of 1938 the Japanese had some reason to be confident of victory with the capture of Hankow and Canton, but as the war descended into stalemate the reason for Japanese frustration over Chinese resistance becomes more discernable after examining the logistical role of Hong Kong more closely.

During 1939 there were four major lines of communication available to transport war supplies into China. The first of these was the northwest route

⁹³ TNA, FO 371/24667 F 3597/43/10; Memorandum No. 1322 by Ambassador Lord Lothian, 12 July 1940.

⁹⁴ Lowe, *Great Britain and the Origins of the Pacific War*, p. 268.

through Sinkiang. Approximately 2,000 to 3,000 tons per month of war material entered China from the Soviet Union via Sinkiang. By April 1941 the total value of these supplies was estimated to have been about \$200 million (US).⁹⁵ The other routes included the Burma Road, the French Indochina Railway (including the Kwangsi road network) and the route from Hong Kong via Waichow.

Under construction from the fall of 1937 to late 1938, the Burma Road became an important line of communication for Chinese military supplies after the fall of Canton, and even more so following the collapse of French Indochina.⁹⁶ Many problems, however, impeded operations including corruption, the operating practices of T.V. Soong's Southwest Transportation Company, and the annual fall monsoons. The British closure from July to October 1940 also produced serious diplomatic tensions in Sino-British relations. When combined, these factors limited the full potential capacity that was hoped for.⁹⁷

Simple inefficiency of road transportation through rough terrain compared with rail, was another basic factor limiting the usefulness of Burma. US Assistant Military Attaché Captain Edwin M. Sutherland noted in August 1939 how heavy transportation costs and landslides were factors contributing to a reduction in traffic. During the rainy season, capacity fell to between sixty and one hundred tons daily.⁹⁸ Even under normal conditions a minimum of twenty five to thirty percent of the fuel carried on the Burma Road was consumed in transit. The seven hundred ten mile trip from Lashio to Kunming also usually took an average

⁹⁵ Peter Moreira, *Hemingway on the China Front: His WWII Spy Mission with Martha Gellhorn*, (Washington: Potomac Books, 2006), p. 121.

⁹⁶ TNA, FO 371/27697 F 3707/846/10; Report by Captain T. M. H. Pardoe, 30 April 1941. See also Chan Lau Kit-ching, *China, Britain and Hong Kong, 1895-1945* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1990), pp. 276-277.

⁹⁷ TNA, FO 371/27697 F 3707/846/10; Report by Captain T. M. H. Pardoe, 30 April 1941.

⁹⁸ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9788 by Captain Edwin M. Sutherland, 12 August 1939.

of one week to complete.⁹⁹ Hopes were placed on the construction of a new railway to parallel the road but this project was stalled as late as 1941 due to a lack of rails and the difficult labour conditions.¹⁰⁰

In the spring of 1939 US Army assistant military attaché Captain F.P. Munson reported that almost no munitions were being transported into China via the Burma Road with only a fraction of estimates managing to arrive from Indochina.¹⁰¹ Plagued by inefficiency and later by Japanese air strikes the Burma Road ultimately ended up providing an average of only 3,000 useful tons per month (of all supplies, including POL).¹⁰² This figure was confirmed in a report written by Ian Morrison for the Foreign Office in June 1941:

The amount of freight leaving Lashio has rarely exceeded 7,000 tons monthly ... Of this 7,000 tons, approximately 30 per cent is taken up by the gasoline required for the long hauls to the north, 25 per cent represents commercial freight and 15 per cent smuggled goods. Of goods directly required by the Chinese government for the prosecution of the war against Japan, it is highly doubtful if more than 3,000 tons monthly ever enters China by this route. The organisation is chaotic, with control divided between the military and the civil authorities, between the central and the provincial governments. The drivers of the lorries are inexpert, undisciplined and arrogant ... Large numbers of lorries are lost through accidents, large numbers are out of action through a chronic shortage of spare parts, much time is wasted at the ferries which are badly organised.¹⁰³

Others also reported a figure of 3,000 tons per month as being a realistic limit of the Burma Road's effective capacity.¹⁰⁴ Previous estimates anticipating total deliveries of between 10,000 to 20,000 tons per month were grossly optimistic.¹⁰⁵

⁹⁹ TNA, FO 371/24667 F 3584/43/10; Memorandum, 11 July 1940. See also TNA, FO 371/27697 F 3707/846/10; Report by Pardoe, 30 April 1941.

¹⁰⁰ William Grieve, 'Belated Endeavor: The American Military Mission to China (AMMISCA) 1941-1942', (University of Illinois: unpublished PhD dissertation, 1986), p. 35. See also TNA, FO 371/27697 F 3707/846/10; Report by Pardoe, 30 April 1941.

¹⁰¹ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9768 by Captain F.P. Munson, 5 May 1939.

¹⁰² NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3; Report No. 14 by Major David Barrett, 1 March, 1941.

¹⁰³ TNA, FO 371/27715 F 4787/3653/10; Memorandum by Ian Morrison, 3 June 1941.

¹⁰⁴ NAC, RG25, Volume 3233, File 5548-40C; Report No. 52 by Ambassador General Victor Odlum, 9 August 1943. See also NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3; Report No. 11 by Major David

Until the summer of 1939 the French Indochina railway was of greater value to the Chinese than was Burma but there were also many problems associated with this route.¹⁰⁶ Although two hundred tons of munitions and fuel travelled northwest daily problems such as fuel shortages and a lack of wagons at Kunming developed by mid-year, thereby preventing the Chinese from exploiting its full potential.¹⁰⁷ To alleviate congestion ten to fifteen per cent of all supplies leaving Haiphong were sent northeast from Hanoi into Kwangsi rather than northwest into Yunnan.¹⁰⁸ In moving through Kwangsi, supplies were hauled by road or trail to Kweilin where they were then transported by rail to Changsha.¹⁰⁹ A map of these roads and railway lines can be found in figure 4.2. Supplies were also sent through Nanning and other Kwangsi road routes via the Kwangtung coastal cities of Pakhoi and the French controlled enclave of Kwangchowan but fearing another Japanese invasion similar to Kwangtung, General Pai Chung-hsi destroyed part of the road network in January 1939.¹¹⁰ On an international level, Franco-Japanese relations began to deteriorate as early as November 1938 when the Japanese threatened to invade Hainan if the French did not terminate munitions shipments from Haiphong. Although the French issued an order to stop the movement of weapons, aviation fuel and other supplies continued

Barrett, 3 December 1940. See also NARA, RG 165, Entry 184, Box 959; Radiogram by Lieutenant Colonel David Barrett, 27 February 1941.

¹⁰⁵ NAC, RG 25, Volume 3236, File 5667-40; Report No. 52 by Ambassador Victor Odlum, 9 August 1943. See also TNA, WO 208/366, File Military Situation in China by Military Attaché, Oct 1941; Report by Major General Lance Dennys, 22 November 1941.

¹⁰⁶ TNA, FO 371/23520 F 3668/3668/10; J.C. Hutchinson to A.H. George, 7 February 1939.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.* See also NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 10; Report No. 9709 by Major David Barrett, 6 January 1939. See also TNA, FO 371/22150 E 724 (1/12h/1938); Report by Commercial Counsellor A.H. George, 7 September 1938.

¹⁰⁸ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 10; Report No. 9709 by Barrett, 6 January 1939.

¹⁰⁹ TNA, FO 371/23520 F 3668/3668/10; Hutchinson to George, 7 February 1939.

¹¹⁰ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 10; Report No. 9709 by Barrett, 6 January 1939. See also NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9788 by Captain Edwin M. Sutherland, 12 August 1939. See also TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 6/39 by Captain C.J. Edwards, 14 March 1939.

unimpeded.¹¹¹ Consequently, a six-month to one-year backlog of Chinese supplies began to accumulate on the docks at Haiphong.¹¹²



Figure 4.2: Railway Lines and Roads in Southern China, October 1941. [Source: Based on WO 208/366, File Military Situation in China by Military Attaché, Oct 1941; Report by Major General Lance Dennys, 22 November 1941]

Once the occupation of Hainan Island was completed in February 1939, matters became more complicated when Japanese air units began to operate virtually at will throughout much of southern China. Airpower became a serious threat to Chinese logistical operations north of the Indochina border. Long range air strikes against the Indochina railway at Kunming still remained infrequent but the road network leading through Kwangsi was heavily bombed.¹¹³ Built up areas such as Liuchow, Nanning and Pakhoi soon became popular hunting grounds for

¹¹¹ TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R No. 24/38 by Sturgeon, 22 November 1938.

¹¹² NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9793 by Sutherland, 8 September 1939. See also TNA, WO 208/721, File Hong Kong Fortnightly Intelligence Reports, January 1939 to December 1939; H.K.I.R. No. 14/39 by Captain C.J. Edwards, 4 July 1939.

¹¹³ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9793 by Captain Edwin M. Sutherland, 8 September 1939. See also NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9799 by Captain Edwin M. Sutherland, 29 September 1939. See also TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 9/39 by Captain C.J. Edwards, 25 April 1939.

Japanese pilots. With new airbases in Kwangtung air operations were also intensified in April 1939 along the coast as far north as Chekiang [Zhejiang].¹¹⁴ Japanese airpower was making itself felt across southern China but this was especially true in Kwangsi. By the end of 1939, the usefulness of the Indochina railway had diminished and as Japanese pressure against French authorities increased during 1940, traffic in fuel and armaments was eventually terminated by the middle of that year.¹¹⁵

In contrast with the USSR, Indochina, and Burma, war supplies continued to travel into China from Hong Kong from 1937 until December 1941, and the amount of material transported between 1937 and 1938 alone was of such great quantity that the Chinese army was able to rebuild after the damage sustained at Shanghai. Even after the fall of Canton, materials such as fuel and spare parts were sent into China from Hong Kong through Waichow, or after being transhipped to several coastal ports such as Swabue, Swatow, Foochow and Ningpo [Ningbo].¹¹⁶ In October 1940 Major R. Giles of Hong Kong's military intelligence section described how these materials were moved into China primarily from Waichow and the East River to Kukong, and also by following a secondary route along the East River into Kiangsi [Jiangxi]:

All imports from Hong Kong find their way to the East River and move up that to Laolung/Lungchuan. Laolung is the main entrepot on the East bank, but three arches of the concrete bridge carrying the road across the river have been broken by bombs and so Lungchuan (8 km downriver) is used as a road head on the West bank. From Lungchuan the road runs 80 km to Chunghsiu, where it divides, one branch going 245 km to Hsiukwan, and the other 140 km to Lungnan leading to Kanchow. From Laolung the road leads to Hingning and Mehsien, with one branch towards western Kiangsi (Juikin) and the other into Fukien. All these roads are in a shocking state though there are not far

¹¹⁴ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9768 by Munson, 5 May 1939.

¹¹⁵ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3; Report No. 9844 by Major William Mayer, 11 January 1940.

¹¹⁶ NARA, RG 38, M975, Reel 2; Estimate of Potential Military Strength Documents G, Naval Attaché Tokyo, Volume 2, Report No. 189, 5 September 1939.

short of 1,000 trucks operating on them. The cargo moving up the East river consists of salt, piece goods, motor spares (I saw one large junk load filled entirely with new tyres), kerosene, gasoline, cigarettes and hardware. Coming down it consists of tea, wood oil and wolfram.

Chekiang, Fukien and Kiangsi have been relying on Ningpo and other coast ports for foreign supplies. Kwangtung and Hunan draw on Hong Kong. Shiukwan at the southern end of the Canton-Hankow railways is the bottle neck through which 90% of the Hong Kong exports to China pass.¹¹⁷

These routes can be seen in Figure 3.2. Reports are conflicting but for most of the three year period between November 1938 and November 1941, an average of about three thousand tons per month was maintained in this manner.¹¹⁸ Four months later Giles also commented that the volume of material moving along ‘the important Mirs Bay-Waichow route to Free China ... was ... comparable according to some qualified observers, to that over the Burma Road.’¹¹⁹ When all factors are considered from 1937 until the end of 1941, Hong Kong remains the most significant supply source in China’s war effort. This situation helps account for Japanese hostility directed towards the colony and their invasion of southern China.

The Invasion of Hainan

Initial satisfaction over the battlefield successes of October 1938 led to announcements from Tokyo heralding a ‘New Order in East Asia’ in November 1938; a policy to drive western influence from China. Because of this development it was shortly after rejecting Chiang’s ultimatum that the British

¹¹⁷ TNA, WO 208/722, File Hong Kong Fortnightly Intelligence Reports, January 1940 to October 1941; H.K.I.R. 11/40 by Major R.C. Giles, 31 October 1940.

¹¹⁸ NARA, RG 59, M1221; OSS Research and Analysis Report No. 112, July 1942. See also NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3, Report No. 13 by Lieutenant Colonel David Barrett, 31 January 1941.

¹¹⁹ TNA, WO 208/722, H.K.I.R. 2/41 by Major R.C. Giles, 28 February 1941.

began to reconsider their level of support.¹²⁰ Another factor in this decision was Chiang's determination not to capitulate. The Japanese army's triumphs at Canton and Hankow failed to bring victory, and being overextended, stalemate began to envelope them.¹²¹ Insufficient troop strength and a limited resource base restricted Japanese strategic options and morale soon began to drop. Major Barrett noted, 'Observers generally agree that the Japanese are heartily sick of their Yangtze Valley and South China campaigns.'¹²² Consequently, it was in January that Prime Minister Konoye Fumimaro and his Cabinet resigned after failing to reach a peace settlement with the Chinese.¹²³ While the army continued to fight the Chinese unsuccessfully throughout 1939 in northern provinces such as Shansi the navy stepped up its activities in the air by bombing Chungking, and by conducting a brutal littoral warfare campaign along south China's coast. This offensive was primarily directed against China's lines of communication to Hong Kong, and the level of violence experienced at the colony rose sharply throughout the year. The major development, however, was the invasion of Hainan in February 1939. Already poor, Anglo-Japanese relations were further damaged as a result of this move.

The commander of the Japanese 5th Fleet was Vice Admiral Kondo Nobutake and a few months after the fall of Canton he was given responsibility for the invasion of Hainan but the operation was ultimately counterproductive.¹²⁴ The assault on the island was initially executed to extend the range of Japanese

¹²⁰ Donald Gillies, *Radical Diplomat: The Life of Archibald Clark Kerr, Lord Inverchapel, 1882-1951* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1999), pp. 99-100. See also Lowe, *Great Britain and the Origins of the Pacific War*, pp. 50-53.

¹²¹ TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 2/39 by Commander J.M. Sturgeon, 17 January 1939. See also TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 17/39 by Captain C.J. Edwards, 15 August 1939.

¹²² NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 10; Report No. 9700 by Barrett, 8 December 1938.

¹²³ Wilson, *When Tigers Fight*, pp. 149-150.

¹²⁴ NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 39; Report No. 9713 by Captain Maxwell D. Taylor, 13 February 1939. See also TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 4/39 by Captain C.J. Edwards, 14 February 1939.

airpower over Chinese lines of supply in Kwangsi and was not yet intended to be a preparatory element of a farther southward advance. But it did encourage such a move. Once established in the region the temptation for a successful occupation of Indochina only grew larger as any such action became easier to support by air from newly developed bases in Hainan. In this sense it was a direct threat to the western powers and provoked an unwelcome diplomatic reaction resulting in strengthened Chinese ties to the West. But the invasion was also a failure because the movement of military supplies was never greatly interrupted from Hong Kong; a situation made worse in fact, by the corruption of Japanese officers. Moreover, the brutality exhibited during the operation was at variance with the army's professed attempts to improve relations with southern Chinese, and this in turn helped undermine efforts aimed at reaching a peaceful settlement of the war.

The assault on Hainan was begun on 10 February 1939 and the occupation proceeded quickly.¹²⁵ Naval forces included the fleet carrier *Kaga*, the seaplane cruiser *Myoko*, and over ten other warships from their base in the Marianas; bombardment of the island began in December.¹²⁶ Ground forces included a composite group of approximately two regiments drawn from the 18th, the Formosan, and the 112th divisions and these were augmented by the addition of two tank companies.¹²⁷ Most of these troops were part of the Canton garrison and were under the command of Major General Tanaka Hisaichi, Chief of Staff of the South China Expeditionary Army.¹²⁸ The Formosan Division had been fighting along the Yangtze River near Hankow in December 1938 but was

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 2/39 by Sturgeon, 17 January 1939. See also TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 3/39 by Edwards, 31 January 1939. See also TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 4/39 by Edwards, 14 February 1939.

¹²⁷ TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 5/39 by Captain C.J. Edwards, 28 February 1939.

¹²⁸ TNA, WO 106/5303 No. 290; Report on visit to Canton and Shanghai, January to February 1939 by Major G.T. Wards, 11 March 1939.

redeployed to Canton in January 1939.¹²⁹ Initial assault forces landed without opposition to establish themselves rapidly within a forty mile radius of Hoihow. A smaller area in the south at Samah Bay was also secured.¹³⁰ Only the Chinese 159th division and the 9th Independent Brigade had been posted to Hainan for its defence under the command of General Wong Ngai, but they had been withdrawn shortly after the fall of Canton leaving a weak motley collection of local militia in their place. They retreated with General Wong to the interior to conduct guerrilla warfare after the invasion began.¹³¹

In the north one mechanized column started the Japanese advance from the capital of Kiungchow and moved southeast along the coast. After arriving at the town of Mencheong they reinforced popular enmity by stupidly rounding up approximately 150 people and machine-gunning them.¹³² Operations by a Formosan force against Chinese guerrillas continued into March and an airbase was constructed at Mencheong.¹³³ Soon, over one hundred aircraft were based there.¹³⁴ Within a week of the initial assault, however, all immediate objectives had been secured and the Japanese navy's main fleet units such as the *Kaga* along with the 29th destroyer flotilla departed Hainan for Japan; mission accomplished.¹³⁵ A map of the invasion can be seen in figure 4.3.

The occupation of Hainan was a significant escalation of the logistics war in south China. Once Hainan was secured, airbase construction began in order to accommodate land based aircraft, but it soon became evident that Japanese naval

¹²⁹ TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 11/39 by Captain C.J. Edwards, 23 May 1939.

¹³⁰ TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 5/39 by Edwards, 28 February 1939.

¹³¹ TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 4/39 by Edwards, 14 February 1939.

¹³² TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 5/39 by Edwards, 28 February 1939.

¹³³ TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 6/39 by Edwards, 14 March 1939. See also TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 8/39 by Captain C.J. Edwards, 11 April 1939.

¹³⁴ TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 8/39 by Edwards, 11 April 1939.

¹³⁵ TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 5/39 by Edwards, 28 February 1939.

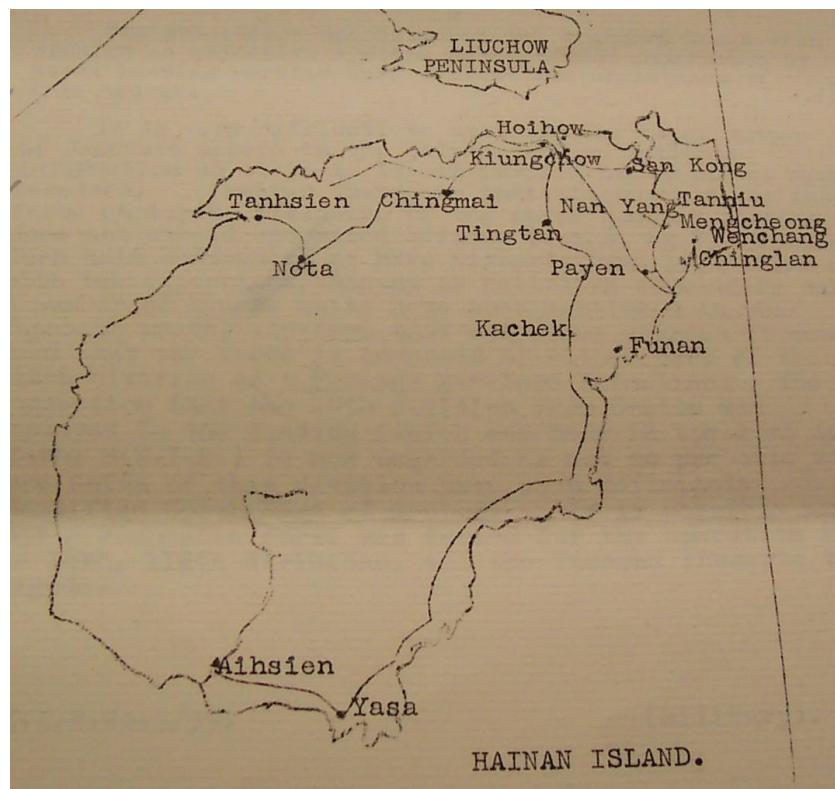


Figure 4.3: Japanese Operations in Hainan. [Source: TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 5/39 by Captain C.J. Edwards, 28 February 1939]

forces could now block maritime traffic to and from the Gulf of Tonkin with ease.¹³⁶ Despite Japanese statements regarding the disruption of Chinese lines of communication being their sole preoccupation, the threat now posed to third powers had become more pronounced. One published announcement indicated logistical factors to be the primary reason for the invasion but the threat to invade Kwangsi was also highly provocative. Captain C. Edwards at Hong Kong quoted the Japanese statement as it appeared in the Chinese press:

The attack on Hainan Island is within the scope of non-occupation of territory and no verbal explanation with the British and French Government. If the Chiang Regime continues to carry on its war of prolongation Japan will vow to occupy Hainan permanently ... If Britain and France continues to assist Chiang, Japan will not only

¹³⁶ *Ibid.* See also TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 4/39 by Edwards, 14 February 1939.

occupy Hainan Island but also give the South West regions military occupation.

The occupation of Hainan Island is a military necessity and no explanation is necessary that we have no ambition over it. If Britain and France do not wake up from their nightmares we will take the necessary steps to bar the policy of helping the Chiang Regime. The Japanese Empire does not mind the collective of Britain, France and America against her but will proceed undaunted towards her aim.¹³⁷

In conjunction with the May 1938 occupation of Amoy, a port which was astride Hong Kong's lines of communication to the northeast, the invasion of Hainan allowed the Japanese to establish more permanent naval and air facilities isolating Hong Kong to the west.

Lieutenant General Ando Rikichi: A New Approach

Although some of the usual brutality was evident amongst the Japanese troops during their first few days in Kwangtung, it was observed by British officials in Hong Kong that the Japanese army had made considerable efforts to adopt a less hostile approach in dealing with Cantonese civilians than had previously been witnessed elsewhere during the war.¹³⁸ Initial Japanese army pacification efforts in Kwangtung relied less on terror and more upon building peaceful relations where possible.

In November 1938 Commander J.M. Sturgeon of Hong Kong's military intelligence section travelled to Canton and witnessed how Japanese troops were conducting themselves with greater discipline than had previously been seen elsewhere and their behaviour was due to the leadership of Lieutenant General Ando Rikichi. Ando was the General Officer Commanding the South China Expeditionary Force, and as the former military attaché in London he spoke

¹³⁷ TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 5/39 by Edwards, 28 February 1939.

¹³⁸ NARA, RG 59, USSDCF, Reel 10; Report No. 893.00 P. R. Canton/129 by Linnell, 10 November 1938. See also TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R No. 24/38 by Sturgeon, 22 November 1938.

English well. He was also a personal friend of Major General Piggott in Tokyo.¹³⁹

Ando was considerably more moderate in his methods than many of his fellow officers and he strove to build better relations with the Cantonese from an early date. In this regard Ando was a notable exception in China when compared with many of his fellow officers. At the outset of the invasion Ando was originally the commander of the 5th Division but was appointed commander of all Japanese army forces in south China after his predecessor Lieutenant General Furusho suffered a stroke in November.¹⁴⁰

Following his visit, Commander Sturgeon reported his observations to the War Office and these were received with much interest and concern. He wrote:

That the Japanese authorities must have taken particular care in their selection of troops for operations in Kwangtung is borne out by many facts.

- 1) Nearly all the Gendamerie, appear to be reservists they are certainly of a type superior to the normal infantry. Many are well educated, pleasant mannered, and a very reasonable proportion speak either English or Cantonese.
- 2) The infantry, who are of a lower type (many cannot read) are not allowed into Canton City, this is in the interests of avoiding trouble.
- 3) Many Formosans are to be found among the troops, both of the Gendamerie, and of those infantry permitted to enter the city. These are very similar to Chinese in character, and nearly all speak Chinese. The writer has seen several groups of Chinese and Japanese sitting and chatting in the most friendly manner.
- 4) The first Japanese officer to appear at the British concession was the former manager of M.B.K. in Shamian, he greeted warmly the Superintendent of Police who met him.
- 5) There had not been, up until 15/11/38 even a suggestion of any 'incident', and all foreigners are impressed by the good manners of Japanese sentries.
- 6) The writer, on several official tours of the city has never met with anything but courtesy and politeness.¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ TNA, FO 371/22153 F 12718/1155/10; Telegram No. 1391 by Craigie, 22 November 1938.

¹⁴⁰ TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R No. 24/38 by Sturgeon, 22 November 1938.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

Sturgeon noted that Japanese conduct in Canton was of such striking contrast to Nanking and Shanghai that there had been an obvious change in policy. The Japanese seemed eager not to impair relations with third powers and in view of the proximity of Hong Kong, this was particularly so with Great Britain.

Commenting further, Sturgeon added:

Whatever the reason, it is an extremely pleasant surprise, and this policy is already having its effect in Canton where the Chinese populace is responding, and is learning to trust the Japanese, and where everyday sees welcome signs of changes towards normal life.¹⁴²

The last statement was of greatest interest to officials in London as it showed the Japanese had adjusted their civilian administration policies to achieve some degree of victory from the ground up. Acting Consul General Whitamore reported how the Japanese had also entered Hankow in a more disciplined manner than was witnessed beforehand.¹⁴³ The problem for the Japanese was that it took a year and a half to develop this understanding and many senior officers did not posses Ando's vision.

On the day of the Japanese invasion of Hainan, the British assistant military attaché to Japan, Major G.T. Wards, travelled from Hong Kong to Canton aboard *HMS Moth* for a meeting with General Ando to learn more about Japanese intentions in south China and to help improve relations.¹⁴⁴ They met the following day (11 February 1939) at the Japanese Headquarters in Canton and Wards found the general to be both cordial and professional. Also attending the meeting were two staff officers; these were Captain Yano and Lieutenant Colonel Ohira Hideo. The conversation was informative and some of Ando's more significant comments revealed that the Japanese occupation of Canton was

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ TNA, FO 371/23415 F 508/14/10; Report No. 110 by Whitamore, 16 November 1938.

¹⁴⁴ TNA, WO 106/5303 No. 290; Report on visit to Canton by Wards, 11 March 1939.

primarily a result of the southern Chinese military logistical situation but their presence was not directed against third powers. Ando informed Wards that, ‘The role of his army as given him on taking over command is to stop the supply of munitions through South China, nothing more, and he intended to confine himself to this and not bother in any other affairs’.¹⁴⁵ Further into the interview Ando revealed how communism remained the primary threat to China, and the Far East in general, and a change in policy towards Chinese civilians had been implemented to deal with this.

To my enquiry as to the progress of the war and as to his opinion on future events, General Ando replied at some length. He first of all admitted that things could not be settled by war alone, and it is very necessary from now on to try to create a better feeling between the Chinese and Japanese peoples.¹⁴⁶

Wards commented on how the counterproductive ill discipline of Japanese forces had thus far made victory difficult and how it had damaged Anglo-Japanese relations but Ando explained that relations would improve after victory was achieved. As a means of reassurance, the main priority of Japanese ambitions in south China was reiterated to be the termination of military aid and supplies to free China.

In time the general’s administrative policies towards the Cantonese did help establish a puppet regime in Kwangtung, but Ando was overly optimistic about Japanese chances for success. By the end of his meeting Wards felt confident to report that Japanese ambitions in China did not yet include war against Britain, at least as far as General Ando was concerned. The General stated he did not have any plans for further large scale operations but some other ports might be occupied. Most future military efforts were to be in the form of aerial

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

interdiction operations against southern Chinese roads and railways. It was significant for Wards to note, however, that Ando appeared somewhat fatigued and lacked a full appreciation of Japanese limitations. Although the Japanese had initially expected a war of short duration, he and others were surprised at the strength of Chinese unity. He also felt that time was on Japan's side and that the country could carry on the war indefinitely.¹⁴⁷ At the end of the meeting Ando surmised there was still a chance to settle the war in China to the satisfaction of all, provided Japanese face could be maintained. Wards reported:

As a parting message General Ando impressed on me that the only way in his opinion to save China from being 'bolshevised' is for England, U.S.A. and France to stop giving aid to Chiang-Kai-shek. My answer to this was that Chiang Kai-shek is nothing to us, all we desire is that our interests and rights in China be respected and we naturally intend to do what we can to preserve these interests and rights. In any case, I added, the Japanese Government have stated that they will not deal with Chiang Kai-shek. Is this really so or not? To this General Ando replied that it is so but there would be no objection to Chiang Kai-shek going into retirement for a while and returning to power a little later on after peace has been declared.¹⁴⁸

Wards felt that General Ando was sincere and Japanese ambitions in south China were strictly focused on wrecking the Chinese logistical system that was sustaining their resistance. Because Hong Kong did not appear to be in any immediate danger, the British continued to allow supplies to pass freely through the colony.

General Ando's hopes began to unravel less than two weeks later through the insubordinate actions of lower ranking personnel within his own army. This type of conduct often created many difficulties for the effective implementation of Japanese strategy but it was usually found to be a particular problem when it existed amongst senior officers. In the Lo Wu Incident, serious strain was placed

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

upon Anglo-Japanese relations beginning on 21 February 1939, when recently arrived pilots at Canton attacked the New Territories. On that date a Japanese army squadron of nine twin engine bombers (Mitsubishi Type 97 - Sally) entered the colony's airspace from the south. From an altitude of five hundred feet the squadron bombed a KCR train, a bridge, a customs office and strafed a railway station killing a Sikh policeman, eleven Chinese, and wounding four others.¹⁴⁹ It was a day with excellent visibility, and more than one pass was made to complete the mission. The main target of the attack was the bridge at Lo Wu but the entire area was easily identified as British territory. Targets were hit up to a mile south of the border in an incident witnessed by Governor Northcote from his home and by 2nd Battalion, Royal Scot officers at the Lo Wu training camp; a camp over flown by the raiders.¹⁵⁰ This incident was not an accidental bombardment. The Lo Wu Incident was a deliberate provocation for war from elements within the South China Expeditionary Army. In response, a protest was lodged by Ambassador Sir Robert Craigie in Tokyo and the issue was resolved locally in Hong Kong during meetings held in early March between Governor Sir Geoffry Northcote, Major General Grasett, Captain Charles Boxer and Major General Tanaka Hisaichi.¹⁵¹ Governor Northcote reported that the Japanese appeared sincere in their apologies and \$20,000 was agreed upon as suitable compensation.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ TNA, FO 371/23514 F 3366/1696/10; 'Report on the Bombing of British Territory' by Major General A.E. Grasett, 6 March 1939.

¹⁵⁰ TNA, FO 371/23513 F 1696/1696/10; Telegram No. 75 by Governor Sir Geoffry Northcote, 21 February 1939. See also TNA, FO 371/23513 F 1709/1696/10; Telegram No. 4871 by Major General A.E. Grasett, 21 February 1939.

¹⁵¹ TNA, FO 371/23514 F 3366/1696/10; Note of proceedings by Governor Sir Geoffry Northcote, 8 March 1939.

¹⁵² *Ibid.* TNA, FO 371/23514 F 3437/1696/10; Governor Sir Geoffry Northcote to H.R. Cowell, 8 March 1939.

Emotions ran high in Hong Kong, and from this point forward, relations between colonial officials and the Japanese began to develop somewhat independently from London. An attempt to ease tensions was made by the Japanese at a dinner party held at the U.S. Consulate in Canton on 10 March. British Consul General A. P. Blunt was informed by Consul General Okazaki that one of the pilots had been imprisoned immediately after the Lo Wu Incident and the General Officer Commanding Army Air Forces in South China lost two years seniority and twenty percent pay for six months. His Chief of Staff received the same punishment for one year.¹⁵³ This gesture was welcomed but had little long lasting effect. Disappointment and anger in the colony, amongst Chinese and non Chinese alike was substantial, but it was decided not to press the Japanese further under the advice of Ambassador Craigie.¹⁵⁴ Because of the attack on Lo Wu, fear of even greater crises became more common throughout the colony and both Governor Northcote and General Grasett likewise felt frustration and anger with the passage of events.¹⁵⁵ By 1941 their feelings became much more pronounced and led to the adoption of more intransigent attitudes in dealing with the Japanese than Whitehall was willing to permit. Grasett in particular would demonstrate his affinity for independent action on several occasions over the next two years and Anglo-Japanese relations worsened as a result. But as early as February 1939 the Lo Wu Incident demonstrated how Hong Kong was a source of considerable friction in Anglo-Japanese relations and how easily armed conflict could result between the two powers despite the best wishes of higher authorities. Hong Kong

¹⁵³ TNA, FO 371/23514 F 2808/1696/10; Telegram No. 64 by Consul General A. P. Blunt, 11 March 1939.

¹⁵⁴ TNA, FO 371/23513 F 1770/1696/10; Telegram No. 78 by Governor Sir Geoffry Northcote, 23 February 1939. See also TNA, FO 371/23514 F 3437/1696/10; Governor Sir Geoffry Northcote to H.R. Cowell, 8 March 1939.

¹⁵⁵ TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 5/39 by Edwards, 28 February 1939.

had become a flashpoint that threatened to ignite war between Britain and Japan within four short months of the Japanese invasion of south China. It also marked the point where attitudes held by colonial officials began to harden against the Japanese.

The invasion of Kwangtung had isolated Hong Kong and the seizure of Hainan effectively threatened to isolate southern China but Japanese victory could no longer be achieved solely through military power. Improved Sino-Japanese relations were required but the time for a military solution was running short. Victory on the battlefield was becoming less possible as Japanese forces were constrained strategically by a lack of resources and operationally by the need to maintain combat forces in close proximity to rail and riverine transport for supply. This limited the amount of territory that could be effectively controlled and the location and manner in which future operations could be conducted.¹⁵⁶ The military stalemate was mirrored by the lack of progress politically. Moderate pacification efforts such as Ando's had come late and were threatened by the impatience of others. Soon his policy of conciliation would not extend past the confines of Canton. As the stalemate in China dragged on, the Japanese continued to search for a way out of their predicament and waited for new opportunities. Wards reported that,

The policy hitherto followed of setting up puppet Governments in the controlled areas supported by military force, excellent in theory, has so far proved unworkable in practice, and the impression is that the actual policy now being pursued is an opportunist one.¹⁵⁷

Opportunities would arise out of European events.¹⁵⁸ In the meantime, after the invasion of Kwangtung and Hainan, Japanese military endeavours in south China

¹⁵⁶ TNA, WO 106/5303 No. 290; Report on visit to Canton by Wards, 11 March 1939.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 9/39 by Edwards, 25 April 1939.

concentrated upon the destruction of China's logistical network. But the biggest problem remained; it was a system of which Hong Kong was an integral component.

Challenging Japan: A Collective Response to Thwart Peace

Soon after the fall of Canton and Hankow, and Chiang's ultimatum to Clark Kerr in October 1938, the British and Americans intervened directly and collectively using economic warfare. Peace in China would have been an unwelcome development and so loans were extended as a counterattack against the change in Japanese methods. The Chinese were desperate for external financing and in August 1938 they began negotiations for a \$20 million loan with Kuhn, Loeb and Company in New York to pay for additional war supplies.¹⁵⁹ The American government's loan of \$25 million was announced in December 1938, and within a month after the bombing of Lo Wu, a British loan for £10 million was also approved in March 1939 for material aid and as a stabilization fund for the Chinese currency. These actions disrupted Japanese attempts to undermine the Chinese economy which resulted in the creation of much animosity and the crisis at Tientsin [Tianjin] later in 1939.¹⁶⁰ The issuance of these loans was coordinated between both governments but this was denied publicly to limit domestic political opposition within the United States.¹⁶¹ It has been argued by some that the reason for direct Anglo-American intervention was the invasion of south China, the

¹⁵⁹ NARA, RG 165, Entry 184, Box 960; Intelligence Report No. 1 by Colonel E.R.W. McCabe, 18 August 1938.

¹⁶⁰ Usui Katsumi, 'The Politics of War', pp. 354-356.

¹⁶¹ NAC, MG 26 J1, Reel C-3748, Volume 278, Frame 234821; Malcolm Macdonald to External Affairs Canada, 11 January 1939. See also TNA, FO 371/23409 F 938/11/10; File cover notation by Nigel Ronald, 31 January 1939.

occupation of Hainan, and the threat this posed to their interests further south.¹⁶²

Combined with the announcement of the New Order in East Asia these factors undoubtedly played a role in the decision.¹⁶³ Another consideration, however, was to provide indirect support for the USSR while a collective security arrangement against Germany was being discussed. Economic intervention in China was also viewed by Foreign Office officials as a means of fostering greater cooperation with the US at a time when the Americans were rearming (e.g. the aircraft production program ordered by Roosevelt in late 1938).¹⁶⁴ For the British closer relations with the United States was considered to be most useful with regard to European affairs, but because of American interest in the Far East, China was a region where improved relations could be developed most effectively.

It is significant to note that ideological factors continued to dominate Far Eastern policy in London, and the British loan helps to explain the earlier decision not to purchase the New Territories when the opportunity presented itself. At the time when the British government was extending the £10 million loan to China, and after his initial support for the deal had faded, Sir John Brenan terminated the New Territories purchasing scheme. Purchasing the New Territories would have been an imperial measure, and within the Foreign Office the concept of imperialism did not pass ideological muster. The loan to the Chinese government was selected as an alternative method of maintaining the war effort because it prevented the political isolation of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Brenan wrote that Sir Shouson Chow, the relatively senior Kuomintang official who

¹⁶² Yu, *The Dragon's War*, p. 48.

¹⁶³ Lowe, *Great Britain and the Origins of the Pacific War*, pp. 53, 60-61.

¹⁶⁴ S. Olu Agbi, 'The Pacific War Controversy in Britain: Sir Robert Craigie Versus the Foreign Office', *Modern Asian Studies*, 17 (3) 1983: 489-517, p. 504. See also Henry Gole, *The Road to Rainbow: Army Planning for Global War, 1934-1940* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2003), p. xvi.

originated the scheme, was ‘out of touch’ with the government in Chungking and his further advice was not needed but this excuse was disingenuous.¹⁶⁵ Brenan and others within the Foreign Office wished to address the Chinese morale problem without driving a British imperial wedge between the Kuomintang and the Communists and the loan helped to accomplish this. A purchase agreement would have instead alienated the Communists and some segments of US public opinion, but had it been necessary complaints from this quarter could have been challenged with a glance towards the US presence in the Philippines. Whitehall’s decision was not based upon a desire to preserve a balance of power. Realists would have secured more with their money than just another war and purchased the New Territories when the opportunity arose. By extending the loan without concessions at Hong Kong, the political aspect of this question superseded other considerations.

Because of the loan China remained a war zone that the British could exploit but to continue to do so the political dimension within the country had to be carefully monitored from several angles. Aside from the KMT-CCP problem, or the puppets associated with Wang Ching Wei, there were many within the central government who wished to make peace with Japan. In November 1938, morale was so low in the new capital that Colonel Stilwell expected a Chinese collapse to come within six months and this had been reported to Washington.¹⁶⁶ Many officials such as Finance Minister H.H. Kung were weary of war yet they remained loyal to Chiang Kai Shek. Japanese peace proposals to Chungking in December 1938, however, were based on terms the British considered most

¹⁶⁵ TNA, FO 371/23513 F 3280/1515/10; File cover notation by Sir John Brenan, 13 April 1939.

¹⁶⁶ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 10; Report No. 9700 by Barrett, 8 December 1938.

conciliatory.¹⁶⁷ The loans were subsequently announced to counter Japanese advances, and in doing so there was cause for Anglo-American optimism.¹⁶⁸ In south China General Ando's troops controlled the area in and around Canton and despite the moderation displayed by both the General and his men, their occupation was still widely resented. In February 1939 at Kongmoon, the Canadian missionary Duncan McRae wrote that, 'Great efforts for peace are being made by the Japanese but there is no hope apart from a complete withdrawal of her forces'.¹⁶⁹ So long as Chiang held firm in his determination to fight, the peace party in Chungking was contained, and with the loans having been made there was some degree of confidence in Washington and London that the war could be kept active.

The British and the Americans had other reasons for optimism including the political situation in occupied China. The absence of a cohesive Japanese political strategy in dealing with Chinese surrogates simply helped prolong the war. Wang Ching Wei and his followers had recently defected because they understood that only the communists would benefit from a protracted war, and as head of a large national government in occupied China, he sought to achieve a somewhat equitable peace with Japan.¹⁷⁰ In Kwangtung, Chi Chi Ching was a small businessman appointed to be the new Chairman of the Canton Chamber of Commerce as an initial step in the creation of a southern arm of the Wang administration (the Kwangtung Peace Commission), but Japanese attempts to

¹⁶⁷ TNA, WO 208/849, File Peace Overtures to China, September 1939 to February 1942; Memorandum entitled 'Japan's Peace Terms', 29 December 1938.

¹⁶⁸ Lowe, *Great Britain and the Origins of the Pacific War*, pp. 53, 60-62.

¹⁶⁹ UCC, Accession 83.046C, Box 3, File 60, BOMSC; Reverend Duncan McRae to Reverend A.E. Armstrong, 8 February 1939.

¹⁷⁰ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 10; Report No. 9709 by Barrett, 6 January 1939. See also TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 1/39 by Captain C.J. Edwards, 3 January 1939. See also John H. Boyle, *China and Japan at War, 1937-1945: the Politics of Collaboration* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1972), pp. 222-223. See also Usui Katsumi, 'The Politics of War', pp. 382-384.

encourage people to return to Canton and begin economic renewal met with limited success.¹⁷¹ Wang's position had been eroded by the resignation of Prime Minister Konoye in mid January due to the Japanese failure of reaching a peaceful settlement with Chiang.¹⁷² The new government made little initial progress in securing popular support as they lacked autonomy and any real military force with which to exert authority. Moreover, US and British loans had lent Chiang Kai Shek great credibility across China while simultaneously undercutting morale within Wang's government. Following Konoye's resignation senior Japanese army officers made their situation more difficult by boosting support for several regional puppet officials in areas under their direct control but these administrations had even less popular appeal. Across the country there were few inducements for people to support a collection of weak Chinese political figures serving under Japanese tutelage, especially when they were subjected to economic discrimination in business and in labour.

Additional Japanese problems included the lack of a unified military strategy combined with an increase in disciplinary problems. Not all of the Japanese army forces in garrison at Canton were of the best quality and 2,000 Korean troops reportedly revolted during February 1939.¹⁷³ Army ill discipline damaged Japanese prestige along with Ando's credibility, but more significant were the actions of the Japanese navy. Army-navy differences in policies and strategies were reflected elsewhere in China but in Kwangtung the impact of Japanese inter-service rivalry was truly great. The navy was largely responsible for creating havoc throughout the West River region thereby undoing much of

¹⁷¹ TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 2/39 by Sturgeon, 17 January 1939. See also TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 3/39 by Edwards, 31 January 1939.

¹⁷² Boyle, *China and Japan at War*, pp. 224-225, 228.

¹⁷³ UCC, Accession 83.046C, Box 3, File 60, BOMSC; Reverend Duncan McRae to Reverend A.E. Armstrong, 15 February 1939.

what Ando tried to accomplish with his policy of restraint. The reasons for the navy's preoccupation with the West River were twofold. First, south China was an area where the navy could best contribute to the war at the strategic level by attacking Chinese lines of communication and second, topographical features of Kwangtung's West River best suited its tactical capabilities. The lack of inter-service uniformity with respect to policy and operations resulted in an endless cycle of violence in the Pearl River Delta that kept the Cantonese from rallying to the puppet administration. Over time Japanese military operations not only alienated the Chinese, they had a direct negative impact on the security of Hong Kong and this steadily exacerbated Anglo-Japanese relations.

The Chinese, for their part, gained some limited advantage in their attempts to influence international relations. Closer ties with Britain and America had been established and relations between British and Chinese officers within 4th War Zone were made stronger, but the desire to build greater military cooperation in defence of Hong Kong was not yet reciprocal because of the British need to avoid open war with Japan and a lack of confidence in Chinese military capabilities.¹⁷⁴ It was thought that Chinese army morale was sufficient to sustain guerrilla operations and this was considered satisfactory for British aims. Lack of enthusiasm in Whitehall for greater immediate cooperation was further dampened by the lack of Chinese military discipline. Rampant piracy by guerrillas against civilian vessels for example, quickly resurfaced along the West River. Chiang's strategy of weakening Kwangtung's military forces and abandoning Canton did little to inspire British confidence in their ally.¹⁷⁵ Although Britain was slowly

¹⁷⁴ TNA, WO 106/5303, No. 289, Report on visit to IV War Zone by Boxer and Chauvin, 20 May 1939.

¹⁷⁵ UCC, Accession 83.046C, Box 3, File 60, BOMSC; Reverend Duncan McRae to Reverend A.E. Armstrong, 15 February 1939.

becoming more entangled in the war Chiang's strategy had its share of deficiencies.

In the end, economic warfare in China produced limited results for Britain outside of East Asia. British discussions in Moscow during 1939 did not bring closer collaboration in Anglo-Soviet relations. Despite British appeals, the German occupation of Czechoslovakia in mid March gave Stalin sufficient cause to abandon collective security.¹⁷⁶ Although British attempts to establish an alliance with the USSR had been redoubled during this period, the ultimate result was the signing of the Nazi-Soviet Pact on 23 August 1939.¹⁷⁷ The provision of economic aid to China was only temporarily useful in promoting improved relations with Stalin although it did help to promote long term collective security with Washington. A British mediated peace of the Sino Japanese War would have removed the main obstacle to improved Anglo-Japanese relations and redirected a great deal of Japanese attention against the USSR, but the desire held by many within the House of Commons and the Foreign Office for stronger relations with Stalin against Hitler superseded imperial considerations. British aid to China was therefore continued in the hope of exploiting any reversal in Soviet policy that might yet arise, but any chance for peace in China in early 1939 had been discarded.

Conclusion

During the winter of 1938-1939 the war in China had become a greater international problem but most of the great powers lacked clear strategies to face

¹⁷⁶ R. Craig Nation, *Black Earth, Red Star: a History of Soviet Security Policy, 1917-1991* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), p. 98.

¹⁷⁷ Sir Curtis Keeble, *Britain, the Soviet Union and Russia* (London: MacMillan Press, 2000), p. 143.

it. Japanese frustration at the duration of the war resulted in the invasions of Kwangtung and Hainan and these operations were carried out with the aim of cutting the movement of war supplies across southern China from Hong Kong and French Indochina. But the invasion of Kwangtung was a dangerous military escalation as the onset of ground operations along the Hong Kong border and aerial bombardment within the colony soon followed. Low intensity conflict had started to envelop Hong Kong, and with Japanese forces stationed at Canton, further conflict with the British became increasingly possible.

Japanese aggression during this period had also produced a diplomatic response from third powers that was somewhat collaborative. Anglo-American loans to China in 1939 were economic counterattacks aimed at thwarting Japanese pacification efforts. Following the invasion of Hainan, American concerns grew over the threat posed to the Philippines and elsewhere in the southwest Pacific, and this helped foster greater Anglo-American cooperation in support of Chiang Kai Shek. With a volatile diplomatic situation in Europe collective action was also intended to support the USSR, but Anglo-Soviet cooperation against Germany was not forthcoming. In similar fashion the British remained unenthusiastic about seeking overt military cooperation with the Chinese preferring the maintenance of a proxy war in place of a more concrete arrangement.

While the British and the Americans coordinated to continue the war, the Japanese missed their chance to secure peace. After a year and a half of hostilities, the Japanese had seemingly made some political progress with the defection of Wang Ching Wei, but continued Chinese resistance after the fall of Hankow led to the resignation of Prime Minister Konoye in place of a more hard-

line regime. Impatience also produced military ill discipline at all levels and a confused political agenda for occupied China was the result. The Japanese undermined their own position and all that was ultimately accomplished was to place further strain upon Far Eastern international relations.

In Chungking, Chiang's strategy of securing overt third power military involvement had taken some initial steps towards fulfillment. In 1939 Anglo-Soviet support still remained limited, but there was sufficient assistance to ensure the continuation of the war. In the process southern China had become the most significant theatre of operations with the railway from Changsha to Kwangtung and the port at Hong Kong being the most important military objectives keeping the Chinese army alive. The invasion of south China marked the first major escalation of the war since Shanghai that threatened to involve third powers, but for Chiang Canton was expendable bait as it brought Britain and Japan closer to war.

Chapter 5

Stalemate, March to October 1939

As war clouds gathered in Europe the impact of the conflict in China on the conduct of international relations became more pronounced. The Sino-Japanese War also increasingly affected the grand strategy of several great powers. Since China's survival depended on the importation of military supplies from abroad, the region south of the Yangtze River had become one of the most important theatres of the war. Until the Japanese attack on the United States in December 1941, control of the southern Chinese railway between Hunan and Kwangtung remained a vital condition for victory and it was because of this that by the fall of 1939 the cities of Changsha and Hong Kong became strategic military objectives of global significance.

The pivotal period for Japan in the Sino-Japanese War was the summer and fall of 1939. Aside from the easy occupation of Hainan in February and the capture of Nanning in November, most military operations ended in defeat. Because of the political impact, three of the most important battles were Nomonhan in Mongolia, Changsha in Hunan, and Shekki [Shiqi] in Kwangtung. Shekki and Chungshan [Zhongzhan] are sometimes used interchangeably in the documents to refer to the same location but Shekki is used here to identify the capital city of Chungshan District, the area north of Macau. Taken together, the Japanese loss of prestige was great, and the psychological impact upon the Chinese served to encourage further resistance. Nomonhan ensured that Soviet material assistance to China continued, although it diminished in scale over the next two years. Following Nomonhan was the battle for Changsha and the

smaller yet equally significant battle for Shekki. Because of these three battles the inauguration of the new Wang Ching Wei government was delayed but a critical opportunity to secure a workable peace was discarded. Strategic stalemate failed to induce the British to end their vital support of Chiang Kai Shek from Hong Kong, despite the humiliations imposed on them at Tientsin and the temporary halt that arose in Anglo-Soviet Far Eastern cooperation. Military reverses in the summer and fall of 1939 marked a turning point in Japanese fortunes in China and the final result was an escalation of the conflict with the invasion of Kwangsi. Henceforth, after the fall of France in June 1940, the Japanese temptation to seize Indochina became too great to resist and a reckless advance further south was encouraged.

Anglo-Japanese relations became further strained as the Japanese blockade against China and Hong Kong was strengthened. Disruption of the supply of war materials remained the paramount concern of the Japanese while food became a weapon that was used against Hong Kong. Littoral warfare in south China spread along the coast culminating in the occupation of Swatow and Foochow. Closer to Canton the blockade had far larger ramifications as it produced the battle of Shekki. In Hunan, the battle of Changsha was more vital for Chinese survival, but without supplies from Hong Kong the Chinese army could not have been sustained. In response to these defeats the Japanese applied greater military pressure against Hong Kong directly in the form of recurring attacks on the colony's fishing fleet and with a return of army units along the frontier. Throughout all of this, Anglo-Japanese relations were further impaired by British ambassadorial misconduct as revealed in the David Kung Incident, and by an increased British covert military presence in Kwangtung. These developments

contributed towards provoking a Japanese escalation of diplomatic tensions at Tientsin.

Japanese frustration had grown over the southern Chinese supply situation but a strengthened blockade was ultimately counterproductive. Not only was it militarily ineffective, it encouraged greater British involvement in the war and promoted Anglo-Soviet cooperation. So long as a Soviet alliance remained a British objective, however, Hong Kong was a hostage to Japanese ambitions, and the longer the Sino-Japanese War progressed, British options continued to diminish.

Food as a Weapon in the Pearl River Delta: January to March 1939

From Toishan in the south to Samshui at the juncture of the West and North Rivers, the western half of the Pearl River Delta was an important region to control as it was part of ‘one of the most highly developed agricultural areas in the world’.¹ As such, its production accounted for much of the region’s wealth and it was an important source of food for both Macau and Hong Kong. This was particularly true of the Sze Yap district surrounding the city of Toishan west of Macau. Almost ninety percent of Chinese living in North America at that time came from this region and remittances from abroad further increased the district’s prosperity. This resulted in a high population density with Toishan having about 950,000 pre-war inhabitants.² Because of these factors control of the lower West River became a priority for the Japanese navy. Interlaced with numerous waterways the region had an added topographical appeal that allowed the

¹ National Archives of Canada, Ottawa (Canada) [hereafter NAC], RG 25, Volume 3029, File 3978-40C Pt. 1; ‘Famine in Kwangtung’ report by Ralph E. Collins, 09 May 1944.

² *Ibid.*

Japanese to exploit their many tactical advantages during combat operations.³

With their arrival in October and November of 1938 food quickly became a weapon used not only against Cantonese civilians in the province but also against Hong Kong and Macau. Japanese marines often seized harvested crops and other goods in raids of increasing frequency throughout most of 1939. War exacerbated the problems created by Chinese corruption, and as illegal commercial trading with the Japanese soon began to develop starvation became endemic along the lower West River within a few short years.⁴

By January 1939, the Japanese had already stepped up their intimidation of Kwangtung by increasing the frequency of air strikes and ground operations throughout the Pearl River Delta.⁵ Air attacks against the region's roads and towns targeted both civilians and militia forces. The city of Shekki in particular (population 250,000), on the Chungshan River eighteen miles east of Kongmoon [Jiangmen], attracted a great deal of unwanted attention.⁶ Ground attacks continued along the West River and much of the Chinese river traffic came to a standstill, but the Japanese encountered a great deal more resistance than they had originally anticipated.⁷ Strangely, the one place still left unmolested until late

³ National Archives and Records Administration, College Park (USA) [hereafter NARA], RG 165, M1444, Correspondence of the Military Intelligence Division Relating to General, Political, Economic, and Military Conditions in China; 1918-1941, Reel 11; Report No. 9799 by Captain Edwin M. Sutherland, 29 September 1939. See also The National Archives, Kew (UK) [hereafter TNA], WO 106/5356, File Hong Kong Fortnightly Intelligence Reports, November 1938 to May 1939; H.K.I.R. No. 9/39 by Captain C.J. Edwards, 25 April 1939.

⁴ NAC, RG 25, Volume 3029, File 3978-40C Pt. 1; 'Famine in Kwangtung' report by Collins, 09 May 1944.

⁵ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 10; Report No. 9700 by Major David Barrett, 8 December 1938.

⁶ NARA, RG 341, Entry 217, Box 824, MIPI File No. 69404; Photo reconnaissance report, 4 October 1944. See also United Church of Canada Archives, Toronto (Canada) [hereafter UCC], Accession 83.046C, Box 3, File 60, U.C.C. Board of Overseas Missions, South China [hereafter BOMSC]; Reverend Duncan McRae to Mr. Hockin, 20 January 1939. See also UCC, *Forward with China: the Story of the Missions of the United Church of Canada in China* (Toronto: United Church of Canada, 1928), p. 185.

⁷ UCC, Accession 83.046C, Box 3, File 61, BOMSC; Reverend Tom Broadfoot to Reverend A.E. Armstrong, 10 January 1939.

January was Kongmoon but it was finally bombed on the 27th.⁸ Later in the war the city became a rest and recuperation centre for wounded Japanese soldiers.⁹

During a pause in operations at the end of January the Japanese army held discussions in Macau with Chinese regional leaders such as Chungshan's district magistrate General Chang Wai Chang (Cheung Wai Cheung) to bring an end to the fighting and enlist support for the new government in Canton. These meetings occurred on 29 January and 5 February 1939, and Japanese terms allowed for Chinese officials to retain their positions while a commercial treaty was also offered as an inducement for cooperation.¹⁰ Negotiations ended in failure with the Chinese blaming the Japanese for their barbarity and the loathsome nature of several of the negotiating officers such as one Lieutenant Wada Shinzo, a Kempeitai officer and 'pseudo-dentist' convicted of war crimes by British authorities after the war.¹¹ The first Japanese response to the breakdown in negotiations again came from the air, followed in March 1939 by numerous ground operations along the West River. Army units and marines were accompanied by their Chinese puppet allies whose only real utility was in looting civilians.¹² This month-long operation met with even greater resistance.¹³ Part of the reason for the lack of Japanese success was their paucity of available troops, as there were only 25,000 in the entire province for the dual missions of

⁸ UCC, Accession 83.046C, Box 3, File 60, BOMSC; McRae to Armstrong, 8 February 1939.

⁹ NAC, RG 25, Volume 3233, File 5548-40C; Memorandum by Lieutenant-Colonel Hiram Wooster, 20 May 1944.

¹⁰ TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 3/39 by Captain C.J. Edwards, 31 January 1939. See also TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 4/39 by Captain C.J. Edwards, 14 February 1939. See also TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 5/39 by Captain C.J. Edwards, 28 February 1939.

¹¹ TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 9/39 by Edwards, 25 April 1939. See also Peter Vine, 'Experiences as a War Crimes Prosecutor in Hong Kong', *Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 35 1995: 205-209.

¹² TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 9/39 by Edwards, 25 April 1939.

¹³ NARA, RG 165, M1513, The Military Intelligence Division Regional File Relating to China, 1922-1944, Reel 39; Report No. 9762 by Captain Elmer E. Count, 10 April 1939. See also TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 5/39 by Edwards, 28 February 1939.

conducting offensive operations and maintaining an effective garrison in Canton.¹⁴

One of the more disquieting elements of the Japanese March offensive to residents in Macau and Hong Kong, was an amphibious landing by two companies of Japanese troops on Lappa Island near the border of Macau, and their subsequent attack against elements of Portuguese colonial military forces located just outside the colony.¹⁵ The Macau Incident was a Japanese attempt to better control the inner harbour and it coincided with efforts to purchase property and generally manipulate the Macanese economy in late 1938 and early 1939.¹⁶ In this brief clash, East African colonial troops did not offer prolonged resistance and they retreated in good order back inside Macau.

Portuguese ground forces were not strong in numbers and were only supported by about three or four Osprey reconnaissance planes, one gunboat, and an under-strength battery of five field guns.¹⁷ A February visit to the garrison by British army Major G.T. Wards revealed that the available forces were not meant for sustained combat. With only a single Mozambique battalion divided into four rifle companies and one machinegun company totalling about 800 men, plus 100 Sikh policemen, Macau invited attack. Wards' comments indicate that the strength of the infantry was found amongst the NCOs and the men.

My general impression was that with the exception of the Portuguese officers, the troops looked clean, well clothed and equipped, and well disciplined.

¹⁴ TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 6/39 by Captain C.J. Edwards, 14 March 1939.

¹⁵ NARA, RG 38, Entry 98A, Box 705, F-6-c 23213 to F-6-e 22379; Report No. 1046-45, 28 February 1945.

¹⁶ TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 1/39 by Captain C.J. Edwards, 3 January 1939. See also TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 5/39 by Edwards, 28 February 1939.

¹⁷ NARA, RG 165, U.S. Military Intelligence Reports: China, 1911-1941 (Frederick: University Publications of America, Inc., 1983) [hereafter USMIR], Reel 13; Report No. 350.05-General by Lieutenant-Colonel Henry McLean, 14 October 1939. See also TNA, CO 129/563/5; Telegram No. 206, 15 December 1937. See also TNA, WO 106/5303 No. 290; Report on visit to Canton and Shanghai, January to February 1939 by Major G.T. Wards, 11 March 1939.

The state of cleanliness of both the barrack room and the weapons was of a high standard, especially as, the visit being unexpected, they could not have been prepared for any special inspection.

As for the Portuguese officers they looked slovenly and lazy and a direct contrast to everything else seen.¹⁸

Being a conduit for food into Hong Kong, as well as another avenue of war supplies into China, the Japanese were likely to bring greater pressure against the British by increasing their grip on Macau. Unfortunately for the Portuguese, but also for the British, Macau had become another potential flashpoint that further threatened the stability of international relations in the Far East.

Sinking into a Quagmire: March to May 1939

From the spring of 1939 onwards Japanese aims in south China included building popular support for their new puppet administration in Canton while eroding British support for Chiang Kai Shek from Hong Kong. In both of these objectives they failed. As a result, the Japanese navy increased its patrols along the south China coast once Hainan had been secured in order to restrict the transhipment of war supplies from Hong Kong moving northeast to Swatow and Foochow.¹⁹ Both of these cities would be occupied by the end of the summer in operations supported by powerful naval forces based at Amoy.²⁰ Failing to gain greater support for their Chinese administration in Kwangtung during the first three months of 1939, Japanese marines and army units also resumed their attacks throughout the Pearl River Delta with combat becoming severe during May and from July to September. These operations were again primarily directed at cutting

¹⁸ WO 106/5303 No. 290; Report by Wards, 11 March 1939.

¹⁹ TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 8/39 by Captain C.J. Edwards, 11 April 1939.

²⁰ Martin H. Brice, *The Royal Navy and the Sino-Japanese Incident, 1937-41* (London: Ian Allan, 1973), p. 117.

the food supply into Hong Kong.²¹ The near complete breakdown in Anglo-Japanese relations impacted Hong Kong during August with the arrival of Japanese army units along the frontier and the closure of the border to China. Throughout all of this, the Japanese air war over China continued with great ferocity, especially at Chungking, but with large bases made available at Hainan and Canton, aerial interdiction against Chinese lines of communication to Hong Kong and French Indochina was greatly increased although this effort remained largely ineffective.

Building popular support for the new administration in Kwangtung was difficult. At Canton the Japanese had formed a twenty-five mile radius defence zone with a no man's land developing between the two sides, but with up to 200,000 guerrillas reportedly located in Kwangtung, Japanese ground forces patrolling the region often met with opposition.²² Fighting in Chungshan had resumed in March causing Japanese morale to deteriorate.²³ Fourth War Zone, and especially Kwangtung, was weak both politically and militarily but Chiang Kai Shek maintained control. Resistance was sustained throughout the province by protecting the bulk of his meagre regular forces intact under General Yu Han Mou north of Canton, and by fighting the Japanese aggressively in Chungshan using General Chang's militia. Although Chinese guerrillas were of varying quality and were certainly a large part of the province's banditry problem, they were far too numerous for the Japanese to eliminate.²⁴ Anarchy was common in

²¹ TNA, WO 208/721, File Hong Kong Fortnightly Intelligence Reports, January 1939 to December 1939; H.K.I.R. No. 16/39 by Captain C.J. Edwards, 1 August 1939.

²² NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9784 by Captain Edwin M. Sutherland, 14 July 1939.

²³ UCC, Accession 83.046C, Box 3, File 60, BOMSC; McRae to Reverend Jesse Arnup, 6 May 1939. See also Douglas Ford, *Britain's Secret War Against Japan, 1937-1945* (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 35.

²⁴ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9768 by Captain F.P. Munson, 5 May 1939. See also NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9784 by Sutherland, 14 July 1939. See also

much of the province including Canton, and because of the lack of effective political control, people were very slow in returning to the city out of fear of violence from all sides.²⁵ By June 1939 somewhere between 500,000 and 700,000 people had returned but half of the businesses remained closed.²⁶

Japanese ground operations at this time coincided with the failed nationwide Chinese April Offensive. Along the North and East Rivers the net military results were inconclusive but civil instability persisted. Twelve thousand men of General Yu's 12th Group Army, including elements of the 151st, 152nd, 154th, and 159th Divisions, attempted and failed to capture Tsengcheng in early April. At Shihlingpu north of Canton, the Japanese also defended against the Chinese 151st, 152nd, 154th, 157th, 158th, and 160th divisions.²⁷ Chinese forces had little chance in attacking large garrisoned cities or towns with any success due to a lack of air and artillery support. Since Yu's forces were not to be squandered neither of these attacks were pressed with great determination. Yet, with only 25,000 men to maintain security over occupied areas the Japanese were themselves similarly unable to make military gains as they could not venture far from their base at Canton in any great strength.²⁸ Somewhat surprising to Hong Kong residents then, was the landing on 10 April 1939 by Japanese troops at the western end of the colonial frontier at Namtau, but these troops quickly proceeded north and away from the border.²⁹

WO 106/5303 No. 290; Report by Wards, 11 March 1939. See also TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 22/38, 25 October 1938.

²⁵ TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 11/39 by Captain C.J. Edwards, 23 May 1939.

²⁶ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 12/39 by Captain C.J. Edwards, 6 June 1939.

²⁷ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9768 by Munson, 5 May 1939. See also NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 39; Report No. 9771 by Captain Elmer E. Count, 24 April 1939. See also TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 9/39 by Edwards, 25 April 1939.

²⁸ TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 6/39 by Edwards, 14 March 1939. See also TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 9/39 by Edwards, 25 April 1939.

²⁹ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9768 by Munson, 5 May 1939. See also NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 39; Report No. 9771 by Count, 24 April 1939.

Combat occurring to the south of Canton was normally small in scale (company or battalion level) and usually inconclusive but the Chungshan District had become an increasingly deadly arena as the war of attrition dragged on.³⁰ The thought persisted amongst many Japanese officers that peace could be more easily imposed in the wake of victory on the battlefield.³¹ Because of their unexpected failure to establish a stable puppet government in the province, preparations for larger military operations were therefore begun in April. A Hong Kong military intelligence report explains how the movement of war supplies continued to be one of the primary factors behind their frustration.

A very respectable volume of traffic was flowing up the back reaches by this route from Hong Kong and Macau, but even if the Japanese succeed in stopping up these particular holes, it will doubtlessly seep through by some other ways in due course.³²

Fanning the flames was the increasingly determined leadership displayed by General Chang Wai Chang and the Japanese need to maintain prestige by defeating him. In the second week of April 1939 Captain Charles Boxer and Captain C.J. Edwards travelled to Chungshan via Macau to investigate the situation and they reported to the General Officer Commanding (GOC) in China, Major General A.E. Grasett, that the Japanese were making preparations for larger offensive operations. Numerous hospital ships had been collected in the area in anticipation of significant casualties and Japanese infantry patrols had become more frequent northwest of Macau.³³ As an indication of their growing difficulties Japanese reinforcements supported by substantial airpower and naval

³⁰ TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 11/39 by Edwards, 23 May 1939.

³¹ TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 9/39 by Edwards, 25 April 1939.

³² TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 8/39 by Edwards, 11 April 1939.

³³ TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 9/39 by Edwards, 25 April 1939.

gunfire were required near Kongmoon in order to defeat an increasingly determined Chinese counterattack between 19 April and 22 April 1939.³⁴

Japanese frustration with the stalemate across China resulted in an expanded long range aerial bombardment campaign to the interior.³⁵ Szechwan [Sichuan] was hit hard by Japanese naval bombers from May 1939 onwards and Chungking was often targeted from newly acquired airbases at Hankow.³⁶ The British Embassy was badly damaged after being hit on 4 May 1939 and the French Embassy was similarly bombed on 3 August 1939.³⁷ Other important centres in Szechwan and along the Yangtze River were also targeted frequently.³⁸ In one particularly heavy raid at Ichang on 8 March 1939, over 1,500 people were killed.³⁹ Unfortunately for the Chinese their air force was badly defeated in the

³⁴ *Ibid.* See also TNA, FO 371/23416 F 3639/14/10; Telegram No. 4984 by Major General A.E. Grasett, 11 April 1939. See also UCC, Accession 83.046C, Box 3, File 60, BOMSC; McRae to Armstrong, 28 April 1939, and UCC, Accession 83.046C, Box 3, File 60, BOMSC; McRae to Arnup, 6 May 1939. See also UCC, Accession 83.046C, Box 3, File 61, BOMSC; Broadfoot to Armstrong, 1 April 1939, and UCC, Accession 83.046C, Box 3, File 61, BOMSC; Broadfoot to Arnup, 6 May 1939.

³⁵ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9768 by Munson, 5 May 1939. See also NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9784 by Sutherland, 14 July 1939, and NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 39; Report No. 9762 by Count, 10 April 1939. See also Major General Claire L. Chennault, *Way of a Fighter: The Memoirs of Claire Lee Chennault, Major General, U.S. Army (Ret.)* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1949), p. 87.

³⁶ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9784 by Sutherland, 14 July 1939. See also TNA, FO 371/23473 F 8254/150/10; Ambassador Sir Archibald Clark Kerr to Robert G. Howe, 10 June 1939, and TNA, FO 371/23473 F 8588/150/10; Telegram by Senior Naval Officer China, 5 August 1939. TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 10/39 by Captain C.J. Edwards, 9 May 1939; TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 11/39 by Edwards, 23 May 1939; TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 12/39 by Edwards, 6 June 1939; TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 13/39 by Captain C.J. Edwards, 20 June 1939; TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 14/39 by Captain C.J. Edwards, 4 July 1939; TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 15/39 by Captain C.J. Edwards, 18 July 1939; TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 16/39 by Captain C.J. Edwards, 1 August 1939; TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 17/39 by Captain C.J. Edwards, 15 August 1939. See also Mark R. Peattie, *Sunburst: the Rise of Japanese Naval Air Power, 1909-1941* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2001), p. 116.

³⁷ NAC, MG 26 J1, Reel C-3745, Volume 271; Report by Ambassador Sir Archibald Clark Kerr, 8 May 1939. See also TNA, FO 371/23473 F 8254/150/10; Clark Kerr to Howe, 10 June 1939, and TNA, FO 371/23473 F 8467/150/10; Telegram by Consul General H. Prideaux-Brune, 4 August 1939, and TNA, FO 371/27675 F 2616/317/10; Memorandum by Ambassador Sir Robert Craigie to Foreign Minister Lord Halifax, 23 January 1941.

³⁸ TNA, FO 371/23473 F 8514/150/10; Telegram No. 840 by Ambassador Sir Archibald Clark Kerr, 7 August 1939. See also TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 7/39 by Captain C.J. Edwards, 28 March 1939. See also TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 11/39 by Edwards, 23 May 1939. See also TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 14/39 by Edwards, 4 July 1939.

³⁹ TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 6/39 by Edwards, 14 March 1939.

defence of Szechwan and a total of about 800 aircraft had been destroyed since the start of the war.⁴⁰ What units remained were in disarray or were being flown by a handful of Soviet pilots.⁴¹ Chinese air defences were consequently of very limited strength while the air force rebuilt itself with planes acquired from the Soviets and the Americans.⁴²

In reaction to the Japanese air offensive, the Chinese received greater international material assistance. In March 1939 the US War Department began to reassess their Pacific War preparations with specific attention devoted to the reinforcement of the Philippines in the event of a US-Japanese crisis.⁴³ The following month, 200 aircraft were sold to the Chinese for nine million dollars but there were substantial delays in delivery.⁴⁴ After the German occupation of Prague the Soviets also grew more concerned about the threat posed by the Japanese army in Manchuria and a deal was signed with Sun Fo on 5 April 1939 for the delivery of additional aircraft plus 800 pilots and ground crew personnel.⁴⁵ This action coincided with a renewed effort by the British Foreign Office to form an alliance with Stalin after a brief hiatus from earlier discussions.⁴⁶ In East Asia, Japanese strategy remained opportunistic and their reaction to European events during the spring and summer became increasingly anti-British. What they

⁴⁰ TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 2/39 by Commander J.M. Sturgeon, 17 January 1939.

⁴¹ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 10; Report No. 9709 by Major David Barrett, 6 January 1939.

⁴² NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9768 by Munson, 5 May 1939. See also TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 8/39 by Edwards, 11 April 1939. See also TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 18/39 by Captain C.J. Edwards, 30 August 1939.

⁴³ Henry G. Gole, *The Road to Rainbow: Army Planning for Global War, 1934-1940* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2003), p. 97.

⁴⁴ TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 8/39 by Edwards, 11 April 1939.

⁴⁵ NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 39; Report No. 9762 by Count, 10 April 1939.

⁴⁶ Sir Curtis Keeble, *Britain, the Soviet Union and Russia* (London: MacMillan Press, 2000), p. 143.

continued to strive for however, was a break in the military and political deadlock with a significant military victory.⁴⁷

The Occupation of Swatow and Foochow: Summer 1939

With over one million men in the field and approximately 100,000 dead, the Japanese were at a loss about how to bring the war with China to an end.⁴⁸ The Japanese had rejected joining the Axis Pact in the spring of 1939 and they would not decide until September 1940 which grand strategy to pursue. In the meantime it was a question of whether to advance north or south.⁴⁹ Until a decision was made, the British continued to allow the movement of war materials into China. In March 1939, for example, 32,000 tank shells and 80 million rounds of small arms ammunition originating from Germany passed through Hong Kong to Rangoon, followed in July by another 10 million rounds labelled as machine accessories. The latter went directly to free China from Hong Kong on board the *SS Bertram* in exchange for tungsten.⁵⁰ In response, the Japanese continued to monitor European events but China and Hong Kong were further isolated with the occupation of Swatow and Foochow.⁵¹

One of the major problems thwarting the establishment of a Chinese government in the occupied regions of south China was the lack of uniformity on strategy; a result of Japanese army-navy inter-service rivalry. A highly aggressive

⁴⁷ TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 9/39 by Edwards, 25 April 1939.

⁴⁸ TNA, FO 371/23416 F 5302/14/10; Telegram No. 3868, 30 May 1939. See also WO 106/5303 No. 290; Report by Wards, 11 March 1939.

⁴⁹ Tsunoda Jun, 'The Navy's Role in the Southern Strategy', in *The Fateful Choice, Japan's Road to the Pacific War: Japan's Advance into Southeast Asia, 1939-1941*, ed. James W. Morley, trans. Robert Scalapino (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), p. 263.

⁵⁰ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9784 by Sutherland, 14 July 1939. See also TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 7/39 by Captain C.J. Edwards, 28 March 1939. See also TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 14/39 by Edwards, 4 July 1939. See also Chan Lau Kit Ching, *China, Britain and Hong Kong, 1895-1945* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1990), p. 282.

⁵¹ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 15/39 by Edwards, 18 July 1939.

posture adopted by Vice Admiral Kondo Nobutake and the Japanese 5th Fleet failed to correspond with General Ando Rikichi's policy of restraint. Personal ambition and greed amongst senior Japanese officers were additional factors preventing the establishment of a politically cohesive strategy as many commanders continued to favour the maintenance of regional puppet governments over a single administration headed by Wang Ching Wei.⁵² Poor Japanese civil-military relations compounded their difficulties. In Canton, complaints relating to this issue were openly expressed by Japanese officials, even to foreign missionaries. One of these was Dr. Oscar Thomson, and he noted how many felt that the Japanese lack of direction was leading to a wider war. Thomson explained to a colleague that the Japanese Consul had told him how his own lack of communication and understanding with the military had made his job much more difficult, especially in dealing with the British.⁵³

Impatience amongst Japanese commanders was one of the reasons underpinning these problems but the cruelty exhibited all too frequently by troops outside of Canton was also a constant drag on whatever limited political progress was made. Captain Edwards reported on this.

Of all of Japan's mistakes none has been so foolish or done more to lose her the war than the apparent inability to prevent, if not the actual incitement of her soldiers to behave as pure savages. Especially during the early days of the war murder of large numbers of innocent civilians under revolting conditions, looting, arson and wholesale rape were the normal corollary of every Japanese advance.⁵⁴

⁵² NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9793 by Captain Edwin M. Sutherland, 8 September 1939. See also NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3; Report No. 9800 by Captain F.P. Munson, 3 October 1939. See also TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 20/39 by Captain C.J. Edwards, 26 September 1939. See also Hans Van de Ven, *War and Nationalism in China, 1925-1945* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), p. 227-228.

⁵³ UCC, Accession 83.046C, Box 3, File 63, BOMSC; Dr. J.O. Thomson to Armstrong, 21 May 1939.

⁵⁴ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 15/39 by Edwards, 18 July 1939.

Continued cooperation between the Chinese central government and the communists was the first result of Japanese conduct. Increased political awareness amongst many Chinese was another. Edwards continued: ‘It turned even the uneducated Chinese peasant, who normally neither knows nor cares who rules him, so he can cultivate his field in peace, into an active enemy of Japan, either as a guerilla or as the guerilla’s friend’.⁵⁵ Many Chinese also shared the fatalistic view that having survived for two years on their own with limited aid from abroad, time was on their side. Edwards wrote how this was once expressed to him in Chungking: ‘We do not expect to beat Japan to her knees, but we think we can drag her down with us’.⁵⁶ So long as a Chinese army remained in being along the Yangtze River and in Hunan there was less need for capitulation. Hatred of the Japanese still remained a relatively constant variable in the equation of Chinese morale, and resistance would continue provided Hong Kong supplied the Chinese army in Hunan.⁵⁷

Commerce offered a chance for the Japanese to achieve their political and diplomatic objectives but few Japanese officers understood this as well as General Ando or the British. Several foreign observers made note of the possible establishment of peace over time, provided the Japanese military services restrain their more aggressive elements and adopt less brutal methods. Foreign missionaries and military officers based these opinions upon years of observation of Chinese culture and the Chinese affinity for trade. As the war progressed, their predictions of how peace could gradually emerge through a condition of military stalemate and static

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 9/39 by Edwards, 25 April 1939.

⁵⁷ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 15/39 by Edwards, 18 July 1939.

deployments were substantiated by events. Major David Barrett was one of the most prescient regarding this eventuality.⁵⁸ In areas where Japanese aggression was curbed, trading with the enemy grew more common out of the desire amongst many Chinese both in and out of uniform for a return to normal life. By 1944 a de facto peace had grown out of this widespread economic reality that had settled in many parts of China, but by then it was too late to help the Japanese. In the summer of 1939 it was already an established reality in some parts of north China as well as in Manchuria.⁵⁹ Although the development of Sino-Japanese trade in areas of static warfare conditions also had the potential to undermine Japanese military discipline over time, the possibility of peace developing in occupied and adjacent areas was an issue that became the greatest concern of those officials in London tasked with managing affairs in China. This kind of scenario was considered most undesirable by the British because the prolongation of the war, not peace, remained their objective.⁶⁰

After the Pearl River was effectively closed much commercial trade passed from Hong Kong into China to the north through Swatow and Foochow.⁶¹ Several non-treaty ports such as Wenchow were opened to international economic activity but trading with the enemy soon became

⁵⁸ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3; Report No. 16 by Lieutenant Colonel David Barrett, 1 May 1941. See also NARA, RG 493, Entry 531, Box 51, Z Force Operations, Adjutant General Decimal File; Report by Colonel David Barrett, 20 May 1944.

⁵⁹ TNA, FO 371/22164 F 12980/12980/10; Report on Visit to Manchuria in September-October 1938 by Major G.T. Wards, 5 November 1938. See also John H. Boyle, *China and Japan at War, 1937-1945: the Politics of Collaboration* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1972), pp. 83-84.

⁶⁰ TNA, FO 371/27715 F 4091/3653/10; File cover notation by A.L. Scott, 21 May 1941. See also TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 24/38 by Commander J.M. Sturgeon, 22 November 1938, and TNA, WO 208/849, File Peace Overtures to China; Memorandum, 25 September 1939. See also UCC, Accession 83.046C, Box 3, File 60, BOMSC; McRae to Armstrong, 20 May 1939.

⁶¹ NARA, RG 38, M975, Reel 2; Estimate of Potential Military Strength Documents G, Naval Attaché Tokyo, Volume 2, Report No. 189, 5 September 1939. See also TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 8/39 by Edwards, 11 April 1939.

commonplace along the entire Kwangtung and Fukien [Fujian] coastline.⁶²

Trade was often conducted with the navy and this business continued in great volume even under the threat of occasional bombardment and invasion but the Chinese endeavoured to avoid provoking an attack on Foochow and Swatow by restricting imports there to non military goods.⁶³ Helping them maintain peace was the fact that tungsten mined from Kiangsi was the most important commodity sold to the Japanese at Swatow (tungsten mines near Toishan were an additional factor drawing the navy's interest towards Macau).⁶⁴ The impatience of Admiral Kondo, however, over the continued political trouble in Kwangtung and the logistical situation from Hong Kong resulted in a continuation of periodic bombardments directed against Foochow and Swatow throughout the spring.⁶⁵

Littoral warfare along the coast increased tensions between Japanese and Hong Kong officials as operations often directly affected British naval forces and civilian maritime vessels. Admiral Kondo's arrival in Amoy during the first half of May did not ease Anglo-Japanese friction. He had come to Amoy to oversee personally events in the region following the assassination of a Chinese puppet official in what became known as the Kulangsu Incident.⁶⁶ As in Foochow and Swatow, aerial bombardment likewise became commonplace in the area surrounding Amoy from the beginning of May onwards and an airbase was

⁶² TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 4/39 by Edwards, 14 February 1939. See also TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 10/39 by Edwards, 9 May 1939.

⁶³ TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 5/39 by Edwards, 28 February 1939, and TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 6/39 by Edwards, 14 March 1939. See also TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 10/39 by Edwards, 9 May 1939, and TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 12/39 by Edwards, 6 June 1939.

⁶⁴ NAC, RG 25, Volume 3264, File 6161-40C; Report by Reverend V.J.R. Mills, 27 September 1943. See also TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 10/39 by Edwards, 9 May 1939.

⁶⁵ TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 11/39 by Edwards, 23 May 1939.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* See also NARA, RG 38, Entry 98A, Box 705, F-6-c 23213 to F-6-e 22379; *USS Tulsa* Report No. A8-2(844), 27 July 1939.

established there to accommodate additional units.⁶⁷ Naval reinforcements were also received.⁶⁸ On 14 May 1939 a severe Japanese aerial attack on Swatow was conducted with aircraft from three Japanese warships including the seaplane carrier *Myoko*. These attacks involved British vessels and were reported on by Hong Kong military officers:

While air-raids have been carried out by all units, including ‘Myoko’, ‘Nagara’, ‘Natori’, and ‘Kamikawa Maru’, the most brutal and destructive attacks are the work of aircraft from the flagship ‘Myoko’. The most wanton act of all was the machine-gunning of sampans by ‘Myoko’s’ aircraft at Swatow on 14th May. ‘Folkestone’ reported that two sampans within 200 yards of the ship were attacked and ten casualties sustained including several dead. Two children were treated by ‘Folkestone’s’ Medical Officer but one, a girl aged 16, subsequently died. ‘Folkestone’ also reported the machine gunning of the Nanchai ferry which caused 24 casualties including 8 killed and ‘Thracian’ has reported similar cases.⁶⁹

Royal Navy vessels were in Swatow to assist British ships that were stopped due to the blockade. Just prior to the *Folkestone*’s report the *SS Sagres* had been seized off the Fukien coast and was brought to the Pescadores Islands.⁷⁰ The Royal Navy prevented further such seizures by their prompt intervention on behalf of other British ships.⁷¹

By June Japanese anger directed towards the British in southern China had grown, although with less intensity than was seen at Tientsin and air attacks along the coast were followed by an amphibious landing at Swatow on 21 June to isolate Hong Kong further.⁷² For this operation a Japanese army mixed brigade, which included Koreans and elements of the Formosan Division, all supported by the

⁶⁷ TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 11/39 by Edwards, 23 May 1939. See also TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 12/39 by Edwards, 6 June 1939.

⁶⁸ TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 9/39 by Edwards, 25 April 1939.

⁶⁹ TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 11/39 by Edwards, 23 May 1939.

⁷⁰ TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 8/39 by Edwards, 11 April 1939. See also TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 10/39 by Edwards, 9 May 1939.

⁷¹ TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 11/39 by Edwards, 23 May 1939. See also TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 12/39 by Edwards, 6 June 1939.

⁷² TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 17/39 by Edwards, 15 August 1939.

recently arrived seaplane carrier *Chiyoda*, was landed to occupy the city.⁷³ By 9 July 1939 this brigade had secured the port and most of the immediate area after meeting stronger than expected Chinese resistance and sustaining approximately 200 casualties.⁷⁴ Consul Matsudaira in Swatow explained to a British maritime officer that all third power shipping was henceforth restricted to one ship per week because of the high volume of war material that had been passing through the port.⁷⁵ The Japanese included trucks and rice from Hong Kong as contraband.⁷⁶

The occupation of Swatow had little impact on the Chinese military supply situation. Captain John Stapler of the *USS Tulsa* noted that, ‘British coastwise shipping is keeping up [the] struggle against the closing of the ports and is endeavoring to find out-of-the-way places where vessels can stop.’⁷⁷ Closer to Hong Kong, Kondo attempted to hit the Chinese economically with a small ground assault on the salt distribution centre at Swabue, but this attack was repelled between 18 and 21 July 1939.⁷⁸ Salt was one of the few commodities left for the Chinese government to generate revenue with and the disruption of the salt trade was just as much an economic goal of the Japanese as was their attack on the Chinese currency at Tientsin.⁷⁹

⁷³ NAC, RG 25, Volume 3233, File 5548-40C; Memorandum by Wooster, 20 May 1944. See also NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9784 by Sutherland, 14 July 1939. See also TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 12/39 by Edwards, 6 June 1939, and TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 13/39 by Edwards, 20 June 1939, and TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 14/39 by Edwards, 4 July 1939.

⁷⁴ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 15/39 by Edwards, 18 July 1939.

⁷⁵ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 16/39 by Edwards, 1 August 1939.

⁷⁶ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 15/39 by Edwards, 18 July 1939.

⁷⁷ NARA, RG 38, Entry 98A, Box 705, F-6-c 23213 to F-6-e 22379; *USS Tulsa* Report No. A8-2(844), 27 July 1939.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ TNA, FO 371/23520 F 3966/3905/10; Ambassador Quo Tai Chi to Halifax, 22 April 1939. See also FO 371/23520 F 3968/3905/10; Finance Minister H.H. Kung to Halifax, 22 April 1939. See also TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 9/39 by Edwards, 25 April 1939. See also TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 11/39 by Edwards, 23 May 1939.

Kondo soon turned his attention to Foochow. His forces had periodically bombarded the port throughout the spring and summer and its occupation was completed by 1 August 1939. The bombardment and mining of other ports as far as Wenchow in Chekiang [Zhejiang] was also underway by September but the net result was of little military utility. By the fall of 1939 Kondo had failed to block the movement of war supplies from Hong Kong into free China.⁸⁰

In consolidating their newly acquired positions the Japanese installed puppet administrations in both Foochow and Swatow but ultimately little was gained politically. Once established the Japanese navy tried to tighten the south China blockade further by increasing the frequency and strength of surface patrols within Bias Bay.⁸¹ They also encouraged anti-British demonstrations amongst the Chinese at Swatow and on 7 August 1939 *HMS Tenedos* landed a rating party to safeguard the British consulate from a potentially violent mob but the situation was diffused without great difficulty.⁸² Although anti-British sentiment amongst Japanese officers was becoming more pronounced in south China, personal profit still seemed to play a more prominent role in their decision making. By way of example, Admiral Kondo arrived in Swatow on 10 September 1939 for several days to discuss the amount of money to be paid to him by Chinese business parties in exchange for permission to allow a shipment of goods to proceed to America.⁸³ Aside from business arrangements such as this, however, little else was accomplished by Kondo's war along the Chinese coast northeast of Hong

⁸⁰ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 12/39 by Edwards, 6 June 1939. See also TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 14/39 by Edwards, 4 July 1939. See also TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 15/39 by Edwards, 18 July 1939. See also TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 16/39 by Edwards, 1 August 1939. See also TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 17/39 by Edwards, 15 August 1939. See also TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 20/39 by Edwards, 26 September 1939.

⁸¹ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 16/39 by Edwards, 1 August 1939.

⁸² TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 17/39 by Edwards, 15 August 1939.

⁸³ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 20/39 by Edwards, 26 September 1939.

Kong. Had trade been conducted with fewer bombs from his fleet perhaps the results may have been more profitable for Japan.

The Battle for Shekki, Chungshan District: June to October 1939

Following the Cantonese political rebuff in Chungshan the Japanese intensified military operations throughout the entire Pearl River Delta during the summer and fall of 1939, but they remained unsuccessful in terminating the war. An acceptable peace in occupied Kwangtung could not be imposed. Aggressive patrolling against Chinese irregulars south of the East and West Rivers was continued nonetheless while simultaneously it was hoped to keep General Yu's 12th Group Army divisions from infiltrating in from the north. As summer turned to fall the forces of both sides converged on Shekki but repeated Japanese attempts to capture the city met with failure. The Chinese defended the birthplace of Sun Yat Sen with great determination and although the fight for Shekki was small in scale compared to other significant battles, its political impact was great in helping to prolong the war. Combined with the defeats at Nomonhan and Changsha, the Japanese Pyrrhic victory in Chungshan only strengthened the Chinese in their resolve to continue fighting. The earnestly sought after military victory required for the inauguration of the Wang Ching Wei government continued to remain elusive.

Japanese plans also involved maintaining pressure against Hong Kong and this further escalated the conflict. During the period from June to October 1939 the Japanese army appeared on Hong Kong's border in strength, but General Ando still remained careful to ensure that his forces respected British sovereignty and avoided direct confrontation with the colonial garrison. Admiral Kondo was

much more aggressive in his attacks on Hong Kong's lines of communication, especially towards the West River, and his forces brought the war directly into Hong Kong both by air and at sea. Kondo's desire to exploit the British preoccupation with the crisis in Europe caused the low intensity conflict enveloping Hong Kong to expand.

With Generals Yu's 12th Group Army and General Ng Kei Wai's 9th Group Army ready to attack any thinly held positions outside of Canton, it was difficult for the Japanese army to gather sufficient forces to fight effectively at a distance. Consequently, it was the navy's marines and their Chinese allies that fought much of the summer battle for control of the Pearl River Delta. Support for the Chungshan campaign was extended as early as March with airfield expansions and railway improvements near Kongmoon, Canton and on Sanchau Island (during August).⁸⁴ It was expected that the Chinese were defending the region with weak militia forces made up largely of peasant farmers but for added assurance the navy reinforced the 5th Fleet with several seaplane carriers, such as the *Mizuo* (with its fifteen aircraft capacity) during April and May. The 5th and 23rd Destroyer Flotillas were replaced by the 9th and 45th Destroyer Flotillas respectively.⁸⁵ Along the West River the Japanese also had an advantage in gunboats including the *Saga*, *Enoshima*, and the *Ento*.⁸⁶ General Ando's army at Canton likewise received reinforcements but the bulk of his infantry consisted of

⁸⁴ TNA, FO 371/23416 F 5347/14/10; Telegram No. 5131 by Major General A.E. Grasett to War Office, 1 June 1939. See also TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 7/39 by Edwards, 28 March 1939. See also TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 9/39 by Edwards, 25 April 1939. See also TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 10/39 by Edwards, 9 May 1939. See also TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 18/39 by Edwards, 30 August 1939. See also UCC, Accession 83.046C, Box 3, File 61, BOMSC; Broadfoot to Arnup, 18 May 1939.

⁸⁵ TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 7/39 by Edwards, 28 March 1939. See also TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 9/39 by Edwards, 25 April 1939. See also TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 10/39 by Edwards, 9 May 1939. See also TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 11/39 by Edwards, 23 May 1939.

⁸⁶ TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 5/39 by Edwards, 28 February 1939.

elements of several divisions including the 18th, the 104th and the Formosan Division under Major General Iida Shojiro. Iida later commanded the Imperial Guard Division at Nanning in 1940 and the 15th Army in Burma.⁸⁷ In all there were approximately 50,000 Japanese troops in the region during the first week of June with the 18th Division under Major General Kuno Seiichi guarding the East River, and the 104th under Major General Hamamoto stationed along the North and West Rivers.⁸⁸ The Formosan division had three full regiments supported by armoured fighting vehicles (AFVs) and engineers at Canton, Fatshan and Samshui, and part of this unit also defended Bocca Tigris. An artillery regiment was also positioned at all of these places (as well as at south Hainan and Swatow) and each of these garrisons was augmented with a marine battalion and Chinese puppet troops. Because of the general shortage of manpower towns such as Samshui and Sheklung were usually only garrisoned by one or two companies totalling about 200 or 300 men.⁸⁹

In order to protect Canton adequately, the Southern China Expeditionary Army could only provide limited assistance to the Chungshan offensive, whereas General Chang Wai Chang was able to defend the region because his militia forces were supported from western Kwangtung. To keep the Japanese in place at Canton help was available from the 16th Group Army, from Yu's weaker 12th Group Army in the north, and if needed there was Ng's more effective 9th Group

⁸⁷ TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 11/39 by Edwards, 23 May 1939. See also TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 16/39 by Edwards, 1 August 1939. See also TNA, WO 208/722, File Hong Kong Fortnightly Intelligence Reports, January 1940 to October 1941; H.K.I.R. 7/41 by Major R. Giles, 1 August 1941. See also Hata Ikuhiko, 'The Army's Move into Northern Indochina' in *The Fateful Choice, Japan's Road to the Pacific War: Japan's Advance into Southeast Asia, 1939-1941*, ed. James W. Morley, trans. Robert Scalapino (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), p. 168. See also Sir B.H. Liddell Hart, *History of the Second World War* (New York: Cassell & Company, 1971), p. 233.

⁸⁸ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 12/39 by Edwards, 6 June 1939.

⁸⁹ TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 9/39 by Edwards, 25 April 1939. See also TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 11/39 by Edwards, 23 May 1939. See also TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 16/39 by Edwards, 1 August 1939.

Army positioned in southwest Kiangsi.⁹⁰ Strong Kwangsi reinforcements had also arrived along the West River to strengthen Kwangtung's western defences. These included the 64th and 69th Armies under Lieutenant General Hsia Wei.⁹¹ The westernmost base of operations was located at Wuchow [Wuzhou] on the Kwangsi-Kwangtung border and it was primarily defended by Kwangsi troops. Many fortifications were constructed during June. More forces were positioned further downriver at Koyiu [Shiuiling] along with ten Chinese MTBs to protect the river boom located there. Because these were the gateways into Kwangsi, both cities were often bombed by Japanese aircraft and one raid on Wuchow on 26 July 1939 resulted in over 1,000 casualties.⁹² With these forces available throughout the province the Chinese were able to exploit any opportunities presented by Japanese garrison reductions made in support of offensive operations in Chungshan. Because of this, the bulk of the South China Expeditionary Army was unable to fight in great strength in Chungshan and maintained most of its attention to the north of Canton and along the East River in areas close to the city.

Airpower was used to begin the assault on the Chungshan District in May and June and raids were continued throughout the summer. Many towns were bombarded while Chinese farmers were often strafed either working in their fields or when transporting their produce to Shekki.⁹³ During this first phase, interference with the region's agricultural production still remained the primary

⁹⁰ TNA, WO 106/5303, No. 289, Report on visit to IV War Zone Headquarters by Major Charles Boxer and Lieutenant Colonel H. Chauvin, 20 May 1939.

⁹¹ TNA, WO 106/5796, File Chinese Nationals: Yu Han Mou; Extract from Shanghai Military and Naval Intelligence Summary No. 47, 9 March 1939.

⁹² TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 13/39 by Edwards, 20 June 1939. See also TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 17/39 by Edwards, 15 August 1939.

⁹³ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 12/39 by Edwards, 6 June 1939. See also UCC, Accession 83.046C, Box 3, File 61, BOMSC; Broadfoot to Arnup, 3 August 1939.

objective.⁹⁴ This was confirmed by Hong Kong military intelligence officers after Governor Barbosa had been informed during a visit by officers of the *Saga* that food shipments into Macau were going to be reduced to provide for the needs of his colony only.⁹⁵ In July, Portuguese mariners were told by Japanese naval officers that food shipments from Shekki could only be made to Macau or Swabue and not to Hong Kong.⁹⁶

Ground operations began slowly by mid June 1939 and were carried out once again with companies of marines and Chinese puppets patrolling the West River Delta, but these forces were insufficient to defeat unexpectedly determined guerrillas who were reinforced by regulars during July. According to the Canadian missionary Reverend Tom Broadfoot, the Japanese made very little headway near Kongmoon and Sunwui and were constantly harassed by Chinese central government forces.⁹⁷ Japanese river and ground patrols continued throughout the month and reinforcements were brought in from Swatow.⁹⁸ ‘Severe fighting’ was reported by US Army Captain Edwin Sutherland in the area between Sunwui and Shekki on 16 July against the Chinese 152nd Division.⁹⁹ Reverend Broadfoot commented on the situation near Kongmoon that same day. ‘Fighting proceeds in and around Kong Moon as it has now, for many weeks. The Japanese are making no progress and are losing men and material.’¹⁰⁰ A Japanese marine battalion assaulted and captured the town of Kishan along the eastern coast of Chungshan District on 27 July, but the follow up advance was also met with

⁹⁴ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 15/39 by Edwards, 18 July 1939. See also TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 17/39 by Edwards, 15 August 1939. See also UCC, Accession 83.046C, Box 3, File 61, BOMSC; Broadfoot to Arnup, 16 July 1939.

⁹⁵ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 18/39 by Edwards, 30 August 1939.

⁹⁶ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 16/39 by Edwards, 1 August 1939.

⁹⁷ UCC, Accession 83.046C, Box 3, File 61, BOMSC; Broadfoot to Arnup, 28 June 1939.

⁹⁸ NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 40; Report No. 9857 by Captain Eric Svensson, 2 August 1939.

⁹⁹ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9788 by Captain Edwin Sutherland, 12 August 1939.

¹⁰⁰ UCC, Accession 83.046C, Box 3, File 61, BOMSC; Broadfoot to Arnup, 16 July 1939.

strong resistance at Shekki and the attack on the city ended in failure.¹⁰¹ To deal with the troublesome situation the Japanese further increased their troop strength in Kwangtung by dispatching two additional divisions to Canton from Formosa. By the end of July this brought their total strength in the province to about 75,000 men.¹⁰² Some success was then achieved with the capture of Kongmoon, Kowkong, and Sunwui once they arrived.¹⁰³ A map of the Pearl River Delta with most of these locations can be seen in figure 5.1.

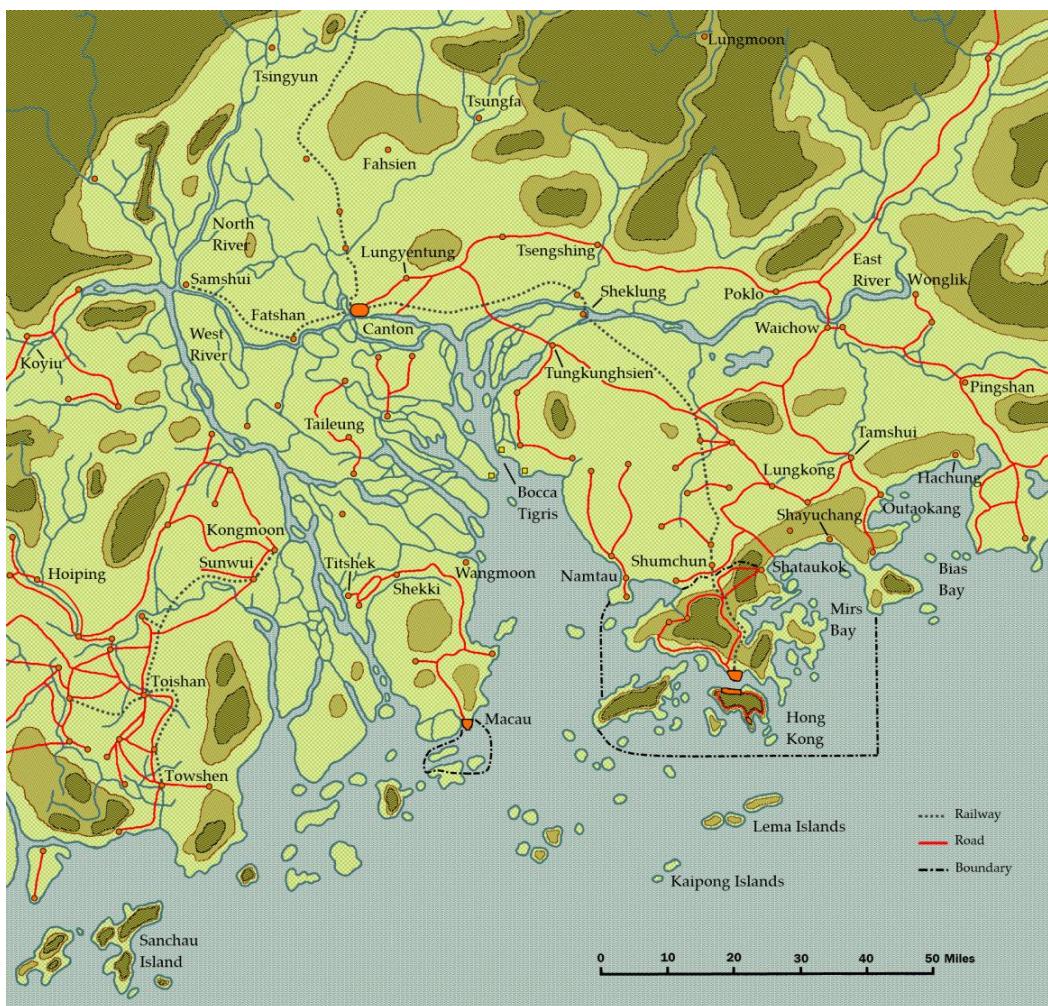


Figure 5.1: Pearl River Delta. [Source: Based on map found in TNA, WO 106/2384]

¹⁰¹ NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 40; Report No. 9857 by Svensson, 2 August 1939.

¹⁰² NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9788 by Sutherland, 12 August 1939.

¹⁰³ NARA, RG 38, Entry 98A, Box 705, F-6-c 23213 to F-6-e 22379; USS *Tulsa* Report No. A8-2(842) by Captain John Stapler, 27 July 1939.

Even with the loss of these centres and despite the near death on 3 August 1939 of General Chang during a Japanese attack at Wangmoon (on the eastern shore of Chungshan District), Chinese determination grew more resolute. Counterattacks grew both in frequency and in strength and on one occasion near Kongmoon, also on the third, a Japanese column including twelve tanks and a cavalry battalion was ambushed with many killed.¹⁰⁴ Because of this resistance the Japanese political program in support of the new Wang Ching Wei national government was given a rocky start and the newly arrived ill-disciplined reinforcements did little to help as looting also became commonplace.¹⁰⁵ Less than a week later a meeting was held between Wang and Ando in Canton, on 9 August 1939, but this failed to produce positive political results since most southern Chinese generals had failed to rally to Japanese calls for unity and peace. Although Ando agreed to permit Chinese autonomy for police and militia forces and the retention of position and power for all Chinese officials in occupied Kwangtung, Wang's public radio appeal to launch a new national government based in Canton fell flat amongst both the Chinese military leadership as well as the general public. Wang's message of 'Canton for the Cantonese' had little attraction in the face of the Japanese navy's pacification methods in Chungshan.¹⁰⁶

Urban areas such as Shekki were bombarded regularly by Japanese artillery and aircraft as fighting continued throughout August and September.¹⁰⁷ By 26 September three assaults on Shekki of increasing severity were defeated in

¹⁰⁴ UCC, Accession 83.046C, Box 3, File 61, BOMSC; Broadfoot to Arnup, 3 August 1939.

¹⁰⁵ UCC, Accession 83.046C, Box 3, File 60, BOMSC; McRae to Arnup, 28 August 1939.

¹⁰⁶ Boyle, *China and Japan at War*, pp. 250-252.

¹⁰⁷ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9799 by Sutherland, 29 September 1939. See also TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 17/39 by Edwards, 15 August 1939. See also UCC, Accession 83.046C, Box 3, File 60, BOMSC; McRae to Arnup, 9 August 1939.

succession and the third of these had been augmented by almost two army battalions transferred in from the Hong Kong border. Hong Kong military officers took note of the Chinese ability to defend the hometown of Sun Yat Sen and sent their observations to London. They reported that the Japanese had lost a tremendous amount of prestige in their repeated defeats at the hands of Chinese ‘farmer soldiers’ but most importantly they noted the political result was the failure of the Cantonese to respond to Wang Ching Wei’s call for unity with his new national government.¹⁰⁸

Pressure for a quicker victory began to mount on Japanese commanders from within their own ranks and from businessmen anxious over the fact that the Pearl River was closed to civilian traffic.¹⁰⁹ All previous Japanese attempts to take Shekki had failed due to limited numbers of troops and an over reliance on weak Chinese allies.¹¹⁰ A victory at Shekki was required to save face and the final assault began on 6 October 1939.¹¹¹ Three columns advanced on the city supported by air and naval gunfire. A full Formosan brigade was landed at Tieshih [Titshek] and advanced on Shekki from the west while two marine battalions advanced from the east starting at Wangmoon on the coast. Another group came in from the north.¹¹² Waterborne forces took full advantage of the river bisecting Chungshan District and a photo of this can be seen in figure 5.2.

Following two days of heavy combat the Japanese finally occupied Shekki on 8 October 1939 as the remaining 2,000 Chinese withdrew after running out of ammunition and the defending force sustained a total of 2,600 killed and 350

¹⁰⁸ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 20/39 by Edwards, 26 September 1939.

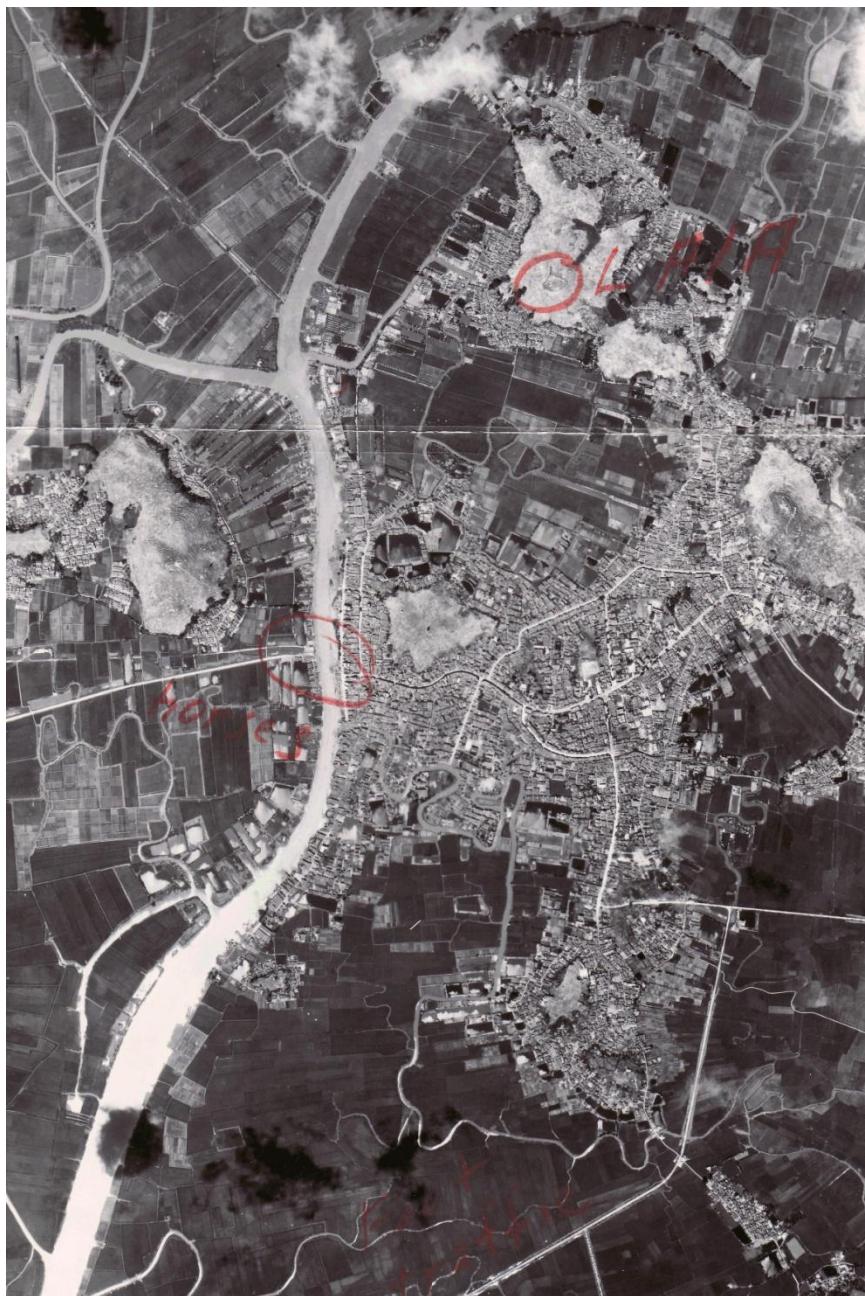
¹⁰⁹ TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 11/39 by Edwards, 23 May 1939.

¹¹⁰ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 21/39 by Captain C.J. Edwards, 10 October 1939.

¹¹¹ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9808 by Captain F.P. Munson, 26 October 1939. See also TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 22/39 by Captain R. Giles, 23 October 1939.

¹¹² NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 40; Report No. 9930 by Captain Eric Svensson, 11 October 1939.

captured.¹¹³ It was a bitter pill to withdraw from the birthplace of Sun Yat Sen just before the ‘Double Tenth’ anniversary of the revolution, especially after the Cantonese victory over Japanese forces on the same anniversary in 1938 at Tehan, but the battle was hard fought nonetheless and the campaign had dragged on,



Map: Figure 5.2: Shekki, 1944. [Source: NARA, RG 341, Entry 217, Box 824, MIPI File No. 69404; Aerial reconnaissance photo, 4 October 1944]

¹¹³ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9808 by Munson, 26 October 1939. See also NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 40; Report No. 9937 by Captain Eric Svensson, 26 October 1939.

despite all expectations, for a large part of 1939.¹¹⁴ Most of the fighting was done by Cantonese forces while Kwangsi troops maintained security over Chinese lines of communication. Despite holding much of the lower reaches of the West River, however, the Japanese victory was short-lived as they withdrew from Shekki after only two days of occupation.¹¹⁵ The Japanese persisted in the effort to make their point but the Chinese under General Chang Wai Chang quickly returned as soon as they left.¹¹⁶ Although much smaller in scale than the major battles elsewhere during the summer and fall of 1939, the battle for the Chungshan District was still very significant in that it helped upset Japanese plans to inaugurate the national government of Wang Ching Wei. Captain R. Giles of the Royal Marines reported this to London.

The only reason they occupied Shekki was to retrieve the loss of ‘face’ resulting from their previously unsuccessful attacks on the Chungshan district with Marines and Puppet troops. But although strategically sound, it was a tacit admission since it implied that they have not sufficient troops to garrison all the points they capture. The political effect therefore greatly encouraged the Chinese, especially as it coincided with the turn of the tide at Changsha and the air raids over Hankow. Japanese efforts to install a puppet government proved abortive, and the Chinese under General Cheung Wai Cheung reoccupied the town as soon as they had left.¹¹⁷

It also proved that the Chinese could defend Kwangtung militarily for a protracted period of time if they so chose. This in turn helps demonstrate that the rapid withdrawal from Canton in October 1938 was a deliberate element of Chiang Kai Shek’s strategy and not an act of treason by General Yu. The Japanese loss of prestige in Kwangtung also followed in the wake of much larger defeats in July in

¹¹⁴ TNA, WO 106/5303, No. 289, Report on visit to IV War Zone by Boxer and Chauvin, 20 May 1939.

¹¹⁵ NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 40; Report No. 9937 by Svensson, 26 October 1939.

¹¹⁶ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 22/39 by Giles, 23 October 1939.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

both Shansi and Hupeh.¹¹⁸ Morale problems greatly worsened amongst Japanese forces as a result of the military stalemate and the disasters suffered in Mongolia and Hunan from August to October only compounded Japanese difficulties further.¹¹⁹

Nomonhan (Khalkhin Gol): August-September 1939

The battle of Nomonhan had a large psychological effect on the Chinese and when combined with the battles of Chungshan and Changsha in south China, the political impact was tremendous. Throughout much of the Sino-Japanese War, Anglo-Soviet support to China remained somewhat coordinated but at times their assistance was shaped by conflicting strategic and political interests. Often their efforts were made simultaneously but support was usually increased or decreased by one to influence the other. Both countries supported the Chinese to keep the Japanese from expanding north or south, but since much of the British economic activity along the Yangtze River had already been eliminated, the only place where direct British interests in China remained relatively strong was at Hong Kong. Economic activity there amounted to two per-cent of British trade.¹²⁰ Although a free Hong Kong remained a vital concern for Chinese survival, as far as British imperial security was concerned it remained an outpost for Singapore. Siberia was of much greater strategic importance for the Soviet Union and these realities were reflected in the level of support each country provided to China. The best illustration of this occurred during the Soviet-Japanese battle of

¹¹⁸ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9784 by Sutherland, 14 July 1939. See also NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9788 by Sutherland, 12 August 1939.

¹¹⁹ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9788 by Sutherland, 12 August 1939. See also TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 16/39 by Edwards, 1 August 1939. See also TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 22/39 by Giles, 23 October 1939.

¹²⁰ TNA, FO 371/22159 F 9516/4847/10; Notes of Meeting held at Colonial Office, 26 August 1938. See also TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 19/39 by Captain C.J. Edwards, 12 September 1939.

Nomonhan. As Stalin moved towards Hitler in August 1939 the ferocity of the Mongolian battle increased. Stalin's first concern in Asia was to maintain the proxy war in China by reassuring the Chinese of his continued support. As the battle was heating up, US Army Captain Edwin Sutherland reported on Soviet objectives in Mongolia:

The aim of the Soviets in this war is to give the Chinese just enough aid and encouragement to keep them from accepting any Japanese peace proposals that may be forthcoming. The Russian Military Attaché, Combrig Ivanov, indicated this.¹²¹

In countering the diplomatic effects of the Nazi-Soviet Pact and the Tientsin crisis, Nomonhan served as a useful tonic in boosting Chinese morale, and Japanese peace offers directed at Chungking were once again thwarted, in part, because of their defeat at the hands of the Red Army. The battle of Nomonhan was more than just another border clash, it was the largest foreign intervention of the Sino-Japanese War and a key element of Stalin's evolving Far Eastern strategy.

Early in 1939 after the occupation of Hainan, Japanese army commanders felt secure enough in the north to reinforce south China in anticipation of operations along the coast. At that time it appeared that the Soviets and the Japanese had come to some form of diplomatic understanding. This was demonstrated with the signing of a fishery agreement during April and it was thought by some British officers in Hong Kong that additional units might be pulled from Manchuria for service elsewhere.¹²² These concerns were short lived. Following Hitler's move into Czechoslovakia, and the renewal of interest in collective security amongst French and British officials with Moscow, the Soviets

¹²¹ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9788 by Sutherland, 12 August 1939.

¹²² TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 8/39 by Edwards, 11 April 1939.

began to intervene more directly on the ground in the Sino-Japanese War.¹²³

Since May of 1939, Soviet-Japanese border friction in Mongolia had grown more serious and the military situation deteriorated during the course of the summer.

Consequently, by August the desire for trouble with Britain was temporarily lessened within the Japanese army. One demonstration of this change was the termination of the crisis at Tientsin at the end of July. During the first half of August seven Japanese divisions were then transferred out of the Yangtze River valley for duty farther north.¹²⁴ But as the Nazi-Soviet Pact was being signed on 23/24 August 1939, the Japanese 6th Army was encircled at Nomonhan near the Mongolian border. Red Army forces completed its destruction by the end of the month and some estimates place the number of Japanese casualties as high as 60,000.¹²⁵ Casualty totals vary depending on the source but the 6th Army was entirely destroyed with almost all ranks being killed. This battle was a significant intervention on the part of the Soviets but Chinese hopes for any greater involvement were over-optimistic. Aside from their Far Eastern forces, the rest of the Red Army was incapable of conducting large scale offensive operations because of Stalin's purges in 1937 and 1938.¹²⁶ Despite this, Japanese withdrawals from central China caused a dangerous shortage of troops on the eve of the first battle of Changsha which took place in late September and early October.¹²⁷ The first battle of Changsha was another humiliating defeat for Japan in a year of noteworthy defeats.

¹²³ Keeble, *Britain, the Soviet Union and Russia*, p. 143.

¹²⁴ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9788 by Sutherland, 12 August 1939.

¹²⁵ Alan Lothian, 'Khalkhin-Gol (1939)' in *The Mammoth Book of Battles: the Art and Science of Modern War*, ed. Jon E. Lewis (New York; Carroll & Graff Publishers, 1995), p. 140.

¹²⁶ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 18/39 by Edwards, 30 August 1939.

¹²⁷ NAC, MG 26 J1, Reel C-3745, Volume 272; Telegram No. 225 by Charges d'Affaires E. D'Arcy McGreer to Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King, 28 July 1939.

Coinciding with Anglo-Soviet alliance discussions, Soviet military supplies to China were increased somewhat but in an odd turn of events, Stalin boosted Soviet commitment even further as alliance negotiations with the British stalled and a deal with Hitler began to look possible. Soviet artillery and air advisers were posted as far south as Kweilin as the Japanese navy began their aerial interdiction campaign against Chinese lines of communication to French Indochina.¹²⁸ Naval transfers from Leningrad to Vladivostok included the passage of 11 warships via Panama during July followed by the appearance of another 150 aircraft at Lanchow [Lanzhou] and a squadron at Chungking during August.¹²⁹ Loans worth \$150 million were also negotiated on 10 August 1939 to counter Japanese economic pressure at Tientsin. These coincided with a British loan of £5 million which was not made public.¹³⁰

Unfortunately for the Chinese and the British, the battle of Nomonhan marked the turning point of Soviet aid to China and following the Nazi-Soviet Pact further Soviet assistance was gradually reduced until material supplies were terminated in 1941 with the German invasion of the USSR.¹³¹ During the early summer of 1939 Soviet military operations in Mongolia helped support the British position at Tientsin while negotiations in Moscow for a collective security alliance were then underway.¹³² But after discussions with the British and French had stalled by the end of July 1939, the ferocity and scale of the battle were greatly increased, and the destruction of the 6th Army helped convince the Japanese that future expansion southwards against British interests would be more

¹²⁸ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 16/39 by Edwards, 1 August 1939.

¹²⁹ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9793 by Sutherland, 8 September 1939. See also TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 17/39 by Edwards, 15 August 1939.

¹³⁰ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9788 by Sutherland, 12 August 1939.

¹³¹ Yu Maochun, *The Dragon's War: Allied Operations and the Fate of China* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2006), pp. 14, 23.

¹³² NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9784 by Sutherland, 14 July 1939.

profitable than an attack into Siberia. After Stalin's alliance with Hitler was signed in August 1939, a Japanese advance to the south became a Soviet strategic objective not only for national security, but also as a means of providing indirect support to Germany.¹³³ Consequently, the intensification of the battle at Nomonhan was directed as much against the British as it was against Japan. British aid to China via Hong Kong was thought to be useful in London so long as the USSR remained a potential ally but British support was maintained throughout 1939 and into 1940 in the weak hope of a Soviet reversal of policy.

Soviet aid continued on a diminishing scale following the alliance with Hitler as Stalin still wished to keep the Japanese mired down in China but from this point forward both the Japanese and the Soviets sought to maintain official neutrality in their diplomatic relations, in part to continue the shipment of raw materials to Germany, and this in turn brought a change in Anglo-Soviet diplomatic relations in the Far East.¹³⁴ As part of their aerial counteroffensive, Soviet raids were carried out against Hankow shortly after the October debacle at Changsha and this helped to keep the Japanese further off balance while trying to recover from their losses.¹³⁵ By November Lanchow had become a larger external Soviet base with barracks for 1,000 Red Army troops and 1,000 air force personnel. Weapons arsenals were also in operation under Soviet supervision.¹³⁶ But despite the continued assistance to China, Soviet attitudes towards Britain and France had now become problematic. Soviet propaganda directed at China highlighted French military limitations and suggested the French army would be

¹³³ R.C. Raack, *Stalin's Drive to the West, 1938-1945: the Origins of the Cold War* (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1995), pp. 21-23.

¹³⁴ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3; Report No. 9830 by Colonel William Mayer, 29 November 1939. See also Yu, *The Dragon's War*, p. 14.

¹³⁵ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 22/39 by Giles, 23 October 1939.

¹³⁶ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 24/39 by Major R. Giles, 21 November 1939.

outflanked by a German advance through Belgium.¹³⁷ Propaganda against Poland was also meant to undermine British prestige and demonstrate Soviet solidarity with Germany. Captain Giles in Hong Kong reported to London some examples of this trend.

The merciless hunting-out and shooting of Polish “officer-scum” is recounted in a vivid and peculiarly revolting manner. There are detailed accounts of the alleged atrocities committed by Polish officers upon the defenders and downtrodden workers. “Fat Priests” are described as preying on the people.¹³⁸

Vitriolic radio attacks soon worsened with the Soviet attack on Finland in December: ‘The “Anglo-French Imperialists” are blamed for egging-on the Finnish, “scarecrow militarists and their clownish government”.¹³⁹ The change in Soviet attitude was first physically witnessed in the Far East at Vladivostok by British ship masters whose crews in 1939 had previously been allowed ashore with few restrictions.¹⁴⁰ When the SS *Hauk* docked at Vladivostok following the Nazi-Soviet Pact the contrast could not have been greater. In this case a Chinese crew suffering from beriberi was forced to remain on ship and several deaths resulted. An autopsy was performed on deck by Soviet officials with the headless corpse of one man left there to rot for another day.¹⁴¹

The battle for Nomonhan was a very significant event because it also lent Soviet military and diplomatic support to Chiang Kai Shek when a Sino-Japanese peace again looked possible. It simultaneously strengthened Chinese communist morale. After the destruction of the 6th Army what unity in command the Japanese possessed continued to fragment. Steps were taken quickly to restore discipline amongst their own leadership, and the Japanese then began to

¹³⁷ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 21/39 by Captain C.J. Edwards, 10 October 1939.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 25/39 by Major R. Giles, 5 December 1939.

¹⁴⁰ TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 11/39 by Edwards, 23 May 1939.

¹⁴¹ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 25/39 by Giles, 5 December 1939.

concentrate on building greater support for Wang Ching Wei.¹⁴² The reckless independence of commanders in Mongolia had also been mimicked further south in Nanking [Nanjing] when a plan to assassinate Wang was revealed. His death would have promoted the maintenance of regional puppet regimes that would have better preserved the autonomous power of independently minded senior officers. The shift in support to Wang was begun in late September and early October following a change in command in Manchuria and central China.¹⁴³ Lieutenant General Umezu Yoshijiro was appointed to command the Kwantung Army in place of Lieutenant General Ueda Kenkichi and Lieutenant General Nishio Toshizo assumed command of the China Expeditionary Army.¹⁴⁴ Greater discipline and unity in command was demanded from Tokyo at a time when Soviet influence in China was at its height, but also when the potential of exploiting British weakness following the outbreak of war in Europe had now become too appealing to ignore.

Low Intensity Conflict at Hong Kong

On 18 August 1939 the British Chiefs of Staff had determined that it was virtually impossible to relieve Hong Kong in the event of hostilities with Japan, but the following month they opted for a continuation of the war in China although peace was possible and it was in their interest to arrange.¹⁴⁵ Japanese anger against Britain over this ongoing situation had been directed onto Hong Kong as well as in Tientsin. Before his replacement as head of the China Expeditionary Army,

¹⁴² Boyle, *China and Japan at War*, pp. 257-258.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.* p. 84.

¹⁴⁴ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3; Report No. 9830 by Mayer, 29 November 1939. See also TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 20/39 by Edwards, 26 September 1939.

¹⁴⁵ TNA, WO 208/849, File Peace Overtures to China; Memorandum, 25 September 1939. See also Catherine Baxter, ‘Britain and the War in China, 1937-1945’ (University of Wales, unpublished PhD Dissertation, 1993), p. 92.

General Homma Masaharu insisted that British support for China was the major factor prolonging the war and this opinion was shared by British officers such as Captain Edwards in Hong Kong. In August 1939 he wrote,

Although the U.S.A. and Russia are in some ways giving more support to China at the present moment than ourselves, there is no doubt that the Japanese are right to a great extent when they blame us for the efficacy of China's continued resistance.¹⁴⁶

The navy's blockade was somewhat successful in curbing the food supply from Chungshan into the colony, but friction with British military officers was building because of such action.

Anglo-Japanese conflict was becoming more of a problem in the air. Aside from reconnaissance missions, the few Walrus and Vildebeeste RAF biplanes at Hong Kong were of little combat value, and as was made evident during the Lo Wu Incident, Japanese pilots flew about the colony without fear of interference.¹⁴⁷ Attacks on aircraft flying in or out of Hong Kong such as occurred in August 1938 were a constant threat and more aircraft were forced down during the blockade.¹⁴⁸ Civilian pilots also had to worry about the possibility of being hit by naval anti-aircraft fire from Japanese warships. In one example, the Imperial Airways aircraft *Delia* was fired upon near Hong Kong on 31 January 1939.¹⁴⁹ Another Imperial Airways plane, the *Dardanus*, was attacked while on a flight from Hong Kong to Bangkok by three naval fighters on 8 November 1939 forcing it to land at Weichow Island in the Gulf of Tonkin. On

¹⁴⁶ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 17/39 by Edwards, 15 August 1939.

¹⁴⁷ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 18/39 by Edwards, 30 August 1939.

¹⁴⁸ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 17/39 by Edwards, 15 August 1939. See also Peter Moreira, *Hemingway on the China Front: His WWII Spy Mission with Martha Gellhorn* (Washington: Potomac Books, 2006), pp. 46-47.

¹⁴⁹ TNA, CO 129/579/5; Lady Manton to Foreign Minister Lord Halifax, 7 February 1939.

this occasion, no casualties were reported.¹⁵⁰ Colonial airspace violations resumed only a month following the resolution of the Lo Wu Incident when a flight of three Japanese naval aircraft over flew Castle Peak while en route to their ship located west of Lin Tin Island.¹⁵¹ In April, a flight of four Japanese naval Type 96 bombers from Sanchau Island flew through Hong Kong airspace at Deep Bay, and on 29 April, *HMS Cicala* was buzzed at Black Point by three of the same type of aircraft. Three monoplanes made a mock dive bombing attack on a police station on Lantau Island on 8 May.¹⁵² Macau received similar intimidation when a squadron of Japanese bombers over flew the city on 2 July while returning to their base at Sanchau.¹⁵³ To make their intentions clear, Japanese Consul General Okazaki met with British Consul General Blunt at Canton on the first day of June 1939. Okazaki threatened that Japanese air units would attack any airbase where Chinese aircraft were operating from, including Kai Tak in Hong Kong.¹⁵⁴

At sea the Japanese made their presence felt more strongly by periodically attacking junks and with regular stoppages and searches of British owned ships just outside Hong Kong's territorial waters. After the invasion of south China, junk attacks by motor launches from Japanese armed trawlers had resumed in January, and Chinese tungsten smuggling was somewhat interfered with during these operations.¹⁵⁵ Japanese warships frequently intercepted merchant vessels plying the waters of south China to search for war supplies. On 8 February 1939 the *SS Wosang*, carrying British Military Attaché Lieutenant Colonel C.R. Spear

¹⁵⁰ NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 40; Report No. 70, 27 November 1939. See also TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 24/39 by Major R. Giles, 21 November 1939. See also UCC, Accession 83.046C, Box 3, File 63, BOMSC; Thomson to Armstrong, 17 November 1939.

¹⁵¹ TNA, CO 129/579/5; Hong Kong Police Report by Acting Sub-Inspector L.K. George, 23 April 1939.

¹⁵² *Ibid.* See also TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 10/39 by Edwards, 9 May 1939.

¹⁵³ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 15/39 by Edwards, 18 July 1939.

¹⁵⁴ TNA, CO 129/579/5; Aide Memoire by Ambassador Sir Robert Craigie, 23 June 1939.

¹⁵⁵ TNA, FO 371/23513 F 1597/1597/10; Report by Governor Sir Geoffrey Northcote, 16 January 1939. See also TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 1/39 by Captain C.J. Edwards, 3 January 1939.

at the outset of his famous journey to the north, was travelling from Hong Kong to Haiphong when it was stopped by the seaplane cruiser *Myoko* and examined under searchlights. Seven trucks on the deck of the ship were carefully investigated.¹⁵⁶ In April, Colonel Gordon Grimsdale noted how on a return trip to Hong Kong from Shanghai aboard the SS *Ranpura* he and several other British officers, including an admiral, became incensed that their vessel was stopped just outside of Hong Kong's territorial waters while on its regular run. Four Hong Kong Royal Navy MTBs responded by aiming tubes at the Japanese cruiser while the boarding party was still reviewing the *Ranpura*'s log. Grimsdale and the Royal Navy officers donned their dress uniforms in case a serious incident developed but the confrontation ended peacefully.¹⁵⁷ On 25 July 1939 the British vessel *Haitan* was holed by a mine along the Fukien coast and had to limp into Hong Kong for repairs.¹⁵⁸

Additional serious confrontations at sea occurred during September after ground combat in Chungshan had intensified. While covering a fleet of troop transports located in Mirs and Bias Bays on the night of 12 September, HMS *Dorsetshire* discovered the carrier *Kaga* along with the *Myoko* conducting night landing exercises and aimed its searchlights on the *Kaga*.¹⁵⁹ Many Japanese army troops were situated north of the colony from mid August until early September and it was widely feared the navy was preparing to make a diversionary amphibious landing as a prelude to a larger naval assault on Hong Kong itself.¹⁶⁰ Instead the Japanese navy stepped up its attacks on junks from September to

¹⁵⁶ TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 5/39 by Edwards, 28 February 1939.

¹⁵⁷ Imperial War Museum (London) [hereafter IWM], Conservation Shelf; 'Thunder in the East' by Major General G.E. Grimsdale, 1947, pp. 18-19.

¹⁵⁸ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 16/39 by Edwards, 1 August 1939.

¹⁵⁹ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 20/39 by Edwards, 26 September 1939.

¹⁶⁰ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 13; Report No. 350.05-General by McLean, 14 October 1939.

October.¹⁶¹ Captain Edwards reported that the objective still remained the disruption of Hong Kong's food supply.

Six occupants left their own junk in a dinghy on observing Japanese aircraft firing at another junk anchored ahead of them.

Two aeroplanes then attacked the dinghy killing 3 female occupants, the remaining three, including a child aged one were wounded.

Several attacks occurred between 9th and 22nd September. The junks attacked were usually burnt and in some cases members of the crew drowned, in others bayoneted. In one case M.T.B. 10 rescued a junk's crew of 7 after they had been in the water for about 1 hour and their junk burnt.

The R.F.A. *Pearleaf* picked up the crews of three junks in the vicinity of Hong Kong, 8th October.

Two Junks had been gutted and the three crews placed in the remaining disabled junk. The Japanese are reported to have told them that, 'if they were again found to be taking food to Hong Kong they would have their throats cut.'

(The junks were reputed to have come from Santao and were carrying potatoes, ginger and a little rice.)¹⁶²

This increase in aggression during September was considered by Hong Kong officials to be a manifestation of the Japanese navy's sense of diplomatic easement caused by the start of the war in Europe; a most welcome event for the Japanese following their initial shock of the Nazi-Soviet Pact.¹⁶³

Anti-British sentiment had grown stronger and increasingly impatient officials demanded greater pressure be exerted on Hong Kong from the ground. In July 1939, Shiratori Toshio, Tokyo's ambassador to the USSR, commented on the situation.

It is well known that at present the Chiang regime is supported by two pillars. These are, of course, Great Britain and the Soviet

¹⁶¹ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 18/39 by Edwards, 30 August 1939. See also TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 19/39 by Edwards, 12 September 1939. See also TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 21/39 by Edwards, 10 October 1939. See also TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 22/39 by Giles, 23 October 1939.

¹⁶² TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 21/39 by Edwards, 10 October 1939.

¹⁶³ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 19/39 by Edwards, 12 September 1939. See also Tsunoda, 'The Navy's Role in the Southern Strategy', p. 242-243.

Union. If one of these two pillars were to be removed, the China Incident could probably be settled.¹⁶⁴

Thus, Japanese forces began military operations along the Hong Kong border in August with the aim of better interdicting the importation of war materials as well as to control the exportation of wolfram, much of which had been diverted to Hong Kong after the occupation of Swatow.¹⁶⁵

It was in the very early hours of 16 August 1939 that General Ando landed a mixed brigade of Formosans and elements of the 18th Division supported by AFVs, artillery, and cavalry at Namtau. Parts of the 23rd Brigade (18th Division) also marched down the coastal road from Bocca Tigris, and when combined, the total strength of the force was about 6,000 men.¹⁶⁶ Because of the Shataukok and Lo Wu Incidents, an earlier agreement between Ando and Grasett caused the Japanese to provide a warning of the impending operation forty-eight hours in advance.¹⁶⁷ The Japanese rapidly moved inland after a Chinese regiment withdrew and they then began to advance along the Hong Kong border. In response, the British deployed troops to the frontier and bridges within the New Territories were dismantled.¹⁶⁸ Roads were also mined, barbed wire barricades were erected and the colony was placed on a war footing. Upon conferring with Japanese army officers, however, no serious problems developed.¹⁶⁹ A photograph of the border can be seen in figure 5.3. By the 21st the Japanese

¹⁶⁴ Hosoya Chihiro, 'The Japanese-Soviet Neutrality Pact' in *The Fateful Choice, Japan's Road to the Pacific War: Japan's Advance into Southeast Asia, 1939-1941*, ed. James W. Morley, trans. Robert Scalapino (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), p. 23.

¹⁶⁵ NARA, RG 38, M975, Reel 2; Estimate of Potential Military Strength Documents G, Volume 2, Report No. 189, 5 September 1939. See also FO 371/23514 F 9512/1696/10; Admiralty Telegram No. 1814/25, 24 August 1939. See also TNA, FO 371/23514 F 9739/1696/10; Telegram No. 160 by Acting Consul General Gerald Tyler to Governor Sir Geoffrey Northcote, 22 August 1939. See also TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 18/39 by Edwards, 30 August 1939.

¹⁶⁶ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 18/39 by Edwards, 30 August 1939.

¹⁶⁷ TNA, FO 371/23514 F 9087/1696/10; Telegram by Major General A.E. Grasett to War Office, 16 August 1939.

¹⁶⁸ TNA, FO 371/23514 F 9507/1696/10; Telegram, 26 August 1939.

¹⁶⁹ NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 40; Report No. 9895 by Captain Eric Svensson, 12 September 1939.

reached Shataukok on the other end of the border, but after several days a partial withdrawal totalling 1,800 Formosans was carried out on the 27th and 28th although the area of occupation was extended along the coast of Mirs Bay.¹⁷⁰ One reason for the abrupt end of the operation was the signing of the Nazi-Soviet Pact and a very brief Japanese reversion towards neutrality vis-à-vis Great Britain.¹⁷¹



Figure 5.3: Hong Kong Border along the KCR, 23 August 1939. [Source: NARA, RG 306, Box 944-1000; *Domei/New York Times*]

Some of the troops withdrawn were then sent on to Chungshan, but the bulk of the 55th Regiment under the command of Colonel Nakajima Tokutaro remained at Shumchun and was headquartered at Namtau. This regiment had some heavy support weapons including 37 mm and 70 mm mortars but it also had

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.* See also NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9793 by Sutherland, 8 September 1939. See also TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 18/39 by Edwards, 30 August 1939.

¹⁷¹ TNA, FO 371/23514 F 9467/1696/10; Telegram No. 954 by Ambassador Sir Archibald Clark Kerr, 28 August 1939.

a battery of 75 mm guns for extra firepower. The nearest Japanese unit was the remainder of the 23rd Brigade posted to the north at Sheklung but the 55th Regiment made no attempt to link with the brigade as the Chinese had already destroyed the KCR. Because the 55th Regiment lacked greater support or a land line of communication to Canton they were not considered an immediate threat to Hong Kong.¹⁷² Chinese forces at Waichow also posed a threat to their rear.¹⁷³ This operation along the colony's border was the first ground action to involve Japanese army units in such close proximity to Hong Kong since the Shataukok Incident of November 1938. As such, it successfully created a war scare amongst Hong Kong's residents and foreign missionaries living in Kwangtung.¹⁷⁴

An original purpose of these border operations was to intimidate British officials.¹⁷⁵ The timing of the event coincided with the worsening situation in Europe. Captain Edwards reported how the move was ordered from Tokyo:

An open secret that the comparative moderation of the South China Expeditionary Force in the anti-British campaign being waged by the Japanese army in China, was provoking serious dissatisfaction in Tokyo. Both the G.O.C. Lt-Gen. R. Ando, and the Consul-General Mr. Miyazaki, had limited the anti-British campaign in Canton to press attacks, and great pressure was being brought on them to do something more drastic. They were eventually compelled to give way, but even so acted with relative caution and moderation up to the last moment. A further obvious purpose of the Japanese move, was that it enabled them to place a screen of troops along the frontier, behind which a striking force could be assembled for a quick blow against Hong Kong, if Japanese intervention should materialise in connection with the anticipated outbreak of war in Europe.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷² TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 18/39 by Edwards, 30 August 1939. See also TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 19/39 by Edwards, 12 September 1939.

¹⁷³ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 19/39 by Edwards, 12 September 1939.

¹⁷⁴ UCC, Accession 83.046C, Box 3, File 63, BOMSC; Thomson to Arnup, 7 September 1939.

¹⁷⁵ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9793 by Sutherland, 8 September 1939.

¹⁷⁶ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 18/39 by Edwards, 30 August 1939.

The presence of secondary objectives such as a guerrilla training school at Pingwu just fifteen miles north of the border and several Chinese radio transmitters located at Shataukok also attracted Japanese attention towards the colony.¹⁷⁷

In conjunction with this operation the Japanese also launched several serious attacks between August and October to the north of Canton at Tsungfa and Fahsien; partly to reduce the Chinese army's strength near Canton and also as retribution for the stubborn Cantonese refusal to align themselves with Wang. But these attacks ran into stronger than anticipated defences established by General Yu's 12th Group Army resulting in little appreciable gain. Many casualties were sustained including the deaths of three senior Japanese commanders.¹⁷⁸ The Japanese could not afford to become greatly entangled, however, as the potential for a Chinese counterattack posed an ever present danger. Chinese forces were watchful for any chance to threaten Canton and they conducted guerrilla raids against forward posts almost on a nightly basis.¹⁷⁹ General Yu's 12th Group Army maintained the defence of Waichow with large numbers of troops awaiting opportunities to occupy vacated towns or strong points along the East River closer to Canton, or within the region just north of Hong Kong.¹⁸⁰

Fighting between Japanese and Chinese forces southeast of Canton was stepped up at the end of September once the Japanese decided to exploit Britain's difficulties arising from European events. To make Hong Kong's isolation more effective the Japanese landed additional troops at Namtau and advanced eastward along the border between the night of 29/30 September and 3 October but on this

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 20/39 by Edwards, 26 September 1939.

¹⁷⁹ NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 40; Report No. 70, 27 November 1939.

¹⁸⁰ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 21/39 by Edwards, 10 October 1939. See also TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 22/39 by Giles, 23 October 1939.

occasion combat against Chinese forces. There was no direct British involvement during this incident but with the war being fought along the colony's frontier the potential for such a scenario once again resurfaced.¹⁸¹ This action was timed to support the inauguration of the new national government under Wang Ching Wei.¹⁸² It had been hoped that by isolating China from Hong Kong even further Wang's new government could more easily be established by 10 October.¹⁸³

The Chinese response to the landing came on the night of 30 September/1 October 1939 when the 20th Regiment of the 151st Division attacked Japanese positions along the border with Hong Kong. One reason the Chinese conducted the operation was to boost Cantonese morale within Hong Kong as part of the larger effort to erode political support for the Wang Ching Wei government. But another military concern was to provide indirect assistance to Chinese forces fighting desperately at Chungshan by attempting to prevent Japanese reinforcements being sent from Shumchun. The Chinese attacks were well timed but not pressed with determination and the Japanese counterattack began during daylight. Hong Kong officers of the 1st Kumaon Rifles witnessed a company level assault by Japanese troops on a hill just outside Shataukok and the battalion commander reported on the tactical capabilities of each side. Both made effective use of terrain to aid movement and Japanese automatic weapons and mortar fire was very accurately laid down even though few Chinese casualties were sustained. Japanese NCOs were described as being of excellent quality and they proved to be the decisive factor in the engagement. Both Japanese and Chinese

¹⁸¹ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9808 by Munson, 26 October 1939. See also TNA, FO 371/23514 F 10769/1696/10; Telegram, 2 October 1939.

¹⁸² Boyle, *China and Japan at War*, p. 257-258.

¹⁸³ Usui Katsumi, 'The Politics of War', in *Japan's Road to the Pacific War, The China Quagmire: Japan's Expansion on the Asian Continent, 1933-1941*, eds. David Lu and James W. Morley (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), pp. 388-389.

troops moved unhurriedly without great élan, and a sense of caution to limit casualties was evident, but the Chinese held their ground stubbornly even though they lacked sufficient automatic weapons and mortars. Over several days the Chinese regiment was pushed up the KCR for some distance away from the border and combat operations came to an end.¹⁸⁴

Like elsewhere in China, Japanese tactical combat advantages failed to produce tangible military and political results in Kwangtung. Despite their best efforts they were unable to fully isolate Hong Kong, and as the disaster at Nomonhan unfolded, the Japanese sought to bring the Tientsin Crisis to an end while they quickly made peace with Stalin. Towards these goals the government of Prime Minister Hiranuma Kiichiro was replaced by the Abe Noboyuki Cabinet on 30 August 1939.¹⁸⁵ Adjustments were also made in the navy with the appointment of the former naval attaché to Britain, Vice-Admiral Takasu Shiro, as the new commander of the 5th Fleet in place of Vice Admiral Kondo.¹⁸⁶ In line with these developments Japanese troop strength was reduced at Hong Kong and changes were made amongst the Japanese army leadership to ease tensions with the British.¹⁸⁷ Those continuing to demand the termination of support to China, however, maintained Britain as the primary object of Japanese hostility because of Japan's dependence on US trade and fear of the Red Army. Britain was also the weakest power of the group and was most vulnerable at Tientsin and Hong

¹⁸⁴ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9808 by Munson, 26 October 1939; TNA, FO 371/23514 F 10769/1696/10; Telegram, 2 October 1939; and TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 21/39 by Edwards, 10 October 1939.

¹⁸⁵ TNA, FO 371/23514 F 9467/1696/10; Telegram No. 954 by Clark Kerr, 28 August 1939. See also TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 18/39 by Edwards, 30 August 1939. See also Hosoya, 'The Japanese-Soviet Neutrality Pact', p. 18, 23-24. See also Peter Lowe, *Great Britain and the Origins of the Pacific War: a Study of British Policy in East Asia, 1937-1941* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), pp. 100-102.

¹⁸⁶ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 22/39 by Giles, 23 October 1939. See also TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 26/39 by Major R. Giles, 19 December 1939.

¹⁸⁷ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9793 by Sutherland, 8 September 1939. See also NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9799 by Sutherland, 29 September 1939.

Kong.¹⁸⁸ Although anti-British activity was reduced many Japanese officers remained unsupportive of adjusting their political strategy in China. Instead, the formal establishment of Wang Ching Wei's national government was temporarily held in abeyance in favour of the maintenance of regional and subordinate Chinese administrations.¹⁸⁹

Undermining Diplomacy: British Covert Warfare

As early as the spring of 1939, and as a response to the Japanese presence in Kwangtung, the British had begun to increase their support for China from simple assistance in the transhipment of munitions, to the strengthening of direct military and intelligence ties. This escalation coincided with ongoing Anglo-Soviet alliance negotiations. Within Hong Kong conscription was introduced in July to double the size of the Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corps (HKVDC) to a strength of about 2,500 men (this force included an armoured car platoon, a mechanized company, a motorized machinegun platoon and a company of field engineers), and authorization was also granted for the destruction of all oil stocks if the colony came under attack.¹⁹⁰ Stonecutter's Island was already one of the most important global signal intelligence centres but Hong Kong's role as a base for British intelligence and special operations in China was soon expanded in a variety of destabilizing ways.¹⁹¹ It was during this time that the GOC China, Major General Grasett began to exert considerable autonomy on the course of

¹⁸⁸ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 17/39 by Edwards, 15 August 1939.

¹⁸⁹ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 20/39 by Edwards, 26 September 1939. See also Boyle, *China and Japan at War*, p. 258.

¹⁹⁰ NARA, RG 165, Entry 77 NM 84, Box 1738; Military Intelligence Division Regional File: Islands, Hong Kong; Report by Vice Consul John Pool, 15 July 1939. See also NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 13; Report No. 350.05-General by McLean, 14 October 1939. See also TNA, FO 371/23520 F 6814/3918/10; Telegram No. 5233 by Major General A.E. Grasett, 7 July 1939. See also George Endacott, *Hong Kong Eclipse* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 43.

¹⁹¹ Peter Elphick, *Far Eastern File: the Intelligence War in the Far East, 1930-1945* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1997), pp. 69-70, 73.

British strategy in Asia. Grasett personally directed the expansion of Britain's military role in the region by first developing greater professional links with the Chinese army, often with the aid of military intelligence officers such as recently promoted Major Charles Boxer.¹⁹² Meetings with Chiang Kai Shek and other Chinese officials during May resulted in the reaffirmation of an offer for 200,000 Chinese troops in the defence of Hong Kong.¹⁹³ Although this was subsequently rejected in London after the signing of the Nazi-Soviet Pact, Major Boxer made several trips to Chungking in July and October of 1939, as well as in August 1940, for the purpose of building greater military coordination.¹⁹⁴ This was done despite orders from the War Office to Grasett in July 1940 not to engage in direct negotiations with the Chinese out of fear of provoking a Japanese attack at that time.¹⁹⁵ These discussions, and other efforts, helped lay the foundation for a future military alliance, and this process did not go unnoticed by the Japanese.

Prior to the outbreak of war in Europe senior Hong Kong civilian and military officials met with allied colleagues, as would be expected, to coordinate strategy. Aside from strengthening military relations with the Chinese, Grasett worked closely with the French and from 22 to 27 June French and British officers met in Singapore. They agreed to maintain covert support for China while recommendations were sent to London for air reinforcements.¹⁹⁶ Those in attendance included Major General Grasett, Air Vice-Marshal Sir J.T. Babington,

¹⁹² Anne Ozorio, 'The Myth of Unpreparedness: The Origins of Anti Japanese Resistance in Prewar Hong Kong', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, Hong Kong Branch*, 42 2003: 161-186, p. 165.

¹⁹³ TNA, FO 371/23520 F 12784/3661/10; File cover notation by A.L. Scott, 20 December 1939. See also Andrew Whitfield, *Hong Kong, Empire and the Anglo-American Alliance at War, 1941-45* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2001), p. 227.

¹⁹⁴ Ozorio, 'The Myth of Unpreparedness', pp. 164-165. See also Philip Snow, *The Fall of Hong Kong: Britain, China and the Japanese Occupation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), p. 48.

¹⁹⁵ Oliver Lindsay, *The Lasting Honour* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1978), p. 5.

¹⁹⁶ Lowe, *Great Britain and the Origins of the Pacific War*, pp. 95-96.

Admiral Jean Decoux and Lieutenant General Martin.¹⁹⁷ During the height of the Tientsin crisis, General Grasett conferred with his French counterpart in that city on 5 July in order to formulate a more coordinated strategy. They decided not to offer military resistance in the event of a Japanese attack on Anglo-French concessions but rather, to withdraw their forces into the US zone if permission was granted.

Once war against Germany was declared General Grasett developed a tendency to conduct British Far Eastern foreign and military policy on his own initiative. Having been former head of the intelligence staff in India Grasett was quite confident in his judgement but his pronouncements sometimes revealed a lack of necessary foresight for his position.¹⁹⁸ On a visit to Toronto in 1932 for example, he once predicted that ‘the influence of Mahatma Gandhi was not of the lasting character and would soon wane’.¹⁹⁹ On the civilian side of Hong Kong’s administrative ledger Governor Northcote had also become more determined to confront the Japanese and he abandoned his earlier suggestion for demilitarization. With the introduction of conscription for Hong Kong he began to emphasize to the Colonial Office the necessity of a ‘bold front’ in defence of the colony as being important for the continued maintenance of Chinese resistance.²⁰⁰ On this issue Foreign Office officials surprisingly considered Northcote to be somewhat aggressive: ‘we concur generally in his views about the ‘bold front’ – all that we lack is the courage to assume it’.²⁰¹ By 1941 both Grasett and Governor Northcote would exert a higher degree of control over

¹⁹⁷ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 13/39 by Edwards, 20 June 1939.

¹⁹⁸ Metropolitan Toronto Reference Library (Canada) [hereafter TRL], ‘Biographies of People’, Scrapbook Volume 1, Frame No. 457; Newspaper clipping, 24 May 1938.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁰ TNA, FO 371/23513 F 6050/1515/10; File cover notation, 21 June 1939.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*

British foreign and military policy in East Asia than the Foreign Office was prepared to allow. Officials such as A.L. Scott would eventually grow anxious over the possibility that they might start a war with Japan precipitately.²⁰²

In 1939, the formation of a small special operations detachment under the command of a fellow Canadian, Major Francis Kendall was a significant Grasett initiative. Z Force was tasked with conducting sabotage and guerrilla warfare operations behind enemy lines in the event of a Japanese attack on the colony.²⁰³ During the battle for Hong Kong, Z Force carried out their assignment to the best of their ability and also successfully evacuated Admiral Chan Chak along with other important figures to free China via Mirs Bay and Waichow.²⁰⁴ Major Kendall was a mining engineer who had worked in Kwangtung between 1931 and 1939 before being recruited by British authorities as an intelligence agent in southern China.²⁰⁵ He had many close personal connections with the Hakka communists north of Hong Kong; one of whom was his wife.²⁰⁶ Because of this, Kendall was able to establish a very effective network of contacts stretching from Hainan to Swatow, and throughout the Sino-Japanese War he was engaged in the organization of communist guerrilla bands for operations in Kwangtung.²⁰⁷ By 1941 Lieutenant General Vasily Chuikov would be commander of the Soviet

²⁰² TNA, FO 371/27653 F 6607/188/10; File cover notation by A.L. Scott, 25 July 1941.

²⁰³ Baxter, ‘Britain and the War in China’, pp. 231-232.

²⁰⁴ IWM, War Diary, Royal Scots, 2nd Battalion; Hong Kong, December 1941, and TNA, WO 199/1287, File Hong Kong, Siege Surrender and Occupation; Report by Commander H.M. Montague, 16 January 1942. See also Endacott, *Hong Kong Eclipse*, pp. 78-79, 185, and Compton Mackenzie, *Eastern Epic: Volume 1, September 1939-March 1943, Defence* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1951), p. 216. See also Yu Maochun, “In God we Trusted, In China we Busted”: The China Commando Group of the Special Operations Executive (SOE), *Intelligence and National Security*, 16(4) 2001: 37-60, pp. 54-55.

²⁰⁵ NARA, RG 226, Entry 139, Box 169, OSS Field Station Files; OSS Investigative Report No. 11596, 3 December 1943.

²⁰⁶ University of Hong Kong Archive [hereafter HKU], B.A.A.G. Series, Volume II, ‘Capture, Escape and the Early B.A.A.G.’; Report ‘The Early BAAG’ by Colonel Lindsay Ride, 20 August 1942.

²⁰⁷ NARA, RG 226, Entry 92, Box 468, File 43, OSS Central Files; OSS Memorandum by Lieutenant Colonel Kenneth Baker, 2 December 1943.

Military Mission to China and in his memoirs he praised the British intelligence net in Kwangtung and the contribution that it had made throughout the Sino-Japanese War.²⁰⁸

Naturally enough, the British employment of Kendall did not help improve Sino-British relations at Chungking as his activities ran afoul of Chinese intelligence headed by General Tai Li.²⁰⁹ His work with the communists created great distrust of British motives and was a factor in the expulsion of John Keswick's China Commando Group in 1942 once Z Force was rolled into the organization after the fall of Hong Kong.²¹⁰ In 1943 the US Office of Strategic Services (OSS) sought to employ Kendall and he was described as one of Britain's 'most reliable agents' within the Special Operations Executive (SOE).²¹¹ During this period Kendall cooperated a great deal with the OSS; an organization thoroughly compromised by the Soviet NKVD.²¹² The following year he continued his work with the SOE by training North American Chinese in California and British Columbia for planned operations in Malaya and south China, but the war ended before many tangible results were realized.²¹³ In 1939, however, Kendall was already a significant tool in the British clandestine effort to aid the communists, and in this role he had the full support of General Grasett.

²⁰⁸ Lieutenant General Vasily Chuikov, *Mission to China: Memoirs of a Soviet Military Adviser to Chiang Kaishek*, trans. David P. Barrett (Norwalk: EastBridge, 2004), p. 157.

²⁰⁹ Yu, 'In God we Trusted, In China we Busted', pp 54-55.

²¹⁰ HKU, B.A.A.G. Series, Volume II, MI9 China Report by Squadron Leader Basil Russell (GHQ India), 31 August 1942. See also Charles Cruickshank, *SOE in the Far East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 154. See also Yu, 'In God we Trusted, In China we Busted', pp 54-55.

²¹¹ NARA, RG 226, Entry 92, Box 468, File 43, OSS Central Files; OSS Memorandum by Baker, 2 December 1943.

²¹² John Mendelsohn ed., *Covert Warfare: Intelligence, Counterintelligence, and Military Deception During the World War II Era, 8. The OSS-NKVD Relationship, 1943-1945* (New York: Garland Publishing), Document 11. See also Robert Wilcox, *Target: Patton, the Plot to Assassinate General George S. Patton* (Washington: Regnery Publishing, 2008), pp. 137-138.

²¹³ NARA, RG 226, Entry 92, Box 468, File 43, OSS Central Files; OSS Memorandum by Baker, 2 December 1943. See also Roy MacLaren, *Canadians Behind Enemy Lines, 1939-1945* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004), pp. 186-187, and Hamstat On Line, 1996; <http://www.mwadui.com/HongKong/Kendall.htm>.

It is significant to note that like the Japanese, there was also lack of uniformity amongst British officers on how to proceed both diplomatically and militarily with the Chinese, and this too did little to ease Anglo-Japanese relations. General Grasett was strongly anti-Japanese but serving under him was Colonel Grimsdale, an officer who had assumed command of the Far East Combined Bureau (FECB) in April 1939. The FECB was an intelligence unit directly responsible to the War Office in London, and as such, Grimsdale shared the War Office view that the Japanese should not be provoked with overt aid to China. Grimsdale's services were sought by the British Military Mission to the Soviet Union in December 1941 because of the threat posed to the USSR from Manchuria and he was considered to be their 'greatest expert on the Japanese Army'.²¹⁴ In 1939, however, the divergent views of Grasett and Grimsdale on British strategy in Asia resulted in a disjointed approach in dealing with the Japanese. Consequently, the two officers often clashed as Grasett endeavoured to strengthen ties with Chiang Kai Shek while Grimsdale maintained the need for caution and diplomacy. Grimsdale noted in his memoirs that he considered Grasett's attitude to have been a negative influence on Britain's relations with Japan and this feeling was strengthened after his meetings with General Ando on 3 May and at the end of August 1939.²¹⁵

Anglo-Japanese diplomacy was often conducted at a local level by both sides and Grimsdale had endeavoured to maintain friendly relations. While relations had become greatly strained at Tientsin, Grimsdale thought Britain's position in the Far East would be best maintained through negotiations with officers such as Ando. During their August visit to Canton a dinner was held

²¹⁴ TNA, WO 193/921, File Russia and the Far East; Telegram No. 1238, 12 October 1941.

²¹⁵ IWM, Conservation Shelf; 'Thunder in the East' by Grimsdale, 1947, pp. 15, 19-20.

where both Grimsdale and Boxer had been invited as honoured guests and during this occasion Ando once again tried to reassure them about Japanese objectives.²¹⁶ Grimsdale noted how Ando appeared to be an honest, quiet professional whose sole concern was to stop the movement of military supplies from Hong Kong into China. Ando also re-emphasized how it was the communists who were the greatest threat to East Asia.²¹⁷ Grasett took a dim view of Grimsdale's contact with Ando and because of their differences Grimsdale's movements in China were soon restricted. Without much support from the War Office his usefulness quickly diminished.²¹⁸ It was not long thereafter that the FECB was transferred to Singapore.²¹⁹

Grimsdale's caution was prudent as there were many strategic and diplomatic problems to confront in 1939 aside from the tensions at Hong Kong. The Tientsin Crisis and the arrest of British Military Attaché Colonel Spear were the two most serious thorns in Anglo-Japanese relations; situations partly created by an increasingly reckless Foreign Office that almost led to an early Anglo-Japanese war.²²⁰ In May, the outspokenly anti-Japanese Spear was arrested on charges of espionage and held at Kalgan after travelling through communist controlled areas and holding discussions with Chinese Communist Party Chairman Mao Tse Tung.²²¹ The Japanese made it clear to him that his release was directly related to the fate of the Tientsin negotiations and this included a satisfactory response to their demands for the cessation of British economic

²¹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 14.

²¹⁷ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 12/39 by Edwards, 6 June 1939.

²¹⁸ IWM, Conservation Shelf; 'Thunder in the East' by Grimsdale, 1947, pp. 19-20.

²¹⁹ Peter Elphick, *Far Eastern File*, p. 78.

²²⁰ IWM, Conservation Shelf; 'Thunder in the East' by Grimsdale, 1947, p. 9.

²²¹ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3; Report No. 9800 by Munson, 3 October 1939. See also TNA, FO 371/23511 F 5298/1497/10; Telegram No. 65 by Archer, 1 June 1939. See also Baxter, 'Britain and the War in China', pp. 51-52.

warfare in China.²²² The barricades established at Tientsin at the end of 1938 had been transformed into a full blown blockade by June 1939 for a variety of reasons, including the likelihood of war in Europe, but the British wished to continue playing for time.²²³ Some reasons for this included the worsening economic situation in Japan, Japanese pacification difficulties in China, a hardening of US opinion against Japan, and most importantly, despite the purges of 1937 and 1938 there was the potential power of the Red Army.²²⁴

The lack of organizational unity on policy in London exacerbated the strain on Anglo-Japanese relations even further. Although attitudes within the Foreign Office were largely anti-Japanese, the Cabinet, the War Office and the Chiefs of Staff continued until August 1939 to favour a much less confrontational approach due to the limited nature of British military power.²²⁵ Many military officers were not optimistic about the prospects of relying on Chinese military collaboration in challenging Japan due to the previous abandonment of Canton in October 1938.²²⁶ A good number felt Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain's praise for Ambassador Craigie and his ability to resolve the situation at Tientsin was well placed. Craigie successfully moved the negotiations to Tokyo while General Piggott maintained peaceful relations with the ill tempered Homma in China. It was during this crisis that Chamberlain complained of how the anti-Japanese bias within the Foreign Office had worsened the situation as the summer

²²² Baxter, 'Britain and the War in China', pp. 53, 56. See also Usui Katsumi, 'The Politics of War', p. 361.

²²³ NAC, MG 26 J1, Reel C-3745, Volume 271, Frame No. 229773; Report by Ambassador Sir Robert Craigie, 3 March 1939. See also Lowe, *Great Britain and the Origins of the Pacific War*, p. 77.

²²⁴ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 15/39 by Edwards, 18 July 1939. See also TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 17/39 by Edwards, 15 August 1939.

²²⁵ Baxter, 'Britain and the War in China', pp. 43-44.

²²⁶ Lowe, *Great Britain and the Origins of the Pacific War*, pp. 105-107.

wore on.²²⁷ With the exception of a few such as R.A. Butler, many in the Foreign Office were disappointed by the eventual retreat over Tientsin, but others, especially within the military, were still quite relieved. Nigel Ronald's attitude was typical within the Foreign Office following the signing of the Anglo-Japanese Agreement in July. He wrote how, 'Everybody's eyes are likely to be more opened when General Piggott has gone. He is a worthy man, but he has always been as complete a dupe of the Japanese as his brother was of the Nazis.'²²⁸ Piggott, like the Chiefs of Staff, was simply more aware of British military limitations and what the final cost of Foreign office antagonism towards Japan would be. More importantly, he knew who would be paying the bill. Despite the signing of the Anglo-Japanese agreement on 23 July 1939, there was little optimism for a lasting peace by officers in Hong Kong and as the blockade in south China continued, it was felt the Japanese would persist in their efforts to eventually starve them out.²²⁹

Maintaining support for the USSR in China was another factor associated with the Tientsin and Spear problems and this was seen during the David Kung Incident in Hong Kong. On 25 September 1939 the Nathan Road offices of the Central Trust China Corporation were raided by Hong Kong police in search of illegal Chinese government radio transmitters.²³⁰ This company was responsible for military supply procurement in Hong Kong and was headed by General K.C. Tang and David Kung, the son of finance minister H.H. Kung.²³¹ Besides the transmitters, police found code books, ciphers, weapons, money and messages,

²²⁷ Lowe, *Great Britain and the Origins of the Pacific War*, pp. 83-88.

²²⁸ TNA, FO 371/23403 F 8061/1/10; File cover notation by Nigel Ronald, 15 August 1939.

²²⁹ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 17/39 by Edwards, 15 August 1939.

²³⁰ TNA, FO 371/23520 F 10531/3661/10; Telegram by Governor Sir Geoffry Northcote to Colonial Secretary Malcolm Macdonald, 26 September 1939.

²³¹ TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 5/39 by Edwards, 28 February 1939.

some of which were munitions orders intended for Berlin.²³² It was soon learned from the documents that Kung was the head of an organization in Hong Kong named Nam Chim She which controlled assassination squads based in the French Concession at Shanghai. Their targets were Japanese officers and Chinese puppet officials found within the British concession.²³³ Kung was personally involved in the assassination of Wang Ching Wei's nephew Shum Sung and with collecting intelligence on Ambassador Sir Archibald Clark Kerr, but the primary objective of the assassination teams was to create havoc in Britain's diplomatic relations with Japan.²³⁴ Governor Northcote was greatly angered by this situation because he did not wish to see Hong Kong used too openly as a Chinese military base of operations, but Chiang's Australian adviser William Donald soon emerged to calm the crisis and advised Kung not to incriminate himself publicly because of the harm it would cause to Sino-British relations and the disruption it might bring to future military cooperation (i.e. the ongoing negotiations regarding Chinese army relief forces for Hong Kong).²³⁵ In an interesting post-script to this incident, it was after studying economics at Harvard that David Kung personified an improvement in Sino-British relations by briefly serving as a Guards officer in Lord Mountbatten's South East Asian Command in 1944.²³⁶

²³² TNA, FO 371/23520 F 10531/3661/10; Telegram by Governor Sir Geoffry Northcote to Colonial Secretary Malcolm Macdonald, 26 September 1939. See also TNA, FO 371/23520 F 11499/3661/10; Telegram by Governor Sir Geoffry Northcote to Colonial Secretary Malcolm Macdonald, 13 October 1939.

²³³ TNA, FO 371/23520 F 10793/3661/10; Telegram No. 332 by Governor Sir Geoffry Northcote to Colonial Secretary Malcolm Macdonald, 4 October 1939. See also TNA, FO 371/23520 F 11499/3661/10; File cover notation, 7 November 1939. See also TNA, FO 371/23520 F 12864/3661/10; Telegram by Governor Sir Geoffry Northcote to G.E. Gent, 24 November 1939.

²³⁴ TNA, FO 371/23520 F 11173/3661/10; File cover notation, 23 October 1939. See also TNA, FO 371/23520 F 11499/3661/10; File cover notation, 7 November 1939.

²³⁵ TNA, FO 371/23520 F 11499/3661/10; Telegram by W. Donald to Witham, 28 September 1939. See also TNA, FO 371/23520 F 12017/3661/10; Telegram by Governor Sir Geoffry Northcote to Ambassador Sir Archibald Clark Kerr, 16 October 1939.

²³⁶ NAC, RG 25, Volume 4723, File 50056-40 Pt I; Telegram No., 211 by Ambassador Victor Odlum, 21 April 1944, and TNA, FO 371/27715 F 4787/3653/10; Report by Ian Morrison on Situation in China, 3 June 1941.

Death squads, however, were only one element of this incident that illuminates how great strain had been placed upon Anglo-Japanese relations during 1939. British duplicity uncovered by the Japanese was another. Found in the raid were six official British government documents stolen from Clark Kerr by his Chinese language teacher (who had been employed by him until March 1939); all taken from his Shanghai residence.²³⁷ Of these, the sixth revealed British plans to prolong the war in China indefinitely by establishing direct military cooperation with the Chinese. This document detailed discussions held between Clark Kerr and Chiang Kai Shek regarding the Chinese offer of 200,000 troops for the defence of Hong Kong and it also outlined a British proposal to train Chinese guerrillas.²³⁸ A breach in security of this sort was unprofessional and improper conduct on the part of Clark Kerr, and it was assumed at the Foreign Office that the information had already fallen into Japanese hands. Proof of Sino-British collusion against them in the face of official denials to officers such as General Ando, was a direct cause of the furious Japanese escalation of tensions at Tientsin and the establishment of a full blockade against the British concession. The Japanese made certain the British understood this by informing Colonel Spear of their knowledge during his earlier imprisonment at Kalgan.²³⁹ In outlining the problem A.L. Scott noted a Soviet connection as well.

No. 6 reports a conversation between Sir A. Clark Kerr and C.K.S. in which inter alia the latter urged that we sh'd include the Far East in the scope of the understanding which it was then hoped to negotiate with Russia and sh'd initiate joint consultations with China for action in the Far East, offering to help in the defence of Hong Kong with 200,000 men.

²³⁷ TNA, FO 371/23520 F 12052/3661/10; Telegram No. 1275 by Ambassador Sir Archibald Clark Kerr, 21 November 1939.

²³⁸ TNA, FO 371/23520 F 11499/3661/10; Telegram by W. Donald to Witham, 28 September 1939. See also TNA, FO 371/23520 F 12784/3661/10; File cover notation by A.L. Scott, 20 December 1939.

²³⁹ TNA, FO 371/23520 F 12784/3661/10; File cover notation by A.L. Scott, 20 December 1939.

No doubt copies of these documents have been passed by Sir A. Clark Kerr's Chinese teacher to other govt's than the Chinese, including the Japanese. That the Japanese are in possession of the information contained in No. 6 seems to be borne out by the statement on p. 18 of Col. Spear's report on his detention at Kalgan just received in which he says, 'Kobayashi (on 22nd June) added that from information in possession of the Japanese it had come to their notice that Gt. Britain intended to train a body of Chinese troops to oppose the Japanese indefinitely.'

Evidently Sir A Clark Kerr has not been observing the instructions regarding security measures contained in the secret circular Y 414/414/650 of 1st April 1937.²⁴⁰

Clark Kerr's security lapse was either simple negligence or it was a deliberate act, but either way it certainly helped prolong the war in China, and as often noted by Wang Ching Wei, the only real beneficiaries of a protracted war were the Chinese communists.²⁴¹ The ambassador was 'very sympathetic with the Communists' and by helping to redirect Japanese attention southwards and away from Siberia, this incident was of use to the Soviets.²⁴² Serious negative repercussions on Clark Kerr's professional career did not materialize over the David Kung Incident and following his appointment as ambassador to the USSR in early 1942 he became a very good personal friend of Stalin.²⁴³ During 1939, whether wittingly or not, the ambassador was a communist asset in Chungking working for a prolongation of the war instead of a negotiated peace.

The breakdown in Anglo-Soviet alliance talks was followed by significant shifts in international relations starting with the signing of the Nazi-Soviet Pact in August 1939.²⁴⁴ Anglo-Japanese relations were affected positively, albeit temporarily, as friction between the two countries eased. The signing of the

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁴¹ Boyle, *China and Japan at War*, p. 251.

²⁴² Peter Clarke, *The Cripps Version: the Life of Sir Stafford Cripps, 1889-1952* (London: Penguin, Allen Lane, 2002), p. 154.

²⁴³ Donald Gillies, *Radical Diplomat: the Life of Archibald Clark Kerr, Lord Inverchapel, 1882-1951* (London: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 1999), p. 126.

²⁴⁴ Keeble, *Britain, the Soviet Union and Russia*, pp. 153-155.

Anglo-Japanese Agreement, a deal Chiang Kai Shek publicly labelled as a ‘Far Eastern Munich’, was concluded once it became clear that Stalin would not join an alliance with Britain.²⁴⁵ Subsequent to this, the British raised Chinese suspicions about their intentions when they rejected Chiang’s offer of troops for the defence of Hong Kong.²⁴⁶ There was obviously less need for the British to cooperate with Stalin in China in defence of the Soviet Far Eastern flank once Stalin became an ally of Hitler. Because the Japanese soon realized this, the Nazi-Soviet Pact was the primary factor causing them to suspend their anti-British blockades.²⁴⁷ In London, the Committee of Imperial Defence had already determined that the defence of Hong Kong depended upon the assistance of Chinese troops but they settled for an arrangement that rested upon indirect support from the Chinese in the form of guerrilla warfare, rather than any direct conventional move on Hong Kong or Canton. This was the foundation of the policy that led to the formation of the China Commando Group and Detachment 204.²⁴⁸ British and French garrisons were withdrawn from Tientsin in November, but British support for China was otherwise maintained with the continued transhipment of war supplies such as petroleum, oil and lubricants (POL) from Hong Kong through nearby Mirs Bay.²⁴⁹ Although British intrigue resulted in retreat at Tientsin, Hong Kong remained a key element in China’s survival and the colony helped turn the proxy war against Japan into a deadly military stalemate by October 1939.

²⁴⁵ Yu, *The Dragon’s War*, p. 48.

²⁴⁶ Baxter, ‘Britain and the War in China’, pp. 90-91.

²⁴⁷ IWM, Conservation Shelf; ‘Thunder in the East’ by Grimsdale, 1947, p. 13.

²⁴⁸ Baxter, ‘Britain and the War in China’, pp. 92-93.

²⁴⁹ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3; Report No. 9830 by Mayer, 29 November 1939. See also Frank Welsh, *A History of Hong Kong* (London: HarperCollins, 1993), pp. 409-410.

With the outbreak of war in Europe the War Office altered its position to bring itself more into line with the Foreign Office as China came to be seen as a potentially useful ally against the Japanese. War Office personnel had now become more inclined to use the Chinese as a lever in discouraging the Japanese from making any southern advance, but unlike officials in the Foreign Office, the concern shared by many military officers was that China would drift too far under Soviet control if British support were to end.²⁵⁰ They viewed the strategic situation in terms of a balance of power. This decision came at a difficult period in Europe but at an opportune moment of the Far Eastern crisis when the Japanese had failed to find a military solution in Kwangtung (in August) and while their peace offensive in China was fully underway. The Chinese had expressed a desire to end the war at this time and any substantial reduction in military assistance from either Great Britain or the Soviet Union was thought likely to encourage a Chinese peace agreement with the Japanese. Consequently, a recommendation was made by the military not to help mediate a peace between the Japanese and Chinese, but instead to keep the war ongoing with a continuation of the covert system of supply at Hong Kong and Burma. It was noted, ‘On balance therefore it appears desirable, from our point of view, that hostilities should continue in China.’²⁵¹ On 26 September 1939, Cabinet accepted the War Office recommendation and a British mediation effort in the Sino-Japanese War did not materialize.²⁵²

Leading up to the Nazi-Soviet Pact British foreign policy in China also began to parallel that of the Americans, who were beginning to show an increased willingness to involve themselves more directly in the Far East. The Americans

²⁵⁰ TNA, WO 208/849, File Peace Overtures to China; Memorandum, 25 September 1939.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*

²⁵² Peter Lowe, *Great Britain and the Origins of the Pacific War*, pp. 108-109.

would gradually increase their opposition against Japan to establish a global liberal economic order.²⁵³ Elevated Chinese fears over a loss of support after the outbreak of war in Europe were eased by this change. The idea of Soviet cooperation in Asia had also not yet been completely abandoned as a Foreign Office objective either but with the Americans slowly increasing their support for China, the US Pacific Fleet became a more powerful consideration in confronting Japanese ambitions.²⁵⁴ From 12 to 14 June 1939, secret Anglo-American naval talks were held with President Roosevelt in Washington on joint strategic planning for the Pacific. Both the Philippines and Hong Kong were considered to be outposts that could buy time in the event of a Japanese attack.²⁵⁵ But the Americans still remained cautious in their commitments because US military officers reported to Washington how British economic warfare in China was inviting a direct military confrontation with the Japanese at Hong Kong that they would be unable to cope with.²⁵⁶ British weakness at Tientsin, combined with the Soviet-Japanese truce after Nomonhan, likewise caused some Americans to surmise that British support might fade over time.²⁵⁷ It was understood that when the United States applied full economic sanctions against Japan (e.g. cutting oil supplies), war would become an immediate probability and full US-British cooperation was vital to meet a Japanese offensive effectively.²⁵⁸ British support to China, nonetheless remained sufficient to encourage greater US involvement. Following their earlier loans, the intention to allow the US-Japanese commercial treaty to lapse, and the appointment of American logistical specialists in support

²⁵³ Jonathan Utley, *Going to War with Japan, 1937-1941* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1985), pp. 84-86.

²⁵⁴ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 17/39 by Edwards, 15 August 1939.

²⁵⁵ Peter Lowe, *Great Britain and the Origins of the Pacific War*, pp. 97-98.

²⁵⁶ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9784 by Sutherland, 14 July 1939.

²⁵⁷ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3; Report No. 9800 by Munson, 3 October 1939.

²⁵⁸ Henry Gole, *The Road to Rainbow*, p. 97.

of T.V. Soong's Southwest Transportation Company along the Burma Road, British and US foreign policies began to move slowly in unison towards war with Japan.²⁵⁹ The knowledge that the US-Japanese Commercial Treaty was due to lapse within a few months and the public announcement by US Ambassador Joseph Grew in Tokyo that America would not relinquish any of its rights in China, helped reassure anxious Chinese while giving the Japanese further reason to pause and reassess their relations with third powers.²⁶⁰ Modifications to the Neutrality Act in Washington allowing easier access to American munitions likewise had a similar effect.²⁶¹

Until Anglo-American cooperation coalesced greatly, however, the British assumed an increased level of involvement in the war in China by enhancing special operations and intelligence capabilities and this damaged Anglo-Japanese relations. In the summer and fall of 1939 Sino-British relations were also tested since British assistance had been extended to the communists. These developments were products of an inconsistent foreign policy lacking a clearly defined level of commitment to be established with Chungking. Until the outbreak of war in Europe, consensus on this issue at Whitehall was poor and it was even weaker with British officials on the ground in the Far East. Amidst this confusion, some such as General Grasett tended to follow their own instincts with haphazard guidance from London. In the midst of this confusion Hong Kong became more than a vital Chinese military lifeline, it became the centre of British intrigue and covert warfare that generated substantial Japanese enmity and the

²⁵⁹ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9793 by Sutherland, 8 September 1939. See also TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 16/39 by Edwards, 1 August 1939.

²⁶⁰ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9788 by Sutherland, 12 August 1939. See also TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 22/39 by Giles, 23 October 1939.

²⁶¹ Gole, *The Road to Rainbow*, p. 14.

chance for peace in East Asia that was afforded by the Nazi-Soviet Pact was discarded.

The First Battle of Changsha: September and October 1939

Significant military defeats had already been meted out to Japanese forces during 1939, and after receiving orders from Tokyo to bring an end to the war, another serious setback was soon experienced in Hunan.²⁶² The first battle of Changsha took place from 14 September to 8 October 1939 and resulted in another 30,000 Japanese casualties while Chinese losses were estimated at about 20,000.²⁶³ This costly Japanese defeat boosted Chinese morale and prevented the Japanese from achieving victory in 1939.²⁶⁴ Hunan's rice crop and its natural resources such as tungsten and antimony were valuable strategic assets, but more importantly, Changsha was one of the few major transportation hubs and military supply depots left in Chinese hands.²⁶⁵ Because of its location at the northern end of the railway from Kwangtung, its loss to the Japanese would most likely have resulted in the fall of Hunan and possibly brought an end to Chinese resistance. Instead, supplies transported north by rail helped make the battle a Chinese strategic victory.

²⁶² TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 16/39 by Edwards, 1 August 1939. See also Edward Drea, *Japan's Imperial Army: Its Rise and Fall, 1853-1945* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2009), p. 207.

²⁶³ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9808 by Munson, 26 October 1939. See also NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 38; Report by Lieutenant Colonel Henry McLean, 25 October 1939. See also NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 39; Report 'First Battle of Changsha, Sept.-Oct., 1939', n/d.

²⁶⁴ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 21/39 by Edwards, 10 October 1939.

²⁶⁵ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 15; Report No. 7258 by First Lieutenant Helmar W. Lystad, 25 April 1928. See also NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 15; Report No. 9130 by Lieutenant Colonel W.S. Drysdale, 4 June 1935. See also NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 57; Telegram, 28 September 1941.

Japanese preliminary moves commenced with the fall of Nanchang earlier in the spring of 1939.²⁶⁶ The Japanese navy had to assist the army's advance through Kiangsi at that time since strong resistance supported by Chinese and Soviet air units was encountered.²⁶⁷ As a portent of future operations the first attempt at taking Nanchang did not bode well for an advance into Hunan. On 26 March the Chinese waited for advance Japanese elements to reach half-way across the Kan River Bridge before blowing it up but Nanchang fell the following day and this badly disrupted the supply of munitions and reinforcements to Chinese guerrilla forces operating in Anhui and Chekiang. Chinese defences stiffened after the fall of Nanchang, however, because any further loss of territory towards Hunan would have worsened the guerrilla supply situation to the northeast and east.

Geographical considerations made Changsha a likely objective because of the Japanese dependence on rail and riverine transport for supply, and although there were several important Chinese military facilities to be defended in Hunan the most important strategic objective was the railway from Changsha to Kwangtung.²⁶⁸ A large Japanese military base was located about half way between Hankow and Changsha at Yochow [Yueyang], and the city became the jumping off point in all four of the battles waged for Changsha. Yochow fell to the 9th Division in late 1938 while Japanese forces consolidated their position at Hankow.²⁶⁹ Prior to 1939 railway lines had extended north from Changsha to Yochow before being destroyed by the Chinese, but nonetheless, this remained

²⁶⁶ NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 39; Report No. 9762 by Count, 10 April 1939. See also TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 8/39 by Edwards, 11 April 1939.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.* See also TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 10/39 by Edwards, 9 May 1939.

²⁶⁸ TNA, WO 106/5303 No. 293; Report on Visit to South China July 1938, by Captain J. V. Davidson-Houston, 5 August 1938.

²⁶⁹ TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 24/38 by Sturgeon, 22 November 1938.

the primary axis of advance. Just south of Changsha was another railway line branching east to Nanchang which made Eastern Hunan and Kiangsi a more distant secondary front. Japanese naval units and transports could also outflank Chinese defences north-northwest of the city by advancing across Tungting Lake and along the Hsiang River.²⁷⁰ Thus, in September 1939 the Japanese converged on Changsha from the east (Nanchang), north (Yochow) and north-northwest (Tungting Lake).²⁷¹

In defending from the north, the Chinese enjoyed several terrain advantages. From Yochow, the railway bed crossed several difficult rivers including the Milo, before passing to the west of Tamoshan Mountain which dominated the line. The very limited road network in this area was also destroyed by the Chinese and during rainy periods the entire region turned into a sea of mud. Since the Japanese depended entirely upon mechanical transport for the maintenance of their lines of communication, it was impossible to supply their advance forces adequately, or defend the entire 160 kilometres between Yochow to Changsha. Moreover, infantry also depended heavily on artillery and AFVs for support, most of which were virtually useless in this region.²⁷²

The bulk of six Japanese divisions of the Central China Expeditionary Force under Lieutenant General Yamada Otozo participated in the campaign. These included the 3rd, 6th, 13th, and 33rd of the 11th Army under Lieutenant General Okamura Yasuji at Yochow, and the 101st, and 106th Divisions which

²⁷⁰ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9799 by Sutherland, 29 September 1939. See also WO 106/5303 No. 290; Report by Wards, 11 March 1939.

²⁷¹ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9799 by Sutherland, 29 September 1939. See also TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 20/39 by Edwards, 26 September 1939. See also Van de Ven, *War and Nationalism in China*, p. 228-229.

²⁷² TNA, WO 106/5303, No. 289, Report on visit to IV War Zone by Boxer and Chauvin, 20 May 1939.

advanced from Kiangsi.²⁷³ It was the 6th, 13th, and 33rd, that bore the brunt of the fighting north of Changsha and sustained the greatest casualties during the retreat.²⁷⁴ Opposing Okamura was General Hsueh Yueh who established a defence in depth of four lines along a thirty kilometre front using approximately fifty divisions of the 31st and 33rd Group Armies. Reinforcements from Kwangsi were also dispatched north.²⁷⁵

The Japanese launched their attack on 14 September and by the 23rd they had broken through the third defence line a little over half way to Changsha. A map of the battle is presented in figure 5.4. In most major battles against the

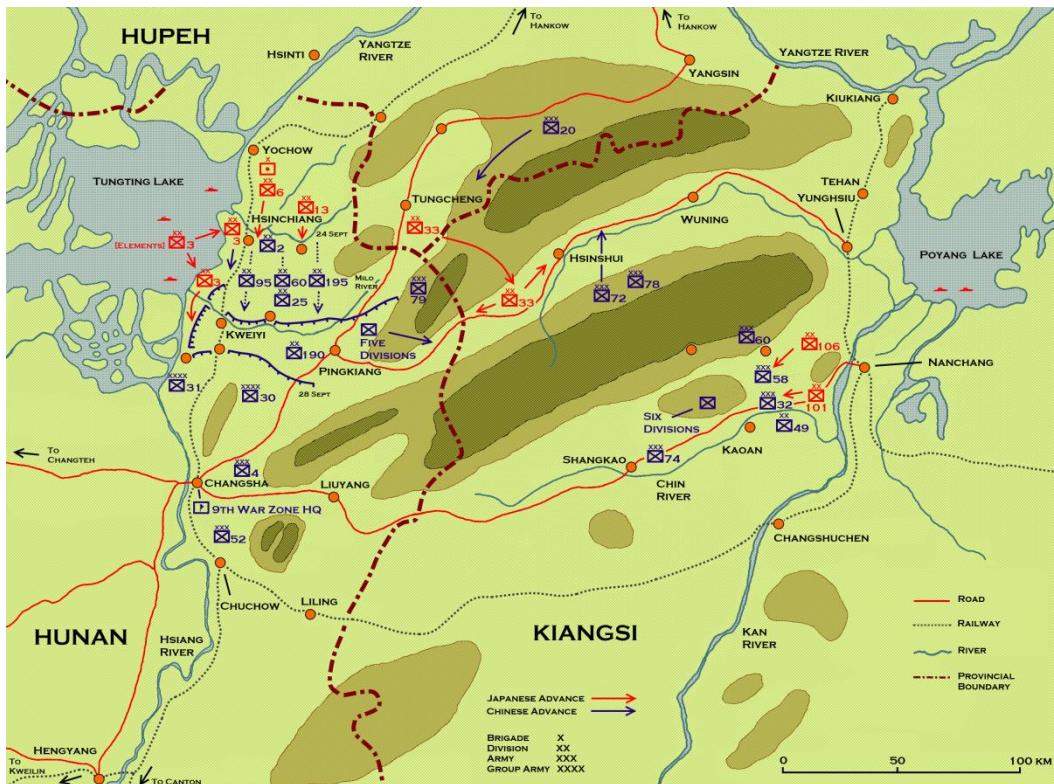


Figure 5.4: First Battle of Changsha, September 1939. [Source: Based on NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9799 by Sutherland, 29 September 1939]

²⁷³ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9784 by Sutherland, 14 July 1939. See also TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 21/39 by Edwards, 10 October 1939. See also Roy Stanley, *Prelude to Pearl Harbor* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1982), p. 123.

²⁷⁴ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9808 by Munson, 26 October 1939. See also TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 22/39 by Giles, 23 October 1939.

²⁷⁵ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9799 by Sutherland, 29 September 1939.

Chinese, Japanese forces achieved victory because of the usual Chinese weaknesses in leadership and firepower. These deficiencies often forced a withdrawal but Japanese tactics invited defeat at Changsha once Chinese counterattacks, which started on the 1st of October, were directed against their overextended lines of communication.²⁷⁶ Gaps in the Japanese rear were penetrated by Chinese units and their supply lines across several major river crossings were threatened.²⁷⁷ Units caught too far forward advancing on Changsha were thus forced to terminate the offensive and attack Chinese forces which had moved against their flanks. They had to fight their way back along the route of advance in order to prevent a disaster. From the heights atop Tamoshan Mountain a handful of Chinese artillery crews were aided by Soviet advisers and these bombarded Japanese forces to reasonable effect. The Japanese 11th Army was able to extricate itself from a dangerous situation but the first battle of Changsha ended as a significant Chinese victory.

Undaunted, the same battle plan was used by the Japanese with only minor alterations on three of the four different attacks made against Changsha but it was not until 1944 that they were finally able to succeed. General Hsueh Yueh, who was still only the acting commander of 9th War Zone, was confirmed in his position after the victory.²⁷⁸ He had earlier predicted the Japanese would attack Changsha when they did because of the need to atone for the debacle at Nomonhan and his record thus far augured well for the future defence of Hunan.²⁷⁹ In Hong Kong, Captain Giles proved equally prophetic.

²⁷⁶ NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 39; Report ‘First Battle of Changsha’, October 1939.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.* See also Stanley, *Prelude to Pearl Harbor*, p. 123.

²⁷⁸ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9808 by Munson, 26 October 1939. NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 39; Report No. 9762 by Count, 10 April 1939.

²⁷⁹ Van de Ven, *War and Nationalism in China*, pp. 235, 237.

The possibility of another Japanese drive on Changsha, or of an attack on Shasi and Ichang, must always be reckoned with; but such a move would probably be undertaken to divert attention from far more serious operations in South China than for any other purpose.²⁸⁰

This was indeed the case when the third battle for Changsha from December 1941 to January 1942 was fought in order to provide indirect support for the attack on Hong Kong.²⁸¹

Changsha was a timely victory for the Chinese for several reasons.

Militarily, the Japanese defeat proved once again that the war had become a stalemate. The Japanese army was absorbing about 10,000 casualties per month and with the exception of Hainan, their military record of 1939 had been one of failure.²⁸² Diplomatically, Changsha boosted Chinese morale when future Soviet support began to look uncertain.²⁸³ Chiang had grown concerned about Stalin's invasion of Poland and there were rumours of Soviet negotiations with the Japanese in Shanghai towards forming a peace deal at Chinese expense.²⁸⁴

Although international attention was focused on Europe Chiang had to defend Hunan at all costs in order to retain his government's legitimacy and prestige amongst foreign powers. At this juncture the Japanese were forced to review their strategic options. US military attaché Lieutenant-Colonel Mayer noted this situation.

The Japanese position has deteriorated markedly in the last few months. The notice of the abrogation of our treaty and Ambassador

²⁸⁰ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 26/39 by Major R. Giles, 19 December 1939.

²⁸¹ Library of Congress (USA) [hereafter LOC], Japanese Monographs; 'Japanese Monograph No. 71; Area Operations in China, December 1941-December 1943' by Heizo Ishiwari, 1963, and NAC, RG 25, Volume 3233, File 5548-40C; Report 'Changsha' by Ralph E. Collins, 8 June 1944. See also *The New York Times*; Article, 30 December 1941, p. 5. See also *The Times*; article by Robert Payne, 1 January 1942, p. 3. See also Richard E. Webb, 'The War in China', *Far Eastern Survey*, 11(4) 1942: 49-50, pp. 49-50.

²⁸² TNA, WO 208/849, File Peace Overtures to China; Memorandum, 25 September 1939.

²⁸³ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 20/39 by Edwards, 26 September 1939.

²⁸⁴ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9799 by Sutherland, 29 September 1939. See also Chang Jung and Jon Halliday, *Mao: the Unknown Story* (London: Vintage Books, 2006), pp. 268-270.

Grew's speech in Tokyo have indicated to Japan our 'unfriendly' stand. The Russo-German pact was a definite blow. The outbreak of the European war, which might have been of great benefit to Japan had she not been engaged upon her China venture, now makes her economic stability practically dependent upon the Americas. The Nomonhan operations and the Changsha reverses have been serious assaults upon Japan's military prestige.²⁸⁵

The Japanese began to look south as an area for expansion since the British concentrated most of their energy and military forces on Europe, but the victory at Changsha reassured both the British and the Americans that the Chinese were still determined to maintain resistance.

The most significant aspects of the battle however, were of a domestic political nature. At the start of the year much of north China was already in Japanese hands and there were few provinces remaining under central government control. Of these, political loyalty remained a constant problem. Chiang Kai Shek's government could not afford to lose any additional provinces without becoming politically irrelevant.²⁸⁶ But there was also great pressure on the Japanese to support the establishment of the Wang Ching Wei government with a military victory against Chiang.²⁸⁷ Several foreign military attaches reported on the significance of the battle in relation to these problems. Captain Edwards again sent his observations from Hong Kong.

There is no need to believe even a tenth of the spectacular Chinese claims, but the fact remains that the Japanese offensive was a complete failure. The results – like the objective – of this battle are of greater political than military importance, but it could not have come at a better time from the Chinese point of view. The Japanese have lost an enormous amount of prestige by their premature disclosure that Changsha was their objective, and by their previous references to it as the 'doomed capital'. The Chinese on the other hand have been heartened to a degree quite unjustified by the purely military significance of the operation, and the Wang Ching Wei faction

²⁸⁵ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3; Report No. 9810 by Colonel William Mayer, 1 November 1939.

²⁸⁶ Van de Ven, *War and Nationalism in China*, pp. 238.

²⁸⁷ TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 9/39 by Edwards, 25 April 1939.

correspondingly discredited. The recall of Gen O. Yamada, formerly G.O.C. of the Central China Expeditionary Force, may also be connected with the Changsha fiasco.²⁸⁸

Colonel Mayer likewise reported on the heavy political impact of Changsha.

Reports from Tokyo indicate that political purposes behind the Japanese drive on Changsha were first to strike a decisive blow at Chinese morale, which was considered to be at an exceptionally low ebb, and second, to use the victory celebration following the expected fall of Changsha to herald the launching of the new Wang Ching-wei puppet regime. It was hoped that this victory would swing many wavering Chinese over to the Wang fold and make Chinese in general amenable to Japanese peace overtures. It was to be the final military stroke of the war. The attack backfired ... giving the Japanese another serious set-back to add to their increasing difficulties. In addition to the Japanese losses in personnel, material, and prestige, the resultant beneficial effect upon Chinese morale will materially hamper Japanese political intrigue in China.²⁸⁹

Following the reverses seen elsewhere in China including, albeit on a much smaller scale, the difficulties experienced by the Japanese in Kwangtung, the defeat at Changsha was a watershed event. Over the next two years the Japanese took increasingly desperate measures to end the conflict in China and this ultimately brought them into war with the British and the Americans.

Although Chungshan was taken on the same day that the battle of Changsha came to a close, the result in Kwangtung was of small comfort considering Japanese marines and army troops had battled provincial militia forces throughout most of the summer to take it.²⁹⁰ The defeats north of Canton at Tsungfa and Fahsien against General Yu's weaker 12th Group Army also meant that the Chinese lines of communication from Hong Kong to Kukong remained open, and military supplies continued to move north along the railroad from Kwangtung at about the same rate or more as along the Burma Road. But unlike in Yunnan, these supplies were transported without being siphoned by regional

²⁸⁸ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 21/39 by Edwards, 10 October 1939.

²⁸⁹ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3; Report No. 9810 by Mayer, 1 November 1939.

²⁹⁰ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 22/39 by Giles, 23 October 1939.

leaders. In this way, Hong Kong kept the Chinese army alive in Hunan and by the 1939 Double Tenth anniversary of the Chinese revolution Japanese forces had remarkably little to show for their efforts. Following the defeats at Nomonhan, Changsha, and the stalemate in Kwangtung, 1939 can rightly be considered a significant year of defeat leading to Japan's ultimate destruction. This was becoming clearer to many Japanese officers themselves. The Canadian Dr. Thomson wrote of this in mid October 1939:

We were told that a number of high Japanese military officers had a conference recently in the hotel opposite the Canton Hospital. One of the employees reported that they were very discouraged at the military situation, and actually wept!²⁹¹

In the fall of 1939 the Chinese were still capable of fighting, and more importantly, they were resolved to do so. Unfortunately, while Wang Ching Wei continued his negotiations with the Japanese, the period between August and October was a missed opportunity for peace that held the potential for a gradual withdrawal of Japanese forces from south and central China.²⁹² It was an opportunity for peace that the British could have helped to broker and was a sensible option after Stalin had embraced Hitler as his ally and they together swallowed Poland.

Kwangsi: Prelude to Invasion

Following the breakdown in September's peace efforts and the serious reversal at Changsha, the Japanese redoubled their efforts to interdict the transportation of war supplies into free China by increasing pressure on Kwangsi. Before leaving China in October, Vice Admiral Kondo publicly indicated where the Japanese were next likely to strike. With most of the major seaports having already been

²⁹¹ UCC, Accession 83.046C, Box 3, File 63, BOMSC; Thomson to Arnup, 18 October 1939.

²⁹² Boyle, *China and Japan at War*, p. 270.

neutralized (aside from Hong Kong), one of some significance still fully functional was Pakhoi [Beihai] in western Kwangtung.²⁹³ Pakhoi tied into the Kwangsi road network that also connected French Indochina to the important railhead located at Kweilin. By occupying Pakhoi along with Nanning, the Japanese could block a considerable amount of the supplies coming north from Haiphong as well as intensify the bombardment of the Indochina railway and the Burma Road in Yunnan.²⁹⁴ Thus, as a prelude to the amphibious assault of Pakhoi and the invasion of Kwangsi in November 1939, Japanese air interdiction of Chinese lines of supply was intensified during the summer months. Concurrently, efforts were continued to build Chinese support for the Wang Ching Wei government.²⁹⁵

The Chinese had greatly expanded road and railway construction in south China during 1939 and Kwangsi served as a useful adjunct to the French Indochina Railway to Yunnan.²⁹⁶ Before the outbreak of war there was virtually nothing in southern China that could have been considered a useful military road.²⁹⁷ It was the area least developed for mechanical transportation but the Chinese had built an average of twenty miles of new road per day so that by July 1939 almost 7,500 miles of road had already been constructed and another 5,000 were planned. In Yunnan, a 530 mile portion of the Yunnan-Burma railway was another important project underway at the time, but even with 100,000 labourers, completion was not expected until sometime between 1942 and 1944.²⁹⁸ Until

²⁹³ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9808 by Munson, 26 October 1939.

²⁹⁴ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 25/39 by Giles, 5 December 1939.

²⁹⁵ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 22/39 by Giles, 23 October 1939.

²⁹⁶ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9793 by Sutherland, 8 September 1939. See also NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9799 by Sutherland, 29 September 1939.

²⁹⁷ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 15/39 by Edwards, 18 July 1939.

²⁹⁸ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9788 by Sutherland, 12 August 1939. See also TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 19/39 by Edwards, 12 September 1939. See also TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 22/39 by Giles, 23 October 1939.

then several thousand trucks of the Southwest Transportation Company operating on the Burma Road had to suffice but corruption and incompetence limited the amount of material that was effectively delivered by this route.²⁹⁹

The need for these new transportation routes was great, not only to meet Chinese army requirements but also to maintain French cooperation. By August 1939, backlogged supplies at Haiphong already required at least six months to clear and the Chinese feared French confiscation with the onset of war in Europe.³⁰⁰ In April, Ambassador Clark Kerr travelled to Haiphong from Hong Kong aboard *HMS Delight* and he reported how Haiphong was full of merchant ships with a two week delay just to unload. French officials could not keep up with demand.³⁰¹ The China United Transportation Company was attempting to establish a trucking service to relieve the congestion at Haiphong through Kwangsi. Many roads in western Kwangtung had been destroyed following the occupation of Canton and the company's operations from Kwangchowan had already been suspended. Kwangsi was a useful place to resume business as the French kept the Hanoi to Kunming railway in operation and they also continued their naval patrols along the coast.³⁰²

The French navy monitored the sea between the Gulf of Tonkin to the Paracel Islands using two cruisers, the *Lamotte Picquet* and the *Suffren*, in addition to several other vessels. Vice Admiral Jean Decoux also maintained close contact with British officials in Hong Kong following the outbreak of war, while the gunboat *Argus* under Lieutenant Commander Ruyneau de SaintGeorge was stationed at the colony to help preserve the French presence up to Canton.

²⁹⁹ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9768 by Munson, 5 May 1939.

³⁰⁰ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9793 by Sutherland, 8 September 1939. See also TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 8/39 by Edwards, 11 April 1939.

³⁰¹ TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 9/39 by Edwards, 25 April 1939.

³⁰² TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 8/39 by Edwards, 11 April 1939.

Decoux and the British also agreed to have French naval vessels continue twice daily contact with Stonecutters Island in order to report on operations and problems.³⁰³

Japanese air units did not let Chinese supply operations in Kwangsi and western Kwangtung continue unmolested. Airpower, however, was often proving militarily ineffective and politically counterproductive. During the first half of April 1939 targets in Kwangsi were bombed and some missions were launched against Yunnan, but air strikes increased in intensity and frequency beginning in July and reached their highest levels during August.³⁰⁴ In Kwangtung, much attention was paid to the area around Pakhoi on the Liuchow Peninsula as well as the North River closer to Canton.³⁰⁵ Operations continued throughout the summer and Japanese aircraft were able to strike deeper into south China once their main bases at Weichow Island and Hainan were reinforced with larger numbers of aircraft (Hainan had received 160 planes by 25 August) but these ultimately had little effect.³⁰⁶

Transportation routes were also politically significant as they facilitated greater internal Chinese cooperation and unity between Chungking and the south and this was another reason for attracting Japanese attention. The loyalty of General Lung was an important consideration Chiang had to contend with as the governor controlled the Burma Road. Even under normal circumstances the potential military effectiveness of the road was lowered by Lung's grazing of

³⁰³ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 19/39 by Edwards, 12 September 1939.

³⁰⁴ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9768 by Munson, 5 May 1939. See also NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9793 by Sutherland, 8 September 1939. See also TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 9/39 by Edwards, 25 April 1939.

³⁰⁵ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 16/39 by Edwards, 1 August 1939. See also TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 17/39 by Edwards, 15 August 1939. See also TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 18/39 by Edwards, 30 August 1939.

³⁰⁶ NARA, RG 38, Entry 98A, Box 705, F-6-c 23213 to F-6-e 22379; Report No. 1083-45, 12 March 1945. See also TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 17/39 by Edwards, 15 August 1939. See also TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 19/39 by Edwards, 12 September 1939.

transported munitions combined with the graft extorted by provincial officials but the province remained a viable if less than perfect supply route to Chungking partly, and ironically, because of these factors. Another reason preventing Lung's split with the Kuomintang was the US and British loans to China. Compared to Japanese inducements, and because of the growing sense of Chinese nationalism within his officer corps, Lung stayed within the Kuomintang camp. In Kwangsi powerful generals such as Pai Chung-hsi and Li Tsung-ren were more politically reliable at this time, and because the railway line from Langson in French Indochina to the railhead at Kweilin was nearing completion by the end of 1939, Chinese political cohesion here would likely grow stronger.³⁰⁷ Thus, the Japanese considered air attacks on southern transportation routes to be a useful method of creating political divisions in China.

The same rationale underpinned the bombing of Chungking. Terror bombing operations against the capital continued without resistance during June after the Chinese air force had been forced to withdraw.³⁰⁸ Chinese morale was slightly improved with the addition of twenty-four French Dewoitine fighters, plus 150 aircraft and fourteen Soviet pilots who arrived at Lanchow on 13 August 1939.³⁰⁹ With these Soviet and French reinforcements the defence of Chungking was once again restored and Japanese casualties in the air continued to climb slowly (Japanese losses had been heavy throughout the war totalling approximately 2,200 aircraft with somewhere between 300 to 800 having been

³⁰⁷ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 15/39 by Edwards, 18 July 1939. See also Boyle, *China and Japan at War*, p. 227.

³⁰⁸ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9788 by Sutherland, 12 August 1939. See also NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9793 by Sutherland, 8 September 1939.

³⁰⁹ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 21/39 by Edwards, 10 October 1939.

lost over Mongolia).³¹⁰ Despite their best efforts, Japanese terror bombing had become increasingly futile as it only served to unify the people and build a spirit of resistance that had not existed before.³¹¹ By the end of the year there was little to show for all of the effort expended, and because of this the war underwent another escalation in December with a Japanese amphibious assault in the Gulf of Tonkin.³¹²

Conclusion

Militarily and politically, 1939 was a year of strategic defeat for the Japanese as the war settled into a stalemate. The Japanese army was stretched thin on the ground and could not make any new major advance without accepting greater risks to their existing garrisons or to their lines of communication. The debacle at Changsha was proof of this reality. Changsha demonstrated Chinese determination and an ability to resist Japanese forces using regular conventional forces, not just with guerrillas. Taken together, the military setbacks at Nomonhan, Chungshan and Changsha greatly undermined support for Wang Ching Wei at a time when peace in China was possible.³¹³ Out of frustration, the Japanese rebounded from the numerous military disasters with the invasion of Kwangsi in November 1939, but even after their initial success in occupying Nanning, any further advance north was stopped by Kwangsi and central government forces. The stalemate continued and a quadrilateral defence zone

³¹⁰ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9793 by Sutherland, 8 September 1939. See also NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9799 by Sutherland, 29 September 1939, and TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 17/39 by Edwards, 15 August 1939.

³¹¹ NAC, RG 25, Volume 1866, File 226-B Pt I; Telegram No. 201 by Consul General H. Prideaux-Brune, 13 September 1939. See also NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 40; Report, 22 July 1939.

³¹² TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 16/39 by Edwards, 1 August 1939.

³¹³ TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 9/39 by Edwards, 25 April 1939.

was effectively established in south China based upon the four cities of Chungking, Changsha, Hong Kong, and Kunming. Defence of this region was necessary for Chinese survival, and Chinese resistance was the desired means chosen by the British and the Soviets to keep the Japanese army bogged down in great numbers. Although this zone was partially penetrated at Canton, the Chinese army could be maintained so long as war supplies from Hong Kong continued to by-pass Canton to the east through Waichow. For any chance at victory the Japanese had to clear the Changsha-Canton railroad and they would make three more attempts to do so before the war was over, two of which occurred in 1941. The latter of these was executed in support of the assault on Hong Kong during the opening moves of the Pacific War.³¹⁴

In defending Hunan, the Chinese army was kept supplied from the opposite end of the railway in Kwangtung and along the Burma Road to Rangoon. Interdiction of war materials continued to be an element of Japanese strategy and the state of low intensity conflict at Hong Kong was therefore maintained while Anglo-Japanese relations worsened. The Japanese army patrolled the border while the navy continued to attack the Hong Kong fishing fleet. Blockade was escalated with the occupation of such ports as Swatow and Foochow. This transformation of the conflict culminated in the hard fought battle for Chungshan. Increased pressure was placed upon the Soviets and the British to terminate their support of Chiang Kai Shek but in both cases the Japanese failed. Victory at Nomonhan was the Soviet response and following the Hitler-Stalin Pact their military victory sent the added message that any future Japanese expansion should be made to the south against British interests. On balance Nomonhan was

³¹⁴ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3; Report No. 7 by Major David Barrett, 22 July 1940.

beneficial for China but was a setback for Great Britain. When tallied with other Japanese military defeats in China, along with the occupation of Poland by the Red Army, the fall of 1939 was a lost opportunity for the British to have mediated a useful agreement for peace. Instead, hope was placed in the ideal of collective security and the possibility of a change in Soviet foreign policy. To this end the British opted to continue their Far Eastern war from Hong Kong while concentrating their resources in Europe against Germany. In following such a course, the British chose to wage a proxy war that increased their commitments to Asia, but without stronger military ties to the Chinese, it was a war they would be unable to finish.

Chapter 6

Impasse in Kwangsi and the Failure of Japan's Interdiction

Strategy against Hong Kong, November 1939 to May 1940

One of the most significant outcomes of the battle of Nomonhan in August 1939 was the redirection of Japanese strategic attention to the south, a policy which was expressed by the announcement of the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere in December, but after a year of defeat on the battlefield Japanese ambitions remained unfulfilled. Army morale had deteriorated since the start of the war and a successful campaign was needed to restore confidence both amongst the military as well as for the people at home.¹ With limited resources a major ground offensive into the key regions of Szechwan or Yunnan was not feasible, but to win the war quickly it was thought possible during the winter of 1939-40 to sever the remaining lines of communication that kept the Chinese army supplied.² These included the Burma Road, the French Indochina Railway to Yunnan and Kwangsi, and the Hong Kong-Changsha route via Mirs Bay, Waichow and Kukong. A reduction in Soviet military aid to Chungking was hoped to be attained by improving relations with the USSR.³ Thus, in November 1939 General Ando Rikichi's South China Expeditionary Army (21st Army) was given the task of seizing Kwangsi to deepen China's isolation and bring sufficient pressure upon the central government to end the war. But as elsewhere in China, Japanese

¹ National Archives and Records Administration, College Park (USA) [hereafter NARA], RG 165, M1513, The Military Intelligence Division Regional File Relating to China, 1922-1944, Reel 40; Report No. 9962 by Captain Eric H.F. Svenssen, 20 November 1939.

² Usui Katsumi, 'The Politics of War', in *Japan's Road to the Pacific War, The China Quagmire: Japan's Expansion on the Asian Continent, 1933-1941*, eds. David Lu and James W. Morley (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), p. 407.

³ Hosoya Chihiro, 'The Japanese-Soviet Neutrality Pact' in *The Fateful Choice, Japan's Road to the Pacific War: Japan's Advance into Southeast Asia, 1939-1941*, ed. James W. Morley, trans. Robert Scalapino (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), p. 33.

ambitions once again exceeded available resources. The Chinese were able to contain this move into Kwangsi while continuing to use Hong Kong and the Burma Road as conduits of supply. These routes were sufficient to sustain Chinese resistance even in the face of increased pressure both in the air and at sea. By the spring of 1940 the occupation of Nanning proved to be a chimera, with the result that many Japanese soon reached the terminal end of their endurance in seeking a solution to their problems solely within China. Although Sino-Japanese efforts to arrive at a peace settlement increased throughout the year, after the fall of France the Japanese resolved themselves to challenge the Western powers directly by preparing for an advance into the Southwest Pacific. In the interim, the strategic value of Hong Kong only grew once Kwangsi's supply capacity was reduced, and because Hong Kong and Burma remained open Chinese determination to continue the war did not break. In turn, the occupation of Hong Kong soon became a Japanese strategic objective.⁴

The Invasion of Southern Kwangsi, November 1939 to April 1940

Japanese desperation at their inability to eliminate China's military logistical capacity remained a primary factor behind the conflict's escalation and so Kwangsi was targeted for several reasons to break the deadlock. In the first instance Kwangsi's defences were weak, but more significantly, sporadic aerial interdiction had thus far proven inadequate as a means of reducing Chinese supply due to the limited number of airbases available and the very long ranges involved in reaching many targets from Hainan, especially in Yunnan.⁵ Kwangsi's own

⁴ Hata Ikuhiko, 'The Army's Move into Northern Indochina' in *The Fateful Choice, Japan's Road to the Pacific War: Japan's Advance into Southeast Asia, 1939-1941*, ed. James W. Morley, trans. Robert Scalapino (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), p. 169.

⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 156-158.

road and rail carrying capacity from the French Indochina border was another consideration as these were in the process of being rapidly upgraded.⁶ Politically, the Japanese were quite desperate to achieve a military victory after the Changsha debacle in order to regain prestige and boost popular support for the Wang Ching Wei administration within occupied China.⁷ It was also hoped that an invasion would aggravate existing political divisions within the Chinese central government and impair their relations with regional southern leaders such as General Pai Chung-hsi and General Li Tsung-ren of Kwangsi, as well as General Lung Yun of Yunnan. When taken together, these factors encouraged the Japanese to make the occupation of Kwangsi their immediate objective in November 1939, but by winter's end victory remained as distant as ever.⁸

A Japanese ground offensive deep into Kwangsi was not expected by the Chinese and the limited degree of road destruction along with the paucity of military forces reflected their general military weakness across southern China.⁹ Largely because of political considerations, there were not more than six divisions in all of south-western Kwangtung and Kwangsi to meet the Japanese invasion. Kwangsi divisions were widely dispersed with the 1st Division at Kweilin, and the 2nd Division at Nanning and Shangzze. The latter was supported by the 12th Artillery Battalion which included four 75 mm guns and one 100 mm gun. The 3rd Division was located at Liuchow, while the 4th and 5th Divisions were posted

⁶ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Correspondence of the Military Intelligence Division Relating to General, Political, Economic, and Military Conditions in China; 1918-1941, Reel 11; Report No. 9799 by Captain Edwin M. Sutherland, 29 September 1939.

⁷ NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 40; Report No. 9962 by Svenssen, 20 November 1939. See also The National Archives, Kew (UK) [hereafter TNA], WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 22/39 by Captain R. Giles, 23 October 1939.

⁸ NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 40; Report No. 9962 by Svenssen, 20 November 1939.

⁹ NARA, RG 165, U.S. Military Intelligence Reports: China, 1911-1941 (Frederick: University Publications of America, Inc., 1983) [hereafter USMIR], Reel 3; Report No. 9830 by Colonel William Mayer, 29 November 1939. See also TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 25/39 by Major R. Giles, 5 December 1939.

to Wuchow on the Kwangtung border and Lungchow near Indochina respectively.¹⁰ But once the invasion was underway military necessity overshadowed political problems and Generalissimo Chiang Kai Shek was able to send an initial force of 100,000 reinforcements into Yunnan and Kwangsi.¹¹ Central government troops arrived piecemeal into Kwangsi and the first of these included the 135th Division near Nanning (46th Army HQ), while the 170th Division was sent to Kweihsien [Guixian or Guigang] (16th Army HQ); a point midway between Nanning and Wuchow along the West River. Three central government divisions had also been positioned in southwest Kwangtung prior to the assault; the 175th Division was located at Pakhoi [Beihai] and the newly formed 19th Division, which bore the brunt of the attack, was posted to the Yamchow coastal district (also known as Chinchow) [Qinzhou]. The 188th Division was also in the region.¹² Of all these forces, however, less than half the 50,000 men located inside Kwangsi were committed to battle, and just as the Bias Bay pirates were paid to guide the Japanese army along their routes of advance on Canton in 1938, similar preparations were made in Kwangsi.¹³ Part of the problem preventing greater resistance was that another offensive directed against Changsha was also expected but this did not in fact materialize.¹⁴

Available Japanese forces were similarly limited due to the widespread level of fighting occurring throughout the rest of China at the time. Only two Japanese divisions of the 21st Army were earmarked for the invasion; the 5th Division returned once again to south China from its base at Shantung

¹⁰ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 24/39 by Major R. Giles, 21 November 1939.

¹¹ *Ibid.* See also TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 25/39 by Giles, 5 December 1939.

¹² NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9829 by Captain F.P. Munson, 29 November 1939.

¹³ NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 40; Report No. 70, 27 November 1939. See also TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 25/39 by Giles, 5 December 1939.

¹⁴ NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 40; Report No. 70, 27 November 1939.

[Shandong], and the 28th Formosan Division was brought in from Canton.¹⁵ On 15 November 1939 these forces landed at various points in western Kwangtung along Chinchow Bay northwest of Pakhoi under very difficult high wind conditions, but they were supported by powerful vessels such as the carriers *Agaki* and *Kaga* and the battleship *Fuso*. Seventy ships of the Japanese 3rd Fleet were deployed and of these approximately fifty were infantry transports.¹⁶ An additional Japanese navy marine regiment was landed near Pakhoi although the port itself remained unoccupied for the time being.¹⁷

Initial combat after the landings was brief as the Chinese did not defend in strength owing to Japanese airpower and naval gunfire advantages. Japanese lodgements were quickly secured and all arms functioned in a coordinated, effective manner.¹⁸ Weak Chinese ground forces in the vicinity, primarily of the 19th Division, were brushed aside easily and the bulk retreated north up the road past Nanning and into the mountains.¹⁹ Within five days of the landings, the Japanese cleared their beachheads and followed the Chinese up to the Kwangsi border; by 24 November 1939 they were in control of Nanning.²⁰ According to a missionary living there, General Ando's forces entered the city without creating additional mayhem and captured several Chinese armoured fighting vehicles (AFVs) in the process.²¹ The entire operation to secure Nanning took ten days to complete and shortly thereafter the Japanese consolidated their position by

¹⁵ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 25/39 by Giles, 5 December 1939.

¹⁶ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9829 by Munson, 29 November 1939. See also NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3; Report No. 9830 by Mayer, 29 November 1939. See also TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 24/39 by Giles, 21 November 1939.

¹⁷ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9829 by Munson, 29 November 1939. See also TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 25/39 by Giles, 5 December 1939.

¹⁸ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3; Report No. 9830 by Mayer, 29 November 1939. See also TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 25/39 by Giles, 5 December 1939.

¹⁹ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9829 by Munson, 29 November 1939.

²⁰ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3; Report No. 9830 by Mayer, 29 November 1939.

²¹ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 3/40 by Major R. Giles, 29 February 1940.

constructing a belt of fortified posts several kilometres from the city.²²

Unfortunately for the Chinese a mobile column had also struck west towards the French Indochina border near Dong Dang where much of the five and a half million gallon stockpiles of petroleum, oil and lubricants (POL) at Chehnankuan and Lunge were destroyed.²³

Similar to the case of Canton the year before, speculation over Chinese actions grew amongst foreign observers as the Japanese advanced rapidly one hundred miles inland over rough terrain but met with little resistance.²⁴ Nanning was the obvious objective because it was a major communication hub along the West River to French Indochina, and its occupation resulted in the loss of a major road artery connecting the Hanoi railway line to Kweilin.²⁵ It also provided the Japanese with a useful airbase with which to increase attacks on the railway in Yunnan and the new Burma Road.²⁶ The frequency and intensity of air strikes directed against these targets grew quickly starting in late December 1939.²⁷ Because of the similarities to the 1938 invasion of Kwangtung, and because to some foreign officials the Chinese did not seem overly concerned about this latest setback or how it further complicated China's supply situation, it was widely suspected that the lack of resistance was deliberate. Officers such as U.S. Military Attaché Colonel William Mayer noted that the prevailing ambivalent attitude amongst many Chinese officials may have been connected to the fact that General Pai had remained in central China for a period of three days after the landings before going to Kwangsi to deal personally with the situation in his home

²² *Ibid.*

²³ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9842 by Captain F.P. Munson, 11 January 1940.

²⁴ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3; Report No. 9830 by Mayer, 29 November 1939.

²⁵ NARA, RG 59, M1221; OSS Research and Analysis Report No. 112, July 1942.

²⁶ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 25/39 by Giles, 5 December 1939.

²⁷ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 3/40 by Giles, 29 February 1940.

province.²⁸ Information is limited but Pai did keep half of his forces out of combat and it is likely he did so in an attempt to preserve some degree of political autonomy from Chiang Kai Shek, as the arrival of central government reinforcements potentially threatened his position.²⁹ Even though he had to accept Chiang's forces, Pai knew from the recent political history of Kwangtung that it was beneficial to preserve some of his own strength.

Several factors contributed to the Chinese reverse and British Royal Marine Major R. Giles commented on these from Hong Kong.

There are various explanations for this disgraceful debacle, so reminiscent of the inglorious Canton campaign, but all the specious Chinese excuses may be boiled down to these. Firstly they never really expected that the Japanese would have sufficient men, equipment, or courage to undertake an operation of this magnitude; consequently they were quite unprepared when the blow fell, though proclaiming their eagerness and readiness for battle until the last minute. Secondly, the reported destruction of all roads and bye-paths in this district had evidently not been properly carried out, as otherwise the Japanese could never have covered the 100 odd miles to Nanning in ten days, as they did, bringing with them Mountain Artillery into the bargain. Thirdly - and perhaps most importantly - the Kwangsi Warlords, Pai Chung Shi and Li Tsung Jen, have always been so jealous of their provincial autonomy that they have never permitted Central Government troops to enter the province, although they have sent large contingents of their own men to fight in Central and North China.³⁰

When the invasion occurred the Chinese took the assault to be a feint with the purpose of providing cover for another expected offensive against Changsha which in fact did not take place. Because of this many Kwangsi troops were defending Hunan when they were needed at home. Previous Japanese operations in Kwangtung also diverted Chinese attention from their primary objective at

²⁸ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3; Report No. 9830 by Mayer, 29 November 1939.

²⁹ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 25/39 by Giles, 5 December 1939. See also TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 26/39 by Major R. Giles, 19 December 1939.

³⁰ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 25/39 by Giles, 5 December 1939.

Nanning.³¹ The loss of Nanning was an embarrassing setback but the Kwangsi generals, under the nominal authority of Fourth War Zone Commander General Chang Fa Kwei, were able to maintain some degree of independence throughout the course of the war because of their hesitance in committing their troops to battle in November 1939.

An unknown quantity at this time was General Lung Yun in Yunnan, and although the invasion of Kwangsi damaged Chinese logistical capabilities the Japanese occupation of Nanning carried with it some potentially useful political benefits for Chiang Kai Shek.³² With the Japanese established in Kwangsi an invasion of Yunnan became possible and Lung's reliability was once again tested.³³ The temptation for Lung to come to some form of peace with the Japanese was strong and Yunnan's defection would have greatly undermined the Chinese ability to continue the war. Kunming was a vital Chinese logistical centre for supplies travelling north from both Burma and French Indochina and it possessed some of the few remaining important bases still available for use by the Chinese air force.³⁴ Chiang's reinforcement of the province had the potential to threaten Lung's authority and the presence of central government forces ultimately served to keep the Yunnanese leader in line. Militarily, they also strengthened Yunnan's defences while the Japanese, and especially General Ando, considered mounting an invasion of the province.³⁵ This threat remained constant

³¹ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9856 by Captain Earl Mattice, 6 March 1940.

³² *Ibid.* See also NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9873 by Captain Earl Mattice, 1 May 1940. See also TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 26/39 by Giles, 19 December 1939.

³³ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9829 by Munson, 29 November 1939.

³⁴ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 7/40 by Major R. Giles, 30 June 1940.

³⁵ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 24/39 by Giles, 21 November 1939.

throughout the occupation of southern Kwangsi but the extremely difficult terrain and the lack of available troops prevented its implementation.³⁶

Chinese counterattacks in Kwangsi began in December coinciding with the failed nationwide Winter Offensive, and the subsequent campaign in the region surrounding Nanning became a difficult struggle for both sides.³⁷ Although Nanning was not recaptured the Chinese were able to prevent the Japanese from venturing much further inland. On 5 December 1939 the Japanese 5th Division under Lieutenant General Imamura Hitochi advanced to a position twenty five miles northeast of the city and captured the strategically important Kunlunkwan Pass; the possession of which was vital for any further move into the interior of Kwangsi.³⁸ This can be seen in figure 6.1. But soon thereafter exceptionally heavy and determined Chinese counter-attacks blunted this drive, and by the beginning of January the Chinese under General Pai pushed the Japanese back onto Nanning. Kunlunkwan Pass changed hands four times during the process.³⁹ In a sign that Chinese anxiety had been raised over these recent serious developments, the valuable semi-mechanized 5th Army was deployed from Kweichow [Guizhou] in an attempt to help retake the city but their subsequent participation did not bring success even after sustaining over 16,000 casualties.⁴⁰ Concern was expressed by British military officers over the commitment of this unit to battle as there was a lack of confidence in the Chinese

³⁶ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 25/39 by Giles, 5 December 1939.

³⁷ Hans Van de Ven, *War and Nationalism in China, 1925-1945* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), pp. 242, 246.

³⁸ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9842 by Munson, 11 January 1940. See also TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 26/39 by Giles, 19 December 1939.

³⁹ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9849 by Captain Earl Mattice, 3 February 1940.

⁴⁰ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 26/39 by Giles, 19 December 1939. See also TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 1/40 by Major R. Giles, 2 January 1940. See also Van de Ven, *War and Nationalism in China*, p. 242.

ability to defend it from enemy air strikes. At the beginning of January Major Giles noted, ‘Unless therefore the Chinese have the sense to withdraw these

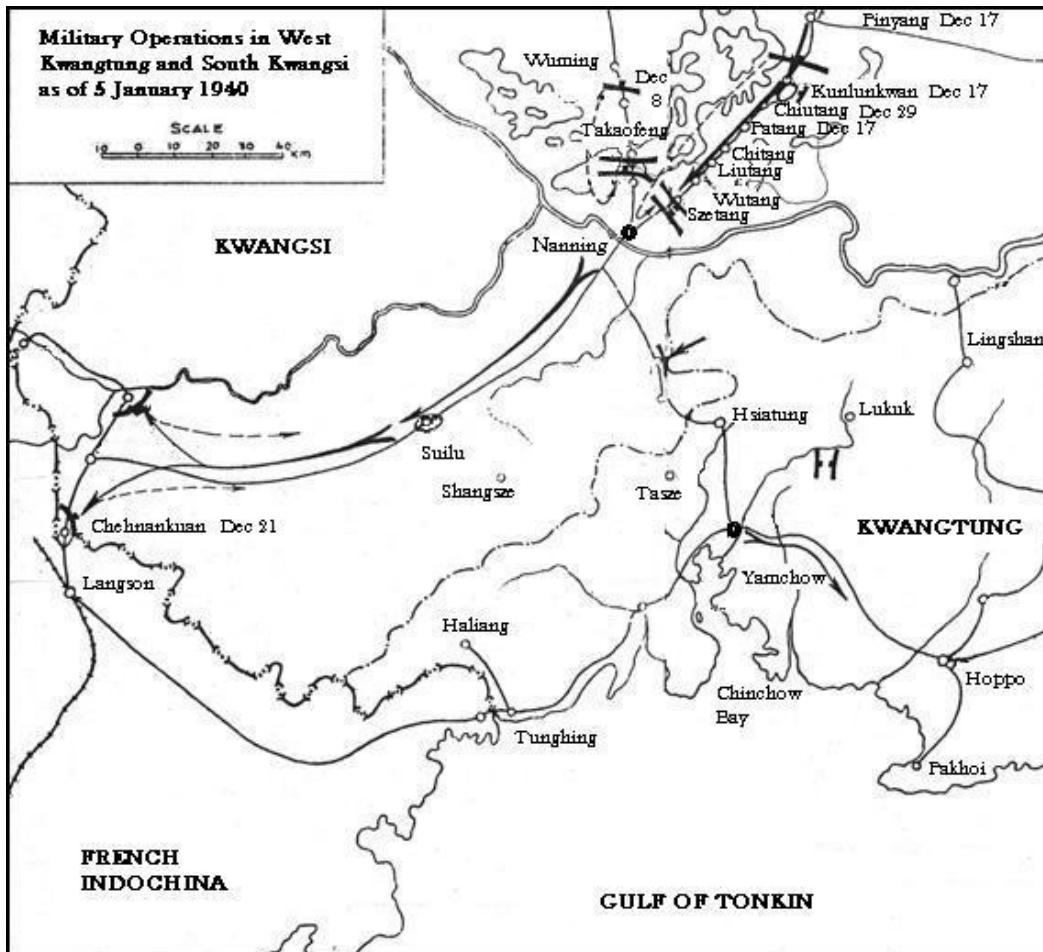


Figure 6.1: Battle for Kwangsi, December 1939 to January 1940. [Source: NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9842 by Munson, 11 January 1940]

forces, it can only be a matter of time before they are caught massed on a road by the Japanese bombers like the Cantonese motorised brigade near Waichow in October 1938.⁴¹ Unfortunately for the Chinese there were many dangers in the air.

Repeated frontal assaults on Nanning’s fortified defences by the Chinese army were supported by Chinese and Soviet air units but their combined strength

⁴¹ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 1/40 by Giles, 2 January 1940.

was insufficient to help alter the situation.⁴² Part of the problem was that Chinese air force losses had been heavy in 1939 and few aircraft were available for Kwangsi.⁴³ Those that were sent proved worse than ineffective in an air campaign that was described by Major Giles, for one, as a ‘complete fiasco’.⁴⁴ Heavy anti-aircraft fire resulted in inaccurate bombing and on at least one occasion a Soviet squadron attacked friendly ground forces.⁴⁵ Approximately fifty Japanese fighters were based at Nanning to maintain air superiority and most of their attention was directed towards the Soviet pilots based at Liuchow and Kweilin.⁴⁶ Air to air combat was frequent but with the exception of a small victory by Soviet pilots over Liuchow on 1 January 1940, where several aircraft were shot down, the Japanese maintained complete aerial dominance and were able to fly continuous ground support missions virtually at will.⁴⁷ Another factor contributing to Chinese deficiencies was the quality of Soviet airmen. Personnel included a mixture of new pilots and veterans from Spain but tours of duty were limited to three months with training being their primary consideration. Nevertheless, as an indication that losses had been substantial, wounded pilots were flown out of the region aboard CNAC transport aircraft when military transport was unavailable.⁴⁸ Throughout the struggle for Kwangsi, Sino-Soviet airpower remained inadequate

⁴² TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 2/40 by Major R. Giles, 31 January 1940.

⁴³ Chiang Wego, *How Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek Won the Eight-Year Sino-Japanese War, 1937-1945* (Taipei: Li Ming Culture Enterprise Co., 1979), pp. 132-133.

⁴⁴ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 3/40 by Giles, 29 February 1940.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9856 by Munson, 6 March 1940.

⁴⁷ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9842 by Munson, 11 January 1940. See also TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 2/40 by Giles, 31 January 1940 and TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 3/40 by Giles, 29 February 1940. See also United Church of Canada Archives, Toronto (Canada) [hereafter UCC], Accession 83.046C, Box 3, File 63, U.C.C. Board of Overseas Missions, South China [hereafter BOMSC]; Letter by Dr. J Oscar Thomson to Reverend A.E. Armstrong, 17 November 1939.

⁴⁸ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 3/40 by Giles, 29 February 1940. See also TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 4/40 by Major R. Giles, 31 March 1940. See also Troy L. Perkins, Telegram No. 18, in *Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers, 1940 Volume 4, The Far East* [hereafter FRUS], ed. Historical Office, Bureau of Public Affairs, Department of State (Washington: United States Department of State, 1955), p. 268.

to greatly worry the Japanese and their losses continued to be heavy. Conversely, Japanese air and firepower advantages remained significant, but these were equally of little value in helping the army break out of their fortified base at Nanning.

In conjunction with the battles being waged at Nanning, Chinese guerrilla forces converged on the Japanese line of supply which snaked along the slender mountainous road running between the city and the southwest Kwangtung coast at Yamchow. Some lessons had not yet been absorbed from the Japanese 11th Army defeat at Changsha in early October, and the force sent to Kwangsi was greatly under strength for its mission. Two divisions were inadequate to fight effectively at Nanning while simultaneously protecting a tenuous one-hundred mile line of communication to the sea, and the battle for the road threatened to drag their expedition into a trap.⁴⁹ Each day Nanning was kept supplied with heavily escorted convoys of approximately one hundred vehicles from Yamchow. Initially these experienced little difficulty in getting through as they were often assigned air cover, and road destruction by Chinese forces usually only impeded traffic for about forty-eight hours at any given time.⁵⁰ But as the frequency of Chinese attacks continued to increase, this artery became a dangerous problem for the Japanese.

After realizing his error in sending an inadequate number of troops, General Ando reinforced Kwangsi in January 1940 from units fighting north and northeast of Canton.⁵¹ These forces included elements of the 18th Division (originally from Kyushu), an additional Formosan Brigade, and a Guards Mixed

⁴⁹ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9849 by Mattice, 3 February 1940. See also TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 2/40 by Giles, 31 January 1940.

⁵⁰ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 3/40 by Giles, 29 February 1940.

⁵¹ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9849 by Mattice, 3 February 1940. See also TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 2/40 by Giles, 31 January 1940.

Brigade raising the strength of the Kwangsi force to three and a half divisions of about 50,000 men. Most of these had recently been engaged in a diversionary offensive in central Kwangtung and this move left Japanese forces in that province similarly under strength.⁵² But the situation in Kwangsi demanded immediate assistance. The Guards brigade was therefore involved quickly in heavy fighting upon its arrival just to maintain security between Yamchow and Nanning. Initial losses included a battalion commander.⁵³ U.S. Army Captain Earl Mattice noted how in late January 1940 a Japanese security detachment tried to clear an area northeast of Hsiatung, about one third of the distance north from Yamchow, ‘but the Chinese fell upon this column and cut it to pieces’.⁵⁴ Displaying unexpected aggression the Chinese were still unable to sever the line completely, but the Japanese were equally unable to push them out of their logistical zone of operations.

Undeterred, the Japanese resumed operations farther north in another attempt to secure the Kunlunkwan Pass. This offensive began on 26 January 1940 in a move that was also designed to break up a Chinese force of approximately thirty to thirty-five divisions, or almost 200,000 men, now massing in the region for another counterattack on Nanning.⁵⁵ At least sixteen Chinese divisions had been transferred from north China during late January and early February and on 1 February, Chiang Kai Shek flew into Kwangsi to investigate matters for himself.⁵⁶ Chinese reinforcements were largely concentrated into four groups including amongst other units the 75th, 78th, 92nd, and 156th Divisions northeast

⁵² NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9849 by Mattice, 3 February 1940. See also NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9856 by Munson, 6 March 1940. See also TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 7/40 by Giles, 30 June 1940.

⁵³ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 2/40 by Giles, 31 January 1940.

⁵⁴ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9849 by Mattice, 3 February 1940.

⁵⁵ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9856 by Munson, 6 March 1940. See also TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 3/40 by Giles, 29 February 1940.

⁵⁶ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9856 by Munson, 6 March 1940.

of the Kunlunkwan Pass at Pinyang (twelve divisions in total); the 145th, 301st, 302nd, and 303rd Divisions farther northwest at Shanglin; the 2nd, 13th, 17th, 45th, 84th, 93rd, 103rd, and 135th Divisions to the west of Pinyang at Wuming; with the 110th, 115th, 155th, 156th, and 175th Divisions deployed east of Pinyang at Litang. Pinyang was the primary Japanese objective, and to by-pass Chinese defensive positions along the road, Japanese forces began their attack from Nanning by utilizing the same infiltration tactics along small paths and trails as they had done in their earlier advance on Nanning from the coast.⁵⁷

The Japanese kicked off the offensive from Nanning by attacking along the northeast road to Pinyang and by sending elements of the 18th Division and the Guards eastward to hook around the main Chinese defences. This eastern column crossed the West River at Yungshun on 29 January 1940 before heading north to attack Pinyang. By 2 February the town was in their hands with the Kunlunkwan Pass sandwiched in between the two Japanese columns. A Chinese countermove on the vacated Yungshun allowed them to re-occupy the town thereby cutting off the Japanese force at Pinyang, but they continued onward nonetheless. The Japanese were able to maintain their attack as most of the Chinese defenders at Pinyang withdrew further north onto Chienkiang after taking heavy casualties. The following day at Kunlunkwan, the Japanese converged on the pass from both directions and met with strong resistance, but in the end, one and a half Chinese divisions were eventually wiped out. Within a few days the road from Nanning to Pinyang was entirely in Japanese hands. An additional Japanese column had also advanced on Wuming from Nanning at the start of the offensive and they captured the town on 8 February. All seemed to have

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

proceeded well enough for the Japanese when on that same day a large Chinese counterattack hit them on their flanks and succeeded in blocking the Nanning-Pinyang road. Faced with this significant danger to their rear, discretion prevailed over valour, and on 11 February the Japanese at Pinyang began a partial pull-back south. After sustaining many losses they were content to halt and maintain a defence of the Kunlunkwan Pass as seen in figure 6.2.⁵⁸ While this was occurring General Ando flew into Nanning from Canton in order to assess the situation better, but from mid-February onwards the northern Nanning front turned relatively static as both sides consolidated their positions and regrouped.⁵⁹

By 15 February 1940 the Japanese felt confident that they had disrupted Chinese plans for a counterattack on Nanning. A withdrawal of some of their forces from the region soon followed.⁶⁰ Troops from about one and a half divisions, including soldiers of the 18th Division, travelled back down the road to Yamchow and embarked on naval transports for a return to Kwangtung. This move was completed by the first week of March. Those units that remained included the 5th Division and elements of the 28th Division plus the Guards Mixed Brigade.⁶¹ In covering this partial withdrawal, a Japanese regiment struck Chinese units southwest of Nanning to disrupt their impending move against the road to Yamchow, and this operation was followed by a similar difficult attack southeast towards the coast.⁶² To push the Chinese further off balance the Japanese occasionally struck out in brigade strength from their base at Nanning to

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9856 by Munson, 6 March 1940. See also TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 3/40 by Giles, 29 February 1940.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 5/40 by Major R. Giles, 30 April 1940.

⁶² NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9856 by Munson, 6 March 1940. See also NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9862 by Captain Earl Mattice, 3 April 1940. See also TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 4/40 by Giles, 31 March 1940.

disperse potentially dangerous Chinese troop concentrations.⁶³ These expeditions were not of any great distance or duration before returning to the city but the Chinese usually attempted to block the line of retreat when possible.⁶⁴ One of these Japanese operations was launched in a westerly direction on 1 April 1940.



Figure 6.2: Battle for Kwangsi, February 1940. [Source: Based on NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9856 by Captain Earl Mattice, 6 March 1940]

⁶³ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9873 by Mattice, 1 May 1940.

⁶⁴ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9856 by Munson, 6 March 1940.

The coastal port of Pakhoi was also assaulted and occupied for a week by Japanese marines during March, but most of their actions consisted of security sweeps and punitive expeditions against Chinese civilians or military forces threatening the line of communication between Nanning and the sea; usually against considerable Chinese resistance.⁶⁵ The ensuing stalemate persisted for most of the year until the Japanese finally withdrew from Kwangsi in October. This transpired after the occupation of French Indochina had been completed and the need to block Chinese lines of communication through Nanning was obviated.⁶⁶

Soon after the initial capture of Nanning the Japanese were able to expand air operations greatly against the Chinese strategic lines of communication crossing Kwangsi and Yunnan. The principle routes targeted were the Burma Road and the French Indochina railway.⁶⁷ Japanese formations as large as thirty-nine heavy bombers were assigned to single missions and these aircraft were based at airfields near Yamchow and Pakhoi.⁶⁸ From 30 December 1939 until 19 February 1940 Japanese army and navy bombers based in Kwangsi hit the railway line to Indochina on thirteen different occasions from altitudes ranging between 6,000 and 12,000 feet. Most attacks were concentrated against tunnels and bridges from the Indochina border to a distance of eighty kilometres inside

⁶⁵ NARA, RG 38, Entry 98A, Box 705, F-6-c 23213 to F-6-e 22379; Report No. 1085-45, 12 March 1945. See also NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9862 by Mattice, 3 April 1940. See also NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9873 by Mattice, 1 May 1940. See also Hata, 'The Army's Move into Northern Indochina', p. 168.

⁶⁶ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 11/40 by Major R. Giles, 31 October 1940.

⁶⁷ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9849 by Mattice, 3 February 1940. See also RG 165, M1513, Reel 40; Report No. 9995 by Captain Eric H.F. Svenssen, 20 November 1939. See also TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 3/40 by Giles, 29 February 1940.

⁶⁸ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 3/40 by Giles, 29 February 1940.

Yunnan.⁶⁹ Captain Mattice noted how in January the Japanese had announced that their intention was to bomb the railroad ‘out of existence’.⁷⁰ The Chinese reacted by intensifying road construction work in Yunnan and by employing waterborne transport when possible to cross rivers.⁷¹

Although the winter air offensive against the Yunnan Railway did not succeed, the Japanese did create a great deal of damage, but less to the railway and more to their diplomatic relations with the French and the Americans. One of the principal reasons for this was the bombing of the French-owned Lace Bridge on 1 February 1940 which was located just inside the border in Yunnan. Although on this occasion the bridge itself was undamaged, Major Barrett explained that the gruesome results of the attack were responsible for provoking international anger. His graphic description helps explain why.

The bombing of February 1st resulted in a ghastly slaughter of passengers on a train which was passing through a tunnel near the mouth of which the bombs fell. The force of the explosion caused the locomotive boiler to burst and reduced the coaches in the tunnel almost to splinters. Many persons were literally cooked to death by the steam.⁷²

Approximately eighty-five people were killed, including five French citizens and a detailed account of the casualty evacuation was provided to Hong Kong military intelligence officers by the crew of *HMS Falcon*. The crew was exiting China because some Royal Navy gunboats were being withdrawn or decommissioned and these men were eyewitnesses to the event.⁷³ The Lace Bridge bombing was one of the more violent episodes of the air campaign, but just as with the 1938

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* See also NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9856 by Munson, 6 March 1940. See also Ambassador William C. Bullitt, Telegram 15 January 1940, in *FRUS, 1940 Volume 4, The Far East*, p. 263.

⁷⁰ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9849 by Mattice, 3 February 1940.

⁷¹ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3; Report No. 9844 by Colonel William Mayer, 11 January 1940. See also TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 3/40 by Giles, 29 February 1940.

⁷² NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3; Report No. 3 by Major David Barrett, 1 March 1940.

⁷³ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 3/40 by Giles, 29 February 1940.

bombing offensive against the KCR, the physical damage inflicted on the line in this or subsequent attacks did not permanently interrupt rail traffic. Ongoing repairs were made rapidly during most evenings and material such as gasoline continued to travel northwest to be transported by barge and other means across obstacles where necessary.⁷⁴ Bombardment of the railway, however, brought diplomatic protests from the French, but for the time being, the potential for greater trouble with the United States was an eventuality that the Japanese chose not to ignore.⁷⁵ Japanese attacks against the line subsequently diminished somewhat in frequency shortly after mid February.⁷⁶ Regardless of the reduction in Japanese raids, concern had grown in Washington over Japanese ambitions after the occupation of Kwangsi and an anticipated \$20 million U.S. loan to China was extended in March 1940.⁷⁷ At this stage of the war the Japanese in south China were still focused on cutting Chinese lines of communication and not on expanding farther south. That would soon change but until the European situation was greatly altered, American concerns could not be completely dismissed.⁷⁸

The Japanese were also unable to influence positively the leadership in Yunnan, meaning that no success was to be found in breaking General Lung Yun's alliance with Chiang Kai Shek. Despite the increased threat to Yunnan, the lack of anti-aircraft units with which to defend the railway, or Lung's disinclination to accept central government troops into the province, he still

⁷⁴ *Ibid.* See also TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 5/40 by Giles, 30 April 1940.

⁷⁵ Ambassador Joseph Grew, Telegram 6 January 1940, in *FRUS, 1940 Volume 4, The Far East*, p. 258.

⁷⁶ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 3/40 by Giles, 29 February 1940. See also TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 4/40 by Giles, 31 March 1940. See also TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 5/40 by Giles, 30 April 1940.

⁷⁷ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3; Report No. 3 by Barrett, 1 March 1940. See also Jonathan Utley, *Going to War with Japan, 1937-1941* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1985), p. 80.

⁷⁸ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 1/40 by Giles, 2 January 1940.

remained loyal to the anti-Japanese camp in Chungking.⁷⁹ Because of these diplomatic and political factors, POL continued to travel into Yunnan along the Indochina Railway.⁸⁰

The Japanese invasion and occupation of Kwangsi was an unprofitable military venture despite initial Chinese military incompetence.⁸¹ Early in the war the Chinese had anticipated an invasion of the region, but the limited forces available to defend the province was a product of political friction and poor planning between Kwangsi and the central government. Japanese temptation to attack was only encouraged once Kwangsi forces were sent north to fight in Hunan leaving the province with a numerically deficient army.⁸² For the ridiculous ease with which Nanning was initially captured, and for his failure subsequently to retake it, General Pai was recalled from the battlefield to Chungking and demoted.⁸³ But the Japanese underestimated the Chinese ability to contain them once the campaign was underway. Despite Japanese efforts to clear the region they were unable to occupy any area of significance outside of Nanning, and had considerable difficulty in maintaining their line of communication to the coast. In the ensuing struggle for control of this artery both sides suffered many casualties.⁸⁴ Japanese civilian pacification methods between Nanning and Yamchow also proved counterproductive, and these operations further demonstrated that General Ando's policy of conciliation did not extend

⁷⁹ *Ibid.* See also NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3; Report by Major David Barrett, 20 April 1940.

⁸⁰ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3; Report by Barrett, 20 April 1940.

⁸¹ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 11/40 by Giles, 31 October 1940.

⁸² NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9849 by Mattice, 3 February 1940. See also NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9856 by Munson, 6 March 1940.

⁸³ NARA, RG 59, Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files: China, Internal Affairs, 1940-1944 (Frederick: University Publications of America, Inc., 1984) [hereafter USSDCF], Reel 25; Report No. 893.20/714 by Krentz, 16 May 1940. See also NARA, RG 493, Entry 531, Box 51, Z Force Operations, Adjutant General, General Correspondence, Decimal File; Memorandum by Brigadier General Malcolm F. Lindsey, 12 June 1944.

⁸⁴ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9849 by Mattice, 3 February 1940. See also NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9856 by Munson, 6 March 1940.

very far beyond Canton. Major Barrett reported from Chungking the unintended impact the Japanese were having on Chinese morale and what this augured for the future:

The undersigned has ventured to point out to some of his Chinese friends upon whose discretion he can depend that probably the best friend China has in the world today is the Japanese Army, for it is the Japanese Army which has caused the birth of a new and at least partially united China, and it is the Japanese Army which, if it continues on its present course, will probably eventually bring about the downfall of Japan.⁸⁵

Until that time, Chinese resistance continued as military supplies entered China from Hong Kong, as well as through Yunnan via Burma and French Indochina.⁸⁶

Although the backlog of material at Haiphong had increased, the Chinese war effort was not greatly impacted by the occupation of Nanning. The greater problem for the Japanese, however, was the growing anxiety exhibited amongst the western powers and the diplomatic friction that this move created. The invasion of Kwangsi was accepted in many foreign quarters as evidence of Japanese preparations for expansionist plans further south and an increase in the frequency and severity of air strikes directed against the French Indochina Railway did not help ease rising tensions with Paris, especially following the bombing of the Lace Bridge. All things considered the Japanese invasion of Kwangsi was not worth the cost.

Stalemate in South-Central Kwangtung: The Battle for Kukong, December 1939 to March 1940

Prior to the late December 1939 Chinese counterattack against Nanning, the Japanese reinforced their positions in Kwangtung and launched a diversionary

⁸⁵ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3; Report No. 2 by Major David Barrett, 2 February 1940.

⁸⁶ Kurt Bloch, 'China's Lifelines and the Indo-China Frontier', *Far Eastern Survey*, 9(4) 1940: 47-49, p. 48.

offensive in the central part of the province in an attempt to divert Chinese forces away from Kwangsi. Japanese troops on the border with Hong Kong were withdrawn for this attack and the net result of these developments was to make Hong Kong's position as a Chinese supply centre even more effective.⁸⁷ The withdrawal of two battalions from the Hong Kong border was an event welcomed by British officials, as it reduced the potential for conflict with the Japanese army while simultaneously creating an opportunity to ease the colony's refugee problem.⁸⁸ But this respite from Japanese pressure was only a temporary change as Major Giles informed London.

Japanese authorities stressed that their troops would return if Hong Kong should again be used as a centre for the import of arms and munitions into China, and expressed the hope that the colonial government would do its best to stop any smuggling of arms over the border.⁸⁹

During this period the Japanese navy maintained their blockade at sea and continued its ground campaign against the rich agricultural region on the western side of the delta. A more serious problem, however, that eventually befell colonial officials, and the British in general, was the rapid collapse of the French in June 1940. Japanese army officers emboldened by this event assumed a more bellicose posture, and soon demonstrated great determination to not only terminate the movement of Chinese military supplies, but to exploit the opportunity presented by European events to expand their areas of occupation further south. Thus, an Anglo-Japanese war became increasingly possible and the threat to Hong Kong was made more dangerous.

To draw Chinese forces away from Kwangsi, General Ando launched a diversionary offensive in Kwangtung on 20 December 1939 with the objective of

⁸⁷ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 2/40 by Giles, 31 January 1940.

⁸⁸ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 1/40 by Giles, 2 January 1940.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

destroying General Yu Han Mou's 12th Group Army headquartered in the mountainous region surrounding Yungyun southeast of Kukong. In accounting for the apparent weaknesses of General Yu's army the plan seemed sound enough, but as the threat posed to the Japanese line of communication in Kwangsi increased, the Kwangtung offensive had to be aborted.⁹⁰ After their easy advance through Kwangtung in October 1938 confidence was high amongst Ando's command. Consequently, only a limited number of forces were actually committed to the attack. Three columns began the advance from their starting points north of Canton to envelop Yu's troops in what was supposed to be a ring of steel.⁹¹ To accomplish this Ando assigned the Guards Mixed Brigade, recently arrived from Japan, with the task of striking hard north from the centre at Tsungfa. On the left, much of the 104th Division (including the 107th Infantry Brigade), which had been in garrison at Swatow, Fatshan and Samshui, was to push up the Hankow-Canton Railway and the North River to capture the town of Yingtak [Yingde] eighty miles north of Canton.⁹² This unit's garrison duties were assumed by the new 38th Division headquartered at Fatshan; a unit which was recently formed at Nagoya and arrived in November 1939 under the command of Lieutenant General Fujii Yoji.⁹³ The 38th Division was the same unit that would eventually assault Hong Kong in December 1941. On the right were elements of the 18th Division starting from Tsengsheng. This division was ordered to envelop Yu's forces after passing through Lungmoon further northeast. Originally the 18th Division was dispersed in garrisons at Tsengsheng, Shumchun, Namtau and

⁹⁰ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9842 by Munson, 11 January 1940. See also TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 2/40 by Giles, 31 January 1940 and TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 3/40 by Giles, 29 February 1940.

⁹¹ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 2/40 by Giles, 31 January 1940.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ *Ibid.* See also National Archives of Canada, Ottawa (Canada) [hereafter NAC], RG 24, Volume 20538, File 982.013 (D5); Historical Bulletin No. 249, History of the 38th Japanese Division. See also TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 3/40 by Giles, 29 February 1940.

two of its battalions had been spread out along the Hong Kong border, but as with the Guards, part of this force had to be redeployed to Kwangsi in the midst of what became a costly retreat.⁹⁴

These three groups of the Japanese 21st Army in Kwangtung began the advance simultaneously. Initially all went according to plan, but partly because of unexpected resistance in the mountains they were unable to achieve victory.⁹⁵ Some preliminary combat had already commenced during the week prior to the offensive and Dr. Thomson noted how there was ‘heavy fighting up the north and west rivers’, but General Yu quickly withdrew his forces north to prevent their encirclement and by doing so was also able to defend the approach to Kukong.⁹⁶ Approximately fifteen Chinese divisions were available for the defence of Kwangtung including the 151st, 153rd, 154th, 157th, 159th, 160th, 168th, 187th, and the 7th Cantonese.⁹⁷ Attacking on the left, the Japanese 104th Division marched on Yingtak to occupy the town on 29 December 1939.⁹⁸ In the centre the Guards took Langkow on 26 December and after some difficulty captured Lutien on 2 January 1940.⁹⁹ On the right the Japanese 18th Division met with greater success by reaching Lungmoon on 25 December. They captured Yungyun one

⁹⁴ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9842 by Munson, 11 January 1940. See also TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 24/39 by Giles, 21 November 1939. See also TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 2/40 by Giles, 31 January 1940 and TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 3/40 by Giles, 29 February 1940.

⁹⁵ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 1/40 by Giles, 2 January 1940. See also TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 2/40 by Giles, 31 January 1940. See also TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 3/40 by Giles, 29 February 1940. See also Peter Moreira, *Hemingway on the China Front: His WWII Spy Mission with Martha Gellhorn* (Washington: Potomac Books, 2006), p. 87.

⁹⁶ UCC, Accession 83.046C, Box 3, File 63, BOMSC; Letter by Dr. J Oscar Thomson to Reverend A.E. Armstrong, 14 December 1939.

⁹⁷ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9849 by Mattice, 3 February 1940. See also TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 1/40 by Giles, 2 January 1940.

⁹⁸ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9849 by Mattice, 3 February 1940. See also TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 2/40 by Giles, 31 January 1940.

⁹⁹ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9842 by Munson, 11 January 1940. See also TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 2/40 by Giles, 31 January 1940.

hundred ten miles northeast of Canton on New Year's Eve.¹⁰⁰ From here the terrain to Kukong was less difficult to traverse. An advance on the city would have been somewhat easier to conduct, but the Chinese once again moved against the overextended Japanese flanks to cut their lines of supply to Canton. A general withdrawal from central Kwangtung was therefore begun on 1 January 1940 as seen in figure 6.3. The bigger problem however, was that the Japanese position in Kwangsi had become dangerously threatened, and reinforcements were needed immediately from Kwangtung in order to stabilize the situation between Nanning and the coast.¹⁰¹



Figure 6.3: Battle for Kwangtung, 20 December 1939 to 5 January 1940. Three Japanese thrusts north of Canton. [Source: NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9849 by Captain F.P. Munson, 11 January 1940]

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.* See also NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9849 by Mattice, 3 February 1940.

Before help could be sent to Kwangsi the Japanese had to extricate themselves from their problems in Kwangtung. Maintaining pressure during the 21st Army's retreat, the 12th Group Army advanced closely behind, and several units managed to work their way around the Japanese to become blocking forces at key points. In the east, the retreat of the Japanese 18th Division was delayed at Lungmoon on 10 January 1940 while they fought their way into the town, but once this was accomplished they continued their move until passing through Tsengcheng on the 19th. In the centre the Guards travelled back down the Canton-Kukong highway, passing through their original start positions at Tsungfa on 10 January, but they were forced to fight their way into Shenkang farther to the southwest. Heavy fighting developed there on 19 and 20 January. Along the river and the railway line, the Chinese kept constant pressure on the 104th Division until they halted just north of Canton at Hsinkai. By the time the Japanese finished their withdrawal they were occupying positions closer to Canton than they had originally started from. This can be seen in figure 6.4. In the end, the Japanese Kwangtung offensive lasted for about a month but it was more futile than the occupation of Nanning. Instead of diverting Chinese forces it was Ando who had to break off his attack in Kwangtung to save his position in Kwangsi. Casualties for both sides amounted to 6,000 Japanese and 13,000 Chinese but there was little to show for it as the war in Kwangtung continued to remain deadlocked just as it was before.¹⁰²

General Yu's defence of Kwangtung showed that the Chinese strategy of securing direct British involvement was still in effect. Even with limited

¹⁰² NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9849 by Mattice, 3 February 1940. See also TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 2/40 by Giles, 31 January 1940.

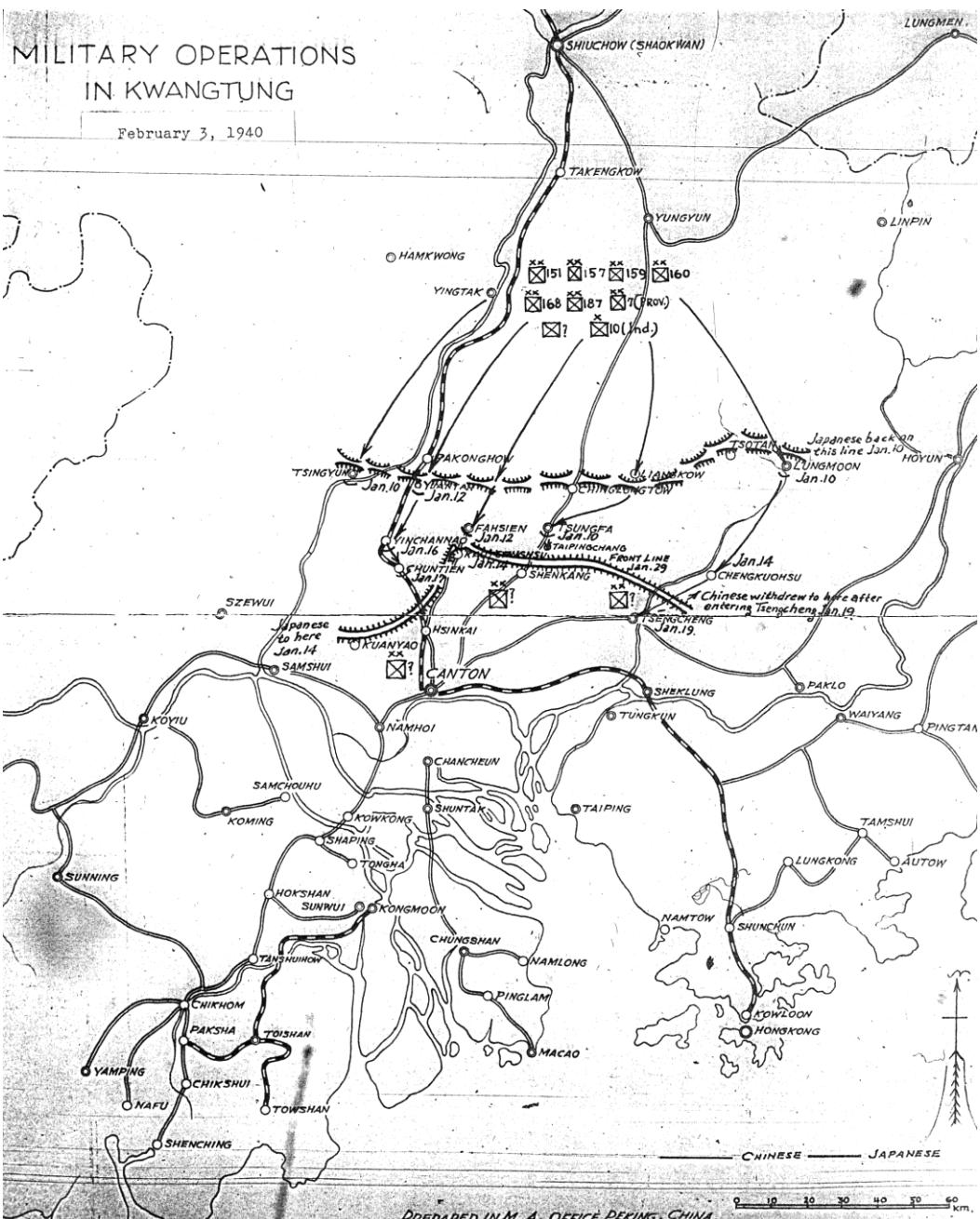


Figure 6.4: Battle for Kwangtung, 6 to 20 January 1940. Chinese counteroffensive and final positions. [Source: NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9849 by Captain Earl Mattice, 3 February 1940]

troop strength General Ando felt the destruction of the Chinese 12th Group Army was possible. What was unexpected by many observers was General Yu's ability

to put up a useful defence.¹⁰³ Part of the reason why Yu proved more competent in battle than expected, was because he prepared ahead of time to face such a challenge. Chinese villagers practiced their evacuation over a period of several months and many were able to move quickly before the arrival of Japanese troops. Thus, the Japanese were forced to withdraw partly because of a general lack of supplies. Nothing was left for the Japanese army to use. All food was dispersed away from the line of advance and there were no people available for road repair.¹⁰⁴ In battle, Yu was forced to rely upon some of the poorest quality troops in the Chinese army but even so he managed to avoid encirclement and maintained the bulk of his forces intact.¹⁰⁵ By advancing with insufficient troops General Ando gambled that he could use long extended columns with exposed flanks to envelop the Chinese, as was similarly hoped for by Lieutenant General Okamura Yasuji and the 11th Army during the first battle of Changsha in October 1939. But in an echo of Changsha, once the Japanese had advanced into the rougher terrain further north, much of their firepower advantage was lost as they were limited to the use of mountain artillery only.¹⁰⁶ Fortunately for Ando, Yu lacked sufficient firepower of his own to exact a greater toll during the retreat. Oddly, however, by February 1940 once Ando's withdrawal was complete, Yu chose to discontinue his attack. An assault on Canton would have been costly but his forces were closer to the city than they had ever been before. With the Japanese 21st Army heavily engaged in Kwangsi conditions would unlikely be more favourable than they were at that time for an attack to have been made. Yet, Yu halted his forces just short of the city and gave the Japanese a chance to

¹⁰³ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 1/40 by Giles, 2 January 1940.

¹⁰⁴ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 2/40 by Giles, 31 January 1940.

¹⁰⁵ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 5/40 by Giles, 30 April 1940.

¹⁰⁶ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 2/40 by Giles, 31 January 1940.

regroup. Even a failed attack would have provided indirect support to Chinese forces fighting in Kwangsi. Instead, Yu was content to keep the Japanese once again frustratingly contained close to Canton while military supplies still tauntingly entered China from Hong Kong.

Blockade of Hong Kong, November 1939 to June 1940

The invasion of Kwangsi was conducted to strengthen the blockade against China, but Japanese plans were once again thwarted largely because of the Chinese use of Hong Kong.¹⁰⁷ Japanese forces redeployed from Hong Kong and from places such as Swatow were urgently required elsewhere for combat, but with an open border the blockade was greatly weakened.¹⁰⁸ Out of desperation the Japanese attempted to make the most of this development by promoting themselves as good neighbours. Proclamations emphasizing their desire for improved relations with British officials were tempered, however, by Major General Tsuchihashi Yuichi, General Ando's new Chief of Staff for intelligence, who informed his hosts while passing through Hong Kong that he still hoped to see a termination of their gasoline exports to China.¹⁰⁹ Reliance was also placed upon weak Chinese puppet troops to make up the shortfall in available manpower but their utility was minimal at best. These forces were aided by Japanese naval and marine units when possible but overall the ability to maintain the blockade was diminished during the winter of 1939 to 1940.

Although the behaviour of Japanese officers towards the British in south China had soured during the fall of 1939, this situation began to improve

¹⁰⁷ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 26/39 by Giles, 19 December 1939.

¹⁰⁸ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 1/40 by Giles, 2 January 1940. See also TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 2/40 by Giles, 31 January 1940.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.* See also TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 26/39 by Giles, 19 December 1939.

temporarily amongst the army after the invasion of Kwangsi had begun.¹¹⁰ This was also true of the navy following the appointment of Vice-Admiral Takasu Shiro as commander of the Japanese 5th Fleet.¹¹¹ Takasu was the former Naval Attaché to Great Britain and a friend of General Ando yet his replacement of Vice-Admiral Kondo Nobutake on 10 October 1939 did not result in any reduction of violence employed by Japanese naval units against Chinese civilians near Hong Kong.¹¹²

After a year of occupation General Ando's conciliatory approach towards the Chinese had also essentially evaporated. Attacks against civilians throughout the region had become more severe, especially along the West River and throughout Chungshan District. As a reprisal for Chinese guerrilla attacks, the town of Kun Shaan, in occupied territory near Canton, was bombed and strafed by Japanese aircraft in early December 1939 with over one hundred people being killed.¹¹³ Ground combat involving the Japanese 38th Division also occurred in December near Kongmoon and was resumed in February 1940 with greater ferocity.¹¹⁴ The city itself was assaulted on 29 March 1939.¹¹⁵ Heavily battered Shekki likewise became the object of Japanese attention yet again, with some speculation amongst British residents that the Japanese needed a face saving

¹¹⁰ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 24/39 by Giles, 21 November 1939. See also TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 3/40 by Giles, 29 February 1940.

¹¹¹ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 1/40 by Giles, 2 January 1940. See also TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 2/40 by Giles, 31 January 1940. See also TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 3/40 by Giles, 29 February 1940.

¹¹² TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 22/39 by Giles, 23 October 1939. See also TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 26/39 by Giles, 19 December 1939.

¹¹³ UCC, Accession 83.046C, Box 3, File 63, BOMSC; Letter by Thomson to Armstrong, 14 December 1939.

¹¹⁴ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 26/39 by Giles, 19 December 1939. See also UCC, Accession 83.046C, Box 4, File 65, BOMSC; Letter by Reverend Duncan McRae to Dr. A.E. Armstrong, 24 February 1940. See also UCC, Accession 83.046C, Box 4, File 66, BOMSC; Letter by Reverend Tom Broadfoot to Jessie Arnup, 12 February 1940.

¹¹⁵ UCC, Accession 83.046C, Box 4, File 65, BOMSC; Letter by Mrs. D. McRae to Jessie Arnup, 1 April 1940. See also UCC, Accession 83.046C, Box 4, File 66, BOMSC; Letter by Broadfoot to Arnup, 12 February 1940.

victory following their difficulties in Kwangsi.¹¹⁶ Food was also becoming increasingly scarce as the disruption to Hong Kong's supply of agricultural goods remained the primary consideration dominating Japanese interest in the region.¹¹⁷ Because of the deployment of Chinese forces elsewhere Shekki was left undefended in March 1940, and with the arrival of Japanese troops on this occasion many civilians were unable to flee beforehand.¹¹⁸ Looting, rape and executions followed during the city's occupation.¹¹⁹

Macau likewise received its share of intimidation during March when Japanese units again occupied villages on the eastern side of Lappa Island overlooking the inner harbour. These did not remain in place for long but smaller groups of Japanese troops entering Macau on leave and for other purposes created many problems by carrying their weapons.¹²⁰ Merchants were often paid in military yen, civilian houses were searched and several Chinese were kidnapped. A levy of \$400,000 per month was also placed upon the city, all with the aim of securing Portuguese recognition of the puppet government in Chungshan District.¹²¹ The following month Macanese police reoccupied the villages on Lappa Island but these units came under attack by Japanese and Chinese puppet troops on 24 April 1940 forcing their withdrawal back inside the colony.¹²²

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 3/40 by Giles, 29 February 1940. See also TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 7/40 by Giles, 30 June 1940. See also UCC, Accession 83.046C, Box 4, File 65, BOMSC; Letter by Mrs. McRae to Arnup, 1 April 1940.

¹¹⁸ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 4/40 by Giles, 31 March 1940.

¹¹⁹ UCC, Accession 83.046C, Box 4, File 65, BOMSC; Letter by Mrs. McRae to Arnup, 1 April 1940. See also UCC, Accession 83.046C, Box 4, File 65, BOMSC; Letter by Reverend Duncan McRae to Jessie Arnup, 17 April 1940.

¹²⁰ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 4/40 by Giles, 31 March 1940.

¹²¹ *Ibid.* See also NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3; Report No. 9866 by Captain F.P. Munson, 4 April 1940. See also UCC, Accession 83.046C, Box 4, File 65, BOMSC; Letter by Mrs. McRae to Arnup, 1 April 1940.

¹²² TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 5/40 by Giles, 30 April 1940.

Despite the open border at Hong Kong Japanese interdiction efforts were strongly maintained at sea. By the end of 1939 most Royal Navy vessels had already been withdrawn from the Far East for service in the Mediterranean or home waters, while the China Squadron Flag was transferred to Singapore in May 1940.¹²³ Hence, pressure against Hong Kong and along the south China coast was maintained persistently by the Japanese navy offshore and along the Pearl River without much interference.¹²⁴ Beginning in mid December 1939 and throughout much of 1940 the Pearl River was periodically closed to foreign traffic in order for the Japanese to support ground operations up the North and West Rivers, but this action was also conveniently useful in disrupting British commercial activity inland.¹²⁵ A stop and search policy directed against British and other third power shipping was also continued just outside of the colony's territorial waters, but in returning the favour officers and men from *HMS Liverpool* boarded the Japanese liner *Asama Maru* close to Japan and detained twenty one Germans during January.¹²⁶ The potential for a dangerous naval confrontation was also found within Hong Kong itself as the harbour was closed

¹²³ Martin H. Brice, *The Royal Navy and the Sino-Japanese Incident, 1937-41* (London: Ian Allan, 1973), pp. 139-140, 145. See also Oliver Lindsay, *The Lasting Honour*, (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1978), p. 3.

¹²⁴ NARA, RG 38, Entry 98A, Box 705, F-6-c 23213 to F-6-e 22379; Report No. 128-40 by Lieutenant-Commander D.J. McCallum, 3 September 1940.

¹²⁵ NARA, RG 38, Entry 98A, Box 705, Intelligence Division, Confidential Reports of Naval Attachés, 1940-1946, F-6-c 23213 to F-6-e 22379; 'Southward Advance of the Japanese Navy', and NARA, RG 59, USSDCF, LM 183, Reel 25; Report No. 893.1562/8 by Consul General M. Myers, 21 May 1940. See also TNA, FO 371/27636 F 1254/144/10; Canton Political Report – December Quarter, 1940 by Consul General A.P. Blunt, 31 December 1940, and TNA, FO 371/27699 F 869/849/10; China Summary No. 11 by P.M. Broadmead, 14 February 1941. See also TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 26/39 by Giles, 19 December 1939, and TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 5/40 by Giles, 30 April 1940. See also UCC, Accession 83.046C, Box 4, File 66, BOMSC; Letter by Reverend Tom Broadfoot to Jessie Arnup, 19 October 1940, and UCC, Accession 83.046C, Box 4, File 66, BOMSC; Letter by Reverend Tom Broadfoot to Jessie Arnup, 30 November 1940.

¹²⁶ NAC, MG 26 J1, Reel C-4574, Volume 295, No. 249963; Dominions Office Telegram No. B-16, 23 January 1940. See also TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 1/40 by Giles, 2 January 1940, and TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 3/40 by Giles, 29 February 1940, and TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 5/40 by Giles, 30 April 1940. See also Brice, *The Royal Navy and the Sino-Japanese Incident*, p. 141, and Sir Llewellyn Woodward, *British Foreign Policy in the Second World War, Volume II* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1971), p. 89.

for approximately five hours that same month due to the presence of an unidentified submarine.¹²⁷ More menacing were the continuous attacks made against Hong Kong junks. In one instance during March 1940 a group of fifty junks positioned about two to five miles from Kit Shek were attacked by Japanese naval vessels at about 04:00 a.m. with most of the boats being destroyed. A favourite area for the Japanese to attack was in the vicinity of Lin Tin Island and San Mei and these attacks continued throughout the year.¹²⁸ Chinese lines of supply to and from Hong Kong also came under increasingly frequent aerial bombardment.¹²⁹ A carrier strike was made against Shayuchang in the Mirs Bay region on 13 April 1940 which resulted in the deaths of approximately 120 Chinese and was soon followed by additional strikes launched early in May. These were quickly extended farther north to Tamshui, Waichow and to other points along the East River.¹³⁰

Following the battles for Kwangsi and Kwangtung General Ando strove to stabilize his positions on the ground and the Japanese 21st Army returned to the task of supply interdiction and garrison duty in Canton. Further east a growing Chinese threat to Japanese and puppet forces at Swatow was confronted during March when the 136th Infantry Regiment of the 106th Division was transferred from the central Yangtze region to strengthen the city's defence.¹³¹ In the first week of May additional Japanese infantry and armour arrived at Canton as reinforcements for central Kwangtung thus allowing the Japanese 38th Division to re-establish the Canton defence zone by battling its way into Tsungfa on the

¹²⁷ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 2/40 by Giles, 31 January 1940.

¹²⁸ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 4/40 by Giles, 31 March 1940.

¹²⁹ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 5/40 by Giles, 30 April 1940.

¹³⁰ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 6/40 by Major R. Giles, 31 May 1940.

¹³¹ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 4/40 by Giles, 31 March 1940.

18th.¹³² Aside from this action south China remained relatively quiet between April and May and the 136th Regiment was soon withdrawn from Swatow to Japan.¹³³ The Japanese 18th, 38th, and 104th Divisions remained in occupation of the area surrounding Canton while the Imperial Guards Brigade along with the 5th and 28th Divisions kept control of Nanning and the road to Yamchow.¹³⁴

Since many Japanese ground units of the 21st Army were operating within the interior of Kwangtung and Kwangsi, weak Chinese puppet troops were utilized to plug the holes along the coast. By January 1940 approximately six thousand Chinese had been recruited into the Kwangtung puppet army under the ostensible overall command of Cantonese General Lay Chan Ming, but about seventy percent of the officers and NCOs were Japanese personnel. The remainder were Chinese junior officers supplied by an Officers Training School in Canton, a facility that provided candidates with two months of instruction.¹³⁵ Although the school was clean and the troops seemingly well disciplined, much of the training was rudimentary and the Chinese central government was able to infiltrate it with ease.¹³⁶

Japanese hopes for the Kwangtung puppet army were short lived. Military results were most unimpressive and their combat record did little in the short term to enhance Japanese prestige amongst the population. Initially, these forces were also of limited value in bolstering the new Wang Ching Wei government which

¹³² NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 11; Report No. 9901 by Colonel William Mayer, 10 June 1940. See also TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 6/40 by Giles, 31 May 1940. See also UCC, Accession 83.046C, Box 4, File 68, BOMSC; Letter by Dr. J. Oscar Thomson to Jessie Arnup, 9 May 1940.

¹³³ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9873 by Mattice, 1 May 1940.

¹³⁴ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 5/40 by Giles, 30 April 1940.

¹³⁵ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 2/40 by Giles, 31 January 1940. See also TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 5/40 by Giles, 30 April 1940.

¹³⁶ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 4/40 by Giles, 31 March 1940.

was officially established on 1 April 1940.¹³⁷ Leading up to this event Chinese puppet troops under the command of General Huang Ta Wei had advanced into south Fukien in December 1939 to clear the Amoy region of central government forces, but these were stopped by local Chinese militia who dispersed the entire puppet force completely.¹³⁸ Huang made another attempt on 12 February 1940 with about 3,800 puppet troops supported by Japanese warships including an aircraft carrier. His force landed near Amoy but after battling against the Chinese 75th Division, Huang quickly withdrew. A second landing was made on 17 February near the International Settlement on Kulangsu, but on the afternoon of the 20th, and after some indecisive fighting, half of the puppet force defected taking 1,500 rifles and many of their machineguns with them. Out of the total original force, about 800 casualties were sustained, including several Japanese advisers. In concluding this farce General Huang was arrested by Japanese officials and detained in Amoy. The value of the weapons lost was estimated to be about \$1,000,000 (CD) and the Chinese government paid each defecting soldier \$100 if they were armed or \$50 if they were not.¹³⁹ A similar effort in June to clear a region near Swatow met with equally dismal results. Early one morning a Chinese puppet battalion in a town near Swatow was attacked by central government forces and compelled to withdraw, but during their retreat towards the city they were mistaken for Chinese guerrillas by Japanese troops and machine-gunned. The puppet force lost 120 killed. Japanese patrols later re-

¹³⁷ UCC, Accession 83.046C, Box 4, File 65, BOMSC; Letter by Reverend Duncan McRae to Jessie Arnup, 17 April 1940.

¹³⁸ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 25/39 by Giles, 5 December 1939. See also TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 26/39 by Giles, 19 December 1939.

¹³⁹ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 4/40 by Giles, 31 March 1940.

occupied the town, where they meted out their reprisals by using local farmers for bayonet practice.¹⁴⁰

Despite the violence inflicted upon rural civilians by Japanese military forces they were able to recruit puppet soldiers in Canton due to the dismal state of the economy and the lack of political stability throughout the rest of the province. In Canton there still existed a sliver of order not seen elsewhere in the region. It was partly because of this that two British officers reported witnessing how there was some acceptance of the Japanese army amongst the population. Most of the Canton garrison was well disciplined and quartered in the eastern area of the city near the airfields away from civilians.¹⁴¹ Encouraging enlistment further were the twin problems of unemployment and inflation.¹⁴² About thirty percent of the pre-invasion population remained in the city to eke out an existence with difficulty as only a few businesses were open and inflation made the cost of living seven times what it was at start of war.¹⁴³ Office clerks made between \$200 to \$300 per month while a pair of shoes cost \$100, a suit went for about \$200, and a room was about \$100 to \$200. Rice was also very expensive.¹⁴⁴ Food riots developed on occasion as approximately 100 deaths per day began to mount due to starvation.¹⁴⁵ With the Pearl River repeatedly closed, and with most of Canton's industry in ruins, there were few options available to alleviate the

¹⁴⁰ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 8/40 by Major R. Giles, 31 July 1940.

¹⁴¹ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 5/40 by Giles, 30 April 1940.

¹⁴² TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 2/40 by Giles, 31 January 1940.

¹⁴³ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 5/40 by Giles, 30 April 1940. See also NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3; Report No. 10 by Lieutenant Colonel David Barrett, 3 November 1940.

¹⁴⁴ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3; Report No. 10 by Barrett, 3 November 1940.

¹⁴⁵ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 6/40 by Giles, 31 May 1940. See also UCC, Accession 83.046C, Box 4, File 68, BOMSC; Letter by Dr. J. Oscar Thomson to Jessie Arnup, 1 October 1940.

problems of Canton's poor.¹⁴⁶ Compounding their difficulties was the widespread distribution and consumption of opium brought into the province by the Japanese. Information regarding this problem was furnished by Dr. Thomson to both U.S. Ambassador Nelson T Johnson and Lieutenant Colonel William Mayer during their visit with him on 21 February 1940, thereby corroborating intelligence already held by U.S. officials.¹⁴⁷ Opium and gambling dens were easily found and the revenue generated was used by the Japanese for personal enrichment and to help pay for the costs of occupation.¹⁴⁸ Consequently, a few Chinese made the best of their situation by enlisting in the Kwangtung puppet army merely to survive.

Others sided with the Communists despite periodic atrocities committed by their troops such as occurred farther north in Hopei [Hebei] in June 1940 when 500 farmers were buried alive for failing to comply with demands.¹⁴⁹ At the time when Canton fell to the Japanese in November 1938, a Chinese Communist guerrilla unit was formed along the KCR between Sheklung and Shumchun under the command of a former seaman, Tsang Shang, and the strength of this force was initially established at two battalions.¹⁵⁰ Tsang was sent to command the East River forces by the New Fourth Army.¹⁵¹ Over time and with the involvement of

¹⁴⁶ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 10/40 by Major R. Giles, 30 September 1940. See also UCC, Accession 83.046C, Box 4, File 68, BOMSC; Letter by Dr. J. Oscar Thomson to Jessie Arnup, 27 May 1940.

¹⁴⁷ UCC, Accession 83.046C, Box 4, File 68, BOMSC; Letter by Dr. J. Oscar Thomson to Jessie Arnup, 21 February 1940.

¹⁴⁸ UCC, Accession 83.046C, Box 4, File 66, BOMSC; Letter by Broadfoot to Arnup, 12 February 1940, and UCC, Accession 83.046C, Box 4, File 68, BOMSC; Letter by Dr. J. Oscar Thomson to Jessie Arnup, 12 February 1940. See also UCC, Accession 83.046C, Box 4, File 68, BOMSC; Letter by Thomson to Arnup, 21 February 1940, and UCC, Accession 83.046C, Box 4, File 68, BOMSC; Letter by Dr. J. Oscar Thomson to Jessie Arnup, 4 March 1940.

¹⁴⁹ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 11; Report No. 9919 by Captain F.P. Munson, 30 July 1940. See also TNA, FO 371/27623 F 110/110/10; Telegram No. 121 by Consul Ronald Hall, 14 November 1940.

¹⁵⁰ NARA, RG 226, Entry 140, Box 54, OSS Field Station Files, Kunming; East River Column News Bulletin, Volume 3, Number 7, 24 March 1946.

¹⁵¹ NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 58; Report by Major K.K. Lau, 14 March 1944.

Major Francis Kendall this force grew in strength to become known as the East River Column, or alternatively, as the East River Brigade. Initially the unit was formed as part of the central government's guerrilla forces but soon broke from their control and declared their communist loyalties shortly after the unit's formation.¹⁵² Throughout 1939 the Kwangtung communist force continued to train and recruit additional members while avoiding entanglements with either the Japanese or the Chinese army. But on 9 March 1940 amidst the general chaotic social and military conditions following the Chinese and Japanese battles north of Canton, the Chinese army launched an attack against one of the communist battalions which had seized the opportunity to occupy Tamshui and Pingshan.¹⁵³ This was done in order to maintain Chinese army lines of communication to Hong Kong. Lacking adequate firepower the communists withdrew from Tamshui and retreated to the mountains of eastern Kwangtung until late in 1941.¹⁵⁴

After combat operations diminished across southern China, by April 1940 the Japanese once again concentrated their energies and resources on the blockade, but the commitment of scarce Japanese infantry to Kwangsi left General Ando and the 21st Army with gaps too numerous to fill. Supplies entered the country more easily from Hong Kong thereby enabling the colony to remain a principal strategic centre of the war. POL and other military stores also continued to move into China from Burma and French Indochina, despite the Japanese occupation of Kwangsi and the intensified air campaign against Chinese lines of communication in Yunnan. Because of the general shortage of troops a greater

¹⁵² University of Hong Kong Archive, B.A.A.G. Series, Volume IV, 'Advance Headquarters, Waichow, Field Operations Group'; Report 'The Hong Kong Guerillas: Background', by Major Ronnie Holmes, 12 July 1944.

¹⁵³ NARA, RG 226, Entry 140, Box 54; East River Column News Bulletin, Volume 3, Number 7, 24 March 1946. See also NARA, RG 226, Entry 140, Box 54; 'East River Dispatch, February 17th'.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

attempt was made to maintain the blockade using Chinese puppet infantry but results were poor as these units were generally unreliable in combat. Their lack of combat power, however, was somewhat offset by their potential political value. Over time their continued existence might lend a degree of credibility to the Wang Ching Wei administration and this increased the leverage the Japanese were able to apply against Chiang Kai Shek during future peace negotiations. Militarily, however, neither the occupation of Kwangsi nor the expansion of the puppet army was sufficient to deal with the Chinese logistical problem, and thus, the stalemate in China continued.

Conclusion

Amidst this impasse the prospect of peace was once again brought forward in Sino-Japanese relations but Chiang Kai Shek continued to bide his time as his strategy of involving third powers slowly progressed. Bitter experience on the battlefield had moulded part of the Chinese army into a more effective fighting force than it had ever been before, yet great improvements were still required in leadership, staff work, and amongst the technical branches before it would be able to defeat the Japanese. Unfortunately for the Chinese or the British, the necessary changes were not expected to be realized during the course of the war.

Furthermore, without a navy it was impossible for the Chinese to break the Japanese blockade. Although many foreign observers had been surprised at Chinese endurance it was widely understood that the Chinese were unable to achieve victory on their own. Reflecting on this situation Major Giles noted that Chinese strategy depended upon greater foreign intervention.

These elementary truths are perfectly clear to the Generalissimo, but he has never seriously considered driving the Japanese north of the

Great Wall with his own unaided military might. On the contrary he has always based his continued resistance on the supposition that sooner or later, Britain, the U.S.A. or Soviet Russia would intervene on China's behalf; not necessarily by force of arms, but with such drastic economic or political measures as would force Japan to withdraw.¹⁵⁵

Yet, the Japanese did little to improve diplomatic relations with Western powers.

During the winter of 1939 the Japanese concentrated their efforts on cutting the Chinese lines of communication in Kwangsi and Yunnan, but by the end of spring in 1940 the Japanese began to seek other ways of bringing the war to an end. Because of their failure in China, Japanese strategy evolved into a more ambitious program of conquest at the expense of the French. overshadowing Chinese events was the worsening situation in Europe, and after the fall of France the opportunity for the Japanese to occupy Indochina as a solution to their problem seemed too good to ignore. Peace negotiations were still supported throughout the year, but war against Britain and the United States had become a more widely acceptable option. The road to victory would be sought further south, but unfortunately for all, it was only a road to ruin.

¹⁵⁵ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 4/40 by Giles, 31 March 1940.

Chapter 7

Leveraging War and Peace: May 1940 to December 1940

The spring and summer of 1940 proved to be a transitional period of great significance with the fall of France ushering in far reaching changes. Powers on the defensive such as China and Britain were able to successfully leverage the possibility of peace to secure greater international support, since the French defeat had created a power vacuum in the Far East that was quickly exploited by Japan. The Japanese began to see an advance into the southwest Pacific as a solution to their problems in China and although Sino-Japanese peace negotiations were elevated to very high levels, war with the Western powers became accepted as necessary. From the Soviet Union, Stalin had been further emboldened to attack neighbouring states as he aligned himself closely with Hitler.¹ More isolated than at any other period of the war the British lacked the necessary resources to continue fighting and so the War Cabinet, armed with a new Prime Minister, was forced to consider the possibility of making peace with Germany. This course was rejected but with their grand strategy in tatters the British temporarily restricted their commitment in China in order to increase American and Soviet cooperation against the Japanese. Facing the threat of war in the Far East the Burma Road was closed but it was hoped that by making such a move others would take the lead in opposing the Japanese. This drastic measure was employed as Stalin had made it abundantly clear since August 1939 that collective security

¹ David Marples, *Motherland: Russia in the 20th Century* (London: Pearson Education, 2002), p. 143. See also R. Craig Nation, *Black Earth, Red Star: A History of Soviet Security Policy, 1917-1991* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), pp. 98, 105.

was dead and US diplomatic and military support for Britain was still lagging.²

Yet, it was at this time when Britain stood alone that the United States started to assume a leadership role against the dictatorships. From this point forward British power steadily declined and the first manifestation of this developed in Canada with the establishment of a US-Canadian security alliance. This shift was an important factor behind the decision to reinforce Hong Kong in 1941 with Canadian troops.

British strategic options remained limited but China was still an area where pressure could be exerted on the USSR and the USA since both saw the continuation of the Sino-Japanese War as being essential to their interests. With the French driven out of the war and northern Indochina soon occupied, only three avenues into China remained open to maintain Chinese resistance. The Soviets controlled the northwest route into Sinkiang but the British still held the keys to the all important doors at Rangoon and Hong Kong. British influence in China was therefore maintained through Hong Kong when all other southern routes including the Burma Road had been closed, and the strategic value of the colony as a military supply centre was greatly enhanced during this period as was its global diplomatic significance. Barring any fundamental diplomatic or military changes on the part of Great Britain or Japan the colony's seizure would remain a Japanese strategic objective even at the cost of war with Great Britain and the increased likelihood of war with the United States.

² John Charmley, *Churchill: the End of Glory* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1993), pp. 429-430. See also R. See also R.C. Raack, *Stalin's Drive to the West, 1938-1945: the Origins of the Cold War* (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1995), pp. 21-22.

The Sino-British Coalition in Retreat

The Fall of France on 25 June 1940 was a pivotal event affecting the course of the war both in Europe as well as Asia.³ Japanese hopes for victory were wrecked on the battlefield at Changsha in October 1939 and the establishment of the Wang Ching Wei government was delayed because their prestige had been thoroughly undermined. Part of the problem was that until mid 1940 Japanese strategy had been opportunistic and lacked a clear direction. It was hoped to bring the war in China to a close by cutting Chinese strategic lines of communication, but beyond that, the overall inconsistency in planning grand strategy was an impediment to their efforts and often produced political instability at home.⁴ Abrupt shifts in foreign policy usually followed the instalment of a new faction in power and reactions to changing geopolitical conditions were often made aggressively and in haste. Needless friction was thereby created in relations with other powers, more so after the fall of France.⁵ With an eye on Indochina hard line officers returned to power in Tokyo and they increased the pressure being applied against Britain for an end to their support of China, while simultaneously they continued to push the Chinese central government to make peace. Both London and Chungking were stretched to their limits of endurance but each continued to fight in the hope of securing greater international cooperation. Once accomplished, however, the cost was heavy and Britain had grown weaker as a result. Within the Empire Canada became less of a Dominion at this time and started to become an

³ National Archives and Records Administration, College Park (USA) [hereafter NARA], RG 165, M1513, The Military Intelligence Division Regional File Relating to China, 1922-1944, Reel 54; Telegram No. 41 by Ambassador Nelson T. Johnson, 24 January 1941.

⁴ Douglas Ford, *Britain's Secret War against Japan, 1937-1945* (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 21.

⁵ David Evans and Mark Peattie, *Kaigun: Strategy, Tactics, and Technology in the Imperial Japanese Navy, 1887-1941* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1997), pp. 452-453.

American protectorate. For their part, the Japanese began to look upon a southern strategic advance and a war with the West as the only path left to achieve victory. Thus, amidst the turbulence stemming from the French defeat, preparations were begun to move the war onto a much larger stage.

In Europe, the strategic situation for Great Britain was most discouraging but this did not bring an end to the war. With France in defeat the British army was forced to evacuate the continent at Dunkirk between late May and early June but only after losing all of their heavy weapons and vehicles. During the battle German armoured forces had been ordered to halt on 23 May 1940 and this helped make the British withdrawal possible.⁶ After the war, Sir Basil Liddell Hart was informed by various German commanders such as Field Marshal P.L.E. von Kleist that Hitler issued the order in the hope of securing peace with Britain once the French had surrendered.⁷ Hitler's ambitions did not include the conquest of Great Britain.⁸ John Lukacs commented on this in his examination of the struggle between Hitler and Churchill during mid-1940. ‘There is no question that Hitler wished for an alliance with Britain, or at least for the neutrality of the latter … It is wrong to believe that, as late as 1940, Hitler wanted “world domination.” He wanted to rule Europe’.⁹ German peace proposals were subsequently discussed in Cabinet throughout 1940 (and after) with Prime Minister Winston Churchill and Foreign Secretary Lord Halifax positioned on opposite sides of the issue until the latter was dispatched to Washington as ambassador.¹⁰ The crux of the problem

⁶ Sir B.H. Liddell Hart, *The German Generals Talk* (London: Quill, 1979), pp. 134-136.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Patrick Buchanan, *Churchill, Hitler, and the Unnecessary War: How Britain Lost its Empire and the West Lost the World* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2008), p. 325.

⁹ John Lukacs, *The Duel, 10 May-31 July 1940: the Eighty-Day Struggle Between Churchill and Hitler* (New York: Ticknor & Fields, 1991), p. 19.

¹⁰ National Archives of Canada, Ottawa (Canada) [hereafter NAC], RG 25, Reel T-1791, Volume 774, File 355; Telegram No 31. 5 November 1939 and NAC, RG 25, T-1795, Volume 784, File 394; Telegram by Prime Minister W.L. Mackenzie King to Prime Minister Winston Churchill, 8

was the insufficiency of British resources to fight a protracted war past the end of the year.¹¹ Industrial and economic weakness impeded the country's war effort.¹² With few interests in Europe and because of Britain's dependence on trade, what the country required above all else was peace.¹³ In contrast, Germany's autarchic structure ensured that the country could sustain itself in war for a longer period of time and render a British blockade useless.¹⁴ The best that could have been managed while still preserving Britain's global independent position was perhaps a limited war, but certainly not a protracted war of annihilation.¹⁵ Under such conditions British exhaustion and collapse were assured.¹⁶

Despite being hindered by material deficiencies the British had several strategic options. During the Battle of Britain the RAF demonstrated their ability to defend the country from any potential German invasion. But the defeat of Germany was beyond British capabilities. After the fall of France neutrality in Europe was a sensible foreign policy option that recognized the country's military limitations. In the Far East, withdrawal from Hong Kong was also a realistic course. Alternatively, given Britain's economic and industrial shortcomings a limited war against the Japanese was a great deal more feasible with China as an overt ally. Chiang's offer of 200,000 troops for the defence of Hong Kong was

August 1940. See also NARA, RG 38, Entry 98, Box 232, File Secret Naval Intelligence Reports, German War Aims, F-6-e No. 22839-F; Report No. 17,614 by Colonel B.R. Peyton, 9 October 1940. See also David Carlton, *Churchill and the Soviet Union* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 79; and John Charmley, *Churchill: the End of Glory*, p. 423.

¹¹ Brian Farrell, *The Basis and Making of British Grand Strategy: Was There a Plan? Book I* (Lewiston, New York: Edwin Mellen Press), p. 60.

¹² Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (New York: Random House, 1987), p. 319.

¹³ Bernard Porter, *Britain, Europe and the World 1850-1982: Delusions of Grandeur* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1983), pp. 85, 103.

¹⁴ Paul Kennedy, 'The Contradiction between British Strategic Planning and Economic Requirements in the Era of Two World Wars' (Washington: International Security Studies Program, Wilson Center, 1979), pp. 15-17.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* See also Correlli Barnett, *The Collapse of British Power* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1972), p. 564.

¹⁶ B.H. Liddell Hart, *History of the Second World War* (New York: Cassell & Company, 1971), p. 141. See also Porter, *Britain, Europe and the World*, p. 104.

still on the table as it had been since early 1939.¹⁷ To challenge the Japanese and keep China fighting, an alliance with the Chinese centred on the defence of Hong Kong, or along a Kunming-Changsha axis was possible but in the end, British Far Eastern forces were destroyed during the winter of 1941-42 in what can be described as a humiliating debacle.

It was largely because of Churchill that there was no change in policy and as war with Germany progressed, war with Japan drew close.¹⁸ With or without victory Britain's days as a global power were drastically cut short and the security of the Empire was imperilled. Authors such as Correlli Barnett, Bernard Porter and others have demonstrated this in great detail.¹⁹ It was Barnett in particular who noted that during the summer of 1940, 'England's existence as an independent power' was lost.²⁰ The only hope of victory rested upon an American entry to the war, but even with this eventuality British power would be diminished greatly.²¹

A clear manifestation of this was seen in Canada's geopolitical shift towards America. Many supporters of Prime Minister Mackenzie King's Liberal government distrusted British imperial motivations, and even before the outbreak of war they had already begun to look to America for guidance and leadership in steering Canada through world events. Some influential party members and allies

¹⁷ Galen Roger Perras, “‘Our Position in the Far East would be Stronger Without this Unsatisfactory Commitment’: Britain, and the Reinforcement of Hong Kong, 1941”, *Canadian Journal of History*, 30 1995: 231-259, p. 242.

¹⁸ Buchanan, *Churchill, Hitler, and the Unnecessary War*, pp. 359-360. See also Lukacs, *The Duel*, pp. 8, 138-140; and Lynne Olson, *Troublesome Young Men, the Rebels who Brought Churchill to Power and Helped Save England* (New York: Farrar Straus and Giroux, 2007), p. 316.

¹⁹ Barnett, *The Collapse of British Power*, p. 576. See also Porter, *Britain, Europe and the World*, p. 102.

²⁰ Barnett, *The Collapse of British Power*, p. 588.

²¹ NAC, RG 25, Reel T-1791, Volume 774, File 353; Memorandum by Oscar Skelton to Prime Minister Mackenzie King, 30 April 1940. See also Charmley, *Churchill: the End of Glory*, p. 411, 430; and Porter, *Britain, Europe and the World*, p. 102.

were associated with the Canadian Institute of International Affairs (CIIA), an organization headed by Escott Reid until 1938. Reid later served as a Canadian representative to the United Nations conference held in San Francisco in 1945.²² The CIIA was a private body that formulated policy recommendations for government consideration with one of its goals being the strengthening of US-Canada relations. It also supported propaganda projects within the United States aimed at bringing that country into the war.²³ The CIIA collaborated closely with the Department of External Affairs and its members included senior officials such as Hugh Keenleyside. In stark tones Keenleyside described Canada's situation in a July 1940 policy document by noting, 'Co-operation with Washington is going to be either voluntary on Canada's part, or else compulsory; in any event it is inevitable'.²⁴ Fighting for the British Empire was not agreeable to many of the people within this circle but waging war as a junior partner in a coalition dominated by the United States was more palatable.²⁵

Much of the impetus for strengthening US-Canadian relations came from those working together within the CIIA and from other forums.²⁶ Adherents of collective security eagerly rallied under American leadership in order to establish what Jonathan Utley only partially identified as the primary aim of the war: a

²² Greg Donaghy and Stephane Roussel, *Escott Reid, Diplomat and Scholar* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004), p. 5.

²³ NAC, MG 31, E 46, Escott Reid Papers, Volume 27, File 7, CIIA 1939-1941; Letter by John Baldwin to Escott Reid, 14 September 1939 and NAC, MG 31, E 46, Escott Reid Papers, Volume 27, File 7, CIIA 1939-1941; CIIA Policy Memorandum, 18 July 1940.

²⁴ NAC, MG 31, E 46, Escott Reid Papers, Volume 27, File 7, CIIA 1939-1941; CIIA Policy Memorandum, 18 July 1940.

²⁵ NAC, MG 31, E 46, Escott Reid Papers, Volume 13, File U.S. and Canada 12 January 1942-16 April 1943; CIIA Policy Memorandum, 12 January 1942. See also NARA, RG 165, Entry 77, Box 363, MID Regional File; Washington Post Article, 'Canada is Pleased,' 8 September 1940. See also A.R.M. Lower, *Canada and the Far East-1940* (New York: Institute of Pacific Relations, 1940), pp. 109, 117-119.

²⁶ NAC, MG 31, E 46, Escott Reid Papers, Volume 27, File 7, Note by Keenleyside, 29 October 1954. See also NARA, RG 165, Entry 77, Box 380; Canadian-American Defence Planning Report by W. Maddox, 15 November 1941.

global liberal economic order based on trade.²⁷ Unfortunately, it was to be supported by non-democratic, supranational, political and economic authority. On 24 June 1939 the Third Conference on Canadian-American Affairs was held at Canton, New York under the auspices of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and was directed by Dr. James T. Shotwell (the second conference had been held at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario on 30 June 1937). Representing America amongst approximately one hundred fifty influential individuals were Professor Owen Lattimore, former Under Secretary of the Treasury Roswell Magill, and future Secretary of State John Foster Dulles. Colonel Charles P. Stacey took some time away from Princeton to represent Canada as did Brigadier General Crerar, then commandant of the Royal Military College at Kingston. They were joined by the widely read journalist Grant Dexter and Professor A.R.M. Lower from Winnipeg.²⁸ On this occasion Dulles delivered a well received paper entitled, 'A North American Contribution to World Order' and Stacey presented a Canadian perspective relating to 'Defence and External Obligations'.²⁹ Amply financed forums such as this helped influential people on both sides of the border share ideas and discuss methods for changing the global distribution of power. Consequently, by 1940 Mackenzie King's government and the Department of External Affairs contained many individuals, including himself, primed to seek an adjustment of Canada's international position towards America.

²⁷ Jonathan Utley, *Going to War with Japan, 1937-1941* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1985), pp. 68, 85.

²⁸ NARA, RG 165, Entry 77, Box 363, MID Regional File; Telegram No. 97 by Daniel Roper to Secretary of State Cordell Hull, 24 June 1939. See also Paul D. Dickson, *A Thoroughly Canadian General, A Biography of General H.D.G. Crerar* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), pp. 91-93, 115.

²⁹ NARA, RG 165, Entry 77, Box 363, MID Regional File; Telegram No. 97 by Daniel Roper to Secretary of State Cordell Hull, 24 June 1939.

After the fall of France, Canada's shift towards the United States accelerated. Washington's Minister to Ottawa, Jay Pierrepont Moffat, informed the State Department about Canadian opinion on 23 June 1940. 'Canada is at a crossroad. She is about to intensify to the full her war effort and knows that it must be redirected. She is all prepared to direct it along American lines if we give her any encouragement'.³⁰ Fear of a British collapse under the weight of German invasion was a prime topic of discussion amidst the personal telephone diplomacy conducted between President Franklin Roosevelt and Prime Minister Mackenzie King, as was the threat posed by Japan.³¹ Early in July Under Secretary of State for External Affairs Oscar D. Skelton informed Mackenzie King that if Japan entered the war Canada would be unable to defend itself without the help of United States forces.³² Because of the crisis, agreement was soon reached between the two leaders in upstate New York to form a military alliance in defence of North America. The Ogdensburg Agreement was signed on 17 August 1940 causing the formation of the Permanent Joint Board of Defence (PJBD).³³

What was truly significant about this event was that the United States had entered

³⁰ J. Pierrepont Moffat Telegram, in *Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers* [hereafter *FRUS*], 1940 Volume 3 *British Commonwealth, Soviet Union, Near East and Africa*, ed. Historical Office, Bureau of Public Affairs, Department of State (Washington: United States Department of State, 1958), pp. 13-14.

³¹ Brian Nolan, *King's War: Mackenzie King and the Politics of War, 1939 – 1945* (Toronto: Random House, 1988), pp. 51-53.

³² Galen R. Perras, *Franklin Roosevelt and the Origins of the Canadian-American Security Alliance, 1933-1945: Necessary, but Not Necessary Enough* (Westport; Praeger, 1998), p. 74.

³³ John English and Norman Hilmer, 'Canada's American Alliance', in *Partners Nevertheless, Canadian-American Relations in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Norman Hilmer (Mississauga: Copp Clark Pitman, 1989), pp. 34, 42; and Jack Granatstein, 'Mackenzie King and Canada at Ogdensburg, August 1940', in *Fifty Years of Canada-United States Defense Cooperation*, eds. Joseph Jockel and Joel Sokolsky (Queenston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1992), pp. 12-13. See also Arthur Menzies, 'Canadian Views of United States Policy Towards Japan, 1945-1952', in *War and Diplomacy Across the Pacific, 1919-1952*, eds. Barry Hunt and A. Hamish Ion (Waterloo, Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1988), p. 158; and Gordon Stewart, *The American Response to Canada Since 1776* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1992), pp. 153-155.

into a military alliance with a country already at war.³⁴ This was an important consideration when Hong Kong was reinforced with Canadian infantry in the fall of 1941. Some Canadian officers such as Brigadier General Maurice Pope, the future vice-chief of the General Staff and senior Canadian member of the PJBD, found no military necessity for the new arrangement.³⁵ Nor did the new Chief of the General Staff, General Crerar think a German invasion to be likely.³⁶ Nevertheless, the agreement went forward.

Roosevelt was eager to sign the agreement as this would increase American involvement in the war. Another objective was to be able to control the British fleet in the event of surrender.³⁷ Within weeks conscription legislation was passed in the US while the destroyer for bases deal soon followed.³⁸ Roosevelt was assured that if Britain fell under German occupation the Royal Navy would continue the war from Singapore.³⁹ Having embraced collective security, Mackenzie King also wished for US intervention and he needed to reassert control within his own foreign service by quelling lingering doubts that the war was not being fought for the sake of Empire.⁴⁰ In 1939 there was still considerable popular

³⁴ Jack Granatstein, *How Britain's Weakness Forced Canada into the Arms of the United States* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), p. 29.

³⁵ Galen Perras, *Franklin Roosevelt and the Origins of the Canadian-American Security Alliance, 1933-1945*, pp. 78, 82. See also Maurice Pope, *Soldiers and Politicians: The Memoirs of Lt.-Gen. Maurice A. Pope* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962), p. 150.

³⁶ Granatstein, 'Mackenzie King and Canada at Ogdensburg, August 1940', p. 16.

³⁷ NARA, RG 165, Entry 77, Box 363, MID Regional File; Council on Foreign Relations Report No. T-B 15 by Philip E. Moseley, 18 July 1940. See also Perras, *Franklin Roosevelt and the Origins of the Canadian-American Security Alliance*, pp. 85-86; and Colonel Charles P. Stacey, *Arms, Men and Government, 1939-1945* (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 1970), pp. 328-329.

³⁸ Thomas Fleming, *The New Dealers' War; Franklin D. Roosevelt and the War Within World War II* (New York: Perseus Books Group, 2001), p. 77. See also Henry G. Gole, *The Road to Rainbow; Army Planning for Global War, 1934-1940* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2003), p. 14. See also Galen Perras, *Franklin Roosevelt and the Origins of the Canadian-American Security Alliance*, p. 75.

³⁹ Stanley Hornbeck, Memorandum No. 793.94/16012, in *FRUS, 1940 Volume 4, The Far East*, ed. Historical Office, Bureau of Public Affairs, Department of State (Washington: United States Department of State, 1955), p. 361.

⁴⁰ NAC, www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/databases/king/001059-100.01-e.php; Diaries of William Lyon Mackenzie King, 3 July 1940, 18 August 1940, 6 February 1941, and 28 August 1941.

resistance to a declaration of war, since nationalist spirit was strong in many parts of the country and it was assumed colonial attitudes dominated the decision.⁴¹

Widely held opposition on this subject in Quebec was particularly worrisome but the Ogdensburg Agreement helped nullify much of this.⁴² Canada's shift initially angered Churchill and other British officials but the possibility of American intervention had substantially increased and their discomfort over the issue soon dissipated with this realization.

Mackenzie King sought to assuage the British by having Canada serve as a vital linchpin or bridge bringing the US and Britain together as the basis for a 'new world order', an arrangement he enunciated during his Mansion House speech in London on 4 September 1941.⁴³ Being a Harvard alumnus and former lecturer associated with such prominent and intimate friends as his previous employer John D. Rockefeller III, and to a lesser degree his brother David, his worldview was based upon a corporate liberal ideology which was trans-national in scale.⁴⁴ His affinity for FDR and his policies was therefore no great surprise.

⁴¹ NAC, MG 26 J4, Reel C-4288, Volume 228, No. C155079; Memorandum by Oscar Skelton to Prime Minister Mackenzie King, 23 August 1939. See also F.R. Scott, 'A Policy of Neutrality for Canada', *Foreign Affairs*, 17(2) January 1939: 402-416, pp. 404, 406, 408.

⁴² NARA, RG 165, Entry 77, Box 360, MID Regional File; Memorandum No. 97 by Consul Richard Ford, 5 October 1940. See also Colonel Charles Stacey, *Arms, Men and Government*, p. 37.

⁴³ NAC, www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/databases/king/001059-100.01-e.php; Diaries of William Lyon Mackenzie King, 21 August 1941. See also 'Canada "With us to the End"', *The Times*, 5 September 1941, and *The Times*, 17 February 1942. See also R.D. Cuff and Jack Granatstein, *Ties that Bind, Canadian-American Relations in Wartime from the Great War to the Cold War* (Toronto: Samuel Stevens Hakkert, 1977), p. 94; and Stacey, *Arms, Men and Government*, pp. 149, 329.

⁴⁴ NAC, MG 26 J1, Reel C-3693, Volume 225, No. 193983; Letter by W.L. Mackenzie King to J.D. Rockefeller Jr., 13 August 1936; and NAC, MG 26 J1, Reel C-3742, Volume 265, No. 225178; Letter by W.L. Mackenzie King to Loring Christie, 13 January 1940. See also NAC, MG 26 J1, Reel C-3748, Volume 277, No. 234225; Letter by J.D. Rockefeller Jr. to W.L. Mackenzie King, 19 October 1939; and NAC, MG 26 J1, Reel C-6805, Volume 308, No. 273232; Letter by David Carnegie to W.L. Mackenzie King, 24 November 1942. See also NAC, MG 26 J1, Reel C-7046, Volume 353, No. 306670; Letter by Major General George Vanier to W.L. Mackenzie King, 13 December 1943; and NAC, MG 26 J1, Reel C-9176, Volume 413, No. 373199; Letter by W.L. Mackenzie King to J.D. Rockefeller Jr., 4 January 1946; and NAC, www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/databases/king/001059-100.01-e.php; Diaries of William Lyon Mackenzie King, 1 December 1941. See also Nolan, *King's War*, pp. 6-7.

In October 1936 he explained to Rockefeller how after returning recently from Europe he was not very concerned about war in the immediate future, but that the world still needed another international political body besides the League of Nations to manage global affairs.⁴⁵ That is partly why in the summer of 1940 Mackenzie King did not consider the shift in power created by the establishment of the PJBD to be an abandonment of Great Britain. Indeed, from the summer of 1940 until America's entry into the war Canada did function as the linchpin that was hoped for by Mackenzie King in forging a trans-Atlantic alliance. Yet by then, Canada had also been strategically positioned under an American umbrella and the limited influence the country temporarily exerted quickly receded with the growth of American hegemony. In this case, ideology did not trump power. Canada's flight into the American orbit was just the first of several British allies to follow. Next in line was Australia in 1942. Further comment on Canadian political considerations can be found in appendix one.

Despite having limited interests or resources in Asia the Canadian government also soon became involved in Chinese affairs because of its contacts within organizations such as the CIIA and the PJBD. One such example is seen with Keenleyside, the Canadian Secretary of the PJBD. He was on friendly terms with Major General Clayton Bissell who was likewise on the board at that time and was later responsible for the Doolittle Raid as commander of the 10th Air Force.⁴⁶ They corresponded during the war on a first name basis.⁴⁷ Lacking a national intelligence agency, Ottawa not only gathered information in part through

⁴⁵ NAC, MG 26 J1, Reel C-3693, Volume 225, No. 193986; Letter by W.L. Mackenzie King to J.D. Rockefeller Jr., 6 October 1936.

⁴⁶ Major General Claire Lee Chennault, *Way of a Fighter: The Memoirs of Claire Lee Chennault, Major General, U.S. Army (Ret.)* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1949), pp. 168.

⁴⁷ NAC, RG 25, Volume 3116, File 4526-40C; Letter by Hugh Keenleyside to Major General Clayton Bissell, 16 January 1943.

regular communication with American officials and academics, but also with people on the ground in China such as the United Church of Canada (UCC) missionaries based in Toronto.⁴⁸ Future presidential envoy to China Owen Lattimore visited the UCC Foreign Mission Council in March 1939 to discuss Far Eastern affairs with Reverend Jesse Arnup, as he and others within the church had considerable experience in China.⁴⁹ Arnup also on at least one occasion corresponded with Soong Mayling (Madame Chiang Kai Shek).⁵⁰ Both Arnup and Lattimore were on friendly terms with Keenleyside and Lattimore helped to advise him in the spring of 1942 over the selection of Canada's first ambassador to China.⁵¹ Prior to this, Canadian involvement in China grew to include the provision of military hardware and the reinforcement of Hong Kong. By fulfilling external alliance obligations in China, Canada helped maintain the anti-Axis coalition at a time of great anxiety, and served as the bridge envisioned by Mackenzie King in helping to align British and American Far Eastern policy. Amidst larger events, however, few paid much attention to Canadian affairs as there were more than enough issues of greater importance to contend with around the globe. This was especially so in Japan.

As in Britain with Churchill's rise to power, a cabinet crisis also emerged in Tokyo earlier in 1940 largely because of the failure to achieve victory in China. In January a stop-gap Cabinet headed by Yonai Mitsumasa assumed control of the government much as the Abe Noboyuki Cabinet had done the previous August in

⁴⁸ NAC, RG 25, Volume 1866, File 226-B Part II; Letter by Reverend Jesse Arnup to Norman Robertson, 3 February 1941.

⁴⁹ United Church of Canada Archives, Toronto (Canada) [hereafter UCC], Accession 83.046C, Box 3, File 61, U.C.C. Board of Overseas Missions, South China [hereafter BOMSC]; Reverend A.E. Armstrong to Reverend Tom Broadfoot, 28 March 1939.

⁵⁰ NAC, RG 25, Volume 1866, File 226-B Part II; Letter by Soong Mayling to Reverend Jesse Arnup, 4 March 1940.

⁵¹ NAC, RG 25, Volume 2883, File 2172-40 Pt 1; External Affairs Memorandum, 19 June 1942.

the wake of the Nazi-Soviet Pact.⁵² Soon thereafter in February 1940 the overall commander of Japanese forces in China, General Nishio Toshizo, was replaced by War Minister General Hata Shunroku, partly because of the large number of casualties sustained during the Chinese winter offensive but also to signal Japan's willingness for a rapprochement with the USSR.⁵³

The Japanese army was under greater domestic criticism than at any time before and the reasons for this situation were reported to the War Office from Hong Kong.

The North China Garrison which seized upon the Lukouchiao incident of July 1937, to put in practice their long-cherished designs on North China, never dreamt that they would involve their country in a major war, the issue of which is still uncertain after two and a half years. The result of this miscalculation is now becoming painfully apparent. Although early predictions of a collapse of the Japanese economic structure have been falsified, the burden of the war is becoming increasingly difficult to carry ...⁵⁴

Few were eager to assume the leadership of the government. In Hong Kong, Royal Marine Major R. Giles noted how the army that 'landed Japan in her present predicament and should logically be responsible for getting the country out of the mess, is equally loath to come forward and attempt to solve the muddle of its own creating'.⁵⁵ US Army Major David Barrett also commented on how the Japanese were digging deeper problems for themselves the longer the war continued. He wrote, 'It is the Japanese Army which has caused the birth of a new and at least partially united China, and it is the Japanese Army which, if it

⁵² The National Archives, Kew (UK) [hereafter TNA], WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 3/40 by Major R. Giles, 29 February 1940. See also Hosoya Chihiro, 'The Japanese-Soviet Neutrality Pact' in *The Fateful Choice, Japan's Road to the Pacific War: Japan's Advance into Southeast Asia, 1939-1941*, ed. James W. Morley, trans. Robert Scalapino (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), p. 18.

⁵³ NARA, RG 165, U.S. Military Intelligence Reports: China, 1911-1941 (Frederick: University Publications of America, Inc., 1983) [hereafter USMIR], Reel 3; Report No. 9844 by Colonel William Mayer, 11 January 1940. See also Roy Stanley, *Prelude to Pearl Harbor* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1982), p. 125.

⁵⁴ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 4/40 by Major R. Giles, 31 March 1940.

⁵⁵ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 3/40 by Giles, 29 February 1940.

continues on its present course, will probably eventually bring about the downfall of Japan.⁵⁶ Not only did peace remain elusive but Japanese repressive methods and drug peddling had also reduced the population to such a state of poverty and malnutrition that even occupied China was quite unable to act as the profitable market for Japanese exports visualised in the original schemes of exploitation.⁵⁷

Underpinning Japan's political troubles were the great divisions on military grand strategy that persisted amongst the country's civil-military leadership.⁵⁸ This problem contributed to the prolongation of the war and encouraged reckless behaviour amongst field commanders.⁵⁹ Relations with third powers were frequently made worse as a result. In general, three groups spanning the military services as well as the government advocated three different strategies. The first, which included General Hata, General Nishio, and Hata's Chief of Staff, General Itagaki Seishiro, desired a southward attack as soon as the European war presented an opportunity.⁶⁰ The second comprised some of the older army commanders such as General Count Terauchi Hisaichi, and General Yanagawa Heisuke of Nanking infamy, as well as many prominent Japanese business leaders who wanted to finish the war in China at all costs and fix the economy. General Ushiroku Jun, commander of the South China Area Army at

⁵⁶ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3; Report No. 2 by Major David Barrett, 2 February 1940.

⁵⁷ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 4/40 by Giles, 31 March 1940.

⁵⁸ NARA, RG 38, M975, Selected Naval Attaché Reports Relating to the World Crisis, 1937-1943, Reel 2, File Probability of an Outbreak of War Documents N, Naval Attaché Tokyo, Volume 2; Report No. 29, 16 February 1940. See also NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3; Report No. 9830 by Colonel William Mayer, 29 November 1939. See also TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 26/39 by Major R. Giles, 19 December 1939 and TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 6/40 by Major R. Giles, 31 May 1940. See also Evans and Peattie, *Kaigun*, pp. 460, 463-464; and Tsunoda Jun, 'The Navy's Role in the Southern Strategy', in *The Fateful Choice, Japan's Road to the Pacific War: Japan's Advance into Southeast Asia, 1939-1941*, ed. James W. Morley, trans. Robert Scalapino (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), p. 264.

⁵⁹ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3; Report No. 2 by Barrett, 2 February 1940.

⁶⁰ Ambassador Nelson T. Johnson, Telegram No. 13, in *FRUS, 1940 Volume 4, The Far East*, pp. 258-259.

Canton in late 1940, was part of the third group which sought to attack into Siberia when the opportunity presented itself.⁶¹

Amongst these groups recognition of the need to end the war in China varied in degree, but overall Japanese hopes were nonetheless placed upon the Kiri Project to establish peace with the Chinese. As was so often the case Japanese efforts again proved counterproductive. Peace overtures were given their strongest support throughout 1940 in these high level discussions conducted directly with the Kuomintang in Hong Kong and Macau.⁶² The Japanese offered to withdraw to areas north of the Great Wall in a bid to end the war but Chiang Kai Shek remained cool to their proposals.⁶³ Provided that Chiang continued to receive support from abroad, time was potentially on his side and it was felt that a guerrilla warfare strategy could keep the Japanese bogged down in north and central China.⁶⁴ The Japanese threatened recognition of the Wang Ching Wei regime as a warning for Chiang Kai Shek to negotiate, but it was felt by some influential Westerners such as future US Ambassador John L. Stuart that Chiang Kai Shek was resolved to continue fighting, and in February 1940 it was thought he would only conclude peace if it were negotiated by US President Franklin

⁶¹ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 2/40 by Major R. Giles, 31 January 1940. See also TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 13/40 by Major R. Giles, 31 December 1940 and TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 7/41 by Major R. Giles, 31 August 1941. See also Hosoya, 'The Japanese-Soviet Neutrality Pact', p. 32.

⁶² John H. Boyle, *China and Japan at War, 1937-1945: the Politics of Collaboration* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1972), pp. 289-290. See also Chan Lau Kit Ching, *China, Britain and Hong Kong, 1895-1945* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1990), pp. 265-266; and Usui Katsumi, 'The Politics of War', in *Japan's Road to the Pacific War, the China Quagmire: Japan's Expansion on the Asian Continent, 1933-1941*, eds. David Lu and James W. Morley (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), p. 409.

⁶³ Consul Richard Butrick, Telegram No. 793.94119/643, in *FRUS, 1940 Volume 4, The Far East*, pp. 360-361.

⁶⁴ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Correspondence of the Military Intelligence Division Relating to General, Political, Economic; and Military Conditions in China; 1918-1941, Reel 11; Report No. 9829 by Captain F.P. Munson, 29 November 1939. See also Catherine Baxter, 'Britain and the War in China, 1937-1945' (University of Wales, unpublished PhD Dissertation, 1993), pp. 98-99; and Peter Lowe, *Great Britain and the Origins of the Pacific War: A Study of British Policy in East Asia, 1937-1941* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977) p. 209.

Roosevelt.⁶⁵ Although not yet officially recognized, the establishment of the Wang government was in itself a confession of failure in beating Chiang into submission and it only served to harden opposition against Japanese designs. From its inception it was generally felt that the new national puppet government would end in failure, and that the war would continue until either the USSR or the USA intervened militarily as neither the Japanese nor the Chinese were strong enough to win on their own.⁶⁶ Concern did exist amongst some Western officials, however, that without greater foreign intervention, economically or militarily, the prospects were likely that the war would remain a protracted stalemate for some time until ending in an undeclared peace. Documents illustrating this issue can be found in appendix two.⁶⁷ Had the Japanese adapted themselves to promote greater trade, occupied China might have been more easily pacified making some semblance of victory possible.⁶⁸

The new national puppet government was inaugurated on 30 March 1940 in Nanking.⁶⁹ Although formal diplomatic recognition from Tokyo was withheld while the Kiri Project continued its work, the move was provocative diplomatically and it increased the strain on Far Eastern international relations.⁷⁰ The presence of the Japanese Combined Fleet under Admiral Yamamoto Isoroku at Amoy for four days from 30 March to 2 April was a limited but contributing factor to this. The Japanese fleet included seven battleships, four carriers (the *Akagi*, *Soryu*, *Hiryu* and *Ryujo*), five cruisers, and approximately eight destroyer flotillas (twenty seven destroyers) plus submarines and numerous ancillary

⁶⁵ Boyle, *China and Japan at War*, pp. 293, 297. See also Usui, 'The Politics of War', p. 414.

⁶⁶ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 4/40 by Giles, 31 March 1940.

⁶⁷ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3; Report No. 16 by Lieutenant Colonel David Barrett, 1 May 1941.

⁶⁸ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 5/40 by Major R. Giles, 30 April 1940.

⁶⁹ Usui, 'The Politics of War', p. 402.

⁷⁰ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3; Report No. 9866 by Captain F.P. Munson, 4 April 1940.

vessels.⁷¹ The presence of such an intimidating naval force was meant to demonstrate Japanese support for the new government. Two weeks later Admiral Takasu and the Emperor's Naval Aide-de-Camp met with Wang Ching Wei during their visit to Canton.⁷² Since the Chinese central government lacked any substantial naval forces of their own the deployment signalled a challenge to foreign powers, particularly the United States to stay out of Chinese affairs. A \$20 million American loan to China had been approved on 7 March 1940 and this display of force was a powerful response.⁷³ The Americans correspondingly returned the gesture by holding a Pacific Fleet exercise near Hawaii during May, and upon its conclusion they retained the fleet at Pearl Harbor as a permanent redeployment from its former base in California.⁷⁴ Along with other factors this gunboat diplomacy encouraged the Japanese navy to begin planning for a pre-emptive strike on the US Fleet the following year.⁷⁵

As added leverage in forcing the Chinese central government to come to terms the Japanese began the most serious air assault on Chungking of the war. Operation 101 was a high altitude terror bombing campaign instigated by General Itagaki and his aim was to weaken Chinese morale by deepening the country's sense of isolation.⁷⁶ Chungking was bombarded with great frequency from May to November 1940 in the hope of breaking popular support for the war and one

⁷¹ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 5/40 by Giles, 30 April 1940.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ Utley, *Going to War with Japan*, p. 80.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 84-85.

⁷⁵ Evans and Peattie, *Kaigun*, p. 475.

⁷⁶ NARA, RG 59, Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files: China, Internal Affairs, 1940-1944 (Frederick: University Publications of America, Inc., 1984) [hereafter USSDCF], Reel 8; Report No. 45, 893.00 N.I. Reports/247 by Captain F.J. McQuillen, 10 June 1940; and NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 11; Report No. 9901 by Colonel William Mayer, 11 June 1940. See also TNA, FO 371/27624 F 981/125/10; Memorandum No. 96 by Wing Commander J. Warburton to Air Ministry, 1 September 1940. See also Ambassador Nelson T. Johnson, Telegram No.

793.94/15881 and 793.94/15938, in *FRUS, 1940 Volume 4, The Far East*, pp. 872, 877-878. See also Mark R. Peattie, *Sunburst: The Rise of Japanese Naval Air Power, 1909-1941* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2001), pp. 118-121.

mission alone accounted for over 10,000 deaths.⁷⁷ Conducted primarily by Japanese naval wings Number 13 and Number 15, initial missions of approximately twenty-seven aircraft grew in size to include over one hundred, but tactics varied so that multiple smaller missions were also sent on some days.⁷⁸ Incendiaries were used beginning with the one-hundred-ninety plane raid on the night of 19-20 August 1940. Overall, in purely arithmetic terms the Japanese exchanged one ton of bombs for every Chinese killed.⁷⁹ In addition to bombs, leaflets were dropped comparing death in Chungking to peace in occupied China.⁸⁰ Great effort was expended by the Japanese including the employment of women as part of their air crews. At the end of June a dead female radio operator was found amongst the wreckage of one bomber brought down by antiaircraft fire near Chungking.⁸¹ Weak Chinese air units defended the capital until September and were able to shoot down about one or two aircraft per mission but after the arrival of the new Japanese Zero, Chinese fighters were driven from the sky and

⁷⁷ NARA, RG 38, Entry 98A, Box 705, F-6-c 23213 to F-6-e 22379; Report No. 128 by Lieutenant Commander H.H. Smith-Hutton, 3 September 1940. See also NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 11; Report No. 9901 by Mayer, 11 June 1940; and NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 11; Report No. 9919 by Captain F.P. Munson, 30 July 1940. See also NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 11; Report No. 9924 by Captain F.P. Munson, 21 August 1940; and NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 11; Report No. 9936 by Captain F.P. Munson, 30 September 1940; and NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 11; Report No. 9943 by Captain F.P. Munson, 31 October 1940. See also TNA, FO 371/27624 F 685/125/10; Memorandum No. 105 by Major K.E.F. Millar to Air Ministry, 1 October 1940. See also, TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 8/40 by Major R. Giles, 31 July 1940; and TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 9/40 by Major R. Giles, 31 August 1940; and TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 10/40 by Major R. Giles, 30 September 1940. See also Chang Jung and Jon Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story* (London: Vintage Books, 2006), p. 273.

⁷⁸ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 5/40 by Giles, 30 April 1940. See also TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 6/40 by Giles, 31 May 1940; and TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 4/41 by Major R. Giles, 1 May 1941. See also Ambassador Nelson T. Johnson, Telegram No. 793.94/15953, in *FRUS, 1940 Volume 4, The Far East*, p. 881.

⁷⁹ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3; Report No. 8 by Major David Barrett, 21 August 1940; and NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3; Report No. 15 by Lieutenant Colonel David Barrett, 31 March 1941. See also TNA, FO 371/27624 F 981/125/10; Memorandum No. 96 by Wing Commander J. Warburton to Air Ministry, 1 September 1940. See also TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 9/40 by Giles, 31 August 1940; and TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 10/40 by Giles, 30 September 1940.

⁸⁰ Ambassador Nelson T. Johnson, Telegram No. 793.94/15938, in *FRUS, 1940 Volume 4, The Far East*, pp. 878.

⁸¹ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 7/40 by Major R. Giles, 30 June 1940.

with the exception of a few anti-aircraft guns the city was left virtually unprotected.⁸²

The bombing of Chungking did produce a negative impact on Chinese morale but this came at the expense of damaging relations with other powers. Hankow served as the initial base of operations until the Japanese occupation of Ichang in mid-June, as over 200 heavy bombers were based there. Being 500 miles distant from Chungking, Hankow's utility lay in its geographic position but it was also situated 650 miles from Hong Kong and this threat was noted by British officers. The potential for future damage to Hong Kong was painfully obvious to see in Chungking.⁸³ Aside from future conflict, however, there were more than enough immediate problems to tackle without looking ahead. The wounding of British nationals and attacks on British owned property were added to the growing list of grievances compiled by the ambassador and numerous protests were delivered in Tokyo. Damage to foreign embassies was also a recurring problem as the Soviet Embassy was bombarded on 11 June 1940 while the British and French were similarly hit on 24 June.⁸⁴ German diplomats received the same treatment on 13 September.⁸⁵ Yet, the Japanese were not greatly worried about the diplomatic fallout from these attacks as the bombing achieved some desired results. By October public sentiment had grown in Chungking for Chiang Kai Shek to come to terms with Japan.⁸⁶ Public morale became such a concern that Chiang told Colonel Chennault that he might be

⁸² NARA, RG 38, Entry 98A, Box 705, F-6-c 23213 to F-6-e 22379; Report No. 194 by Lieutenant Commander H.H. Smith-Hutton, 20 November 1940. See also TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 8/40 by Giles, 31 July 1940; and TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 10/40 by Giles, 30 September 1940. See also Chennault, *Way of a Fighter*, pp. 89, and Peattie, *Sunburst*, p. 120.

⁸³ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 6/40 by Giles, 31 May 1940.

⁸⁴ TNA, FO 371/27675 F 2616/317/10; Memorandum by A.L. Scott, 8 March 1941. See also TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 7/40 by Giles, 30 June 1940.

⁸⁵ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 10/40 by Giles, 30 September 1940.

⁸⁶ Chang and Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story*, p. 273.

compelled to accept Japanese peace terms because he had no way left to defend the public against aerial bombardment.⁸⁷

The fall of France was another problem that initially created greater logistical problems for Chiang Kai Shek but he would eventually have reason for encouragement because of political and military developments in Japan. With Anglo-French forces in defeat first in Norway and then in France, Japanese hard liners were quick to seize control of the government and embrace a southern strategic military agenda.⁸⁸ The more moderate triumvirate of Admiral Yonai Mitsumasa, Admiral Yamamoto Isoroku, and Admiral Inoue Shigeyoshi were outmanoeuvred resulting in the collapse of the Yonai Cabinet in July 1940. Prince Konoye Fumimaro again re-emerged as head of the government and Matsuoka Yosuke assumed the post of Foreign Minister to strengthen ties with Germany.⁸⁹ Greater British and American intervention was still only a hope amongst Western officials, but as Japan drew closer to Germany and made preparations to move south, Anglo-American intervention had become increasingly possible.

For the time being, however, Britain remained weak while cracks in the Empire grew wide. The power vacuum created in East Asia following the collapse of the French greatly added to their troubles by emboldening the Japanese but the second cabinet crisis of the year in Tokyo again brought internal conflicts on strategy into public view. Although a southern advance had been selected as the basis of Japanese grand strategy, divisions between the military services and within the government persisted and this in turn encouraged some

⁸⁷ Chennault, *Way of a Fighter*, p. 90.

⁸⁸ Tsunoda, 'The Navy's Role in the Southern Strategy', pp. 247-248.

⁸⁹ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 8/40 by Giles, 31 July 1940. See also Hosoya, 'The Japanese-Soviet Neutrality Pact', p. 43; and Evans and Peattie, *Kaigun*, pp. 453, 461.

field commanders into taking reckless action as was soon to be seen in Indochina. Meanwhile, Japanese aggression in the air over Chungking and elsewhere was increased thereby placing greater strain on Anglo-Japanese relations. Amidst these problems the Chinese continued to participate in high-level peace negotiations with the hope of gaining greater international support. The British would use similar diplomatic tactics in Europe to accomplish the same goal vis-à-vis the US and the USSR and during the summer the Japanese helped push them in that direction. Given the fundamental divergence of interests and the mutual antipathy engendered by Britain's cooperation with China and Japan's sympathy with Germany, a frontal Anglo-Japanese clash was becoming increasingly likely.⁹⁰ Ending the war in China as quickly as possible remained a Japanese strategic goal and a requirement of this was to terminate the movement of Chinese military supplies from the source. Hence, encouraged by Britain's strategic situation, the capture of Hong Kong became a primary Japanese military objective, a fact well understood by British officers in Hong Kong.⁹¹

Hong Kong: The Fulcrum of War

From 1937 the Foreign Office had utilized the war in China to improve Anglo-Soviet relations, but like Japan, the country's Far Eastern policy lacked uniformity as the War Office continued to view Hong Kong as a dangerous liability. Few resources could be spared for Far Eastern interests and the colony's defences remained weak.⁹² But following the signing of the Nazi-Soviet Pact the British Foreign Office started to adapt its position to better reflect existing military

⁹⁰ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 9/40 by Giles, 31 August 1940.

⁹¹ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 6/40 by Giles, 31 May 1940.

⁹² Christopher Bell, “Our Most Exposed Outpost”: Hong Kong and British Far Eastern Strategy, 1921-1941’, *The Journal of Military History*, 60(1) 1996: 61-88, pp. 75-77.

limitations. US concern over Far Eastern affairs also started to become more pronounced in an evolutionary process that greatly accelerated after the re-election of Roosevelt in November 1940. Substantial material support for Britain would eventually increase, at considerable cost, but until that time Britain alone shouldered much of the responsibility amongst the Western powers in challenging Japanese expansion in Asia. During the summer of 1940, however, Chinese and American anxiety had grown over Britain's stamina and ability to continue its resistance, but one of the means available to determine British resolve was to assess the posture they maintained at their hazardous base at Hong Kong. At a time of great peril Hong Kong was not demilitarized and it started to become more of a Far Eastern nexus drawing the attention of all the great powers. Although still officially regarded as an expendable outpost of Singapore it remained a military centre of global significance so long as the war in China continued and the number of avenues into the country diminished.

Following the invasion of Kwangsi and the Japanese declaration of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere in November 1939, the prospect of war between Britain and Japan had grown closer since the Far East had been relegated as an area of only tertiary priority within British grand strategy. Hong Kong remained a dangerous military outpost because it was encumbered with supporting great diplomatic and military commitments disproportionate to its physical defences. Although the British temporarily eased tensions with the Japanese following the withdrawal of French and British garrisons at Tientsin in November 1939 and by resolving the Tientsin silver problem during April 1940, the Fall of France and the entry of Italy into the war greatly damaged Britain's

global military position.⁹³ With the loss of the French fleet the British concentrated more of their resources on protecting their lines of communication in the North Atlantic while contesting the Mediterranean Sea but this left little for Far Eastern defence.⁹⁴ The Singapore Strategy was no longer feasible and there was no prospect of reinforcing Hong Kong even though it was fully realized that this was likely to be the first point of attack by the Japanese. This problem was noted in a Chief of Staff Far Eastern appraisal dated 13 August 1940. ‘In view of the traditional Japanese method of step by step advance it is thought that her first action would be on our garrisons in China including attacks on or at least blockade of Hong-Kong, all without declaration of war.’⁹⁵ Despite the threat, Hong Kong would not be demilitarized, partly because of the adverse impact such a move would have had on British prestige.⁹⁶ Cabinet records on this decision have often been quoted elsewhere.⁹⁷

In the event of war, Hong Kong must be regarded as an outpost and held as long as possible. We should resist the inevitably strong pressure to reinforce Hong Kong, and we should certainly be unable to relieve it. Militarily, our position in the Far East would be stronger without this unsatisfactory commitment.⁹⁸

⁹³ NARA, RG 59, USSDCF, Reel 8; Report No. 45 893.00 N.I. Reports/247 by McQuillen, 10 June 1940. See also NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3; Report No. 9830 by Mayer, 29 November 1939. See also Sir Llewellyn Woodward, *British Foreign Policy in the Second World War, Volume II* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1971), p. 91; and Saki Dockrill, ‘Britain's Grand Strategy and Anglo-American Leadership in the War Against Japan’, in *British and Japanese Military Leadership in the Far Eastern War, 1941-1945*, eds. Bryan Bond and Kyoichi Takhikawa (New York: Frank Cass, 2004), p. 11.

⁹⁴ NAC, MG 26 J4, Reel H-1561, Volume 407, No. C286798; Chiefs of Staff Far Eastern Appraisal, 13 August 1940. See also Farrell, *The Basis and Making of British Grand Strategy*, pp. 35-36, 45, 94-95, 99.

⁹⁵ NAC, MG 26 J4, Reel H-1561, Volume 407, No. C286798; Chiefs of Staff Far Eastern Appraisal, 13 August 1940.

⁹⁶ Oliver Lindsay, *The Battle for Hong Kong 1941-1945, Hostage to Fortune* (Hong Kong, Hong Kong University Press, 2005), p. 53.

⁹⁷ Kent Fedorowich, “‘Cocked Hats and Swords and Small, Little Garrisons’: Britain, Canada and the Fall of Hong Kong, 1941”, *Modern Asian Studies*, 37(1) 2003: 111-157, p. 131. See also Perras, “‘Our Position in the Far East would be Stronger Without this Unsatisfactory Commitment’”, p. 245.

⁹⁸ NAC, MG 26 J4, Reel H-1561, Volume 407, No. C286798; Chiefs of Staff Far Eastern Appraisal, 13 August 1940. See also TNA, CAB 121/718, File G/Hong Kong/1 (Volume 1); Chiefs of Staff Report (40) 845, 18, October 1940.

The military services were aware of their deficiencies in the Far East but tragically Prime Minister Churchill maintained an exaggerated view of Singapore's strength as a fortress. Furthermore, Peter Lowe has described how Churchill's 'single-minded concentration on Europe and the Middle East' meant that the Japanese threat was not fully appreciated at the highest level of government.⁹⁹

As Britain's global situation deteriorated the prospect of greater United States collaboration against the dictatorships began to appear, and Hong Kong became a yardstick whereby the Americans and the Chinese could measure British reliability in challenging the Japanese.¹⁰⁰ The British were not yet inclined to accept a formal alliance with China at this stage but they were also unwilling to abandon their Asian interests altogether. So long as Hong Kong was not demilitarized the British signalled their willingness to fight Japan if they must and since the Americans also wanted the war in China to continue, a firm British posture at Hong Kong was useful in encouraging greater US involvement in the war.¹⁰¹ The prospect of this helped buoy Chinese morale after earlier British retreats such as at Tientsin left the likelihood of Western support looking more remote.¹⁰² The Chinese remained concerned over the possibility that British weakness might still cause them to reach an agreement with the Japanese at their expense but the maintenance of a garrison at Hong Kong at least precluded the possibility of complete abandonment.

⁹⁹ Lowe, *Great Britain and the Origins of the Pacific War*, p. 163.

¹⁰⁰ Oliver Lindsay, *The Battle for Hong Kong*, p. 53.

¹⁰¹ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 1/40 by Major R. Giles, 2 January 1940. See also Jonathan Utley, *Going to War with Japan*, pp. 43, 165.

¹⁰² NAC, RG 25, Volume 1881, File 862; External Affairs Memorandum, 17 April 1940. See also NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3; Report No. 3 by Major David Barrett, 1 March 1940; and NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3; Report by Major David Barrett, 20 April 1940. See also NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3; Report No. 9830 by Mayer, 29 November 1939. See also Lowe, *Great Britain and the Origins of the Pacific War*, pp. 128, 130, 134.

Unlike the Chinese some US military officers were not as greatly concerned about British intentions in China but they were less than optimistic about the ability of the Hong Kong garrison to hold in the face of a determined Japanese ground attack.¹⁰³ In the Philippines Lieutenant Colonel Henry C. McLean of US military intelligence submitted a report on this in June 1940. He noted that:

Three redoubts, or fortified points, have been fortified at Sleepers Knoll, Unicorn Ridge and Smugglers Ridge. The chief of staff stated that the garrisons of these were only 1 company each which seems incredible. These had been estimated as at least a battalion. Although this is a very strong position, it is believed this could be taken by a night assault because of its being so thinly held. All the ground to the north has been carefully plotted so that the guns on Hong Kong Island could search that area. It is believed, that the artillery is insufficient to be critically effective.

The British expect to be forced off that line and to retire to the south across the channel known as Victoria Harbor, there to defend the island of Hong Kong to the last. No heavy guns with permanent emplacements are in Leased Territory, as they would expect to lose them all. Guns of all calibers are in position on Hong Kong Island. The British will run the risk of having very heavy losses in crossing Victoria Harbor ...

Large sums of money have been lavished on the defense of Hong Kong. It is believed this will prove futile because of the insufficiency of troops to hold the line north of Beacon Hill and to properly garrison the Island of Hong Kong and to eject by counter attack any landing parties which might get a footing on the island ...

The British are prepared to sacrifice by destruction the splendid city of Hong Kong rather than let it fall into Japanese hands...

If the Japanese make a determined attack on Hong Kong in sufficient strength it can not last over two months.¹⁰⁴

Some British officers also expressed anxiety as in May 1940 when Major Giles commented on Japanese perceptions.

The Japanese have a low opinion of the British Army as a fighting force. They are fully aware of their own inherent advantages in having local naval and complete air superiority, and do not consider that the reduction of Hong Kong presents a particularly difficult military problem.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 13; Report by Lieutenant Colonel Henry C. McLean, 20 June 1940.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 6/40 by Giles, 31 May 1940.

Hong Kong was not strongly held but McLean added some positive comments regarding the military leadership.

General Grassett is the general officer commanding in Hong Kong. He is a very able officer, much respected in the British army and formerly Operation Officer for the Indian Army at Delhi.

Colonel Neville is chief of staff in Hong Kong; is also a very able officer. Just before his appointment in Hong Kong was Secretary of the Imperial General Staff in London.

All of the above information was obtained from General Grassett and Colonel Neville and from the War Plan which the writer was permitted to see; as well as inspection of the defenses.¹⁰⁶

Grasset was undoubtedly eager to challenge the Japanese but in mid-1941 he would gamble the security of Hong Kong to do so.¹⁰⁷ In the interim, American and Chinese concerns about Britain became more pronounced as the year progressed.

During subsequent Anglo-American strategic planning meetings, US officers attempting to ascertain Britain's ability to wage war in the Far East enquired from their British counterparts how long Hong Kong could hold if attacked. In response, the new Dominions Secretary Lord Cranborne likewise informed the Canadian government about British opinion on this matter.

The United States representatives addressed a series of questions to the Chiefs of Staff. With regard to the Far East they enquired regarding the strength of Hong Kong and were told the fortress should be able to resist a siege for a considerable time. They were emphatically assured, in response to another question, that it is very much in our interests that the United States main fleet should remain in the Pacific.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 13; Report by McLean, 20 June 1940.

¹⁰⁷ TNA, FO 371/27653 F 6607/188/10; File cover notation by A.L. Scott, 25 July 1941.

¹⁰⁸ NAC, RG 25, Reel T-1813, Volume 812, File 623; Memorandum by Gerald Campbell to Prime Minister W.L. Mackenzie King, 9 October 1940.

Naval issues aside, American and Chinese anxieties were not eased with the long delayed British refusal in July of Chiang Kai Shek's offer of 200,000 troops for the defence of Hong Kong.¹⁰⁹

Japanese belligerence directed against Britain greatly increased during the spring and summer of 1940 because the fall of France seemed to present a useful opportunity with which to terminate external support for China while expanding territorially. British grand strategy was in disarray once the French army had been defeated and they faced both Germany and Italy with only the Dominions as allies.¹¹⁰ But Hong Kong was not demilitarized in order to maintain Chinese resistance and it was thereby hoped to encourage greater American involvement in international affairs. In this the British were soon successful. The Japanese in turn made Burma, Hong Kong, and French Indochina the immediate objects of their attention.

The Burmese Gambit

One of the most difficult tests of British endurance in China came during June and July 1940 when the Japanese demanded the closure of the Burma Road and the termination of military supply shipments from Hong Kong.¹¹¹ Until late 1939 many within Whitehall believed the war in China to be useful in minimizing the threat to British Far Eastern interests elsewhere.¹¹² It was also hoped by some, especially within the Foreign Office, that common cause with Stalin against Japan could provide a basis for improved Anglo-Soviet relations in general. Out of a

¹⁰⁹ Kent Fedorowich, 'Decolonization Deferred? The Re-establishment of Colonial Rule in Hong Kong, 1942-45', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 28(3) 2000: 25-50, p. 27.

¹¹⁰ R.D. Cuff and Jack Granatstein, *Ties that Bind*, p. 95.

¹¹¹ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 11; Report No. 9919 by Munson, 30 July 1940; and TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 8/40 by Giles, 31 July 1940. See also Perras, "Our Position in the Far East would be Stronger Without this Unsatisfactory Commitment", pp. 243-244.

¹¹² Fedorowich, "Cocked Hats and Swords and Small, Little Garrisons", p. 119.

sense of desperation, however, the British became temporarily willing to adjust to the global military situation. To avoid war with Japan the British closed the Burma Road but in doing so the potential for a Sino-Japanese peace was exploited with the aim of ending Britain's isolation. In this they were only half successful as American support against both Germany and Japan expanded while Stalin remained Hitler's ally. Nevertheless, American support was sufficient to maintain Britain's war effort and the war in China would be used to expand US commitment further over time. This was facilitated by reopening the road in October 1940, but during the intervening period the British were able to hedge their bets despite Japanese intimidation by maintaining the covert movement of Chinese supplies from their vulnerable position at Hong Kong.¹¹³ In this way, China became a useful lever that could be equally applied against the Soviet Union as well as the United States.

Termination of British support for China was demanded by the Japanese under the threat of war starting with the fall of France.¹¹⁴ Munitions had not been allowed into China from Hong Kong since January 1939 but the Japanese regarded POL and spare parts as contraband and therefore included the suspension of military supplies from the colony as part of their new demands.¹¹⁵ French restrictions on the Indochina Railway were already being implemented and as Japanese troops again deployed along Hong Kong's border the British agreed to close the Burma Road for a three month period starting on 18 July 1940.¹¹⁶ Ambassador Sir Robert Craigie negotiated the agreement in Tokyo and was in

¹¹³ Chan Lau Kit Ching, *China, Britain and Hong Kong*, p. 288.

¹¹⁴ Woodward, *British Foreign Policy in the Second World War, Volume II*, pp. 92-93.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 99. See also TNA, FO 371/24667 F 3568/43/10; Circular D No. 319, 7 July 1940.

¹¹⁶ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 11; Report No. 9919 by Munson, 30 July 1940. See also Boyle, *China and Japan at War*, p. 299, and Woodward, *British Foreign Policy in the Second World War, Volume II*, p. 99.

favour of such a move because he understood the military situation Great Britain faced and because he considered the Burma Road to be serving Chinese interests ahead of Great Britain's.¹¹⁷ He also advocated a rapprochement with Tokyo at this time noting that the Americans were still not yet willing to carry the diplomatic or military load in the Far East and that it would be possible to encourage a peace accord for China.¹¹⁸ Sino-British relations could be repaired at a later date. Additionally, Japanese attention would be redirected against the Soviet Union.¹¹⁹ By the first week of July the War Cabinet and Chief of the Imperial General Staff Sir John Dill agreed with Craigie in making concessions to the Japanese as they felt the situation in Europe was too dangerous to risk open war with Japan.¹²⁰ Craigie's advice was accepted in this instance but even though the Burma Road was closed and the British garrison at Shanghai was also withdrawn three weeks later in August, the placement of Japanese inspectors in Hong Kong was refused.¹²¹ Despite these retreats the Chinese were not abandoned completely as POL and other essential supplies were allowed to move into China surreptitiously from Hong Kong just as before. Details of the blockade running operation at Hong Kong can be found in appendix three.¹²²

¹¹⁷ Lowe, *Great Britain and the Origins of the Pacific War*, pp. 143, 150. See also Peter Lowe, 'Retreat from Power: British Attitudes towards Japan, 1923-1941', in *War and Diplomacy Across the Pacific, 1919-1952*, eds. Barry Hunt and A. Hamish Ion (Waterloo, Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1988), pp. 58-59.

¹¹⁸ TNA, FO 371/24667 F 3568/43/10; Telegram No. 1196 by Sir Robert Craigie, 9 July 1940. See also S. Olu Agbi, 'The Pacific War Controversy in Britain: Sir Robert Craigie Versus the Foreign Office', *Modern Asian Studies*, 17 (3) 1983: 489-517, pp. 508-509.

¹¹⁹ TNA, FO 371/24667 F 3568/43/10; Telegram No. 1196 by Sir Robert Craigie, 9 July 1940.

¹²⁰ Lowe, *Great Britain and the Origins of the Pacific War*, pp. 141, 143-144.

¹²¹ TNA, FO 371/24668 F 3799/43/10; File cover notations by B.E. Gage and Ashley Clarke, 14 August 1940, and 26 August 1940. See also Utley, *Going to War with Japan*, p. 103; and Yu Maochun, "In God we Trusted, In China we Busted": The China Commando Group of the Special Operations Executive (SOE)', *Intelligence and National Security*, 16(4) 2001: 37-60, p. 40.

¹²² TNA, CO 967/70; Letter by Governor Geoffry Northcote to Lord Moyne, 9 June 1941. See also TNA, FO 371/27664 F 10950/218/10; Letter by Mr. Caine to Mr. G.C. Scott (Asiatic Petroleum Company), 16 October 1941.

To weaken Chinese morale and bring about a collapse of Chiang Kai Shek's government the Japanese had also redoubled their military efforts. The closure of the road was a serious blow to the Chinese as aviation fuel and spare parts were urgently needed not only to defend Chungking from aerial bombardment, but also from a ground offensive being fought in Henan.¹²³ Some foreign observers thought a Chinese collapse was possible since the pressure on Chiang had been increased after General Itagaki launched his attack in May 1940 with Ichang as his primary objective.¹²⁴ Ichang was situated farther west along the Yangtze River and it controlled the water transportation system of Szechwan.¹²⁵ The Japanese 13th Division captured the city on 11 June after a twelve-day advance in which very heavy fighting resulted in many casualties for both sides.¹²⁶ After the fall of Ichang the Japanese offensive was expected to continue against Chungking in combination with additional moves against Kwangsi, Yunnan and Shensi to finish the war. In covering the approach to Chungking General Chen Cheng was appointed in August to command the newly created 6th War Zone, although any Japanese offensive against the capital would have been extremely difficult owing to the vulnerability of their lines of communication against Chinese flank attacks.¹²⁷ Because of these factors Itagaki limited his advance to Ichang but as the city was only 240 miles from Chungking its fall made the Japanese aerial campaign much more efficient since newly acquired

¹²³ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 11; Report No. 9919 by Munson, 30 July 1940.

¹²⁴ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 11; Report No. 9901 by Mayer, 11 June 1940. See also Ambassador Nelson T. Johnson, Telegram No. 363, in *FRUS, 1940 Volume 4, The Far East*, p. 409.

¹²⁵ Dick Wilson, *When Tigers Fight: The Story of the Sino-Japanese War, 1937-1945* (New York: The Viking Press, 1982), pp. 175-176.

¹²⁶ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 11; Report No. 9901 by Mayer, 11 June 1940. See also TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 7/40 by Giles, 30 June 1940.

¹²⁷ NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 38; Memorandum No. 642 by Ambassador Nelson T. Johnson to Secretary of State Cordell Hull, 27 August 1940.

airbases substantially reduced flight time.¹²⁸ The loss of Ichang also greatly complicated the Chinese logistical situation by disrupting the movement of military supplies between the railroad at Changsha and Szechwan.¹²⁹ When taken together along with the failed Winter Offensive, the closure of the Burma Road, and an inflationary economy, the defeat at Ichang produced a very negative impact on the Chinese will to continue the war.¹³⁰

Running perpendicular to their military efforts, the Japanese maintained their hopes in the viability of the Kiri Project which seemed to be finding a degree of success.¹³¹ Chiang Kai Shek and General Itagaki were to have met in Changsha to elevate discussions during August, but this was called off after the existence of the talks was leaked to the public.¹³² Chiang Kai Shek may have been merely playing for time to delay Japanese recognition of the Wang Ching Wei government but the peace faction within the Kuomintang was not inconsequential and could not be entirely dismissed.¹³³ Chiang Kai Shek was himself determined to fight but the potential for a Chinese capitulation increased further after the Burma Road was closed.¹³⁴

In Britain, morale was also low and concern in Washington over a potential British collapse soon resulted in greater American intervention. One of

¹²⁸ NARA, RG 59, USSDCF, Reel 8; Report No. 45 893.00 N.I. Reports/247 by McQuillen, 10 June 1940. See also TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 7/40 by Giles, 30 June 1940. See also Wilson, *When Tigers Fight*, pp. 173-176.

¹²⁹ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 11; Report No. 9901 by Mayer, 11 June 1940.

¹³⁰ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3, Report No. 13 by Lieutenant Colonel David Barrett, 31 January 1941. See also TNA, FO 371/24667 F 3597/43/10; Telegram No. 1322 by Lord Lothian to Lord Halifax, 12 July 1940. See also Usui, 'The Politics of War', p. 414; and Hans Van de Ven, *War and Nationalism in China; 1925-1945* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), p. 246.

¹³¹ Edward Drea, *Japan's Imperial Army: Its Rise and Fall, 1853-1945* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2009), p. 209.

¹³² Boyle, *China and Japan at War*, p. 292.

¹³³ Usui, 'The Politics of War', pp. 414-416.

¹³⁴ NARA, RG 59, M1221, General Records of the Department of State, Intelligence Reports, 1941-1961; OSS Research and Analysis Report No. 112. See also TNA, FO 371/24667 F 3597/43/10; Telegram No. 1322 by Lord Lothian to Lord Halifax, 12 July 1940. See also Usui, 'The Politics of War', p. 414.

Churchill's first priorities following his assumption of power in May 1940 was to develop his personal relationship with the President but by closing the Burma Road he was also able to leverage Britain's Far Eastern policy against Roosevelt's administration.¹³⁵ By doing so one of the few methods available for increasing American opposition against both Germany and Japan was effectively employed. Keeping China in the war was essential to American plans, yet because of the fall elections Roosevelt was wary of increasing involvement in the Far East too quickly.¹³⁶ Public criticism by the US government on the British decision therefore did not accurately reflect private foreknowledge and approval, and the hypocrisy of American complaints over the closure was noted by many, including officials in Hong Kong.¹³⁷ Some within Whitehall such as the historian George Sansom at the Foreign Office hoped that economic sanctions would soon be levelled against Japan fully realizing that such a course of action would eventually lead to war.¹³⁸ The July 1940 embargo on aviation fuel and scrap iron instigated by Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau, in the absence from Washington of Secretary of State Cordell Hull, was one of the first most welcomed steps in this direction.¹³⁹ Across the Atlantic many US military officers already considered Britain as a de facto ally and secret Anglo-American Staff talks were held during

¹³⁵ Farrell, *The Basis and Making of British Grand Strategy*, pp. 53-54.

¹³⁶ S. Olu Agbi, 'The Pacific War Controversy in Britain', p. 511. See also Barbara Tuchman, *Stilwell, and the American Experience in China, 1911-45* (New York: Macmillan, 1970), p. 219. See also Utley, *Going to War with Japan*, pp. 98, 133, 178.

¹³⁷ TNA, FO 371/24667 F 3622/43/10; File cover notation by Ashley Clarke, 23 July 1940; and TNA, FO 371/24668 F 3695/43/10; Telegram No. 55 by Mr. Broadmead to Foreign Office, 1 August 1940. See also TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 8/40 by Giles, 31 July 1940. See also Peter Lowe, *Great Britain and the Origins of the Pacific War*, pp. 144, 150-151, and Usui, 'The Politics of War', pp. 373-375.

¹³⁸ Lowe, *Great Britain and the Origins of the Pacific War*, p. 118.

¹³⁹ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 8/40 by Giles, 31 July 1940. See also Nagaoka Shinjiro, 'Economic Demands on Dutch East Indies', in *The Fateful Choice, Japan's Road to the Pacific War: Japan's Advance into Southeast Asia, 1939-1941*, ed. James W. Morley, trans. Robert Scalapino (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), pp. 139-140. See also Utley, *Going to War with Japan*, pp. 97-99.

August 1940 in order to formulate joint grand strategy.¹⁴⁰ These talks centred upon the ‘Rainbow 5’ plan which was the basis for the Germany first strategy employed upon America’s entry to the war.¹⁴¹ A full transition to American leadership in China would have to await the arrival of the US Military Mission in August 1941 under the command of Brigadier General John Magruder.¹⁴² His mission’s task was to supervise the distribution of Lend Lease material.¹⁴³ But the initial moves in 1940 formed a basis for subsequent US intervention and they were suitably sufficient to keep Britain fighting.

Equally, if not more significant, the British decision on Burma was meant to pressure Stalin. By June 1940 British strategy in East Asia had started to assume a degree of uniformity between the War Office and the Foreign Office as both sought to limit commitment in China.¹⁴⁴ Until August 1939 the Foreign Office had attempted to build a collective security arrangement with Stalin in order to encourage Soviet collaboration against Hitler.¹⁴⁵ But with the signing of the Nazi-Soviet Pact Stalin became Hitler’s loyal, if junior ally.¹⁴⁶ The war in China had been supported from Hong Kong with the goal of providing indirect protection to the Soviet Far Eastern flank. Once the Hitler-Stalin Pact was signed, British foreign policy underwent a gradual reversal. Anglo-Soviet relations were greatly strained as Stalin supplied Hitler with considerable amounts of strategic

¹⁴⁰ Farrell, *The Basis and Making of British Grand Strategy*, pp. 54-55. See also Gole, *The Road to Rainbow*, p. 107.

¹⁴¹ Gole, *The Road to Rainbow*, pp. 114,120.

¹⁴² William Grieve, ‘Belated Endeavor: The American Military Mission to China (AMMISCA) 1941-1942’ (University of Illinois, PhD Dissertation, 1986), p. 16.

¹⁴³ NARA, RG 59, M1221; OSS Research and Analysis Report No. 112.

¹⁴⁴ Martin Kitchen, *British Policy Towards the Soviet Union During the Second World War* (London: Macmillan, 1986), pp. 19-20.

¹⁴⁵ Donald Gillies, *Radical Diplomat: The Life of Archibald Clark Kerr, Lord Inverchapel, 1882-1951* (London: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 1999), p. 120. See also Nation, *Black Earth, Red Star*, pp. 98, 105. See also R.C. Raack, *Stalin’s Drive to the West, 1938-1945: The Origins of the Cold War* (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1995), pp. 23-24.

¹⁴⁶ Chiang Kai Shek, *Soviet Russia in China* (New York: Noonday Press, 1957), p 61. See also W.G. Krivitsky, *I Was Stalin’s Agent* (London: The Right Book Club, 1940), p. 19. See also Nikolai Tolstoy, *Stalin’s Secret War* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1981), p. 115.

resources and joined his ally in attacking neighbouring states.¹⁴⁷ Within areas under his control the extermination of Polish officers in the Katyn Forest mimicked the war annihilation being waged against the Russian people by the NKVD.¹⁴⁸ The invasion of eastern Poland along with the Winter War in Finland were particularly resented by many prompting the British government to condemn Soviet actions at the League of Nations and to belatedly approve the release of over one hundred aircraft for Finnish defence.¹⁴⁹ Stalin's friendship with Hitler caused some cabinet and military officials in London to consider the Soviets as enemies of equal standing.¹⁵⁰ Few options were available to confront the Berlin-Moscow axis but when the British closed the Burma Road Chinese morale was pushed to the breaking point, and had peace been secured the possibility of a Japanese attack into Siberia would have greatly increased.¹⁵¹ Stalin needed to sustain the war in China and he wanted British cooperation to achieve this goal.¹⁵² Stalin had reason for concern because many dangers confronted him and the British were able to play on his fears.

Naturally enough he was anxious to reduce his reliance on British cooperation and this was gradually accomplished by improving Soviet-Japanese relations. The possibility of such a development was reported from Hong Kong as early as January 1940.

¹⁴⁷ Martin Kitchen, *British Policy towards the Soviet Union During the Second World War*, p. 34. See also Nagaoka Shinjiro, 'Economic Demands on Dutch East Indies', p. 145. See also Nikolai Tolstoy, *Stalin's Secret War*, pp. 108-109.

¹⁴⁸ Nikolai Tolstoy, *Stalin's Secret War*, pp. 179, 247.

¹⁴⁹ NAC, RG 25, Volume 1994, File 1191 Part I; Dominions Office Circular D-43, 25 January 1940; and NAC, RG 25, Volume 1994, File 1191 Part I; 'League of Nations', n/d.

¹⁵⁰ NAC, MG 26 J4, Reel H-1561, Volume 407, No. C286723; Telegram No. 950H-80 by Sir Gerald Campbell to Prime Minister Mackenzie King, 22 April 1940. See also Sir Curtis Keeble, *Britain, the Soviet Union and Russia* (London: MacMillan Press, 2000), p. 161; and R. Craig Nation, *Black Earth, Red Star*, p. 99.

¹⁵¹ TNA, FO 371/24667 F 3584/43/10; Telegram No. 1286 by Lord Lothian to Foreign Office, 9 July 1940. See also Chang Jung and Jon Halliday, *Mao: the Unknown Story*, pp. 273-274.

¹⁵² TNA, FO 371/24667 F 3606/43/10; Telegram No. 276 by Lord Halifax to Sir Stafford Cripps, 25 July 1940.

The poor showing of the Red Forces in Finland must not be taken entirely at its face value, since the Russian armies are neither trained nor equipped for fighting in such difficult country in arctic conditions. They put up a very different performance against the best Japanese troops in the spring and summer of last year at Nomonhan. But it is nevertheless fairly certain that Stalin cannot fight a war on two fronts; and if his present Finnish or future Balkan adventures are going to involve him as an active participant in the European war, the present slight possibility of an agreement with Japan at China's expense will become a strong probability.¹⁵³

Ambassador Craigie reported Tokyo's view of Anglo-Soviet relations which supported this analysis. Japanese press reports emphasized how the war in China was more important for Soviet security than it was for the British and that diplomatic efforts should be directed towards Moscow rather than London.

Translations were sent to London:

Russia regards continuation of Chungking's resistance as in her defence interests and is absolutely opposed any weakening of that resistance. Molotov said to have stated if England abandons support of Chungking, Russia will continue supplies ... Russia thus holds key to solution since though England may desire amicable settlement with Japan, she is also most anxious for improved relations with Russia.¹⁵⁴

German success in France complicated Stalin's position as he had counted on a war of long duration.

Consideration was being given in London to German peace proposals at this time while Stalin's anxiety grew accordingly.¹⁵⁵ Unencumbered with war in the West Hitler could easily turn his attention East, so at a time when the possibility of an Anglo-German peace had emerged the British closed the Burma Road in the hope that Stalin could be restrained. For his part Stalin very much wanted a southward Japanese strategic advance but he remained cautious about pushing

¹⁵³ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 2/40 by Giles, 31 January 1940.

¹⁵⁴ TNA, FO 371/24667 F 3568/43/10; Telegram No. 1179 by Sir Robert Craigie, 8 July 1940.

¹⁵⁵ Hosoya Chihiro, 'The Japanese-Soviet Neutrality Pact', p. 43. See also Sir Curtis Keeble, *Britain, the Soviet Union and Russia*, p. 165.

Britain into making a deal with Germany.¹⁵⁶ This partly accounts for the delays that occurred during Soviet-Japanese neutrality talks.¹⁵⁷ Although inwardly antagonistic to the USSR, the Japanese were still eager to exploit Britain's weakness by maintaining discussions with the Soviets, but Stalin was also aware that the new Japanese Cabinet was more aggressive than its predecessor and some members such as Army Minister Tojo Hideki had not dismissed the idea of challenging Soviet power.¹⁵⁸ Amidst these many variables China therefore remained one of the few areas where the British could still apply pressure on Moscow.

Despite the impending British retreat over Burma, the need to keep up the appearance of Anglo-Soviet cooperation was deemed vital in London even though such conditions no longer had any basis in reality. One Foreign Office official commented on this: 'Our position in the Far East is admittedly insecure, but the insecurity will be increased once the Japanese are sure that we have nothing in common with either the USSR or the USA.'¹⁵⁹ Four days after the road was closed J.W.R. Maclean clarified the new policy in China.

Nothing that we say to the Soviet Government is likely to have the slightest effect on their policy in the Far East. Nor do I see that we should in any way help matters in Moscow by raising the question of the Far East. In point of fact there is no real community of interests between ourselves and the Russians in this region. As I understand it, our policy at this moment is to promote a reasonable settlement of the "China incident" and to find a satisfactory basis for our own relations with Japan. The Soviet Government on the other hand are undoubtedly anxious to keep the war going between China and Japan for as long as possible, and, if an opportunity offers, to make trouble between ourselves and the Japanese. Clearly then, the Far Eastern problem offers no real basis for Anglo-Soviet co-operation, and it

¹⁵⁶ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 11/40 by Major R.C. Giles, 31 October 1940. See also R.C. Raack, *Stalin's Drive to the West*, p. 22.

¹⁵⁷ Hosoya Chihiro, 'The Japanese-Soviet Neutrality Pact', pp. 39-40, 43.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

¹⁵⁹ TNA, FO 371/24667 F 3568/43/10; File Cover Notation, 10 July 1940.

would be likely to do more harm than good if we were to raise it in our conversations with the Soviet Government.¹⁶⁰

Out of growing concern the Americans entered the fray.¹⁶¹ US Secretary of State Cordell Hull proposed that the British seek greater Soviet assistance in pressuring the Japanese but the British were not interested.¹⁶²

The British were not inclined to trust Soviet intentions unless Stalin was prepared to alter his position with Hitler. This view was expressed by Sir John Sterndale Bennett on 20 July 1940.

It has been suggested that we should make an attempt to work in more closely with Russia over the Far Eastern problem. The advantages of this course from the point of view of our general relations with Russia requires further discussion. From the purely Far Eastern point of view it is difficult to see what we are likely to gain by such a course.¹⁶³

Ambassador Ivan Maisky in London attempted to deal with the problem on 16 July by approaching Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs R.A.B. Butler. He expressed his government's great concern about British efforts to secure peace between the Chinese and the Japanese but Butler was evasive in response, simply informing Maisky that the British government had no concrete proposals towards achieving this goal. Maisky then sought to restore British support for the Chinese by suggesting a £7 million loan be extended to China along with an additional £8 million from the Americans. Butler duly passed on this request with no result.¹⁶⁴ The British had become firmly amenable to the idea of easing their Far Eastern problem at Stalin's expense and attempts at cooperation with the Soviet Union were finally terminated with the closure of the Burma Road.

¹⁶⁰ TNA, FO 371/24667 F 3606/43/10; File Cover Notation by J.W.R. Maclean, 22 July 1940.

¹⁶¹ Ambassador Joseph Grew, Telegram No. 793.94119/670, in *FRUS, 1940 Volume 4, The Far East*, p. 420.

¹⁶² TNA, FO 371/24667 F 3606/43/10; File Cover Notation, 22 July 1940.

¹⁶³ TNA, FO 371/24667 F 3606/43/10; Telegram by J. Sterndale Bennett, 20 July 1940.

¹⁶⁴ TNA, FO 371/24667 F 3606/43/10; Telegram No. 276 by Halifax to Cripps, 25 July 1940.

Unsurprisingly, British opinion on challenging the Soviets was not universal with several significant individuals in the House of Commons such as Labour's Sir Stafford Cripps, and Foreign Office officials such as Ambassador Clark Kerr, still determined to be supportive of Soviet actions despite Stalin's alliance with Hitler.¹⁶⁵ Cripps was enthusiastically pro-Soviet and had written articles in defence of Stalin's invasions of Poland and Finland.¹⁶⁶ But unlike Sir Oswald Mosley and other British fascists who were imprisoned for their political activity Cripps was selected to become the new ambassador to Moscow on 20 May 1940. He was given the job because of his communist credentials with the objective of weakening German-Soviet relations. To help accomplish his mission Cripps was instructed to inform his Soviet colleagues that the British government would recognize Stalin's recent mid-June seizure of the Baltic States.¹⁶⁷ He also later informed Molotov and others in October and November 1940 that the British Cabinet were deliberating on Hitler's peace proposals which if accepted would obviously encourage a German invasion of the Soviet Union.¹⁶⁸ But in his limited number of meetings held with Soviet officials during the year he met with few tangible results.¹⁶⁹ He was not well received at the Kremlin as it was thought his influence either within the Cabinet or the Foreign Office was limited. Cripps met with failure not because of a lack of personal effort but simply because Britain had little to offer. A further discussion of Soviet political considerations can be found in appendix four.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁵ Peter Clarke, *The Cripps Version: the Life of Sir Stafford Cripps, 1889-1952*, (London: Allen Lane, 2002), p. 107. See also Martin Kitchen, *British Policy towards the Soviet Union during the Second World War*, pp. 15-16, 30-31.

¹⁶⁶ Martin Kitchen, *British Policy towards the Soviet Union during the Second World War*, p. 16.

¹⁶⁷ Peter Clarke, *The Cripps Version*, p. 205. See also Martin Kitchen, *British Policy towards the Soviet Union during the Second World War*, p. 42.

¹⁶⁸ Martin Kitchen, *British Policy towards the Soviet Union during the Second World War*, p. 50.

¹⁶⁹ Nikolai Tolstoy, *Stalin's Secret War*, p. 214.

¹⁷⁰ Peter Clarke, *The Cripps Version*, pp. 190, 192.

In the future, after the tide of war had turned, Cripps' successor was Ambassador Archibald Clark Kerr, and he would have much greater success in gaining Stalin's favour. By that time in 1942 Britain and the Soviet Union were allies and his job was therefore a great deal easier but his own ideological outlook certainly aided him in his work. His views were known to many Western officials inside China with Cripps himself commenting on them during his stopover in Chungking during his first trip to Moscow in February 1940. According to Cripps' biographer Peter Clarke, 'Cripps heartily approved of the British ambassador, Archibald Clark Kerr, who was "most advanced in his views & very sympathetic with the Communists".'¹⁷¹ On 1 March 1941 Lieutenant Colonel David Barrett (promoted in October 1940) also commented on Clark Kerr.

A noteworthy aspect of the present relations between the National Government and the Communists is the apparent indifference with which the representatives of the Soviet Government here appear to contemplate the alleged grievances of the Communists. The Soviet Ambassador stated not long ago to a member of this Embassy that his Government had no intention of interfering in the internal affairs of China particularly as far as relations with the Communists were concerned.

The Chungking representatives of the British Government, however, appear definitely in sympathy with the Communists. Communist sources claim that the British Ambassador has on several occasions exerted pressure on the Chinese Government to refrain from oppressing the Communists. Whether this is true or not, the British Ambassador has on several occasions told the writer that he considered the National Government unduly alarmed over the ability of the Communists to threaten the present set-up in China, and he hoped that the Kuomintang would not attack the Communists until the war with Japan had been won.

The Press Attaché of the British Embassy, Mr. James Bertram, is frankly in sympathy with the Communists, and appears to use every possible opportunity to further their interests.¹⁷²

Evidence of this can be seen in Clark Kerr's opposition to London's tungsten embargo levelled against the Soviet Union.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid*, p. 154.

¹⁷² NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3; Report No. 14 by Lieutenant Colonel David Barrett, 1 March, 1941.

The British tried to apply pressure on the USSR by using the Burma Road and Hong Kong as choke points against the flow of strategic materials leaving China. But meddling with Sino-Soviet relations in this way produced marginal results. Sino-Soviet barter agreements called for Soviet military hardware and pilots to be exchanged for tungsten and other strategic resources at a financial ratio of ten to one favouring the Chinese.¹⁷³ Stalin's alliance with Hitler ensured that many Chinese resources arriving in the USSR were actually sent on to Germany to be made into munitions for use against British troops. By January 1940 Soviet vessels plying Pacific waters caught the attention of British officials and those entering Rangoon and Hong Kong such as the *Salenga* and the *Vladimir Mayakovsky* became subject to temporary detention while export limits to the USSR were placed against Chinese tungsten.¹⁷⁴ This situation continued throughout 1940 and after the fall of Ichang it became quite difficult to transport tungsten overland from Hunan and Kiangsi north into the Soviet Union. After May 1940 the French also embargoed these materials through Indochina leaving the British in control of the sole remaining lines of communication through Hong Kong and Burma.¹⁷⁵ Curtailment of Chinese exports to the USSR was maintained until the German invasion of June 1941.¹⁷⁶ Until that time, Clark Kerr's persistent

¹⁷³ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9793 by Captain Edwin M. Sutherland, 8 September 1939; and NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3; Report No. 3 by Barrett, 1 March 1940. See also TNA, CO 852/324/6, File notation by B. Perry, 1 July 1940; and TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 4/40 by Giles, 31 March 1940.

¹⁷⁴ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3; Report No. 3 by Barrett, 1 March 1940; and NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3; Report by Barrett, 20 April 1940. See also TNA, CO 852/337/19; File notation by P.W. Davies, 17 May 1940. See also TNA, FO 371/27660 F 3189/198/10; Letter by John Keswick to Counsellor W.C. Chen, 14 April 1941; and TNA, FO 371/27660 F 3925/198/10; Letter by John Keswick to Ashley Clarke, 10 May 1941; and TNA, FO 371/27660 F 4553/198/10; Letter by Ashley Clarke to John Keswick, 27 May 1941

¹⁷⁵ TNA, CO 852/337/19; Ministry of Supply Letter to P.W. Davies, 15 May 1940.

¹⁷⁶ TNA, FO 371/27660 F 3187/198/10; Letter by Ashley Clarke to B Perry, 17 April 1941; and TNA, FO 371/27660 F 5754/198/10; File notation by S. Hebblethwaite, 27 June 1941; and TNA, FO 371/27660 F 8158/198/10; Ministry of Economic Warfare Memorandum to Ashley Clarke, 20 August 1941.

appeals to the Foreign Office to help the Chinese meet their commitments to Stalin failed to significantly alter the British position.¹⁷⁷

Faced with the prospect of supporting the Chinese on their own, the Soviets redoubled their military efforts to keep the war from ending. During August 1940 the Chinese communists launched the One Hundred Regiments Campaign in north China in support of central government forces fighting around Ichang.¹⁷⁸ This was the only major offensive the communists conducted during the war and it was carried out because the morale situation in Chungking had deteriorated to such a state that the attractiveness of a peace settlement became too great to ignore.¹⁷⁹ As Soviet influence became stronger in Chungking, Chiang and others also grew increasingly anxious about their growing dependence on Stalin.¹⁸⁰ They also became more critical of the lack of support from the West.

In the end the British found little success in influencing Stalin by closing the Burma Road but they were able to somewhat restrict the movement of strategic materials going to Germany via Vladivostok. Nevertheless, the closure did help increase American involvement in global affairs as a British partner. This provided sufficient encouragement for the British to continue the war in Europe but only at the expense of the Empire's Far Eastern defences and the security of such allies as Australia and New Zealand. Lacking adequate military strength in Asia Britain's position at Hong Kong remained greatly exposed and the Japanese began preparations for war with the Western powers. Planning now

¹⁷⁷ TNA, FO 371/27660 F 4875/198/10; Foreign Office Memorandum to Archibald Clark Kerr; and TNA, FO 371/27660 F 5208/198/10; Telegram No 293 by Archibald Clark Kerr to Foreign Office, 12 June 1941.

¹⁷⁸ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 11; Report No. 9936 by Munson, 30 September 1940.

¹⁷⁹ Chang and Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story*, pp. 273-274.

¹⁸⁰ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3; Report by Major David Barrett, 22 July 1940; and NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3; Report No. 8 by Major David Barrett, 21 August 1940. See also Baxter, 'Britain and the War in China', p. 97.

began for an attack on Hong Kong, but first, the opportunity presented by the capitulation of France would be seized for an invasion of northern Indochina.¹⁸¹

Taking the Plunge: The Invasion of Northern French Indochina

With Japanese officers now planning for war with America and Great Britain, the fall of France provided a rare chance to expand south territorially and simultaneously eliminate a significant line of supply into China.¹⁸² Greatly encouraged by German success in Europe the Japanese hoped to move against the French before an Anglo-German peace could be negotiated.¹⁸³ The occupation of northern Indochina was begun on 22 September 1940 as the first major step in Japan's southern strategic advance, yet once again, lack of discipline at high levels created unnecessary problems by antagonizing the Western powers and escalating diplomatic tensions.¹⁸⁴ So too did the Japanese decision to join the Axis Pact. Fortunately for the French, their colony at Fort Bayard otherwise known as Kwangchowan [Guangzhouwan] near Pakhoi was left relatively unmolested due to its restricted logistical capacity. In contrast, Hong Kong grew even more significant as a Chinese source of military supply while becoming an increasingly dangerous Far Eastern flashpoint.

Facing catastrophic problems in Europe, French military strength in Indochina was not great and the Japanese did not require a large army to occupy the northern half. Heading the colonial government was Vice-Admiral Jean

¹⁸¹ Drea, *Japan's Imperial Army*, p. 210.

¹⁸² NARA, RG 59, USSDCF, Reel 8; Report No. 45, 893.00 N.I. Reports/247 by McQuillen, 10 June 1940. See also Hata Ikuhiko, 'The Army's Move into Northern Indochina' in *The Fateful Choice, Japan's Road to the Pacific War: Japan's Advance into Southeast Asia, 1939-1941*, ed. James W. Morley, trans. Robert Scalapino (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), p. 165, Evans and Peattie, *Kaigun*, p. 453. See also Tsunoda, 'The Navy's Role in the Southern Strategy', pp. 246, 251.

¹⁸³ Tsunoda, 'The Navy's Role in the Southern Strategy', pp. 248, 269-270.

¹⁸⁴ Hata, 'The Army's Move into Northern Indochina', pp. 206-208.

Decoux, an officer who had commanded French naval forces in the Far East until replacing the anti-Vichy Georges Catroux as Governor General on 24 July 1940.¹⁸⁵ His available ground forces consisted of twenty-four battalions of the Tonkin Division, five battalions of the Annam Brigade, and sixteen battalions of the Cochinchina and Cambodian Division. European troops numbered 12,000 out of the total 120,000 dispersed throughout the colony. French AFVs were negligible amounting to twenty-four medium Renault 1918 tanks of which only two were operable while airpower was also minimal at eighty-two aircraft, but at least twenty-five of these were modern Morane 406 fighters. More positively, gun batteries at Doson and at Camranh Bay were considered to be strong.¹⁸⁶ Against these forces elements of the six divisions comprising the Japanese 21st Army under General Ando Rikichi were available for operations and those involved prominently included the 5th Division from Kwangsi under Lieutenant General Nakamura Aketo along with part of the 104th Division in Canton.¹⁸⁷ Other units employed were drawn from north China including elements of the 26th and 110th Divisions.¹⁸⁸ All of these were supported by the Japanese 5th Fleet under Admiral Takasu Shiro.

Agreements negotiated with French officials during the summer of 1940 allowed for Japanese inspection of the embargo as a preliminary step to an unopposed Japanese occupation, but as with many other best laid plans problems soon developed.¹⁸⁹ Even with agreements in place, arranged in large part by the head of the Japanese inspection unit in Hanoi, General Nishihara Issaku, other

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 166-167. See also TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 19/39 by Captain C.J. Edwards, 12 September 1939.

¹⁸⁶ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 9/40 by Giles, 31 August 1940.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid*. See also TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 10/40 by Giles, 30 September 1940.

¹⁸⁸ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 10/40 by Giles, 30 September 1940.

¹⁸⁹ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 8/40 by Giles, 31 July 1940. See also Hata, 'The Army's Move into Northern Indochina', pp. 158-159, 173-175. See also Lowe, *Great Britain and the Origins of the Pacific War*, p. 169.

Japanese officers created needless embarrassment for both the Konoye government and the army as soon as the invasion began. The most important of these was General Ando Rikichi. Insubordination was exposed as a serious problem in his command once combat broke out from 22 to 25 September 1940 during the battle of Langson near the Kwangsi-Indochina border. General Nakamura and his officers of the 5th Division were most eager to fight against the French and they ignored orders not to initiate combat during their advance from Kwangsi.¹⁹⁰ In violating the occupation agreement the French battalion at Dongdang was attacked and about thirty of all ranks were killed.¹⁹¹ Amongst the dead was the battalion commander Lieutenant Colonel Louvet.¹⁹² Nakamura achieved nothing with his dishonourable conduct except to create needless diplomatic trouble for his government in their relations with third powers, the most important of these being the United States.¹⁹³

Hopeful of assistance during the crisis the French unsuccessfully appealed to the Americans for aircraft. There had been some reason for optimism since in August Roosevelt already threatened to tighten the economic embargo against Japan in order to deter any aggressive action directed southward against the Netherlands East Indies (N.E.I.), but no support was extended to Hanoi due to political concerns over the government's reliability.¹⁹⁴ Fighting was brought to a close by diplomatic agreement within a few days but the manner in which this transpired was similarly odious to foreign officials as was the attack itself. British

¹⁹⁰ Hata, 'The Army's Move into Northern Indochina', pp. 193-198.

¹⁹¹ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 12/40 by Major R. Giles, 30 November 1940.

¹⁹² NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 11; Report No. 9936 by Munson, 30 September 1940. See also TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 10/40 by Giles, 30 September 1940.

¹⁹³ Drea, *Japan's Imperial Army*, p. 212.

¹⁹⁴ NAC, MG 26 J1, Reel C-4574, Volume 296, No. 251093; Dominions Office Telegram No. D-470 to Prime Minister Mackenzie King, 16 September 1940; and NAC, MG 26 J1, Reel C-4574, Volume 296, No. 251105; Dominions Office Telegram No. D-474 to Prime Minister Mackenzie King, 18 September 1940. See also Tsunoda, 'The Navy's Role in the Southern Strategy', p. 254.

officers in Hong Kong paid close attention to events in Indochina for several good reasons and described the affair to London partly to encourage additional support for the Dutch farther south. They noted how:

Under the most miserable conditions, the Governor-General, Vice-Admiral Decoux, decorated Major-General Nishihara, the outgoing head of the Japanese Military Inspectorate, with the Order of the Dragon of Annam. Senior Japanese and French officers also banqueted daily in Hanoi, whilst French prisoners and wounded were rotting in the sun at Langson.¹⁹⁵

Though the French were not held prisoner for long, it was easy for the British to see how Langson might serve as a discouraging premonition of future events at Hong Kong.

Nakamura's actions reflected the confusion then existing amongst Japanese strategic planners amidst the scramble to determine how best to react to the pace of European events with the war in China still unresolved.¹⁹⁶ Not only were the navy and the army at odds over the tempo of challenging the Western powers directly, Nakamura demonstrated the lingering persistence of disunity within the army itself.¹⁹⁷ To remedy this, he and the senior commanders of the 21st Army were disciplined for their conduct as War Minister Tojo Hideki reasserted Tokyo's control.¹⁹⁸ General Ando shouldered much of the blame for the affair as Nakamura's attack was ultimately his responsibility, but as a sign of an overall rise in frustration Ando himself had become far more aggressive and reckless than had previously been the case. At one point Ando also sought additional forces to make a more difficult attack into Yunnan in conjunction with

¹⁹⁵ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 11/40 by Giles, 31 October 1940.

¹⁹⁶ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3; Report No. 9 by Major David Barrett, 24 September 1940. See also Tsunoda, 'The Navy's Role in the Southern Strategy', p. 249.

¹⁹⁷ Tsunoda, 'The Navy's Role in the Southern Strategy', p. 252. See also Hata, 'The Army's Move into Northern Indochina', pp. 156, 199-200, 206-208.

¹⁹⁸ Drea, *Japan's Imperial Army*, p. 210. See also Hata, 'The Army's Move into Northern Indochina', p. 204.

the occupation of north Indochina.¹⁹⁹ It was suspected by some foreign nationals living in Kwangtung that in a previous trip to Tokyo Ando pressed hard for the closure of the Burma Road as well as the invasion of French Indochina.²⁰⁰ Observing events, US Army Captain F.P. Munson laid the blame for the affair squarely at Ando's feet.

The fact that General Nishihara's agent failed in his mission is not surprising and shows all the more clearly the lack of unity in the present Japanese chain of command. That General Nishihara represented the Tokyo government made little or no difference to General Ando, who probably had his own plan to invade Yunnan via Tongking and thought by committing his forces to action he would force the Tokyo government to recognize his course. It is also possible that the news of the signing of the agreement had not reached the commander at Lungchow, but in that case it would seem the messenger would be authorized to explain this to the Japanese commander, and when the fighting continued it showed too clearly that General Ando either did not like the terms of the agreement or had made up his mind to ignore it anyway.²⁰¹

After being summoned by the Emperor, Ando was held responsible for the actions of the 5th Division and was soon replaced by Lieutenant General Ushiroku Jun, while Nakamura was sacked to make room for Major General Nishimura Takuma.²⁰² The South China Army (21st Army) was later re-designated as the Japanese 23rd Army in its place.

Equally disconcerting as the absorption of northern Indochina was the announcement soon afterwards that Japan had joined the Axis Pact on 27 September 1940, but again this move was counterproductive.²⁰³ The Japanese signed the pact to end their diplomatic isolation and to forestall any possibility of an Anglo-German compromise peace. The Japanese also hoped to deter the

¹⁹⁹ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 11; Report No. 9936 by Munson, 30 September 1940.

²⁰⁰ UCC, Accession 83.046C, Box 4, File 68, BOMSC; Letter by Dr. Oscar Thomson to Reverend Jesse Arnup, 3 July 1940.

²⁰¹ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 11; Report No. 9936 by Munson, 30 September 1940.

²⁰² TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 11/40 by Giles, 31 October 1940. See also Hata, 'The Army's Move into Northern Indochina', pp. 183, 204.

²⁰³ Utley, *Going to War with Japan*, p. 136.

British from re-opening the Burma Road and to stave off further economic sanctions by the Americans.²⁰⁴ It produced the opposite effect.

The Americans reacted to the German-Japanese alliance in a variety of ways and the net result was to encourage the British with increased support. They first tightened the July fuel and scrap iron embargo against Japan and then in October issued an evacuation order to all US nationals in China.²⁰⁵ The embargo was also tightened in part because the Japanese were buying as much fuel as possible in the United States while subsequently loading it onto German ships in Japan.²⁰⁶ More support for China was provided when a \$100 million loan was approved in November.²⁰⁷ With American power stirring behind them the British found the Japanese shift towards Germany to be an excellent excuse for reverting to a more confrontational foreign policy and the Burma Road was reopened in October at the end of the three month agreement.²⁰⁸ Victory in the Battle of Britain was another factor behind this decision and although the British military situation was still difficult the prospects of an Anglo-German peace were correspondingly reduced.²⁰⁹ With the Americans beginning to assume the leadership role in confronting Japan, the reopening of the road helped make Anglo-American strategy in the Far East more uniform while strengthening their

²⁰⁴ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 10/40 by Giles, 30 September 1940.

²⁰⁵ NARA, RG 38, Entry 98A, Box 705, F-6-c 23213 to F-6-e 22379; ‘Southward Advance of the Japanese Navy’; and NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3; Report No. 9944 by Captain F.P. Munson, 31 October 1940. See also TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 8/40 by Giles, 31 July 1940. See also Utley, *Going to War with Japan*, pp. 95, 105.

²⁰⁶ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 10/40 by Giles, 30 September 1940.

²⁰⁷ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3; Report No. 9957 by Lieutenant Colonel William Mayer, 4 December 1940. See also TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 12/40 by Giles, 30 November 1940. See also Boyle, *China and Japan at War*, p. 304.

²⁰⁸ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 10/40 by Giles, 30 September 1940. See also S. Olu Agbi, ‘The Pacific War Controversy in Britain’, p. 510.

²⁰⁹ Lowe, *Great Britain and the Origins of the Pacific War*, pp. 167-168. See also Woodward, *British Foreign Policy in the Second World War, Volume II*, p. 107.

bilateral relations.²¹⁰ Britain's goal from this point forward was the formation of a defence alliance between the US, the Netherlands East Indies (NEI) and themselves.²¹¹ Previously, the Burma Road served as a means of applying limited pressure against Stalin but in the end, the British found it to be more effectively used in swaying their new potential senior ally. US intervention in the global crisis started to gain momentum and after the re-election of President Roosevelt in November it greatly accelerated.

By November 1940, events also produced a positive impact on Chinese morale, but even as the war was escalating into larger proportions with greater American involvement the limit of Chinese endurance was still hard to determine.²¹² Hong Kong intelligence officers noted that if China was to continue as an ally, Anglo-American support would require constant reinforcement.

The air has been full of peace rumours and there are good grounds for believing that the Japanese are now making a special effort to come to terms with Chiang Kai Shek as well as with Soviet Russia, and for the same reason. On the other hand there is no doubt that the Generalissimo and the majority of those in power at Chungking are resolved to continue the struggle if only they can be sure that the USA and Britain will intervene on China's behalf in the long run. They realise that we can do nothing to help them now; but they also realise that it is impossible for China to expel the Japanese with her own unaided might. Chiang has always fought this war and rejected all previous offers of peace, in the belief that eventually the victorious Democratic Powers would induce Japan - whether by economic pressure or by force - to let go. It is probable that he still retains this belief; but if by any chance he does not, then he may well be tempted to conclude at any rate an armistice with Japan. In this connection a continued display of Anglo-American firmness vis-à-vis Japan will do much to reassure him.²¹³

²¹⁰ Brereton Greenhous, '*C' Force to Hong Kong; a Canadian Catastrophe: 1941-1945* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1997), p. 9. See also Lowe, *Great Britain and the Origins of the Pacific War*, pp. 169-170.

²¹¹ TNA, CAB 84/20; J.P. (40) 519, 6 October 1940.

²¹² NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 11; Report No. 9943 by Munson, 31 October 1940; and NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3; Report No. 10 by Lieutenant Colonel David Barrett, 3 November 1940. See also TNA, FO 371/27699 F 849/849/10; China Summary No. 10 by Ambassador Archibald Clark Kerr, 14 February 1941. See also Lowe, *Great Britain and the Origins of the Pacific War*, p. 210; and Usui, 'The Politics of War', pp. 414, 422.

²¹³ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 11/40 by Giles, 31 October 1940.

This problem grew more acute as time progressed, becoming most severe during the invasion of the Soviet Union when the German offensive was being pushed hard against Moscow in the fall and winter of 1941. Had the Japanese been free at that time to invade Siberia, Allied grand strategy would have fallen apart. It is ironic then that along with the departure of Soviet Military Attaché General Pavel Rybalko on 10 September 1940, military support for China from the USSR was partly withdrawn as a result of Soviet-Japanese neutrality negotiations.²¹⁴

The most significant result of the invasion of French Indochina was the emergence of the United States as the dominant Chinese ally which eventually translated into considerable increases in American material support, but the costs were steep and the damage to the Chinese economy produced by the war only perpetuated the problem of weakening popular morale. It also increased the level of influence exerted by Washington over Chungking which in turn had a negative impact on Chinese sovereignty. By way of example, aircraft were much needed as the Chinese air force had been all but wiped out after the appearance of the Zero, but the procurement costs were tremendous.²¹⁵ Expenditures for such items were covered with gold reserves which until this time had been sufficient to back approximately seventy percent of all Chinese notes, but inflation became more of a problem as gold transfers were common and the printing of excess notes remained high at \$150 million (CD) per month.²¹⁶ Consul General A.J. Martin commented on this from Chungking. ‘A special plane took gold from Chungking

²¹⁴ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 7/40 by Giles, 30 June 1940; and TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 10/40 by Giles, 30 September 1940.

²¹⁵ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3; Report No. 11 by Lieutenant Colonel David Barrett, 3 December 1940. See also NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 11; Report No. 9956 by Captain F.P. Munson, 5 December 1940.

²¹⁶ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3; Report No. 12 by Lieutenant Colonel David Barrett, 31 December 1940.

to Hongkong on 1st August, the value being estimated at about £150,000.²¹⁷

Under growing inflationary pressures Chiang still managed to maintain Chinese resistance largely because of his own prestige amongst the people and because of their widespread hatred of the Japanese. Major Giles illustrated this point for London by quoting a letter written by an unnamed British traveller. After commenting on how the price of rice had hit the poorest in Chinese society hardest, it was also noted how:

The Generalissimo stands supreme and penetrates to the furthest regions. Take, for instance, Ningpo. In Ningpo there is one God, and he alone is God – the dollar. That is notorious throughout China. It recently cost the 7th Day Adventist Mission more to ship a truck from Shanghai to Ningpo at Mr. Yu Ya Ching's rates than it cost to ship a similar truck from Shanghai to Rangoon. No good citizen of Ningpo would willingly abide the slaughter of such a golden goose. After the Japanese withdrawal from Chinhai at the mouth of the Ningpo River, it was believed that the renewal of steamer sailings from Shanghai could be “arranged”; and so it could, easily, were the matter left to local Sino-Japanese interests. But to the horror of the Ningpo merchants, Chiang Kai Shek ordered that mines were to be laid in the Yung (Ningpo) River and, such is his authority, the order was carried out without audible demur.²¹⁸

War is good business and trade held the potential for bringing the conflict to an end but Chiang effectively kept control of its direction. Unfortunately for the Chinese government they were becoming ever more reliant upon the receipt of Western loans as the war continued to expand.

Under growing Western intervention, peace in China nonetheless became less likely, at least temporarily, and the Japanese prepared for further offensives.²¹⁹ After the aborted Chiang-Itagaki meeting the Kiri Project virtually died and in November the Japanese recognized the new Chinese national

²¹⁷ TNA, FO 371/27637 F 11224/144/10; Chungking Political Report by Consul General A.J. Martin, 3 October 1940.

²¹⁸ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 11/40 by Giles, 31 October 1940.

²¹⁹ First Secretary Smyth, Telegram No. 893.00/14554, in *FRUS, 1940 Volume 4, The Far East*, pp. 348-349.

government under Wang Ching Wei in Nanking.²²⁰ Although the Japanese move negated the possibility of peace in the short term, the recognition of the Wang government was a way of managing the war while preparations for a southern advance gathered momentum.²²¹ Navy Minister Admiral Oikawa Koshiro, former head of Japanese naval forces in China, had already ordered preparatory fleet mobilization measures in September and this included the stockpiling of resources as a preliminary step.²²² In the army, a general reorganization during November included the adoption of a triangular divisional system in place of the square system used up until that time. The excess regiments were used to form five new divisions which thereby augmented Japanese littoral warfare capabilities.²²³

The Japanese also redeployed. Two divisions briefly remained in French Indochina as a garrison but the army withdrew from Kwangsi in October as the need for its occupation had been removed.²²⁴ By December there were still approximately half a dozen divisions attached to the 23rd Army but the 28th and the 5th Divisions, having suffered earlier in Kwangsi from prolonged combat as well as from malaria and dysentery, were withdrawn from Indochina for rest and reorganization, and these were replaced by the 15th and 26th Divisions which were deployed to Swatow and Hainan respectively. Only six thousand Japanese troops remained in northern Indochina by the end of the year.²²⁵

In the meantime, Japanese efforts to break Chinese resistance were strengthened by exploiting their new strategic position from the air. Burma had

²²⁰ TNA, FO 371/27699 F 869/849/10; China Summary No. 11 by Ambassador Archibald Clark Kerr to Lord Halifax, 14 February 1941. See also Boyle, *China and Japan at War*, p. 301, and Usui, 'The Politics of War', p. 417.

²²¹ Ambassador Joseph Grew, Telegram No. 793.94119/694, in *FRUS, 1940 Volume 4, The Far East*, pp. 444-446. See also Usui, 'The Politics of War', p. 415.

²²² Tsunoda, 'The Navy's Role in the Southern Strategy', pp. 260-262.

²²³ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 12/40 by Giles, 30 November 1940.

²²⁴ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 11; Report No. 9943 by Munson, 31 October 1940; and TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 11/40 by Giles, 31 October 1940.

²²⁵ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 13/40 by Giles, 31 December 1940.

become more important for Chinese communications while Kunming was turned into a significant airbase, and so French Indochina airfields were utilized to attack the Burma Road more aggressively than ever before.²²⁶ Japanese facilities included the airfield at Laokay [Lao Cai] near the Yunnan border and other airbases closer to Hanoi such as the Gaalam civil airfield, the base at Phulangtong thirty-three miles northeast of the city, and Phuto, a base situated along the railway.²²⁷ One result of this new air campaign was the bombing of the aircraft assembly factory at Loiwing near the Yunnan-Burmese border on 26 October 1940 in a raid which caused over sixty Chinese casualties.²²⁸ Arrogant contempt of Western weakness was expressed by Captain Kamei Chudo of the navy's Special Mission to Indochina when he stated that 'British circles would not have dreamed that Japanese bombers would visit the outskirts of the Himalayas when they decided to reopen the supply route.'²²⁹

The Chinese also redeployed and reorganized. Nanning was reclaimed and two hundred thousand Chinese troops were sent to the Yunnan-Indochina border to prevent any Japanese move northwest.²³⁰ Kwangsi had already been reinforced during August with an additional five divisions and a regiment of heavy artillery equipped with twenty-seven 150 mm German guns (three or four

²²⁶ NAC, MG 26 J1, Reel C-4574, Volume 295, No. 249936; Dominions Office Telegram No. B-26 to Prime Minister Mackenzie King, 6 February 1940. See also NARA, RG 38, Entry 98A, Box 705, F-6-c 23213 to F-6-e 22379; Report No. 194 by Smith-Hutton, 20 November 1940. See also TNA, FO 371/27697 F 3707/846/10; Report by Captain T.M.H. Pardoe, 17 October 1940; and TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 24/39 by Major R. Giles, 21 November 1939. See also TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 6/40 by Giles, 31 May 1940; and TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 11/40 by Giles, 31 October 1940.

²²⁷ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 10/40 by Giles, 30 September 1940.

²²⁸ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 11/40 by Giles, 31 October 1940. See also TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 7/41 by Giles, 31 August 1941.

²²⁹ NARA, RG 38, Entry 98A, Box 705, F-6-c 23213 to F-6-e 22379; Report No. 194 by Smith-Hutton, 20 November 1940.

²³⁰ NARA, RG 38, Entry 98A, Box 705, F-6-c 23213 to F-6-e 22379; 'Southward Advance of the Japanese Navy'.

guns per company).²³¹ A Chinese army leadership struggle earlier in May resulted in a major organizational change with 7th War Zone being created in Kwangtung by October 1940 under the leadership of General Yu Han Mou.²³² Most of Kwangtung was removed from the control of Chang Fa Kwei in 4th War Zone and this clarified the reality of the leadership situation within south China by centralizing more control directly under the Chungking government.²³³

The invasion of French Indochina was a major step taken by the Japanese to escalate towards war with the West, as was joining the Axis Pact.²³⁴ American reaction was swift and international support for China increased accordingly. American money and a resumption of military traffic along the Burma Road helped offset the loss of the Indochina railway and the Chinese were able to continue the war, but like Britain, it would be under US domination. Aside from Burma, Hong Kong continued to serve as a significant base of Chinese support and with Indochina occupied Hong Kong's importance was again increased, a fact well understood by the Japanese.

Escalation at Hong Kong

With control firmly established over northern Indochina and the air war picking up steam over Yunnan, the Japanese army returned its attention to the neglected Chinese logistical situation in Kwangtung. During the occupation of southern Kwangsi the Japanese army was hard pressed to confront the Chinese at any great distance from Canton and the noose around Hong Kong had frayed.²³⁵ This was

²³¹ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 11; Report No. 9924 by Munson, 21 August 1940; and TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 9/40 by Giles, 31 August 1940.

²³² NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 38; Memorandum by Major David Barrett, 1 October 1940.

²³³ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9873 by Captain Earl Mattice, 1 May 1940.

²³⁴ Drea, *Japan's Imperial Army*, p. 213.

²³⁵ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 11/40 by Giles, 31 October 1940.

remedied after the withdrawal from Kwangsi and although the Japanese were preparing to move into the southwest Pacific before a conclusion to the war in China could be secured, pressure against Chinese lines of communication was continued to maintain the country's isolation. The Burma Road and Hong Kong were the only routes still functioning in this capacity southwards, but of the two, Hong Kong was more exposed and Anglo-Japanese friction remained a dangerous problem. It was a problem made worse by the lack of uniformity in military policy amongst local British colonial officials.

Larger Japanese designs for a southward advance raised the strategic value of southern China and this increased the potential for turning the low intensity conflict at Hong Kong into an open Anglo-Japanese war. Victory in China depended upon clearing the Canton to Hankow railway of Chinese forces. Hence, the closure of the Burma Road combined with the occupation of Hong Kong were now considered essential requirements of that plan.²³⁶ Because of the capitulation of France air attacks were intensified against the railway lines in southern China and after a temporary lull Hong Kong military officers assumed that they might face an attack at any time.²³⁷ London was informed of their concerns and observations.

The capture of Hong Kong, together with the Foreign Settlements at Shanghai and Tientsin, would be a crushing blow to the political and economic side of Chinese resistance, and might even prove fatal. So long as these centres of anti-Japanese feeling and action remain, Japan can never hope to achieve complete success in China. This opportunity to eradicate them may not recur.²³⁸

It was also known that in early June the Soviets and the Japanese had signed an agreement officially ending the Nomonhan dispute of 1939 making a southern

²³⁶ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3; Report No. 7 by Major David Barrett, 22 July 1940. See also Hata, 'The Army's Move into Northern Indochina', p. 169.

²³⁷ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 6/40 by Giles, 31 May 1940.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*

advance more viable.²³⁹ Accordingly, by June 1940 the South China Army assembled plans for a direct invasion of Hong Kong and Japanese troops were once again deployed along the border for the purpose of restoring the landward blockade. Their assigned task was to stem the movement of Chinese military supplies, but the arrival of these forces was primarily meant to be an act of intimidation.²⁴⁰ On 21 June 1940, the Japanese 124th Regiment (18th Division) under Colonel Nomizo landed at Namtau and with air support advanced east along the frontier to Shataukok. The Mirs Bay supply point for Hong Kong at Shayuchang was occupied and burned on the 27th.²⁴¹ With the return of Japanese ground forces to Hong Kong's landward frontier food supplies became increasingly strained.²⁴² This new threat was not ignored. With mixed results all women and children were ordered to leave the colony on 1 July 1940.²⁴³

Immediate British concern somewhat diminished due to the limited number of Japanese troops that actually appeared, but nonetheless, a feeling of unease persisted amongst some colonial officials following their arrival. This was fuelled on 24 June 1940 when officers of the 1st Kumaon Rifles witnessed a fight for control of Shumchun as the Japanese clashed with elements of the Cantonese 159th Division.²⁴⁴ Although potentially dangerous to the colony's security this at least proved to be another useful opportunity with which to assess Japanese and

²³⁹ NARA, RG 59, USSDCF, Reel 8; Report No. 45, 893.00 N.I. Reports/247 by McQuillen, 10 June 1940.

²⁴⁰ NARA, RG 38, Entry 98A, Box 705, F-6-c 23213 to F-6-e 22379; Report No. 112-40, 29 July 1940; and NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 11; Report No. 9919 by Munson, 30 July 1940. See also TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 7/40 by Giles, 30 June 1940. See also George Endacott, *Hong Kong Eclipse* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 7-8; and Hata, 'The Army's Move into Northern Indochina', pp. 159, 169.

²⁴¹ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 7/40 by Giles, 30 June 1940.

²⁴² *Ibid.*

²⁴³ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3; Report No. 7 by Barrett, 22 July 1940; and NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 11; Report No. 9919 by Munson, 30 July 1940. See also UCC, Accession 83.046C, Box 4, File 65, BOMSC; Letter by Mrs. Susie H. McRae to Reverend Jesse Arnup, 2 July 1940. See also Endacott, *Hong Kong Eclipse*, p. 14.

²⁴⁴ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 7/40 by Giles, 30 June 1940. See also TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 8/40 by Giles, 31 July 1940.

Chinese infantry tactics. A report written by Major Giles indicated that not all British military officers were willing to underestimate Japanese army capabilities. According to Giles:

Both sides made good use of ground, and fire and movement were well coordinated. As in the case of the similar skirmish which was witnessed and fully reported by O.C. 1st Kumaon Rifles last November, there was a total absence of the ‘human bullet’ spirit on the part of the Japanese; but on the other hand they worked forward over exposed ground very well, and covering fire was given as and when (but for no longer than) was necessary. The unprepossessing appearance of the Japanese troops on our frontier should not blind us to the fact that they are by no means so untrained as their appearance would indicate.²⁴⁵

He also added that the Japanese soon began to improve the road network immediately north of the colony to Canton.²⁴⁶ This was necessary preparation for any future attack on Hong Kong. Significantly, Major General Grasett took note of these and subsequent developments and soon informed London about the potential for an outbreak of war at Hong Kong at any time.²⁴⁷ In a bid to help to bring this about the Chinese attacked Japanese ground forces again at Shumchun on 18 and 19 September as well as at other locations closer to Canton.²⁴⁸

The Japanese also increased pressure by tightening their grip on outlying coastal areas as both the Swatow and Amoy regions were reinforced for upcoming ground operations during the summer.²⁴⁹ Hainan was reinforced causing some foreign observers to speculate that the Japanese may have been making

²⁴⁵ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 8/40 by Giles, 31 July 1940.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁷ TNA, FO 371/24667 F 3568/43/10; Telegram No. 184 by Major General A.E. Grasett to Admiralty, 6 July 1940.

²⁴⁸ NARA, RG 38, Entry 98A, Box 705, F-6-c 23213 to F-6-e 22379; ‘Southward Advance of the Japanese Navy’. See also NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 11; Report No. 9943 by Munson, 31 October 1940.

²⁴⁹ NARA, RG 38, Entry 98A, Box 705, F-6-c 23213 to F-6-e 22379; Report No. 128 by H.H. Smith-Hutton, 3 September 1940; and NARA, RG 38, Entry 98A, Box 705, F-6-c 23213 to F-6-e 22379; ‘Southward Advance of the Japanese Navy’. See also TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 8/40 by Giles, 31 July 1940; and TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 11/40 by Giles, 31 October 1940.

preparations for an invasion of the Dutch East Indies.²⁵⁰ Air bombardment throughout Kwangtung was intensified from July through the fall, although a less than convincing display of strength was applied against the Chekiang supply lines to Ningpo.²⁵¹ This was reported from Hong Kong at the end of July.

Farcical operations for tightening the Japanese blockade of Ningpo and other areas of the Chekiang coast, petered out in the usual welter of rival claims of sweeping victories, accompanied by the passing of considerable sums of hard cash to ensure a Japanese withdrawal.²⁵²

The arrival of additional troops along the Hong Kong border in August followed the first group in June and the arrest of British nationals in Japan that same month created further anxiety amongst British military officers.²⁵³ Reinforcement of the 124th Regiment along the Hong Kong border by the 137th Regiment under General Hara Mamoru had shown that the Japanese were fully determined to enforce the blockade with renewed vigour.²⁵⁴ The 137th Regiment (of the 104th Division) brought the total number of Japanese troops adjacent to Hong Kong up to 5,000. It would not take many more to make the threat of invasion credible and a zone of occupation five miles north of Hong Kong to Pokut was established to support such action. Road improvement continued and an amphibious landing area was prepared at Deep Bay for possible future use.²⁵⁵ Officers in Hong Kong thought that the Japanese might also have been preparing for a move against the Chinese 153rd, 157th, 159th and 165th Divisions located around Waichow but it was soon determined that the Japanese reinforcement of the region was only

²⁵⁰ NARA, RG 59, USSDCF, Reel 8; Report No. 45, 893.00 N.I. Reports/247 by McQuillen, 10 June 1940.

²⁵¹ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9856 by Captain Earl Mattice, 6 March 1940. See also TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 8/40 by Giles, 31 July 1940; and TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 10/40 by Giles, 30 September 1940; and TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 11/40 by Giles, 31 October 1940.

²⁵² TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 8/40 by Giles, 31 July 1940.

²⁵³ *Ibid.* See also TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 9/40 by Giles, 31 August 1940.

²⁵⁴ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 9/40 by Giles, 31 August 1940.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.* See also TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 13/40 by Giles, 31 December 1940.

meant to strengthen the blockade.²⁵⁶ As a countermove the Chinese reinforced Waichow with an additional two divisions during November.²⁵⁷

Japanese aggression displayed in south China and elsewhere further strained Anglo-Japanese relations. Air attacks on civilian airliners, for example, had become more frequent and deadly. One of the more brutal incidents was also a case of great Japanese embarrassment, when on 7 July 1940 they shot down an Air France plane carrying two of their own Indochina inspectors who had been monitoring French compliance with the embargo against China.²⁵⁸ Other nations such as Canada also felt the brunt of Japanese hostility as was seen in the bombing of the S.S. *Empress of Asia* on 14 September 1940 near Japan.²⁵⁹ Closer to Hong Kong, Japanese anti-aircraft gunners stationed at the Namtau airfield were quick to shoot at British and Chinese aircraft flying nearby even if the planes were inside British airspace. On 13 September a CNAC DC2 was hit shortly after leaving Kai Tak airfield as was an RAF Vildebeeste on the 27th. Both were inside Hong Kong airspace.²⁶⁰ Two civilian airliners were shot down during October 1940 and one of these, on the 29th, was attacked near Kunming. This was a CNAC plane in which nine of the fourteen people aboard were killed, including the pilot W.C. Kent, after the aircraft had been grounded and strafed.²⁶¹ Major Giles described the attack.

²⁵⁶ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 9/40 by Giles, 31 August 1940.

²⁵⁷ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 12/40 by Giles, 30 November 1940.

²⁵⁸ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 8/40 by Giles, 31 July 1940.

²⁵⁹ NAC, RG 25, Volume 2813, File 1079-40; Report by G. Goold, 17 September 1940.

²⁶⁰ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 10/40 by Giles, 30 September 1940. See also Tony Banham, *Not the Slightest Chance: The Defence of Hong Kong, 1941* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2003), p. 6.

²⁶¹ NARA, RG 38, Entry 98A, Box 705, F-6-c 23213 to F-6-e 22379; Report No. 194 by Smith-Hutton, 20 November 1940. See also TNA, FO 371/27683 F 561/561/10; Letter by A.J. Bell to Brigadier General C.R. Woodroffe, 18 November 1940; and TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 11/40 by Giles, 31 October 1940. See also Peter Moreira, *Hemingway on the China Front: His WWII Spy Mission with Martha Gellhorn* (Washington: Potomac Books, 2006), pp. 46-47.

The China National Aviation Corporation 12-ton Douglas DC-2 14 passenger airliner 'Chungking' – No. 39 (formerly the 'Kweiling') – No. 32, the same aircraft which was shot down by Japanese naval fighters in the Pearl River Delta near Macao on August 24th, 1938, and which, after repair carried out the initial flight on the Chungking-Rangoon air service), left Chungking for Kunming shortly after noon on 29th October, 1940. As Yunnan province was under air alarm the pilot cruised around the northern part of that province waiting for the 'all-clear' to be given, but after some time decided to continue to Kunming. The aircraft was carrying two pilots, one radio operator, one air hostess, and ten passengers. As the aeroplane approached Tchangyi (Tsunyi), 75 miles north-east of Kunming the radio operator sent the message, 'sighted Tchangyi'. This was at 1432 hours and immediately afterwards the aircraft was intercepted and fired at by five Japanese aircraft. The last message received was, 'Am trying to land'. After the plane had been forced down the Japanese aircraft dropped bombs on the aerodrome and continued to fire their machine-guns at the aeroplane, which was destroyed by fire. Of the ten passengers, seven were killed, two were wounded and one was uninjured. The pilot and stewardess were also killed.²⁶²

Japanese attention was drawn to the company as CNAC was a significant blockade runner partly owned by the Chinese government. CNAC was used to export strategic materials and this included a deal in which three hundred tons of tungsten were flown into Hong Kong from Namyung, near the Kiangsi border, every month.²⁶³ Perhaps the Japanese wished to corner the market at Ningpo.

Lack of airpower throughout East Asia prevented any kind of deterrence to these attacks. The British were hard pressed to reinforce the Far East because of the Battle of Britain, while by November 1940 the Chinese air force had been smashed over Chungking leaving about thirty aircraft spread throughout the country.²⁶⁴ To defend their interests the British estimated their requirements to be three hundred thirty-six aircraft to cover Malaya, Singapore, Borneo, Australia and NEI. In August 1940 they only had eighty-eight throughout the entire region, none of which were useful fighters. The Dutch in NEI were similarly hard

²⁶² TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 12/40 by Giles, 30 November 1940.

²⁶³ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 2/41 by Major R. Giles, 2 February 1941.

²⁶⁴ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3; Report No. 10 by Barrett, 3 November 1940. See also Chennault, *Way of a Fighter*, p. 89; and Lowe, 'Retreat from Power', p. 52.

pressed with one hundred forty-four but of these only twenty-four were fighters.²⁶⁵ After several months without any deliveries to China, Stalin sent forty I-16 fighters in early December 1940 but Chinese problems extended beyond a lack of aircraft because of persistent logistical difficulties.²⁶⁶ Six million gallons or about eighteen thousand tons of aviation fuel were arriving in China annually but that was only enough to keep about forty fighters and a similar number of bombers in the air. Amongst other supplies, half of this total entered the country from the frequently interdicted route from Hong Kong via Tamshui and Waichow.²⁶⁷ In contrast the Japanese had one hundred seventy well supplied aircraft on Hainan, twelve at Sanchau, plus thirty more at Canton. Nanning based an additional thirty six planes until October.²⁶⁸ There were many other aircraft available in central and north China. Aside from these air forces the Japanese navy temporarily increased its carrier strength patrolling off the coast of Kwangtung during September while the army kept busy in Indochina.²⁶⁹

As part of the blockade of Hong Kong the Japanese also resumed their ground operations in the western part of the Pearl River Delta but additional motivations were the acquisition of loot and to provide training. Shekki had already been reoccupied in March and since the Sze Yap District was previously identified by Japanese forces as an area of interest the city of Toishan was finally

²⁶⁵ NAC, MG 26 J4, Reel H-1561, Volume 407, No. C286798; Chiefs of Staff Far Eastern Appraisal, 13 August 1940.

²⁶⁶ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 13/40 by Giles, 31 December 1940.

²⁶⁷ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3; Report No. 10 by Barrett, 3 November 1940. See also TNA, FO 371/27624 F 1110/125/10; Telegram No. 9051 by Major General A.E. Grasett to War Office, 18 February 1941; and TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 11/40 by Giles, 31 October 1940.

²⁶⁸ NARA, RG 38, M975, Reel 2; Estimate of Potential Military Strength Documents G, Naval Attaché Tokyo, Volume 3, Report No. 160, 27 September 1940. See also TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 8/39 by Edwards, 11 April 1939.

²⁶⁹ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 10/40 by Giles, 30 September 1940.

taken in late October 1940.²⁷⁰ Transportation was difficult in the region as the railway between Toishan and Sunwui had been destroyed through a combination of bombing and Chinese guerrilla activity, hence, there were few mechanical means available to reach the city. Even so army units were able to converge on Toishan from the northeast using riverboats starting at Sunwui while cavalry approached overland from the south through mountainous passes after being landed at the coast at Kwonghai Bay. The force from Sunwui included at least two small gunboats and the infantry was towed towards the city in rafts. The cavalry were aided in their march by fifth columnists dressed as monks.²⁷¹ No Chinese army units were available to defend the region but irrespective of this the city was heavily bombarded and Japanese forces were able to occupy Toishan without difficulty.²⁷² Although the occupation was not of great duration the blockade was once again extended resulting in a curtailment of food supplies to Hong Kong. The arrival of the 38th Division and the 2nd Guards Independent Mixed Brigade in the Chungshan District during December soon followed.²⁷³

With Japanese army units deployed throughout the Pearl River Delta, British officials in London and the Far East grew more anxious over the possibility of an attack on Hong Kong, but with limited resources hopes for greater security were placed on improving military cooperation with potential allies and by augmenting special warfare capabilities in southern China.²⁷⁴ The greatest sense of relief came from the re-election of President Roosevelt. Hope

²⁷⁰ UCC, Accession 83.046C, Box 4, File 65, BOMSC; Letter by Mrs. Susie H. McRae to Reverend Jesse Arnup, 1 April 1940.

²⁷¹ NAC, RG 25, Volume 3233, File 5548-40C; Military Situation Memorandum by Lieutenant Colonel Hiram F. Wooster, 20 May 1944. See also NARA, RG 38, Entry 98A, Box 705, F-6-c 23213 to F-6-e 22379; Report No. 845-44 by C.A. Perkins, 28 December 1944.

²⁷² UCC, Accession 83.046C, Box 4, File 65, BOMSC; Letter by Reverend Duncan McRae to Reverend Jesse Arnup, 5 November 1940.

²⁷³ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 13/40 by Giles, 31 December 1940.

²⁷⁴ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 9/40 by Giles, 31 August 1940.

for greater US intervention was founded on the belief that American public opinion was increasingly becoming pro-British as European countries continued to fall under German domination and secret Anglo-American military discussions during August produced similar optimism.²⁷⁵ To encourage collaboration in Asia between the British, Dutch, Chinese and Americans, Air Chief Marshal Robert Brooke-Popham was appointed from October 1940 as the new British Commander-in-Chief, Far East Command based in Singapore.²⁷⁶ Somewhat disappointingly the Americans did not attend the Singapore Defence Conference held that same month because of the impending election. Nevertheless, Brooke-Popham got on with his work and one of his first tasks, supported by Churchill, was to develop a special warfare training program with the Chinese.²⁷⁷ He quickly began preparations for the establishment of such units as Detachment 204 and the China Commando Group, both under the direction of the Special Operations Executive (SOE) which was formed in July.²⁷⁸

Brooke-Popham's arrival also encouraged General Grasett in Hong Kong to push for greater British commitment in China. Earlier in the year a British propaganda office had been opened in Hong Kong to counter Japanese radio broadcasts.²⁷⁹ Grasett and others thought that Britain needed a better propaganda campaign both in China as well as Japan since publications containing illustrations of happy soldiers with girlfriends or women in air raid shelters sent

²⁷⁵ NAC, RG 25, Reel T-1813, File British Press Service; Movements of Opinion in the USA, September 1940. See also TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 11/40 by Giles, 31 October 1940. See also Farrell, *The Basis and Making of British Grand Strategy*, p. 54.

²⁷⁶ Lowe, *Great Britain and the Origins of the Pacific War*, p. 187.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid*, p. 180. See also Baxter, 'Britain and the War in China, 1937-1945', pp. 98-99.

²⁷⁸ Baxter, 'Britain and the War in China, 1937-1945', p. 162. See also Charles Cruickshank, *SOE in the Far East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 77-78; and Farrell, *The Basis and Making of British Grand Strategy*, p. 41; and Yu, "In God we Trusted, In China we Busted", pp. 41, 44-46.

²⁷⁹ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 5/40 by Giles, 30 April 1940.

the wrong kind of message, unlike German propaganda which featured tanks and victory parades. Hong Kong intelligence officers explained this to London.

Our own representatives in Tokyo are fully alive to the necessity for careful selection in the type of propaganda which should be sent to Japan, and have requested London to avoid, as far as possible, the sending of photographs depicting the democratic habits of their Majesties, soldiers kissing their sweethearts, and others of this kind, which though popular in America and the Dominions are highly incongruous and un-military to Japanese eyes. Photographs of U-Boat personnel in uniform as prisoners of war, would go a long way to counteract similar German efforts; whilst action pictures of troops, naval units engaged in anti-submarine work etc. should also be distributed on a lavish scale. Best of all however are photographs of aeroplanes of all types. The Japanese dove of peace has long since developed a tendency to resemble a twin-engine bomber; and a study of the Japanese pictorial press for the last year or two reveals the undisputable fact that pictures of aeroplanes, in action or on the ground, are more popular than anything else. Japan is becoming air-minded at a phenomenal rate, and the more we can do to convince her that we are a first-class nation in the air, the better for our prestige.²⁸⁰

More significantly, Grasett's first request to the War Office to coincide with Brooke-Popham's arrival was for permission to form an independent commando in Hong Kong. He wanted a unit that could be used to counterattack Japanese forces in the event of war but the scheme was shelved as the commando had to be created from local resources.²⁸¹ Grasett then revived a previous request from February 1940 for regular infantry reinforcements for the colony. The original was submitted after the War Office extended the length of the period of relief and the second request for an additional battalion was sent in October.²⁸² This request, however, was at variance with the views of Governor Northcote and it demonstrates how Grasett tended to act independently of external authority.

²⁸⁰ TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 25/39 by Major R. Giles, 5 December 1939.

²⁸¹ TNA, WO 106/2382; Telegram No. 8279 by Major General A.E. Grasett, 26 October 1940; and TNA, WO 106/2382; Telegram No. 15741 by Air Chief Marshal Sir Robert Brooke-Popham, 13 February 1941.

²⁸² Greenhous, '*'C' Force to Hong Kong*', p. 8. See also Perras, "'Our Position in the Far East would be Stronger Without this Unsatisfactory Commitment'", p. 247.

Without altering the military situation at Hong Kong, Cabinet rejection of Grasett's request struck a middle ground between the General and the Governor by maintaining the status quo. Governor Northcote had again reversed his opinion on Hong Kong's defence policy and informed Whitehall of his views upon reaching London. Because of a medical problem Northcote returned to England for approximately seven months from August 1940 to March 1941.²⁸³ One of his first actions upon arrival was to recommend to the government that Hong Kong be demilitarized. His appeal was considered but the War Cabinet concluded that American support was now more likely in the event of an attack on British forces. They rejected his advice as demilitarization would have had a negative impact on US policy.²⁸⁴ Their reasons were varied but most significantly it was the view of the Chiefs of Staff view that so long as Hong Kong served as a potentially useful tool in helping to bring America into the war, demilitarization was unjustified.

The retention of the garrison and our avowed intention of defending our territory:-

- (a) Would cause the Japanese to hesitate before attacking it.
 - (b) Would encourage the USA to take a firm line. Its gallant defence might be an important factor in bringing them into the war.
9. In fact the possible loss of prestige due to the fall of Hong Kong in war even with all its attendant horrors would have less serious results than the loss of prestige from its demilitarisation under present conditions.
10. We therefore are firmly of the opinion, with which we understand the Foreign Office are in agreement, that demilitarization is out of the question at the present time. In the event of war Hong Kong must be regarded as an outpost and held as long as possible.²⁸⁵

Hong Kong officials were ordered to stockpile food and supplies for a protracted siege as the colony, not only China, was now to be used to influence American

²⁸³ Endacott, *Hong Kong Eclipse*, p. 53.

²⁸⁴ TNA, CAB 84/20; C.O.S. (40) 549, 15 October 1940; and TNA, CAB 121/718; C.O.S. (40) 843, 18 October 1940. See also Bell, “Our Most Exposed Outpost”, p. 86; and Perras, “Our Position in the Far East would be Stronger Without this Unsatisfactory Commitment”, p. 245.

²⁸⁵ TNA, CAB 121/718; C.O.S. (40) 843, 18 October 1940.

foreign policy in Britain's favour.²⁸⁶ A significant problem still to be faced, however, in the event of a Japanese attack was the lack of provisions for over two million civilians. Of these, many also possessed unknown loyalties.²⁸⁷

Refusal of Grasett's appeals did not prevent him from seeking greater collaboration with the Chinese and this he did on his own authority. When diplomatic tension with the Japanese was at its height over the Burma Road crisis in July, the War Office ordered Grasett not to engage in direct talks with the Chinese and give the Japanese any pretext for additional complaint.²⁸⁸ Grasett ignored this by sending Major Charles Boxer to Chungking in August to gather intelligence on Japanese troop deployments.²⁸⁹ In October after the departure of Governor Northcote, Grasett established a joint Sino-British radio intelligence network based in Hong Kong for the stated purpose of providing early warning against Japanese air operations from Canton airfields.²⁹⁰ In addition to Hong Kong's air defence requirements, teams placed in Hainan and the Bocca Tigris were established with the alternate functions of identifying Japanese army and naval movements.²⁹¹

Grasett informed the War Office of his actions after he had already begun the project and explained how Chinese military personnel would be required to work in Hong Kong. He wrote that the, 'Chinese can read Japanese Naval and military air force codes, but that as their operators use unorthodox system of signals it will be necessary for Chinese operators to man Hong Kong

²⁸⁶ TNA, CAB 121/718; C.O.S. (40) 875, 28 October 1940.

²⁸⁷ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 7/40 by Giles, 30 June 1940; and TNA, CAB 84/20; C.O.S. (40) 549, 15 October 1940.

²⁸⁸ Oliver Lindsay, *The Lasting Honour* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1978), p. 5.

²⁸⁹ Philip Snow, *The Fall of Hong Kong: Britain, China and the Japanese Occupation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), p. 48.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.* See also TNA, WO 106/2389; Memorandum , 10 September 1941; and TNA, WO 106/2389; Telegram No. 8204 by Major General A.E. Grasett to War Office, 15 October 1940.

²⁹¹ TNA, WO 106/2389; Memorandum, 10 September 1941; and TNA, WO 106/2389; Telegram No. 8260 by Major General A.E. Grasett to War Office, 23 October 1940.

terminals'.²⁹² In developing this link with the Chinese army Grasett was acting on his own and he did not notify colonial civilian authorities. Major General E.F. Norton was serving as the Officer Administering the Government in the absence of Governor Northcote, and he downplayed the significance of the issue when he communicated with the War Office in November.

Arrangements made by G.O.C. designed purely to improve military intelligence naturally attempted to establish some measure of warning in war of approach of hostile aircraft. At present we can expect no warning of air raids and in view of vulnerability of Hong Kong to air attack and teeming Chinese population exposed such warning is a vital factor.

G.O.C. himself has been conducting secret conversations with the Chinese on this question and has arranged for necessary wireless sets and Chinese operators using a Chinese code to be accommodated in military premises and under military supervision. There are no administrative problems which concern the Colonial Government. On political side as arrangements made are purely of a military character, for reasons of secrecy G.O.C. has not informed the Colonial Government. They are in fact merely extension of existing intelligence system employing Chinese agents for reasons of defence and therefore have no political significance.²⁹³

The radio net was not merely an extension of the existing intelligence system. It was something new that had considerable diplomatic significance. Grasett increased British involvement in the war against Japan on his own initiative and the radio net established that the British and the Chinese were acting as active military allies, albeit in a limited manner.

Significantly, Ambassador Clark Kerr was notified from the beginning and gave the project his full endorsement. Grasett explained this in October.

Chinese delegation consisting of Major-General Colonel and Air Force Officer arrived as personal emissaries of Generalissimo with instructions to cooperate with us to the full. Discussions held on (A) possibility of organising air raid warning system on lines found so effective at Chungking and elsewhere and (B) speeding up of

²⁹² TNA, WO 106/2389; Telegram No. 8260 by Grasett to War Office, 23 October 1940.

²⁹³ TNA, WO 106/2389; Telegram No. 701 by Major General E.F. Norton to War Office, 3 November 1940.

intelligence reports from likely centres of Japanese troop concentrations forming potential threat to colony ...

Although this arrangement has been kept strictly secret and is in fact solely designed to improve our local intelligence and secure vital air raid warning, it does constitute closer contact with the Chinese which would seem inevitable since Japan has joined the Axis and former reasons for keeping Chinese at arms length have now lost much of their validity. The Generalissimo is giving this matter his whole hearted personal support and I have acted throughout with the full approval of the Ambassador.²⁹⁴

Grasett may have had the approval of the Ambassador but his plan should have been discussed at a higher level. Neither Grasett nor Clark Kerr was in China to determine British foreign policy as they chose. The plan should have been approved in London by the departments involved before its implementation.

One of the reasons why Grasett acted independently when the opportunity presented itself was because he and the colonial government held opposing views on Hong Kong's defence policy, and Governor Northcote, for one, most certainly would not have approved. Following the discovery of a Chinese intelligence organization in Hong Kong during the David Kung incident in 1939, an angry Northcote expressed his adamant opposition to the Chinese using Hong Kong as an intelligence base, but Grasett ignored this once the governor was out of the colony and the government was being administered by Norton and the ailing Colonial Secretary N.L. Smith.²⁹⁵ After Northcote's return to Hong Kong in the spring of 1941, another clandestine Chinese radio transmitter was discovered on Robinson Road on 19 May 1941 under the control of Shum Hang Chung. Shum was working on counter-intelligence operations in Hong Kong, Shanghai and Macau for the Kuomintang, and his group had been operating for a period of three

²⁹⁴ TNA, WO 106/2389; Telegram No. 8260 by Grasett to War Office, 23 October 1940.

²⁹⁵ TNA, CO 967/69; Letter by Governor Sir Mark Young to A. Parkinson, 14 October 1941. See also TNA, FO 371/23520 F 12017/3661/10; Letter by Governor Sir Geoffry Northcote to Ambassador Sir Archibald Clark Kerr, 16 October 1939. See also Endacott, *Hong Kong Eclipse*, p. 53.

years.²⁹⁶ As with the David Kung affair Northcote was similarly distressed, and although he wanted to expel the Chinese agents involved, he followed the advice of Clark Kerr and refrained from doing so to avoid causing further diplomatic embarrassment.²⁹⁷ Instead, the British responded with an official diplomatic protest delivered by Clark Kerr.²⁹⁸ Northcote would most certainly not have supported Grasett's scheme to establish a Sino-British radio net centred upon Hong Kong because he would have viewed it as a provocative move. Thus, Grasett under his own initiative implemented his plan and in his own way helped advance British involvement in the Sino-Japanese war.

In fairness to Grasett, the Cabinet had already decided to use Hong Kong as bait in bringing America into the war and his actions can understandably be seen as an officer making the best of his military situation with the meagre resources available to him. But in the fall of 1941 his conduct during the reinforcement of Hong Kong again showed that he was indeed trying to escalate the war on his own initiative; in this case by involving Canada. He was successful in both instances. In the interim official British policy remained unchanged and Hong Kong was not to be reinforced, nor was there any intention of resisting a Japanese occupation of southern Indochina militarily. Unfortunately for the British their Far Eastern strategic plans became known to the Japanese after the *S.S. Automedon* was sunk on 11 November 1940 in the Indian Ocean by a German surface raider. A copy of the August 1940 Chiefs of Staff Far Eastern

²⁹⁶ TNA, WO 208/720; Telegram No. 410 by Governor Sir Geoffry Northcote to Lord Moyne, 19 May 1941.

²⁹⁷ TNA, FO 371/27719 F 4630/4526/10; Telegram No. 85 by Governor Sir Geoffry Northcote to Ambassador Sir Archibald Clark Kerr, 29 May 1941.

²⁹⁸ TNA, FO 371/27719 F 4526/4526/10; Telegram No. 95 by Ambassador Sir Archibald Clark Kerr to Governor Sir Geoffry Northcote, 24 May 1941.

Appreciation fell into German hands as a result.²⁹⁹ Armed with the information contained in this document the Japanese continued to pursue a southern advance strategy without undue worry over possible British resistance. Military pressure was consequently maintained against Hong Kong. Japanese naval forces patrolled the waters adjacent to the colony and from May to December 1940 they carried out forty-one known attacks on junks.³⁰⁰ Grasett's frustration would mount as the blockade continued because his options for response remained limited, but by the summer of 1941 he became quite willing to risk open war on his own initiative by challenging Japanese naval vessels directly with the meagre forces he had available.³⁰¹

Conclusion

After the occupation of southern Kwangsi failed to bring an end to the war the Japanese sought to find solutions for their problems elsewhere. The French defeat produced fundamental changes in Japanese grand strategy as it seemed to provide a unique opportunity to tighten their grip on China. It was a watershed event. The invasion of Indochina was the first step of the Japanese advance to the southwest Pacific and preparations for war against both Britain and America were begun. With the absorption of northern Indochina the importance of Hong Kong and Burma as conduits sustaining Chinese resistance greatly increased and Hong

²⁹⁹ Christopher Bayly and Tim Harper, *Forgotten Armies: the fall of British Asia, 1941-1945* (London: Penguin, 2004), p. 114. See also Peter Elphick, *Far Eastern File: the Intelligence War in the Far East, 1930-1945* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1997), pp. 256, 259.

³⁰⁰ TNA, FO 371/27653 F 3809/188/10; Letter by Major General E.F. Norton to Lord Lloyd 20 December 1940; and TNA, FO 371/27653 F 4030/188/10; Letter by Colonial Secretary N.L. Smith to Lord Moyne, 20 February 1941. See also TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 11/40 by Giles, 31 October 1940.

³⁰¹ TNA, FO 371/27653 F 7144/188/10; Telegram by Naval Attaché, Tokyo to Admiralty, 30 July 1941.

Kong's military situation deteriorated because its occupation had now become a primary Japanese objective. With diminishing diplomatic options in the Far East so long as the war against Germany continued, the British were somewhat successful in leveraging their support for China as a means of inducing greater international cooperation against their enemies. The cost, however, was a further weakening of their global position as manifested with the transfer of Canada into America's orbit. But success in Washington was not paralleled in Moscow and Stalin remained a loyal partner of Hitler. Nevertheless, with a temporary closure of the Burma Road, China was kept fighting despite intensified Japanese efforts to arrange peace, and this was accomplished in part because of Hong Kong. Against this backdrop British military policy for the colony remained virtually unchanged, notwithstanding the best efforts of senior colonial officials to alter it. Lacking an alliance with China while remaining militarily weak, Hong Kong invited Japanese attack. In such an event the Cabinet and the Chiefs of Staff hoped to use Hong Kong as a means of bringing America into the war.

Chapter 8

The Triumph of Collective Security: Hong Kong, 1941

By the end of 1941 the United States assumed the leading position within the anti-Axis coalition and this transition had partly developed in the Far East. Britain had already scaled back its proxy war in China after the temporary closure of the Burma Road in the summer and fall of 1940, yet the conflict remained a potentially useful tool with which to influence other great powers under changing geopolitical conditions. Important adjustments occurred in mid-1941, making the latter half of the year the most crucial period of the Second World War. Two major events were the German invasion of the Soviet Union and the release of the ‘Maud’ Report in Britain, a document which confirmed the feasibility of producing an atomic bomb within the projected timescale of the war.¹ Anglo-American grand strategy rested upon the continuation of Soviet resistance but this appeared unlikely given the near destruction of the Red Army. Unable to provide immediate direct assistance to Stalin it was considered essential to increase support to China as an indirect method of securing the Soviet Far East. During these six months China therefore became the most significant area affecting Allied plans in East Asia, and because of this Hong Kong completed its transformation into a globally significant strategic objective.

As the Far Eastern crisis deteriorated throughout 1941, American opposition to Japanese ambitions steadily grew. The Japanese were desperate to end the war in China and began to view an advance to the south as a means of terminating Allied material support transiting through Burma and Hong Kong.

¹ Richard Overy, *Why the Allies Won* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995), p. 241.

Occupation of south Indochina was the first step in this direction while the blockade of Hong Kong was also tightened. Anglo-Japanese tensions only worsened in the Pearl River Delta where localized brinkmanship threatened to erupt into open war. The American oil embargo was a response to this Japanese expansion and it was an ultimatum that could not be ignored in Tokyo. The pace of Far Eastern developments quickened accordingly. Anglo-American weakness invited attack, and while the British lacked forces to spare for Far Eastern defences, President Roosevelt's ability to intervene was restricted by Congress. American financial power proved effective as a temporary substitute for real military support and it ultimately ensured the country's dominant position in the burgeoning anti-Axis alliance. Potential allies were kept in the war but unfortunately for the British this came at the expense of imperial power. An erosion of Chinese sovereignty was also begun as American aid was followed by interference in domestic political affairs. In time American military assistance became dependent on central government cooperation with the communists, and it would eventually be supplied only under direct American supervision or control. While Soviet aid was given unconditionally, support to others was not.²

At a time when China became most central to the Far Eastern crisis, Canada emerged as a useful Anglo-American agent that helped bind together the anti-Axis alliance in Asia. With the Permanent Joint Board of Defence in place along with the Hyde Park and Lend Lease agreements sustaining the Commonwealth war effort, the stage was set for Canada to take a more active role in the Pacific. Since Hong Kong remained vital for the Chinese war effort, and the continuation of the Sino-Japanese conflict became increasingly important for

² Correlli Barnett, *The Collapse of British Power* (London: Eyre Methune, 1972), p. 592.

the maintenance of Soviet resistance against Germany, the colony in turn became a more volatile Anglo-Japanese flashpoint in the Far East. To encourage Chinese resistance and to help satisfy Anglo-American obligations, Canadian troops were sent as reinforcements for Hong Kong but the move ended as an unmitigated military disaster. Part of the reason for this was that Allied motives were less concerned with assisting the Chinese than they were with aiding Stalin and this information was suppressed from the public at the highest levels. More importantly, as a manifestation of Allied collective security doctrine, the Canadian deployment did little to deter further conflict. Instead, it was viewed by the Japanese as a direct provocation.³

Change of Command: Lend Lease and America's Assumption of Coalition Leadership

America's leadership of the anti-Axis coalition began with the re-election of President Roosevelt in November 1940. It was an evolutionary process that often involved Canada. Popular opposition to war remained strong in the US but the push for military intervention continued unabated from within the White House and from much of the American foreign policy establishment.⁴ With his political base secure Roosevelt proceeded to build an anti-Axis coalition. This was largely accomplished with the enactment of Lend Lease in March 1941 since economic warfare was still the primary American method of influencing geopolitical events. The charade of American neutrality became increasingly transparent after Lend

³ This opinion was expressed in the *Ottawa Evening Citizen*, 19 November 1941.

⁴ Priscilla Roberts, 'The Transatlantic American Foreign Policy Elite: its Evolution in Generational Perspective', *Journal of Transatlantic Studies*, 7 (2) 2009: 163-183, pp. 172-173.

Lease legislation came into force.⁵ Britain was virtually bankrupt by this stage of the war and Prime Minister Churchill was desperate to bring America into the conflict.⁶ In accomplishing this, however, the decline of his country's autonomous power was greatly accelerated. British intelligence operations and coercive propaganda efforts within the United States were intensified and supported from its new military ally to the north. Canada was thus found to be a useful partner in cementing the Anglo-American alliance.⁷ As North America was secure from invasion, Canadian reinforcement of Great Britain was greatly encouraged with US naval support being provided on at least one occasion for the deployment of an armoured division across the Atlantic.⁸ As wartime circumstances developed, Canada soon found itself playing the role of middleman to deepen US commitment in China. Due to army expansion there was a general shortage of munitions in the United States, but Canadian overproduction in light infantry weapons was seized upon by Roosevelt as a useful resource to meet Chinese requirements. The shipment of Canadian Bren guns to China lent additional weight to US assurances of support to Generalissimo Chiang Kai Shek, and it demonstrated that Canada's China policy originated in the White House. Canada, under Mackenzie King's leadership, helped Churchill and Roosevelt bring America into the war, and in turn Roosevelt launched Canada's official involvement in China.

⁵ Henry Gole, *The Road to Rainbow: Army Planning for Global War, 1934-1940* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2003), p. 15.

⁶ Paul Kennedy, 'The Contradiction between British Strategic Planning and Economic Requirements in the Era of Two World Wars' (Washington: International Security Studies Program, Wilson Center, 1979), pp. 14-15, 17.

⁷ *The Times*, 5 September 1941. See also Charles P. Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments: The War Policies of Canada, 1939-1945* (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 1970), pp. 148-149.

⁸ National Archives of Canada (Ottawa) [hereafter NAC], MG 26 J1, Reel C-4864, Telegram No. 405 by Mackenzie King to Roosevelt, 4 October 1941.

After the Battle of Britain and Roosevelt's re-election, the British Cabinet united in the decision to continue the war against Germany, yet this did not alter the fact that the country was facing financial ruin.⁹ Prophetic warnings by the British Treasury about the consequences of large scale military spending were becoming clearer to understand by the spring of 1941 when Britain's gold reserves had fallen to \$12 million (US), and this deteriorating situation triggered a forthright statement to the press by Lord Lothian a few months earlier in November 1940.¹⁰ According to John Charmley, the British Ambassador to America at that time remarked, 'Well, boys, Britain is broke; it's your money we want'.¹¹ The following month, Churchill informed Roosevelt that the United States had to assume the costs of maintaining the war otherwise Britain would be compelled to terminate hostilities.¹² Roosevelt's adviser, Harry Hopkins, was dispatched to London with assurances of full American support and a pledge that they would win the war together but American aid would not come cheaply.¹³ Following a review of British assets Roosevelt remarked to Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau, 'Well, they aren't bust – there's lots of money there'.¹⁴

The first seven billion dollars of the Lend Lease program addressed immediate needs, yet those in London with knowledge of the agreement were

⁹ NAC, MG 30 D45, Reel M-79; Memorandum by Dexter, 29 January 1941, and NAC, www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/databases/king/001059-100.01-e.php; Diaries of William Lyon Mackenzie King, 3 February 1941. See also David Carlton, *Churchill and the Soviet Union* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp. 80-82.

¹⁰ Paul Kennedy, 'The Contradiction between British Strategic Planning and Economic Requirements in the Era of Two World Wars', pp. 14, 21.

¹¹ John Charmley, *Churchill: the End of Glory* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1993), p. 437.

¹² Brian Farrell, *The Basis and Making of British Grand Strategy, 1940-1943: Was There a Plan?* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1998), p. 97.

¹³ Thomas Fleming, *The New Dealers' War: Franklin D. Roosevelt and the War Within World War II* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), p. 83.

¹⁴ Charmley, *Churchill: the End of Glory*, p. 438.

angered over its terms as they felt that Britain was in many ways being robbed.¹⁵

During 1940 half a billion pounds had been raised and spent when on 23 December 1940 an American warship was sent to Cape Town to pick up £50 million of gold. Concern seemed to be justified as a large portion of Britain's final reserve was relinquished.¹⁶ More financing would be extended through Lend Lease but hopes for an American gift were short lived. Eventually, less encumbered aid emanated from Canada in early 1942 when one billion dollars was donated to ease Britain's plight.¹⁷ By that point, however, British decline was past the point of no return.

Lend Lease was also designed to enrich American business.¹⁸ One noteworthy example can be found within China Defense Supplies (CDS), a corporation that supplanted the Universal Trading Corporation soon after the bill was signed into law by the President.¹⁹ The company was headed by Generalissimo Chiang Kai Shek's adviser and brother-in-law, Dr. T.V. Soong, and its purpose was to procure weapons and munitions for Chinese military forces. Almost every plane, rifle or bullet that was sent into China from America was bought and sold by CDS. Barbara Tuchman made note of this:

The business generated by Lend-Lease through China Defense Supplies was even more lucrative than most military procurement operations. It made the fortunes of the Americans involved in the group and added to Soong's, which through his previous tenure as Minister of Finance and chairman of the Bank of China was already considerable.²⁰

¹⁵ NAC, MG 26 J1, Reel C-4872; Letter by Wrong to Mackenzie King, 16 September 1941. See also Charmley, *Churchill: the End of Glory*, p. 438.

¹⁶ *The New York Times*, 11 November 1941, and Charmley, *Churchill: the End of Glory*, p. 438.

¹⁷ *The Times*, 28 January 1942.

¹⁸ Barnett, *The Collapse of British Power*, pp. 590, 592, and Bernard Porter, *Britain, Europe and the World 1850-1982: Delusions of Grandeur* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1983), p. 107.

¹⁹ NAC, RG 25, Volume 3343, File 4929-F-40C Part 3; British Mission Memorandum, 20 May 1944. See also National Archives and Records Administration (College Park) [hereafter NARA], RG 493, Entry 531, Box 50; Z Force Journal.

²⁰ Barbara Tuchman, *Stilwell and the American Experience in China, 1911-1945* (New York: Macmillan, 1970), p. 221.

Using the Lockheed Aircraft Corporation as an example, it cost almost \$80,000 to buy a Hudson bomber, not including the propeller and engine which was an additional \$30,000.²¹ There was plenty of money to be made provided one had the right connections. Omitted from the Tuchman rebuke was the fact that the President's uncle, Frederic Adrian Delano, was also a member of the board.²² Frederic Delano was born in Hong Kong on 10 September 1863 at a time when the family made much of their original fortune on the opium trade. War was also good business, and not to be outdone by their forebears, the President and his family did what they could to profit in Asia by supplying the Chinese with weapons. This was not the sole or even the most important consideration shaping Roosevelt's wartime policy but personal considerations cannot be entirely dismissed as irrelevant.

Notwithstanding the economic situation, prominent personages within the Commonwealth remained the most eager to continue the war and deepen American involvement.²³ By 1941 even earlier sceptics like Lord Halifax saw US-Canadian relations as a useful arena where this objective could be developed. British Cabinet members such as Churchill, South African Prime Minister Jan Smuts, and press baron Lord Beaverbrook (Max Aitken from Canada) all earnestly desired a greater propaganda effort to have been made within the United States, but the Canadian Prime Minister and his allies south of the border were

²¹ NARA, RG 18, Entry 300, Box 934, File Miscellaneous A; Letter by Boddis to Arnold, 9 September 1941.

²² Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum [hereafter FDRL], Frederic A Delano Papers, Box 2, File China Defense Supplies; Department of State, Foreign Official Status Notification.

²³ NAC, Diaries of William Lyon Mackenzie King; 3 February 1941.

more cautious over such moves.²⁴ One of these allies was the President's son, James Roosevelt. The younger Roosevelt was a leading figure in the Office of the Coordinator of Information (COI) along with William Donovan and James Warburg.²⁵ This agency preceded the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) and worked closely with British Security Coordination (BSC), an intelligence organization in North America headed by the Canadian businessman William Stephenson.²⁶ Direct American intervention in the war remained the paramount objective amongst British officials working within BSC and elsewhere, and in this they were aided continuously by the Canadian government.²⁷

Propaganda work was coordinated with the Canadian legation in Washington and military collaboration was also arranged.²⁸ In January and February 1941, for example, James Roosevelt sought Prime Minister Mackenzie King's help in establishing a pilot training facility in California. It was to be run on a cooperative basis with Canada's Commonwealth air training program which was already in operation.²⁹ During the summer Donovan travelled to Canada to strengthen propaganda efforts and this led to the establishment of a Canadian

²⁴ NAC, Diaries of William Lyon Mackenzie King; 25 August 1941 and 9 October 1941. See also The National Archives (London) [hereafter TNA], FO 954/31; Letter by Smuts to Cranborne, 29 August 1941.

²⁵ NAC, Diaries of William Lyon Mackenzie King; 9 October 1941. NAC, MG 26 J1, Reel C-4864, Telegram No. 2917 by McCarthy, 26 September 1941.

²⁶ William Stephenson and Nigel West, *British Security Coordination: The Secret History of British Intelligence in the Americas, 1940-1945* (New York: Fromm International, 1999), pp. xxvii, xxxiii.

²⁷ NAC, MG 26 J1, Reel C-4864, Telegram No. 2917 by McCarthy, 26 September 1941. See also H. Montgomery Hyde, *The Quiet Canadian: the Secret Service Story of Sir William Stephenson* (London: The Quality Book Club, 1962), pp. 3, 30.

²⁸ NAC, MG 26 J1, Reel C-4864, Telegram No. 2917 by McCarthy, 26 September 1941. See also NAC, MG 31 E 47, Volume 27, File 7, Canadian Institute of International Affairs – Correspondence; Letter by Baldwin to Reid, 14 September 1939.

²⁹ NAC, MG 26 J1, Reel C-4868; Letter by Roosevelt to Mackenzie King, 23 January 1941 and letter by Mackenzie King to Roosevelt, 8 February 1941.

department within his agency.³⁰ Mackenzie King understood the President's reluctance to fully engage Congress for an open declaration against Germany and both leaders were hesitant to aggressively publicize Commonwealth military efforts within the United States.³¹ President Roosevelt wanted to enter the war gradually following the imposition of retaliatory measures against Axis military action, and he felt that the less attention brought to bear upon Anglo-American or US-Canadian cooperation the better. He hoped that war could eventually be waged without a declaration being necessary once the anger of American voters had been sufficiently roused over time.³²

America's domination of the Commonwealth was further advanced with the signing of the Hyde Park Agreement in on 21 April 1941. Partly written by Canadian Deputy Minister of Finance Clifford Clark and Secretary Morgenthau, war production between the United States and Canada was streamlined under the terms of this deal by integrating economic and industrial resources.³³ As the Permanent Joint Board of Defence (PJBD) had created greater military and diplomatic cooperation between the United States and the British Commonwealth, the Hyde Park Agreement expanded this collaboration into the field of economics.³⁴ This 'free trade' agreement was a product of the personal diplomacy so often conducted between Roosevelt and Mackenzie King and it increased North American wartime industrial production by ensuring Commonwealth Lend

³⁰ NAC, MG 26 J1, Reel C-4872; Memorandum No. 2295 by Wrong, 5 August 1941. NAC, MG 26 J4, Volume 424, File War Cabinet Minutes, July 1941 – December 1941; Minutes, 6 November 1941.

³¹ NAC, MG 26 J1, Reel C-4872; Memorandum No. 2775 by Wrong, 11 September 1941.

³² TNA, FO 954/31; Letter by Macdonald to Cranborne, 7 November 1941.

³³ NAC, MG 30 D 45, Reel M-79; Memorandum by Dexter, 21 April 1941. See also Galen Roger Perras, *Franklin Roosevelt and the Origins of the Canadian-American Security Alliance, 1933-1945: Necessary, but Not Necessary Enough* (Westport: Praeger, 1998), pp. 97-98.

³⁴ NAC, MG 26 J1, Reel C-6805; Letter by Currie to Mackenzie King, 4 December 1942. NAC, RG 25, Reel T-1794; Memorandum by Keenleyside, 27 December 1940. NARA, RG 165, Entry 77, Box 380; 'Canadian-American Defence Planning', *Foreign Policy Reports*, Volume 17 (17) by William Maddox, 15 November 1941.

Lease purchases could be made in dollars borrowed from Wall Street and by guaranteeing American purchase of Canadian overproduction.³⁵ Hence, the further loss of British Sterling was prevented while greater profits were accrued in New York.

Like the PJBD, the Hyde Park Agreement similarly signalled a shift in Canada's foreign policy that further pulled the country away from Great Britain and into America's orbit.³⁶ It was applauded in political circles on both sides of the border because of the military and economic interdependence that was expanded between the two countries. Even before America officially entered the conflict this relationship was upheld as a positive model for the preservation of world peace which could be duplicated elsewhere during post-war reconstruction.³⁷ Apparently somewhat discouraged later in the year, however, Mackenzie King commented in his diary on the linkage that had been created between the Federal Reserve and the Bank of Canada to facilitate subsequent transactions. Regarding the Bank of Canada he wrote: 'I confess I begin to look on that institution as being part of the Empire of Finance'.³⁸ Further comments by Canadian officials on wartime economics can be found in appendix five.

With financing arranged Allied strategic planning proceeded full steam ahead. It was agreed during Anglo-American discussions (the ABC-1 talks) held in Washington from late January to early March 1941 to fight the war in Europe first.³⁹ The air campaign over Germany was to be intensified while the British

³⁵ *The Times*, 5 January 1942. See also Perras, *Franklin Roosevelt and the Origins of the Canadian-American Security Alliance*, pp. 97-98.

³⁶ NARA, RG 165, Entry 77, Box 363; Report No. 1380 by Moffat, 25 April 1941.

³⁷ NARA, RG 165, Entry 77, Box 363; *Baltimore Sun* article, 23 November 1941 and *The New York Times* article, 4 November 1941. NARA, RG 165, Entry 77, Box 380; 'Canadian-American Defence Planning', by Maddox, 15 November 1941.

³⁸ NAC, Diaries of William Lyon Mackenzie King; 18 December 1941.

³⁹ Thomas Buell, 'American Strategy in the Pacific: Its Philosophy and Practice', in *War and Diplomacy Across the Pacific, 1919-1952*, eds. A. Hamish Ion and Barry D. Hunt (Waterloo:

were to hold in the Mediterranean against any further Axis advance. From Singapore it was recommended that if Malaya, the dominions, or the Netherlands East Indies (NEI) were attacked by Japanese forces, both the US and Britain should declare war.⁴⁰ Recognition was also given to the fact that one of the first points of attack would be at Hong Kong.⁴¹ Global areas of responsibility were defined and because of the weight of American power the British indicated that they would follow America's lead by not making any further concessions to Japan.⁴² A conference report explains Allied strategy then being formed:

If Japan does enter the war, the Military strategy in the Far East will be defensive. The United States does not intend to add to its present Military strength in the Far East but will employ the United States Pacific Fleet offensively in the manner best calculated to weaken Japanese economic power, and to support the defense of the Malay barrier by diverting Japanese strength away from Malaysia. The United States intends so to augment its forces in the Atlantic and Mediterranean areas that the British Commonwealth will be in a position to release the necessary forces for the Far East.⁴³

Henceforth, Europe was the primary theatre of operations and America was to be the dominant partner. This document is also significant, however, in that it made any reinforcement of Hong Kong an element of Allied grand strategy rather than just a British manoeuvre.

East Asian events had already tested the spirit of Anglo-American resolve. Roosevelt's main goal was to have China continue fighting and tie down as many Japanese troops as possible, but after the New Fourth Army Incident, and despite reliable information that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was largely

Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1988), p. 147. Peter Lowe, *Great Britain and the Origins of the Pacific War: a Study of British Policy in East Asia, 1937-1941* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), p. 189.

⁴⁰ Lowe, *Great Britain and the Origins of the Pacific War*, pp. 201-202.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 206.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 191. TNA, FO 371/27675 F 2617/317/10; File notation by Brenan, 12 March 1941. See also Farrell, *The Basis and Making of British Grand Strategy*, p. 133.

⁴³ NAC, MG 26 J4, Volume 422, File WWII Anglo-American Strategy ABC-1 1941; Joint Letter of Transmittal, 27 March 1941.

responsible for exploiting the underlying political friction, grossly unequal pressure was applied against Chiang Kai Shek by making additional support dependent upon the cessation of internal conflict.⁴⁴ Further south, a war sparked by Japanese subterfuge was waged in December 1940 and January 1941 between the French in Indochina and Thailand.⁴⁵ This war extended Japanese influence onto Malaya's doorstep once Thailand essentially became a Japanese satellite.⁴⁶

Other serious incidents had the effect of encouraging the development of a southern Japanese strategy. One of these was the signing of the Soviet-Japanese neutrality pact by Josef Stalin and Foreign Minister Matsuoka Yosuke in April 1941.⁴⁷ A Japanese strike to the south was now much more feasible and Matsuoka's bellicosity had already raised anxiety. When speaking to Japanese provincial governors he reiterated complaints over Hong Kong's military logistical role. He stated, 'As to China, it was unavoidable that third Powers' interests should suffer, "particularly if those interests are being used as bases to resist our military operations in China".'⁴⁸ According to a military intelligence report from Hong Kong, Matsuoka issued additional threats. The Foreign Minister,

⁴⁴ NARA, RG 165, U.S. Military Intelligence Reports: China, 1911-1941 (Frederick: University Publications of America, Inc., 1983) [hereafter USMIR], Reel 11; Report No. 9972 by Captain F.P. Munson, 4 February 1941, and NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3; Report No. 14 by Lieutenant Colonel David Barrett, 1 March 1941. See also Chang Jung and Jon Halliday, *Mao: the Unknown Story* (London: Vintage Books, 2006), pp. 275-277, 283-284.

⁴⁵ Nagaoka Shinjiro, 'The Drive into Southern Indochina and Thailand', in *The Fateful Choice, Japan's Road to the Pacific War: Japan's Advance into Southeast Asia, 1939-1941*, ed. James W. Morley, trans. Robert Scalapino (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), pp. 221, 226-227.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 233-234. NARA, RG 165, Entry 184, Box 959; Telegram No. 35 by Barrett, 21 March 1941. NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3; Report No. 13 by Lieutenant Colonel David Barrett, 31 January 1941, and NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3; Report No. 15 by Lieutenant Colonel David Barrett, 31 March 1941.

⁴⁷ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3; Report No. 15 by Barrett, 31 March 1941. See also Hosoya Chihiro, 'The Japanese-Soviet Neutrality Pact', in *The Fateful Choice, Japan's Road to the Pacific War: Japan's Advance into Southeast Asia, 1939-1941*, ed. James W. Morley, trans. Robert Scalapino (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), pp. 79-80.

⁴⁸ NAC, MG 26 J4, Reel H-1531; External Affairs Memorandum, No. C243283, 1941.

Broadly hinted that continued British and American aid to the Chiang Kai Shek regime may lead Japan to invoke the 3rd clause of the Tripartite Pact which would automatically bring her into the war. This may be – and probably is – only bluff; but the fact remains that under steady German pressure and with Prince Konoye's admitted lack of control over the extremists, Japan is drifting into a position wherein she will have no option but to fight. Such at least is the opinion of one of the leading Japanese firms in Hong Kong, which has received instructions to send back unostentatiously to Japan all members of its staff who are not indispensable, in view of the fact that American participation in the war is regarded as only a matter of time.⁴⁹

Army-navy discussions in Tokyo built momentum for the acquisition of southern Indochina as a preliminary move.⁵⁰ Subsequent military preparations indicated that the Japanese might soon strike south towards Malaya and Singapore.⁵¹ In response, the British cautiously paralleled the latest American \$50 million loan to China by finalizing a smaller £5 million credit that had originally been planned late in 1940.⁵²

During the second round of Anglo-American strategy discussions held in April 1941 China was still relegated to a position near the bottom of strategic priorities although the desirability of increasing support to Chiang Kai Shek was recognized.⁵³ The Middle-East, Greece and Turkey were regarded as a single strategic theatre of much greater significance and when General Erwin Rommel pushed east in North Africa, the British position in Egypt was clearly made far

⁴⁹ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 1/41 by Major R. Giles, 31 January 1941.

⁵⁰ Tsunoda Jun, 'The Navy's Role in the Southern Strategy', in *The Fateful Choice, Japan's Road to the Pacific War: Japan's Advance into Southeast Asia, 1939-1941*, ed. James W. Morley, trans. Robert Scalapino (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), p. 284.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 288.

⁵² NAC, MG 26 J1, Reel C-4575; Dominions Office Telegram D-605, 10 December 1940, and NAC, RG 25, Volume 1881, File 862; Dominions Office Telegram D-247, 29 April 1941. NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3; Report No. 16 by Lieutenant Colonel David Barrett, 1 May 1941. See also Hosoya, 'The Japanese-Soviet Neutrality Pact', p. 85, and Sir Llewellyn Woodward, *British Foreign Policy in the Second World War, Volume II* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1971), p. 117.

⁵³ TNA, FO 371/27638 F 607/145/10; File notation by Gage, 10 February 1941. Annalee Jacoby and Theodore White, *Thunder Out of China* (New York: William Sloane Associates, 1961), p. 146.

from impregnable.⁵⁴ Defeat in the desert was expected and very few resources could be spared for augmenting Far Eastern defences.⁵⁵ The Americans wished to concentrate forces against Germany and in May 1941 one quarter of the US Pacific Fleet was transferred from Hawaii in order to help escort convoys during the Battle of the Atlantic.⁵⁶ Chief of the Imperial General Staff, General Sir John Dill tried to convince Churchill that Singapore should be made a higher British priority but Churchill did not expect a Japanese attack during the first half of 1941 and he remained determined to concentrate on Egypt.⁵⁷ Since American military leaders did not see British Asian possessions as being strategically vital to Allied interests, they were not willing to make any commitment to defend Singapore.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, it was agreed that China should receive some greater material assistance than it had otherwise obtained in the past.

As the US assumed command of the anti-Japanese front, the foundation was laid for China to become a US sphere of interest.⁵⁹ Loans had thus far provided sufficient inducement for a prolongation of the war, but to avoid any possibility of its cessation, and to thereby keep the Japanese army engaged, Roosevelt considered it useful to expand America's influence and presence in China.⁶⁰ One of the first actions taken was to send a personal representative to Chiang Kai Shek. Roosevelt selected Lauchlin Currie, his Canadian born

⁵⁴ NAC, MG 26 J4, Reel H-1561; Memorandum no. C286917, 4 January 1941. NAC, MG 30 D45, Reel M-79; Memorandum by Dexter, 22 April 1941.

⁵⁵ NAC, MG 30 D45, Reel M-79; Memorandum by Dexter, 21 April 1941. TNA, FO 371/27638 F 1051/145/10; File notation by Scott, 21 February 1941.

⁵⁶ Jonathan Utley, *Going to War with Japan, 1937-1941* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1985), p. 148.

⁵⁷ B.H. Liddell Hart, *History of the Second World War* (New York: Cassell & Company, 1971), pp. 231-232. Lowe, *Great Britain and the Origins of the Pacific War*, pp. 230-231.

⁵⁸ Peter Lowe, 'Retreat from Power: British Attitudes towards Japan, 1923-1941', in *War and Diplomacy Across the Pacific, 1919-1952*, eds. A. Hamish Ion and Barry D. Hunt (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1988), p. 53.

⁵⁹ NAC, RG 25, Volume 2135, File 572-1943; Letter by Pearson to Hickerson, 9 September 1943.

⁶⁰ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3; Report No. 11 by Lieutenant Colonel David Barrett, 3 December 1940.

economic adviser and former board member of the Federal Reserve, to strengthen his connection to Chungking.⁶¹ Roosevelt's emissary was a primary architect of the Lend Lease plan, as it pertained to China, and his first recommendation was to quickly increase military aid.⁶² In addition to his White House duties, however, Currie was also a Soviet intelligence asset, and while travelling through Hong Kong during March he conferred with Ernest Hemingway.⁶³ It was about this time that Hemingway conducted a tour of the Seventh War Zone in Kwangtung while working for the United States Treasury and he met with General Yu Han Mou in Kukong.⁶⁴ His subsequent writing emphasized the great need to maintain external Western support if China was to be kept in the war.⁶⁵ Hemingway was also a friend of Morris 'Two Gun' Cohen, another former Canadian figure who was a general in the Chinese army as well an international arms dealer.⁶⁶ During the year Currie would be instrumental in helping to establish an American Military Mission (AMMISCA) under Brigadier General John Magruder in Chungking as well as the United States Army Air Force (USAAF) Mission under Brigadier General Henry Claggett.⁶⁷ He was also an essential broker in obtaining increasingly scarce aircraft for the American Volunteer Group (AVG).⁶⁸

⁶¹ William Grieve, 'Belated Endeavor: The American Military Mission to China (AMMISCA) 1941-1942' (University of Illinois, PhD Dissertation, 1986), pp. 10-11. See also John Haynes, *Venona: Decoding Soviet Espionage in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), pp. 145-146; and Yu Maochun, *The Dragon's War: Allied Operations and the Fate of China, 1937-1947* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2006), pp. 33-34.

⁶² Grieve, 'Belated Endeavor', pp. 10-11. Nigel West, *Venona: The Greatest Secret of the Cold War* (London: HarperCollins, 1999), p. 294.

⁶³ John Dugdale, 'Hemingway Revealed as a Failed KGB Spy', *The Guardian*, 9 July 2009. See also Haynes, *Venona*, p. 145, and Peter Moreira, *Hemingway on the China Front: His WWII Spy Mission with Martha Gellhorn* (Washington: Potomac Books, 2006), p. 40.

⁶⁴ Moreira, *Hemingway on the China Front*, pp. 74-75.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 189-190.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 32-33.

⁶⁷ NARA, RG 18, Entry 300, Box 934, File Misc A; Letter by Currie to Stimson, 21 March 1941. NARA, RG 38, Entry 98A, Box 705, F-6-c 23213 to F-6-e 22379; 'Southward Advance of the Japanese Navy'. See also Grieve, 'Belated Endeavor', p. 11.

⁶⁸ Major General Claire Chennault, *Way of a Fighter* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1949), p. 99, and Yu, *The Dragon's War*, pp. 34-35.

Although the Americans concentrated upon using the Burma Road to sustain the war effort in China, Hong Kong did not escape their attention and the US service chiefs soon began to push the British towards reinforcing their position within the colony.⁶⁹ Like Currie, President Roosevelt's son had also been sent on a mission to Hong Kong and Chungking. Staying approximately three days in each city, Captain Jimmy Roosevelt arrived in Hong Kong on 26 April 1941 wearing his Marine Corps uniform to publicly demonstrate America's commitment to China.⁷⁰ Roosevelt toured the colony with the Governor and discussed the military situation with Canadian-born Major General Grasett.⁷¹ At that time Grasett was working with US Military Attaché, Colonel William Mayer, to establish an American attaché office within the colony, ostensibly to better administer official finances. This was accomplished during May without the initial approval or knowledge of the American ambassador Nelson Johnson.⁷² Both Grasett and the Commander-in-Chief Far East Command, Air Chief Marshal Sir Robert Brooke-Popham, had previously requested reinforcements for Hong Kong but their appeals had been rejected by the Chiefs of Staff (COS) and by Churchill.⁷³ Undoubtedly the question of reinforcing Hong Kong soon reached the President's ear following Jimmy Roosevelt's departure from China in early May. As a point of interest the President's son next appeared in Crete as he was

⁶⁹ Philip Snow, *The Fall of Hong Kong: Britain, China and the Japanese Occupation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), p. 41.

⁷⁰ NARA, RG 84, Entry 2685, Box 98; Telegram No. 898 by Bruins, 29 April 1941.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² NARA, RG 84, Entry 2685, Box 98; Telegram No. 898 by Bruins, 29 April 1941, and NARA, RG 319, Entry 57, Box 169, File 1; Telegram No. 734A, 8 October 1941.

⁷³ Galen Roger Perras, “Our Position in the Far East would be Stronger Without this Unsatisfactory Commitment”: Britain, and the Reinforcement of Hong Kong, 1941’, *Canadian Journal of History*, 30 1995: 231-259, pp. 246-248.

evacuating the island by Sunderland flying boat about thirty-six hours ahead of the German airborne assault.⁷⁴

Following Roosevelt's trip, Canadian diplomatic and militarily involvement in China was initiated. Because of the US army's expansion program one of the biggest obstacles impeding the provision of Lend Lease support was the scarcity of surplus munitions.⁷⁵ China's greatest need was for small arms ammunition but no US plants produced the necessary 7.9 millimetre rounds.⁷⁶ After consultations between Currie and C. D. Howe, Canada's Minister of Munitions and Supply, and after Lord Beaverbrook's discussions with Canada's Minister of Defence, J. L. Ralston in London, the answer was found at the John Inglis plant in Toronto, touted then as the world's largest production facility for automatic weapons.⁷⁷ Surplus Bren guns were made available for shipment to China and from an original five hundred weapons, the scheme expanded to include an order for 15,000 more by October 1941, a figure that was forty three percent of Canada's total Bren gun production at that time.⁷⁸

The shipment of Canadian Bren guns to China lent additional weight to US assurances of support to Chungking and in the process the Canadian government again found itself as part of the linkage deepening America's involvement in the war. Howe explained this development in a letter to Ralston.

In the matter of materials, we are dependent to a considerable extent on the goodwill of the United States. A shortage of steel

⁷⁴ Antony Beevor, *Crete: The Battle and the Resistance* (London: John Murray, 2005), p.119.

⁷⁵ Gole, *The Road to Rainbow*, p. 14.

⁷⁶ TNA, WO 208/366; Note on the Military Situation in China by Dennys, 25 October 1941, and NARA, RG 165, Entry 184, Box 959; Telegram No. 116 by Mayer, 6 July 1941.

⁷⁷ NAC, RG 24, Reel C-5281, File 8865; Letter by Currie to Howe, 29 August 1941, and NAC, RG 24, Reel C-5281, File 8865; Letter by Ralston to Howe, 8 November 1941. See also C.D. Howe, in Hansard, *Dominion of Canada Official Report of Debates, House of Commons, Second Session, Nineteenth Parliament, 4-5 George VI, 1941, Volume I* (Ottawa: Government of Canada, 1941), p. 971.

⁷⁸ NAC, RG 24, Reel C-5281, File 8865; Letter by Sheers to DesRosiers, 30 October 1941, and NAC, RG 24, Reel C-5281, File 8865; Memorandum by Sifton to Crerar, 10 November 1941.

exists in that country, and we are dependent on steel from that country to the extent of 25 per cent to 30 per cent of our requirements. It has been necessary on two or three occasions to invoke the good offices of the President in order that we can maintain our place as buyers of steel in that market.

In the matter of supplies to China, the President, through his assistant, Mr. Lauchlin Currie, told me that, in return for the help of his office, he would expect us to give him some help in arranging urgently needed supplies for China. I therefore have contracted for certain material where our productive equipment promises to be in excess of our commitments either to Canada or to Britain. Any commitment we have made for China has the reservation that we must first meet both these prior commitments.

It also must be kept in mind that we have received large orders from the United States for equipment to be lease-lent to Britain, and that our usefulness to supply equipment to Britain has been greatly enlarged by that process. It seems to me that Britain should be the last to object to our doing something for the United States, when Britain has been so greatly helped by the United States in stepping up Canadian production.⁷⁹

Howe had also indiscreetly told Winnipeg reporter Grant Dexter that, 'apart from Empire points Washington is paying for these shipments but this is strictly confidential.'⁸⁰ In 1944 it was noted by General Brehon Somervell, head of the US Army's Services of Supply, that production in Canada of Bren guns, Sten guns and pistols had been arranged primarily for the benefit of China.⁸¹

The main problem, however, with the Canadian munitions plan was the same as it was for the Americans, and that was actually delivering supplies under the prevailing chaotic transportation conditions that existed in southern China and Burma. It was a situation made worse owing to the heavy degree of bombing inflicted on Chinese lines of communication in Yunnan and Kwangtung by Japanese aircraft based in northern Indochina and Canton.⁸² A Japanese press spokesman stated that raids carried out on Kunming and against the Burma Road

⁷⁹ NAC, RG 24, Reel C-5281, File 8865; Letter by Howe to Ralston, 15 November 1941.

⁸⁰ NAC, MG 30 D 45, Reel M-79; Memorandum by Dexter, 5 September 1941.

⁸¹ NAC, RG 25, Volume 3343, File 4929-F-40C Pt 3; Memorandum No. 61661 by Somervell, 6 July 1944.

⁸² NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 11; Report No. 9972 by Munson, 4 February 1941, and TNA, FO 371/27655 F 544/196/10; Telegram No. 65 by Clark Kerr, 7 February 1941.

were very successful with hundreds of trucks stranded at a destroyed bridge over the Salween River. This span was claimed to have been knocked out by the navy's 'Wild Eagles'.⁸³ With periodic intensity these attacks continued throughout the first half of the year. In late April one raid on Kunming resulted in damage to the British consulate, while during the summer the city's power station was also destroyed as was another important bridge to Kweichow.⁸⁴ Japanese air units were also taking a toll on China National Airways Corporation (CNAC) planes flying in and out of Kunming.⁸⁵

Since Chinese airpower was all but wiped out by the fall of 1940 the Americans created the American Volunteer Group to defend against Japanese air units, but they needed British help to do so.⁸⁶ According to AVG commander Colonel Chennault it was primarily because of the support received from Roosevelt's Cabinet, especially from Morgenthau and Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox that the Flying Tigers became a reality.⁸⁷ Once the Burma Road had been re-opened and Roosevelt was re-elected, Chiang sent Chennault and General P.T. Mao, head of the Chinese air force, to the United States in search of replacement aircraft over the winter of 1940-1941.⁸⁸ With White House assistance the diversion from British and Swedish allocation of one hundred forty four Vultee aircraft to the Chinese air force was arranged, but more significantly,

⁸³ NARA, RG 38, Entry 98A, Box 705; Report No. 33-41 by Lieutenant Commander D.J. McCallum, 27 February 1941.

⁸⁴ NARA, RG 38, Entry 98A, Box 705; Report No. 78-41 by Lieutenant Commander H.H. Smith-Hutton, 29 July 1941. TNA, FO 371/27637 F 8324/144/10; Report No. 17 by Prideaux-Brune, 22 April, 1941, and TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 5/41 by Major R. Giles, 1 June 1941.

⁸⁵ WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 1/41 by Giles, 31 January 1941.

⁸⁶ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3; Report No. 10 by Lieutenant Colonel David Barrett, 3 November 1940. NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3; Report No. 11 by Barrett, 3 December 1940.

⁸⁷ Library of Congress (Washington) [hereafter LOC], Chennault Papers, Reel 5; Letter by Alsop to Chennault, November 1941. See also Chennault, *Way of a Fighter*, p. 99.

⁸⁸ NARA, RG 165, Entry 184, Box 959; Telegram No. 37, 26 March 1941, and NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3; Report No. 12 by Lieutenant Colonel David Barrett, 31 December 1940. Chennault, *Way of a Fighter*, p. 90.

in April 1941 Roosevelt authorized the release of pilots from American military forces for service in the AVG.⁸⁹ Coinciding with the arrival of one hundred fifty Soviet fighters in China, arrangements for an additional diversion of one hundred P-40 Tomahawk fighters from British orders were also finalized in order to equip the AVG.⁹⁰ By the beginning of June 1941 the personnel and aircraft had been assembled and began their deployment to China via Hong Kong.⁹¹ This White House initiative was a significant escalation in bringing America into the war.

British internal opinion on the release of aircraft, however, demonstrates that any Western intervention in China during the first half of 1941 was not a British priority. The driving force behind such action came from Washington. In February 1941, while arrangements for the diversion of the P-40s were being made, Berkeley Gage at the Foreign Office noted that,

In view of the fact that we consider it an absurd waste of good material to send these ultra-modern machines to the Chinese, who are unlikely to have pilots trained to fly them, I think it is a lot to ask us to use the subterfuge suggested by Mr. Soong to protect them on their way, especially as the Japanese know all about the transaction. I think that we should refuse to do so. If the ship is intercepted by the Japanese it will be unfortunate, since they will be able to make use of the aircraft against us. But the number is not great and their capture might be a lesson to the United States on the futility of sending good material direct to the Chinese, who are incapable either of protecting it en route or using it effectively on receipt.⁹²

Nigel Ronald noted how,

The whole behavior of the US administration over this strikes me as lacking in consideration to us and demanding a lamentable want on their part of any sense of proportion. But it is obviously no use

⁸⁹ TNA, FO 371/27596 F 4475/1/10; File notation by Scott, 27 May 1941. See also TNA, FO 371/27638 F 1846/145/10; Telegram No. 312, 24 March 1941. Chennault, *Way of a Fighter*, p. 102, and Carroll Glens, *Chennault's Forgotten Warriors: The Saga of the 308th Bomb Group in China* (Atglen: Schiffer, 1995), p. 18.

⁹⁰ TNA, FO 371/27638 F 1198/145/10; Telegram No. A.4 18/2, 19 February 1941, and TNA, FO 371/27639 F 4381/145/10; File notation by Scott, 24 May 1941.

⁹¹ NAC, MG 26 J1, Reel C-4865; Telegram No. Z-209 by MacDonald, 11 June 1941. See also TNA, FO 371/27639 F 4258/145/10; Telegram No. X.451, 16 June 1941.

⁹² TNA, FO 371/27638 F 1073/145/10; File notation by Gage, 22 February 1941.

returning to the charge over this particular parcel ... I feel, however, that the left hand of the administration can have little idea of what the right is doing and that, if we could continue to call attention to this in the gentlest and politest possible way at some favourable opportunity, we might at least minimize the chance of this sort of thing recurring.⁹³

A.L. Scott commented on where British strategic attention was fixed. 'We do not wish priority to be given to Chinese requirements over Greek.'⁹⁴ An additional comment was added by an unidentifiable official: 'The upshot is that 100 of our aircraft & 470 of our guns are to be wasted.'⁹⁵

The British agreed to the release of the aircraft despite their misgivings only because of US pressure and this was explained to Ambassador Clark Kerr on 24 March 1941.

Our present Far Eastern policy, is to avert war with Japan unless forced upon us i.e. to avoid action which would be unnecessarily provocative to Japan, but to keep in line with the United States Government and to maintain Chinese powers of resistance. Scheme has been examined in the light of these considerations by Chiefs of Staff who are disposed to recommend it to His Majesty's Government provided it is quite clear that the United States Administration are in favour.⁹⁶

Ironically, it proved to be one of the better military investments made by the British during the war. Additional information on Allied assistance to the Chinese air force can be found in appendix six.

By the spring of 1941 American leadership of the anti-Axis coalition was becoming increasingly firm and initial moves had been completed to intervene more directly in China. Outside of Asia the Sino-Japanese War had largely become a White House concern, and until the German invasion of the USSR, was no longer a British priority. Military resources were marshalled to defend

⁹³ TNA, FO 371/27638 F 2035/145/10; File notation by Ronald, 19 March 1941.

⁹⁴ TNA, FO 371/27638 F 1051/145/10; File notation by Scott, 21 February 1941.

⁹⁵ TNA, FO 371/27638 F 2035/145/10; File notation, 20 March 1941.

⁹⁶ TNA, FO 371/27638 F 1846/145/10; Telegram No. 312, 24 March 1941.

southern lines of communication while the White House kept the increasingly dangerous situation in and around Hong Kong under close observation. In North America, Canada was serving as a winch in helping to pull the Anglo-American alliance together.⁹⁷ Through Canada, weapons and money flowed east across the Atlantic while intelligence efforts and special operations chiselled away at domestic American opposition to war. Canada also helped fulfill American commitments in China which in turn eventually led to the establishment of strong personal and diplomatic relations between Ottawa and Chungking. It was because of the White House and the personal diplomacy conducted between Roosevelt and Mackenzie King that Canada became involved officially in Chinese affairs. In the long run, the establishment of Sino-Canadian diplomatic relations did not translate into great material changes in China as was originally hoped for by the Prime Minister, but the moral support was certainly a limited factor in building cohesion within the alliance. Altogether, these developments were manifestations of Roosevelt's vision of Allied collective security, yet time was still required to build up sufficient forces in the Far East to meet an increasingly likely Japanese attack.⁹⁸ This effort failed, however, because the British were dragging their heels. Significant wartime geopolitical events soon outpaced Anglo-American deployment arrangements and Axis victories both in the USSR as well as Indochina threatened to derail Allied strategy before it could be fully developed and implemented.

⁹⁷ *The New York Times*, 31 December 1941, and *The Times*, 31 December 1941. See also Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments*, p. 329.

⁹⁸ NAC, MG 26 J1, Reel C-4862; Memorandum by Duff, 21 June 1941.

A Base Openly at War: Blockade and Conflict at Hong Kong

By 1941 the Sino-Japanese War was stalemated and the Japanese were desperate to isolate Hong Kong from Free China.⁹⁹ Japanese strategy underwent significant changes as the country's leadership began to view the occupation of more distant regions as a solution to their problem. In the summer, war with Britain and America had become an acceptable option, and as a preliminary move Hainan was reinforced while a submarine base was completed on the south shore of the island.¹⁰⁰ Following the German invasion of the Soviet Union, the Japanese advanced into southern Indochina and reinforced Manchuria in preparation for additional moves either south or into Siberia. On land and at sea the blockade of China was also significantly tightened with Anglo-Japanese friction at Hong Kong escalating to dangerous levels. Senior British Far Eastern officials also helped escalate the conflict by increasing their country's involvement at a pace more accelerated than London was inclined to accept.¹⁰¹ Relying on meagre military resources, officials at Hong Kong began to aggressively challenge Japanese naval forces in defence of the colony's fishermen. The low intensity conflict that had been brewing in the region for several years became more brutal and destructive, and threatened to spark an open Anglo-Japanese war in July.

For approximately a week during early January 1941 the General Officer Commanding in China, Major General Grasett, was visited in Hong Kong by the recently appointed Commander-in-Chief, Far East Command, Air Chief Marshal

⁹⁹ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 4/41 by Major R. Giles, 1 May 1941.

¹⁰⁰ NARA, RG 38, Entry 98A, Box 705; Report No. 3-41 by McCallum, 24 February 1941, and NARA, RG 38, Entry 98A, Box 705; 'Southward Advance of the Japanese Navy'. See also NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3; Report No. 14 by Lieutenant Colonel David Barrett, 1 March 1941.

¹⁰¹ TNA, FO 371/27639 F 5030/145/10; Air Ministry letter to Clarke, 8 June 1941.

Sir Robert Brooke-Popham.¹⁰² During the winter both officers had requested two infantry battalions as reinforcements for the colony claiming that these would be useful in tying down Japanese forces that could otherwise be deployed elsewhere.¹⁰³ It was also claimed that reinforcements would serve as a useful deterrent against further Japanese aggression.¹⁰⁴ The Prime Minister conferred with his military adviser Major General Hastings Ismay as to the soundness of any such move. In an oft quoted passage Churchill wrote,

This is all wrong. If Japan goes to war with us, there is not the slightest chance of holding Hong Kong or relieving it. It is most unwise to increase the loss we shall suffer there. Instead of increasing the garrison it ought to be reduced to a symbolic scale. Any trouble arising there must be dealt with at the Peace Conference after the war. We must avoid frittering away our resources on untenable positions. Japan will think long before declaring war on the British Empire, and whether there are two or six battalions at Hong Kong will make no difference to her choice. I wish we had fewer troops there, but to move any would be noticeable and dangerous.¹⁰⁵

The Chiefs of Staff denied the requests but reiterated that Hong Kong was considered an outpost to be held as long as possible. In the event of war, relief by sea was thought to be most unlikely and it was repeated that a reinforcement of two infantry battalions was insufficient to increase the deterrent value of the garrison.¹⁰⁶ Demilitarization had also been ruled out because of the negative impact this would have had on Chinese morale as well as on continued American

¹⁰² Kent Fedorowich, “‘Cocked Hats and Swords and Small, Little Garrisons’: Britain, Canada and the Fall of Hong Kong, 1941’, *Modern Asian Studies*, 37(1) 2003: 111-157, p. 131.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.* See also Perras, “Our Position in the Far East would be Stronger Without this Unsatisfactory Commitment”, p. 248.

¹⁰⁴ TNA, CAB 121/718; Telegram No. 135 6/1 by Brooke-Popham, 6 January 1941.

¹⁰⁵ TNA, CAB 121/718; Memorandum No. D.9/1 by Churchill, 7 January 1941, as quoted by Christopher Bell in, “Our Most Exposed Outpost”: Hong Kong and British Far Eastern Strategy, 1921-1941’, *The Journal of Military History*, 60(1) 1996: 61-88, p. 80, and Perras, “Our Position in the Far East would be Stronger Without this Unsatisfactory Commitment”, pp. 246-257.

¹⁰⁶ Bell, “Our Most Exposed Outpost”, p. 80.

collaboration.¹⁰⁷ After the reinforcement of Hong Kong was considered during the January–February 1941 Anglo-American strategy discussions, however, the Chiefs of Staff had nevertheless informed Brooke-Popham that, ‘Should present discussions in Washington or any major change in situation alter our estimate of the position we will reconsider.’¹⁰⁸ In Singapore, American, Dutch, and British (ADB) officers also planned for war but it was recognized that time was required to build up strength.¹⁰⁹

Much of China’s military supplies passed through Hong Kong but as an outpost of the British Empire it was obvious that the colony would be one of the first points of attack in any Japanese offensive south. For the Chinese, Hong Kong was an absolutely vital component of their logistical network and was a relatively safe haven for families and wealth.¹¹⁰ Even during the Japanese occupation of Canton from October 1938, Hong Kong remained just as militarily significant as the Burma Road. Supplies such as fuel and spare parts bypassed Canton as they were transported from Hong Kong through Mirs Bay north to Waichow, and then north-northeast along the East River to the Kukong-Swatow highway.¹¹¹ From there the majority of supplies were forwarded northwest to the Hunan-Kwangtung railway at Kukong while the remainder was sent north along secondary roads directly into Kiangsi.¹¹² Aside from its importance to China it was also the centre for British intelligence in the region. From Hong Kong British

¹⁰⁷ National Defence and the Canadian Forces, Directorate of History and Heritage Library [hereafter DHH], File 593.013 (D21); Air Ministry Telegram, 14 January 1941, and TNA, CAB 121/718, COS (40) 843; Memorandum, 18 October 1940. See also George Endacott, *Hong Kong Eclipse* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 56.

¹⁰⁸ TNA, CAB 121/718, COS (41) 51; Memorandum, 22 January 1941.

¹⁰⁹ NAC, MG 26 J1, Reel C-4862; Memorandum by Duff, 16 June 1941.

¹¹⁰ NAC, RG 24, Reel C-8294, File 3507-4; Joint Intelligence Committee Report No. 154/2, 1 January 1944. NARA, RG 319, Entry 57, Box 164, File 6; Telegram No. 121 by Mayer, 20 December 1941.

¹¹¹ TNA, FO 371/27624 F 793/125/10; File notation by Scott, 13 February 1941.

¹¹² TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 11/40 by Giles, 31 October 1940.

officials were in contact with General Tai Li's agency in Chungking, Wu Teh Chen's organization in Kwangtung and the CCP through Chu Teh.¹¹³ They also worked with Colonel N.V. Roshchin of the Soviet Military Mission headed by Lieutenant General Vasilii Chuikov.¹¹⁴

Because of this situation at Hong Kong additional friction was created in Anglo-Japanese relations and the Sino-Japanese War underwent a dangerous escalation.¹¹⁵ The Japanese decision to advance south was made in order to bring the war in China to an end.¹¹⁶ It was believed that without Western economic, moral and material aid the Chinese would have ended their resistance and this was the primary reason for their blockade and the final attack on Hong Kong in December.¹¹⁷ According to British military intelligence officers the link from the colony was vital: 'Goods from Hong Kong pour into the interior and a considerable export trade in wood-oil, Tungsten and other products of "Free China" is also carried on.'¹¹⁸ The War Office passed this information along to the Far Eastern Department at the Foreign Office. They noted how Chinese resistance could only be maintained provided supplies continued to enter China from British controlled areas.¹¹⁹ Officers of the Japanese 23rd Army which made the attack on Hong Kong commented on the importance of this situation to Allied

¹¹³ NAC, RG 25, Volume 3297, File 'British Intelligence Agencies in China'; Report of interview with Reverend J.C. Mathieson, 4 October 1943. See also David P. Barrett and Vasilii Chuikov, *Mission to China: Memoirs of a Soviet Military Adviser to Chiang Kaishek* (Norwalk: EastBridge: 2004), pp. 70-71.

¹¹⁴ Barrett and Chuikov, *Mission to China*, p. 157.

¹¹⁵ NARA, RG 38, Entry 98A, Box 705; Report No. 33-41 by McCallum, 27 February 1941. See also TNA, FO 371/27636 F 4269/144/10; Canton Political Report – March Quarter 1941 by Blunt, 27 March 1941, and TNA, FO 371/27706 F 5140/1386/10; File notation by Scott, 13 June 1941.

¹¹⁶ Edward J. Drea, *Japan's Imperial Army: Its Rise and Fall, 1853-1945* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2009), p. 221.

¹¹⁷ NAC, RG 24, Volume 20538, File 982.013 (D3); Operation Record in China Theater, December 1946. TNA, WO 208/721; H.K.I.R. No. 17/39 by Edwards, 15 August 1939.

¹¹⁸ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 1/41 by Giles, 31 January 1941.

¹¹⁹ TNA, FO 371/27626 F 5761/125/10; Letter by Chapman, 29 June 1941.

occupation personnel in Japan after the war. The 23rd Army's intelligence chief, General Shimoda, was one of these.

The outbreak of the Pacific War did not alter the main objective of our operations against China, which consisted of the overthrow of the Chiang Kai-shek regime. We were going to bring further pressure upon them by exploitation of the gains in the battle to the South ... With the success of our operations in the South and the capture of Hongkong, we were determined to route out all enemy foreign influence from China by confiscating their concessions, rights and interests. The Chungking Govt. thus cut off from the support of British and U.S. Allied Powers, would receive a fatal blow both psychologically and materially. If we were to follow up our military success by adequate political and administrative measures, the Chiang Kai-shek regime would ultimately surrender.¹²⁰

Even without a Chinese surrender, however, the war had the potential to end without Chiang's consent by a more or less open Japanese rapprochement with Wang Ching Wei.¹²¹

Anglo-Japanese conflict in the Pearl River Delta had already turned more deadly prior to the Japanese attack in December, with ground combat throughout the region generally becoming more pronounced following the Japanese withdrawal from Kwangsi.¹²² Elements of the Japanese 38th Division maintained control throughout the West River Delta with bases at Fatshan and at Chungshan, and the scale of fighting expanded twenty miles northwest of Canton.¹²³ Aside from the disruption of agricultural production, the 38th Division often conducted foraging raids on towns near Kongmoon in search of loot, frequently inflicting murder and rape amongst civilians in the process.¹²⁴ East of Canton two Chinese

¹²⁰ NAC, RG 24, Volume 20538, File 982.013 (D3); Operation Record in China Theater, December 1946.

¹²¹ NARA, RG 165, Entry 184, Box 959; Telegram No. 20 by Barrett, 3 February 1941.

¹²² TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 2/41 by Major R. Giles, 28 February 1941, and TNA, FO 371/27653 F 8529/188/10; Report by Smith, 6 May 1941.

¹²³ NARA, RG 38, Entry 98A, Box 705; 'Southward Advance of the Japanese Navy'. See also TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 13/40 by Major R. Giles, 31 December 1940.

¹²⁴ NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 40; Report by Consul General M.S. Myers, 30 April 1941. See also United Church of Canada Archives, Toronto (Canada) [hereafter UCC], Accession 83.046C,

Divisions, including the 157th, had been sent to reinforce Waichow in November 1940, while in Canton itself the Japanese reinforced the 18th Division under General Hyakutake soon thereafter.¹²⁵ Chinese guerrilla activity increased through the spring along the West River and north of Canton. Assassinations and bombings were rife and martial law was frequently declared by Japanese authorities in response.¹²⁶ As a prelude to Japanese operations along the North River, the 23rd Army had been reinforced and the defence zone surrounding Canton was extended.¹²⁷ Fighting once again resumed at Tsungfa between General Yu Han Mou's 7th War Zone forces and the 104th Division under General Ito Takeo.¹²⁸ Japanese losses in the region thus continued to number between two to three hundred men each month.¹²⁹

Japan's presence was also felt from the air.¹³⁰ Pilots of the 5th Air Regiment based at Canton supported ground actions and they also interdicted lines of communication to Hong Kong.¹³¹ Heavy bombardment of the Mirs Bay-Tamshui logistical route was conducted regularly. In these operations the 5th Air Regiment was assisted by aircraft flying from carriers such as the *Mizou* which

Box 4, File 71, U.C.C. Board of Overseas Missions, South China [hereafter BOMSC]; Letter by McRae to Arnup, 20 April 1941.

¹²⁵ TNA, WO 106/2384; Telegram No. 8972 by Grasett, 7 February 1941, and TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 12/40 by Major R. Giles, 30 November 1940.

¹²⁶ NARA, RG 59, Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files: China, Internal Affairs, 1940-1944 (Frederick: University Publications of America, Inc., 1984) [hereafter USSDCF], Reel 10; Report No. 893.00 P. R. Canton/161 by Consul General M. Myers, 10 July 1941. TNA, FO 371/27637 F 10548/144/10; Canton Political Report No. 109 by Coates, 26 June 1941. TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 2/41 by Giles, 28 February 1941, and TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 4/41 by Giles, 1 May 1941. See also UCC, Accession 83.046C, Box 4, File 71, BOMSC; Letter by McRae to Arnup, 20 April 1941.

¹²⁷ NARA, RG 38, Entry 98A, Box 705; Report No. 33-41 by McCallum, 27 February 1941.

¹²⁸ NARA, RG 59, USSDCF, Reel 10; Report No. 893.00 P. R. Canton/156 by Consul General M. Myers, 10 February 1941. See also TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 13/40 by Giles, 31 December 1940, and UCC, Accession 83.046C, Box 4, File 72, BOMSC; Letter by Thomson to Arnup, 10 April 1941.

¹²⁹ NARA, RG 59, USSDCF, Reel 10; Report No. 893.00 P. R. Canton/157 by Consul General M. Myers, 12 March 1941.

¹³⁰ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 2/41 by Giles, 28 February 1941.

¹³¹ TNA, WO 106/2384; Telegram No. 8972 by Grasett, 7 February 1941.

were often positioned in Bias Bay.¹³² Little success was found in halting Chinese supplies, however, usually because of poor weather conditions.¹³³ Occasional airspace violations created anxiety, such as on 26 November 1940, when in conjunction with a small ground reconnaissance of the north shore of Mirs Bay, six planes over flew the colony.¹³⁴ CNAC losses also accumulated during this period as fuel and tungsten continued to be flown between Free China and Kai Tak airfield.¹³⁵ This air traffic attracted much attention on the part of Japanese fighters but as most flights were conducted at night losses remained limited. Japanese air units did not have a completely free hand, however, and they sustained a serious loss on 5 February 1941. An aircraft carrying ten senior officials to Indochina was shot down near Shekki at the town of Tan Moon killing all aboard.¹³⁶ Amongst the dead were Supreme War Councillor Admiral Osumi Mineo and Rear Admiral Hikojiro Suga. More significantly, plans for future southern operations were captured by Chinese guerrillas and these were sent on to Chungking.¹³⁷

In March, many Japanese seaborne raids were conducted along the Kwangtung coast to cut other supply lines while providing troops with additional training in amphibious operations.¹³⁸ These operations included the 229th and the

¹³² TNA, WO 106/2384; Telegram No. 8976 by Grasett, 14 January 1941. See also TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 13/40 by Giles, 31 December 1940, and TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 1/41 by Giles, 31 January 1941, and TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 2/41 by Giles, 28 February 1941.

¹³³ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 2/41 by Giles, 28 February 1941.

¹³⁴ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 12/40 by Giles, 30 November 1940.

¹³⁵ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 2/41 by Giles, 28 February 1941. See also TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 6/41 by Major R. Giles, 1 July 1941, and TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 9/41 by Major R. Giles, 1 October 1941, and TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 10/41 by Major R. Giles, 1 November 1941.

¹³⁶ NARA, RG 59, USSDCF, Reel 10; Report No. 893.00 P. R. Canton/157 by Myers, 12 March 1941.

¹³⁷ NARA, RG 38, Entry 98A, Box 705; ‘Southward Advance of the Japanese Navy’. See also UCC, Accession 83.046C, Box 4, File 71, BOMSC; Letter by McRae to Arnup, 20 April 1941.

¹³⁸ NARA, RG 38, Entry 98A, Box 705; ‘Southward Advance of the Japanese Navy’, and NARA, RG 59, USSDCF, Reel 10; Report No. 893.00 P. R. Canton/161 by Myers, 10 July 1941. See also

230th Regiments of the 38th Division under Lieutenant General Fujii Yoji, the latter of which was landed at Pakhoi.¹³⁹ Both regiments would see heavy combat during the attack on Hong Kong later in the year. Other units simultaneously increased the Japanese presence in the region just north of Hong Kong. After assuming command of the 124th Brigade (18th Division) from Major General Hara Mamoru, Major General Suefaji Tomofumi continued to post a number of units along the frontier and thereby maintained the landward blockade.¹⁴⁰

A major interdiction effort against Hong Kong had been mounted during January and February of 1941. On 17 January an initial marine detachment supported by the carrier *Hiryu* advanced along the coast of Mirs Bay with the objective of blocking the Chinese line of communication from Hong Kong to Tamshui.¹⁴¹ This was soon followed with a landing further east in Bias Bay on 4 February by two thousand troops of the 38th Division under General Kawaguchi Kiyotako.¹⁴² Another force landed northwest of the colony at Namtau on 7 February.¹⁴³ A detachment of the 124th Regiment under Suefaji numbering about one thousand men marched north from Shumchun and converged on Tamshui along with the Kawaguchi Detachment which had moved up from Bias Bay.¹⁴⁴ The total number of Japanese troops positioned north of Hong Kong was then

NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3; Report No. 15 by Barrett, 31 March 1941. TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 3/41 by Major R. Giles, 1 April 1941, and TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 4/41 by Giles, 1 May 1941.

¹³⁹ NARA, RG 38, Entry 98A Box 705; Report No. 46-41 by Smith-Hutton, 24 March 1941, and NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 40; Report by Major James McHugh, 11 March 1941. See also TNA, FO 371/27624 F 1812/125/10; Telegram No. 9202 by Grasett, 6 March 1941, and TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 3/41 by Giles, 1 April 1941.

¹⁴⁰ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 13/40 by Giles, 31 December 1940.

¹⁴¹ NARA, RG 38, Entry 98A, Box 705; ‘Southward Advance of the Japanese Navy’. TNA, FO 371/27636 F 4269/144/10; Canton Political Report – March Quarter 1941 by Blunt, 27 March 1941. See also TNA, WO 106/2384; Telegram No. 9147 by Grasett, 27 February 1941, and TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 2/41 by Giles, 28 February 1941.

¹⁴² TNA, WO 106/2384; Telegram No. 9147 by Grasett, 27 February 1941, and TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 2/41 by Giles, 28 February 1941.

¹⁴³ TNA, WO 106/2384; Telegram No. 8972 by Grasett, 7 February 1941.

¹⁴⁴ NARA, RG 165, Entry 184, Box 959; Telegram No. 23 by Lieutenant Colonel Barrett, 8 February 1941, and TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 2/41 by Giles, 28 February 1941.

estimated to be about eight thousand men comprising approximately two brigades.¹⁴⁵ Tamshui was occupied on 6 February without resistance and resulted in the loss of a great deal of military supplies including fuel which had been stockpiled awaiting shipment north to Waichow.¹⁴⁶ Tungsten destined for the United States was also seized.¹⁴⁷ Despite these Japanese moves, Chinese smugglers were nonetheless able to transport one and a half million gallons of fuel using junks over alternate routes from Hong Kong during the first half of 1941.¹⁴⁸

After failing to achieve their goals, many Japanese ground units in occupation of towns scattered along the Kwangtung coast were withdrawn by the middle of March for deployment northeast and for operations further inland in Kwangtung.¹⁴⁹ Where possible the void was filled with Chinese puppet troops such as those of the 20th Division under Lieutenant General Li Au Yat.¹⁵⁰ There were approximately 20,000 of these men in Kwangtung but training and equipment remained minimal.¹⁵¹ New Japanese raids began on 1 April 1941 when the 115th Regiment, of the 18th Division, left Tamshui and linked up with an amphibious assault force at Swabue under the command of Vice Admiral Sawamoto Yorio.¹⁵² Ground operations in the vicinity of Swatow were also

¹⁴⁵ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 2/41 by Giles, 28 February 1941.

¹⁴⁶ TNA, WO 106/2384; Telegram No. 8972 by Grasett, 7 February 1941, and TNA, WO 106/2384; War Office Note, 10 February 1941.

¹⁴⁷ NARA, RG 38, Entry 98A, Box 705; ‘Southward Advance of the Japanese Navy’.

¹⁴⁸ TNA, FO 371/27624 F 1110/125/10; Telegram No. 9051 by Grasett, 17 February 1941. See also Chan Lau Kit Ching, *China, Britain and Hong Kong, 1895-1945* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1990), p. 288.

¹⁴⁹ NAC, RG 24, Volume 3913, File 1037-5-3 Volume 1; Telegram FEW 21, 14 March 1941, and TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 3/41 by Giles, 1 April 1941.

¹⁵⁰ NARA, RG 59, USSDCF, Reel 10; Report No. 893.00 P. R. Canton/160 by Myers, 11 June 1941, and NARA, RG 59, USSDCF, Reel 10; Report No. 893.00 P. R. Canton/163 by Myers, 9 September 1941.

¹⁵¹ NARA, RG 59, LM 65, Reel 21; Report 893.23/97 by Consul General Addison Southard, 18 September 1941, and NARA, RG 59, LM 65, Reel 21; Report 893.23/98 by Southard, 7 October 1941. See also NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 39; Telegram No. 1023 by Southard, 7 October 1941, and TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 9/41 by Giles, 1 October 1941.

¹⁵² NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3; Report No. 16 by Barrett, 1 May 1941, and TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 3/41 by Giles, 1 April 1941.

stepped up while several towns and cities farther along the coast in Fukien and Chekiang faced extended occupations.¹⁵³ Elements of the Japanese 18th, 28th Formosan, and 5th Divisions were used against Foochow, Wenchow, and Ningpo.¹⁵⁴ Heavy artillery was landed at Bocca Tigris and Namtau with the latter also being reinforced with infantry. The small airfield that had been constructed there became somewhat active as a facility for pilots practising dive bombing.¹⁵⁵

Air attacks against inland Chinese supply routes became more frequent in advance of a move against Waichow.¹⁵⁶ Units from the 18th and 38th Divisions occupied the town during May, but the Chinese 152nd and 160th Divisions moved south to divert these forces by threatening Japanese units positioned along the Hong Kong border. Finding resistance just north of Waichow, and with their position at Shumchun under threat of attack, the Japanese broke off contact and evacuated the town withdrawing west along the river.¹⁵⁷ With approximately six to seven thousand men still scattered at various locations along the Hong Kong border they wanted to be able to support these forces if necessary.¹⁵⁸ Fortunately for the British these troops lacked sufficient strength to mount an attack on Hong Kong.

¹⁵³ NARA, RG 38, Entry 98A, Box 705; Report No. 60-41 by Smith-Hutton, 24 April 1941, and NARA, RG 38, Entry 98A, Box 705; Report No. 78-41 by Smith-Hutton, 29 July 1941. See also NARA, RG 165, M1444, Correspondence of the Military Intelligence Division Relating to General, Political, Economic, and Military Conditions in China; 1918-1941, Reel 11; Report No. 9990 by Major F.P. Munson, 11 May 1941, and NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 40; Report No. 10477 by Major Stuart Wood, 28 July 1941.

¹⁵⁴ NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 11; Report No. 9990 by Munson, 11 May 1941, and TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 4/41 by Giles, 1 May 1941.

¹⁵⁵ NARA, RG 38, Entry 98A, Box 705; ‘Southward Advance of the Japanese Navy’. TNA, WO 106/2384; Telegram No. 9476 by Grasett, 12 April 1941, and TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 3/41 by Giles, 1 April 1941. See also TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 5/41 by Giles, 1 June 1941.

¹⁵⁶ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 3/41 by Giles, 1 April 1941, and TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 5/41 by Giles, 1 June 1941.

¹⁵⁷ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 5/41 by Giles, 1 June 1941.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.* NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 40; Telegram No. 9999 by Major F.P. Munson, 15 June 1941.

British military officers nevertheless sought to ease some of the tension that had been building along the border. By this time the elderly Lieutenant General Katajima, commander of the 18th Division, had established his headquarters at Shumchun to better study the approaches to Hong Kong. This was the first time an officer of that rank was posted so close to the colony.¹⁵⁹ In mid June Major Charles Boxer entered into negotiations with Katajima in order to curb Chinese puppet agitation at Shataukok.¹⁶⁰ A Japanese infantry company under Captain Sekiya had been encouraging Chinese to throw rocks at British police patrols and they repeatedly cut the boundary wire. A gambling racket was also creating disorder.¹⁶¹ During Boxer's meeting with Katajima the atmosphere was friendly and the general stated that he would deal with the problem personally.¹⁶² Brigadier Peffers and Major Boxer were then invited to accompany Katajima on an inspection of one of his companies commanded by Lieutenant Mori at Shumchun.¹⁶³ In their presence Katajima ordered the men to cease interfering with British patrols and to move gambling dens away from the border, but as General Grasett reported to London after Boxer's return, the lingering problem was the tendency of junior officers to ignore orders they did not agree with and problems at Shataukok persisted.¹⁶⁴

The Japanese Second Fleet also underwent a change of leadership and the level of aggression displayed at Hong Kong increased significantly at sea.¹⁶⁵ On

¹⁵⁹ TNA, WO 106/2402; Telegram No. 9983 by Grasett, 16 June 1941, and TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 4/41 by Giles, 1 May 1941.

¹⁶⁰ TNA, WO 106/2402; Telegram No. 9983 by Grasett, 16 June 1941.

¹⁶¹ TNA, WO 106/2402; Telegram No. 9974 by Grasett, 15 June 1941, and TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 13/40 by Giles, 31 December 1940.

¹⁶² TNA, WO 106/2402; Telegram No. 9983 by Grasett, 16 June 1941.

¹⁶³ TNA, WO 106/2402; Telegram No. 6 by Grasett, 19 June 1941.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.* TNA, FO 371/27637 F 10548/144/10; Canton Political Report No. 109 by Coates, 26 June 1941.

¹⁶⁵ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 5/41 by Giles, 1 June 1941, and TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 6/41 by Giles, 1 July 1941.

17 May 1941 Vice-Admiral Niimi Masaichi assumed command of the 2nd China Expeditionary Fleet from Vice-Admiral Sawamoto Yorio, an officer who had served in that position since the beginning of the year but had soon been appointed as Vice Minister of the navy.¹⁶⁶ On 30 May at Amoy, Niimi conferred with the Commander-in-Chief of the Japanese Fleet in China, Admiral Shimada Shigetaro, and the blockade at Hong Kong grew increasingly dangerous.¹⁶⁷ On 10 June, Niimi landed troops less than five miles south of Hong Kong territorial waters on the Chinese controlled Lema and Kaipong Island groups, and the occupation of these was to continue throughout the summer.¹⁶⁸ Henceforth, attacks on Hong Kong junks became more deadly than at any time previously and British merchant shipping was intercepted and searched with greater regularity.¹⁶⁹ Ships as large as cruisers were involved in these attacks.¹⁷⁰ On one occasion the *Idzuzu* was reported to have attacked junks with auto-canons and had several vessels in tow.¹⁷¹ Aircraft were also seen strafing junks.¹⁷²

The Japanese were successful in disrupting the colony's food supply as the fishing fleet remained in port and British retaliation was soon instigated by local

¹⁶⁶ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 4/41 by Giles, 1 May 1941, and TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 5/41 by Giles, 1 June 1941.

¹⁶⁷ NARA, RG 59, USSDCF, Reel 10; Report No. 893.00 P. R. Canton/156 by Myers, 10 February 1941. See also TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 5/41 by Giles, 1 June 1941, and

¹⁶⁸ NAC, RG 24, Volume 3913, File 1037-5-3 Volume 1; Telegram FEW 35, 19 June 1941, and NARA, RG 38, Entry 98A, Box 705; 'Southward Advance of the Japanese Navy'. TNA, WO 106/2402; Telegram No. 45 by Grasett, 23 June 1941, and TNA, WO 106/2402; Telegram No. 331 by Grasett, 24 July 1941. See also TNA, WO 106/2387; Telegram No. 9941 by Grasett, 10 June 1941.

¹⁶⁹ TNA, WO 106/2387; Telegram No. 9941 by Grasett, 10 June 1941, See also TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 5/41 by Giles, 1 June 1941, and TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 6/41 by Giles, 1 July 1941.

¹⁷⁰ TNA, FO 371/27653 F 5015/188/10; Telegram No. 501 by Governor Sir Geoffry Northcote, 7 June 1941.

¹⁷¹ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 9/41 by Giles, 1 October 1941.

¹⁷² TNA, FO 371/27653 F 12830/188/10; Letter by Craigie to Toyoda, 10 September 1941.

colonial officials.¹⁷³ Of the sixty attacks reported during this round of conflict at least fifteen people were killed and three were wounded.¹⁷⁴ In response, General Grasett almost precipitated an overt Anglo-Japanese war by using six requisitioned Chinese Maritime Custom vessels to challenge Japanese naval forces directly.¹⁷⁵ On 18 July 1941 shots were fired from a ship of the *HMS Cyclops* class to ward off a Japanese submarine and the Pearl River had already been partially mined by other Royal Navy vessels.¹⁷⁶ Just prior to this event Grasett had indignantly explained the deteriorating situation to Britain's Ambassador in Japan, Sir Robert Craigie.

I fully concur that this is a most dangerous practice. Could Minister of Marines notice be called to this and reminded that we are at war with two other powers both of which are using submarines for indiscriminate warfare and the fact that though a submarine may be flying a Japanese flag it might well be a ruse de guerre and must not be taken as a security that she will not be fired on if she attempts to stop British ships.¹⁷⁷

It was subsequently added that:

If the Japanese navy wished to avoid incidents [the] easiest way to achieve this is to remove their patrols from proximity of Hong Kong observing that this is a British Naval Base and we are in a state of openly declared warfare.¹⁷⁸

Grasett's confrontational actions threatened to ignite open war with Japan.

Whitehall's reaction followed Craigie's recommendation against further retaliation. He noted: 'The danger of a locally provoked incident is, in fact, greater in the case of Hong Kong than in that of other British possessions in the

¹⁷³ TNA, FO 371/27653 F 9206/188/10; Telegram No. 980 by N.L. Smith, 6 September 1941. See also TNA, WO 106/2387; Memorandum by Scott, 12 June 1941, and TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 6/41 by Giles, 1 July 1941.

¹⁷⁴ TNA, FO 371/27653 F 8529/188/10; Letter by Northcote to Craigie, 6 May 1941, and TNA, FO 371/27653 F 12830/188/10; Letter by Craigie to Toyoda, 10 September 1941.

¹⁷⁵ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 3/41 by Giles, 1 April 1941.

¹⁷⁶ TNA, FO 371/27706 F 5140/1386/10; Telegram No. 238/3 by Brooke-Popham, 11 June 1941, and TNA, FO 371/27653 F 7144/188/10; Interdepartmental Telegram No. 13, 30 July 1941.

¹⁷⁷ TNA, WO 106/2402; Telegram No. 837 by Grasett, 7 July 1941.

¹⁷⁸ TNA, FO 371/27653 F 6996/188/10; Interdepartmental Telegram, 27 July 1941.

Far East.¹⁷⁹ The Foreign Office supported his position with A.L. Scott commenting: ‘In this case Sir R. Craigie talks sense, and the governor of Hongkong and his military advisers talk wildly.’¹⁸⁰ Gerard Gent at the Colonial Office had earlier written that ‘local retaliatory measures at Hong Kong seem to us to be unwise … We should not like to see Hong Kong incited or permitted to start a local war of reprisals with Japan.’¹⁸¹ Thus, on 19 July 1941, the day after the incident occurred, Grasett’s command in Hong Kong was terminated.¹⁸² During Grasett’s return to England, he paused in Ottawa to meet with General Harry Crerar, the Canadian Army Chief of Staff, and together they discussed the possibility of sending Canadian infantry to Hong Kong.¹⁸³ Governor Northcote’s departure soon followed Grasett but he had already been preparing for his retirement as early as June.¹⁸⁴

The Japanese had become more desperate after failing to sever Chinese lines of communication to Burma and Hong Kong, but it was the German invasion of the USSR that provided a chance opportunity to break the impasse in south China once again. With the survival of the Soviet Union in doubt the opportunity to threaten Anglo-American forces further south with an occupation of the rest of Indochina seemed too good to ignore.¹⁸⁵ Thus, many troops, including much of the 104th Division, were withdrawn from Kwangtung to conduct the operation which began on 24 July.¹⁸⁶ The largest mobilization of forces in Japanese history

¹⁷⁹ TNA, FO 371/27653 F 6607/188/10; Telegram No. 1226 by Craigie, 21 July 1941.

¹⁸⁰ TNA, FO 371/27653 F 6607/188/10; File notation by Scott, 25 July 1941.

¹⁸¹ TNA, WO 106/2402; Letter by Gent to Sterndale Bennett, 27 June 1941.

¹⁸² TNA, CAB 121/718, COS (41) 559; Memorandum by Dill, 8 September 1941.

¹⁸³ TNA, WO 106/5360; Report No. 163 by Stacey, November 1946.

¹⁸⁴ TNA, CO 967/70; Letter by Northcote to Lord Moyne, 9 June 1941.

¹⁸⁵ NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 38; Telegram by Mayer, 6 August 1941, and TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 7/41 by Giles, 1 August 1941. See also Hallett Abend in, *The New York Times*, 25 July 1941.

¹⁸⁶ NARA, RG 59, USSDCF, Reel 10; Report No. 893.00 P. R. Canton/162 by Myers, 11 August 1941, and NARA, RG 319, Entry 57, Box 169, File 1; Telegram by Captain Bernard Tormey, 4

was also begun at this time.¹⁸⁷ Reinforcements were sent to Manchuria to seize any favourable opportunity for an attack into Siberia. After being stripped for southern operations the 23rd Army was left with three under-strength divisions, one mixed brigade, and two infantry regiments to hold positions in Kwangtung.¹⁸⁸ Troop reductions left approximately 5,000 men positioned along the Hong Kong border and anarchy returned to areas temporarily abandoned such as Chungshan.¹⁸⁹

Violations of British sovereignty at Hong Kong consequently worsened. The Japanese warned British officials that orders had been issued to shoot anyone approaching Hong Kong, Swatow or Canton, and during August twelve Chinese were shot while attempting to cross the frontier.¹⁹⁰ Two sampans were also seized inside British territorial waters of Mirs Bay. The Chinese crews were released after protests were lodged.¹⁹¹ In September, Japanese aircraft entered the colony's airspace on two occasions. A bomber over flew Fanling on the 12th and a few days later a flight of three aircraft crossed over Shataukok in a less flagrant violation.¹⁹² More blood was spilled at the end of October when a Japanese soldier fired at three Chinese boys driving cattle across the frontier near Shumchun. One was shot in the head well inside British territory and

August 1941. See also TNA, FO 371/27626 F 6765/125/10; Telegram No. 277 by Grasett, 18 July 1941, and TNA, FO 371/27626 F 6961/125/10; Telegram, 26 July 1941 and TNA, FO 371/27626 F 6962/125/10. TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 7/41 by Giles, 1 August 1941.

¹⁸⁷ NARA, RG 38, Entry 98A, Box 705; 'Southward Advance of the Japanese Navy'.

¹⁸⁸ NAC, RG 24, Volume 20538, File 982.013 (D3); Operation Record in China Theater, December 1946, and TNA, FO 371/27627 F 7596/125/10; Telegram No. 440, 8 August 1941.

¹⁸⁹ TNA, FO 371/27627 F 8190/125/10; Telegram No. 547, 21 August 1941, and TNA, FO 371/27627 F 9847/125/10; Memorandum by Sterndale Bennett, 23 September 1941. TNA, WO 106/2402; Telegram No. 816 by Sir Geoffry Northcote, 7 August 1941, and TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 8/41 by Giles, 1 September 1941.

¹⁹⁰ TNA, FO 371/27627 F 7847/125/10; Telegram No. 486, 15 August 1941, and TNA, FO 371/27627 F 8148/125/10; Telegram, 22 August 1941.

¹⁹¹ TNA, FO 371/27627 F 8148/125/10; Telegram, 22 August 1941.

¹⁹² TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 9/41 by Giles, 1 October 1941.

subsequently died.¹⁹³ Echoing the earlier submarine incident, a Japanese naval vessel carrying troops and several senior commanders entered the colony's waters in October to conduct a reconnaissance of the defences.¹⁹⁴ It was stopped by MTB No. 8 after machinegun rounds were fired across the bow. The Japanese prepared to repel boarders but discussions on the MTB resulted in a withdrawal of the offending ship.¹⁹⁵

The last round of Japanese ground action in Kwangtung prior to the attack on Hong Kong itself was conducted during September and October.¹⁹⁶ Unlike previous operations earlier in the year this offensive was primarily launched as a diversion to aid the beleaguered Japanese 11th Army in Hunan. The second battle of Changsha was a significant Japanese reverse that resulted in many casualties.¹⁹⁷ In rendering aid from Kwangtung the 23rd Army at Canton attacked north along the railway in the hope of drawing Chinese divisions south but they ran out of steam after an advance of approximately one hundred kilometres.¹⁹⁸ Closer towards the coast Japanese attention was also fixed once again on the towns of Tamshui and Toishan. The latter had become a depot for tungsten transiting the West River.¹⁹⁹ As elsewhere in Kwangtung, Toishan had previously been occupied but a more brutal attack was inflicted upon the city on this occasion

¹⁹³ TNA, WO 106/2402; Telegram No. 1263 by Governor Sir Mark Young, 31 October 1941, and Telegram No. 1447 by Young, 4 December 1941. TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 10/41 by Giles, 1 November 1941.

¹⁹⁴ TNA, FO 371/27653 F 10742/188/10; Telegram No. 381 by Commodore A.C. Collinson, 13 October 1941.

¹⁹⁵ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 10/41 by Giles, 1 November 1941.

¹⁹⁶ NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 40; Report No. 10579 by Major C. Stanton Babcock, 22 October 1941.

¹⁹⁷ NARA, RG 319, Entry 57, Box 164, File 5; Telegram No. 54 by Barrett, 3 October 1941.

¹⁹⁸ NARA, RG 165, Entry 184, Box 959; Telegram No. 50 by Barrett, 30 September 1941, and NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 40; Telegram No. 65/41 by McHugh, 17 October 1941.

¹⁹⁹ NAC, RG 25, Volume 3264, File 6161-40C; Telegram No. 138 by Victor Odlum, Enclosure report by V.J.R. Mills, 27 September 1943. See also TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 9/41 by Giles, 1 October 1941.

causing much damage and many casualties.²⁰⁰ What made the September attack on Toishan most notable was the Japanese use of chemical weapons.²⁰¹ Although outlawed by the Washington Armament treaty of 1922, use of chemical weapons was on the increase in China and anxiety had grown amongst some British officials in Asia because of fears that the Japanese might use these at Hong Kong.²⁰² There was less concern over this issue in London, however, as indicated in early 1942 by one Foreign Office official: ‘The Chinks no doubt are ill-prepared against it & so it pays. The Japs have told us they won’t use gas if we don’t.’²⁰³

The effects of these raids were devastating to the local population. Living conditions in Kwangtung were already dangerous with robbery, inflation and cholera being constant threats cursing those too impoverished to flee.²⁰⁴ Places such as Toishan and Tamshui soon faced difficult food shortages and famine became a serious problem as the war progressed.²⁰⁵ As an additional affront, wheat sent to China as American Red Cross aid was seized by Japanese troops in Chungshan and Toishan, only to be sold at high price in Canton.²⁰⁶ Compounding these problems was the continued widespread cultivation and distribution of

²⁰⁰ NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 40; Memorandum by Consul General M.S. Myers, 30 April 1941, and TNA, FO 371/27624 F 1812/125/10; Telegram No. 9202 by Grasett, 6 March 1941.

²⁰¹ NARA, RG 59, USSDCF, Reel 10; Report No. 893.00 P. R. Canton/165 by Consul General M.S. Myers, 10 November 1941.

²⁰² NARA, RG 319, Entry 57, Box 164, File 6; Telegram No. 122 by Magruder, 23 December 1941, and TNA, WO 106/5303, No. 289, Report on visit to IV War Zone Headquarters by Major Charles Boxer and Lieutenant Colonel H. Chauvin, 20 May 1939. See also Gole, *The Road to Rainbow*, p. 9.

²⁰³ TNA, FO 371/27628 F 14340/125/10; File notation by JGW, 3 January 1942.

²⁰⁴ NARA, RG 59, USSDCF, Reel 3; Report No. 893.00/14801 by Consul General M.S. Myers, 29 August 1941, and NARA, RG 59, USSDCF, Reel 10; Report No. 893.00 P. R. Canton/160 by Myers, 11 June 1941. See also TNA, WO 106/2402; Telegram No. 816 by Sir Geoffry Northcote, 7 August 1941.

²⁰⁵ NAC, RG 25, Volume 3029, File 3978-40C Part 1; Telegram No. 245 by Victor Odlum, Enclosure 1, ‘Famine in Kwangtung’ by R. Collins, 9 May 1944. See also University of Hong Kong Archive [hereafter HKU], B.A.A.G. Series, Volume IV, ‘Advance Headquarters, Waichow, Field Operations Group’; Report by E.D.G. Hooper, 14 August 1942, p. 152.

²⁰⁶ NARA, RG 59, USSDCF, Reel 10; Report No. 893.00 P. R. Canton/162 by Myers, 11 August 1941, and TNA, FO 371/27682 F 12829/520/10; Telegram No. 1896 by Ambassador Joseph Grew, 6 September 1941.

opium.²⁰⁷ The British Consul in Swatow wrote how the Japanese were financing their occupation by selling narcotics. ‘Around Swatow the fields are full of opium’.²⁰⁸ Macau remained a primary distribution base for the region but Hong Kong likewise served as a useful opium conduit where powerful criminal figures such as Tu Yueh Sheng [Du Yuesheng], otherwise known as Big Eared Tu, were able to develop networks as distant as Canada and America well into the post war period.²⁰⁹

Throughout 1941 Kwangtung increasingly became a more violent region of China. The Japanese inability to terminate the movement of military supplies from Hong Kong helped ensure that the war could continue indefinitely. Because of their failure to achieve peace the Japanese grew more desperate and prepared to fight additional enemies who were blamed for their predicament. Encouraged by the German invasion of the USSR, the occupation of south Indochina was a significant step towards this end. British Far Eastern officials had also grown angry over the worsening crisis and their impatience with Whitehall’s restraint almost led to open warfare in July. Hong Kong had become the most dangerous flashpoint in the Far East and local officials had been removed to prevent a precipitant war. American intervention was still desired first, but until that occurred, every effort was made in the Far East to maintain the Soviet Union as a belligerent ally. Thus, Anglo-American support for China assumed a much higher priority in the latter half of 1941.

²⁰⁷ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 11/40 by Giles, 31 October 1940.

²⁰⁸ TNA, FO 371/27636 F 5072/144/10; Quarterly report by Consul Hall, 3 April 1941.

²⁰⁹ NAC, RG 25, Volume 3356, File 25-G(s); Government of Hong Kong Telegram, 15 June 1948, and NAC, RG 25, Volume 8517, File 6605-40; FO Biography of Tu Yueh-sen, 16 April 1943. See also NARA, RG 59, USSDCF, Reel 10; Report No. 893.00 P. R. Canton/162 by Myers, 11 August 1941, and TNA, FO 371/27621 F 12172/91/10; Report, 11 November 1941.

A Faithless Gesture: The Reinforcement of Hong Kong

After the fall of France, Canada accelerated its shift into the orbit of the United States and American strategic problems increasingly became associated with Canada. This was the case in China where US interests were strongest amongst all other wartime allies save the Soviet Union. Both the British and the Americans considered the continuance of the Sino-Japanese War as necessary in keeping the Japanese army engaged and away from other more strategic areas; most especially so after the German invasion of the USSR.²¹⁰ Within this picture Canada's role in Far Eastern affairs emerged as a globally significant component of Anglo-American Far Eastern strategy. It was also another manifestation of Roosevelt's approach to the implementation of collective security.²¹¹ Initially conceived in the White House, Canadian policy was based upon the provision of military support as a means of maintaining Chinese morale. The essential elements involved the sale of munitions but also the disastrous deployment of combat forces to Hong Kong in the fall of 1941. The crucial timing of these events, concurrent as they were with Operation Barbarossa, meant that Canada's official presence in China was begun and maintained in order to provide indirect military support in defence of the Soviet Far Eastern flank but this information was suppressed at the highest levels of government.

Political factors influenced the war effort more significantly in China than any other theatre of operations, and during the latter half of 1941 the maintenance of Chinese morale became a constant concern of Western leaders, especially as

²¹⁰ Fedorowich, 'Cocked Hats and Swords and Small, Little Garrisons', p. 119.

²¹¹ NAC, RG 25, Volume 2920, File 2670-A-40C-1; Telegram No. 2132 by Massey, 16 November 1941. See also H. Angus, *Canada and the Far East, 1940-1953* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1953), p. 18.

the bombing of Chungking intensified during the summer.²¹² Japanese leaders had good reason to suspect Chinese morale was shaken as it had been severely tested over the course of the war. Because of this the peace faction was a significant force in Chinese politics that could not be ignored. British Military Attaché Brigadier General Lance Dennys commented on the situation on 25 October 1941:

China still fervently hopes for war between Japan and the democracies, as providing the best chance of winning their own war. A Japanese move against Siberia would not suit her book so well, unless she was certain that the democracies would then come in on Russia's side. The Chinese General Staff have two main fears, firstly that Japan may come to some compromise with the democracies which will leave her free to concentrate all her efforts against China; secondly that a complete Russian collapse may occur and open up communications between Germany and Japan via Siberia, which the General Staff feels would put both the democracies and China in a very bad position in the Far East. It is probable that a Russian collapse would be followed by the exertion of strong pressure by the "peace party" to come to terms with Japan.²¹³

Ian Morrison noted his concerns at the Foreign Office. He wrote:

Everything, for the moment, hinges upon the outcome of events in Europe. China today is sitting on the sidelines. But if things go badly, it is possible, indeed probable, that this second group ... [peace party] ... will assert itself. And in the hostility which these Chinese leaders as well as the Japanese feel for the communists, may be detected what will perhaps be the face-saving solution to this struggle, the union of the two participants, to eliminate a common enemy.²¹⁴

Years of defeat compounded by the incessant bombing of Chungking had made the Chinese weary of war and as the global military situation became more critical, Anglo-American policy makers became increasingly concerned over the

²¹² *Toronto Daily Star*, 13 September 1941.

²¹³ TNA, WO 208/366; Note on the Military Situation in China by Dennys, 25 October 1941.

²¹⁴ TNA, FO 371/27715 F 4787/3653/10; Report by Morrison, 3 June 1941.

prospects of continued Chinese resistance.²¹⁵ Sir John Sterndale Bennett at the Foreign Office noted in July how the,

Chinese should be provided with additional aircraft defence. If the Japanese raids on Chungking continue at the present rate without any effective defence being put up, it is quite possible that the Chinese may crack and we cannot afford to see them crack at this stage.²¹⁶

The new US Ambassador Clarence Gauss informed the State Department that 'Chinese resistance to Japanese aggression is largely based on the Chinese expectation that sooner or later Japan will clash with other powers having interests in the Far East.'²¹⁷ In search of additional support the potential for a Sino-Japanese peace was often exploited by Chiang in his communications with both Churchill and Roosevelt.²¹⁸ His requests for increased aid grew more forceful in 1941 as American peace talks with Japanese Ambassador Nomura Kichisaburo continued throughout the year.

Chiang's appeals became most insistent when an apparent threat to Yunnan developed in November following a build-up of Japanese forces in northern Indochina. The Chinese were anxious since US warnings to Japan against an attack on Yunnan had not been included in the Washington discussions.²¹⁹ Chiang likely exaggerated the severity of the military threat being made against the Burma Road but intelligence gleaned from the Japanese consul in Hong Kong and elsewhere indicated that peace between China and Japan

²¹⁵ NARA, RG 18, Entry 300, Box 934, File Misc A; Memorandum by Magruder, 18 August 1941. See also Imperial War Museum (London), Conservation Shelf; 'Thunder in the East' by Major General G.E. Grimsdale, 1947, pp. 35, 38.

²¹⁶ TNA, FO 371/27640 F 6619/145/10; File notation by Sterndale Bennett, 10 July 1941.

²¹⁷ Telegram No. 230 by Gauss, in *Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers, 1941 Volume 4, The Far East* [hereafter FRUS], ed. Historical Office, Bureau of Public Affairs, Department of State, (Washington: United States Department of State, 1956), p. 712.

²¹⁸ NARA, RG 165, Entry 184, Box 959, File Messages Incoming; Telegram by Lee, 4 November 1941.

²¹⁹ NAC, RG 2, Volume 3, File D-19-1 Pacific Area; Telegram No. 349 by Chiang, 4 November 1941, and NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 40; Memorandum by Miles, 20 August 1941.

remained a possibility.²²⁰ To the Chinese it looked as though a deal might be made in Washington at their expense and after the temporary closure of the Burma Road in 1940 followed by the signing of the Soviet-Japanese nonaggression treaty in April 1941, they had good reason to be concerned. Following the German invasion of the USSR, neither Roosevelt nor Churchill wished to take further chances in China, and therefore, support for the AVG was stepped up while the Philippines were reinforced with additional B-17 bombers.²²¹

Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union was the most critical event of 1941 as Soviet military reverses encouraged the Japanese to adopt a more aggressive posture.²²² Soviet losses were staggering, amounting to over two million casualties along with 5,000 tanks and aircraft, plus an additional 9,500 guns by the end of October.²²³ After observing initial Red Army defeats a decision was made at a Japanese Imperial Council meeting held on 2/3 July 1941 to move south, and the seizure of southern Indochina had been the first step taken in preparation for future operations.²²⁴ Roosevelt responded by embargoing oil exports to Japan, and by freezing Japanese assets.²²⁵ Lord Halifax commented on these measures to Foreign Minister Anthony Eden in mid 1942.

That the United States Government had, in fact, imposed a total blockade upon Japan by an adroit exploitation of its freezing order was scarcely appreciated by the general public. It is worth recording that the Governments of the British Commonwealth and of the Netherlands East Indies followed the United States lead in

²²⁰ NARA, RG 165, Entry 184, Box 959, File Messages Incoming; Telegram by Mayer, 17 October 1941, and Telegram by Lee, 10 November 1941. See also TNA, FO 371/27627 F 9099/125/10; Telegram No. 580, 8 September 1941, and TNA, FO 371/27715 F 4787/3653/10; Report by Morrison, 3 June 1941. TNA, HW 1/228; Message No. 097886, 19 November 1941.

²²¹ NAC, RG 2, Volume 3, File D-19-1 Pacific Area; Telegram No. 195 by Cranborne, 14 November 1941.

²²² Farrell, *The Basis and Making of British Grand Strategy*, p. 153.

²²³ TNA, FO 954/24B N 4840/78/G; Memorandum No. 216 by Eden, 26 August 1941. See also Rodric Braithwaite, *Moscow 1941: a City and its People at War* (London: Profile Books, 2007), p. 93.

²²⁴ Nagaoka, 'The Drive into Southern Indochina and Thailand', pp. 235-236, 238.

²²⁵ Utley, *Going to War with Japan*, pp. 151-153.

this forward policy without asking for any prior military guarantee. The United States public do not to this day understand how severe were the measures of economic pressure imposed upon Japan, and still believe implicitly in the official doctrine of the Japanese ‘stab in the back’ at Pearl Harbour.²²⁶

Although the embargo and the subsequent announcement of the Atlantic Charter were seen by many as a virtual declaration of war, Allied leaders wanted the Japanese to fire the first shot.²²⁷ In Ottawa Mackenzie King shared this view but he still wanted the Americans to commit themselves further. He also remained anxious that ‘British militarists in the Orient’ might start a war prematurely before Congress was willing to authorize American participation.²²⁸

The Japanese also approved plans to attack the USSR but these were held in abeyance due to the size of the Soviet Far Eastern army.²²⁹ Foreign Minister Matsuoka and War Minister Tojo Hideki advised for an immediate attack into Siberia but after previously signing the non-aggression pact with Stalin, the Japanese had been embarrassed by the German invasion and they were subsequently unprepared for offensive operations in the north.²³⁰ Nevertheless, they were anticipating a reduction of Red Army units as reinforcements were badly needed against the Germans to prevent a Soviet defeat widely expected on all sides.²³¹ If a significant number of Siberian divisions were to be transferred west then a Japanese attack northward became a distinct possibility.²³² In such an

²²⁶ NAC, RG 25, Volume 2661, File 5940-40; Memorandum No. 393 by Halifax, 3 June 1942.

²²⁷ Hallett Abend, *My Life in China, 1926-1941* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1943), p. 361, and Fleming, *The New Dealers' War*, p. 23.

²²⁸ NAC, Diaries of William Lyon Mackenzie King; 30 November 1941.

²²⁹ NARA, RG 38, Entry 98A, Box 705; ‘Southward Advance of the Japanese Navy’. See also Barrett and Chuikov, *Mission to China*, p. 150, and Hosoya, ‘The Japanese-Soviet Neutrality Pact’, pp. 104-108.

²³⁰ *The New York Times*, 1 October 1941, and Hosoya, ‘The Japanese-Soviet Neutrality Pact’, pp. 97, 103-104.

²³¹ Drea, *Japan's Imperial Army*, p. 217. See also Curtis Keeble, *Britain, the Soviet Union and Russia* (London: Macmillan, 2000), p. 167, and Tuchman, *Stilwell and the American Experience in China*, p. 223.

²³² NAC, RG 24, Volume 3913, File 1037-5-3 Volume 1; CIS Telegram, 29 July 1941, and NARA, RG 165, Entry 184, Box 959; Telegram No. 131 by Barrett, 23 July 1941.

offensive the Soviet Union would likely have been defeated and this was to be prevented at all costs.²³³ Although Allied intelligence had confirmed by early October that the Japanese had decided not to attack Siberia, it was clear that they would still seize the opportunity if conditions developed to make such a course more promising.²³⁴ A significant problem, however, was the lack of willingness to share this information with the Chinese as security in Chungking was poor.²³⁵

Great anxiety was evident amongst Western political figures over Soviet capabilities to continue the war.²³⁶ Mackenzie King's comments are useful to consider as they demonstrate why someone who greatly feared the domestic political repercussions of conscription would be motivated to sacrifice ground troops in a forlorn military venture in Asia. After Kiev had been encircled by mid September along with almost 700,000 men, Mackenzie King began to note some of his fears. On 9 October 1941 he wrote, 'I am really haunted by the horror of the Russian situation. It is the worst thing the world has ever witnessed in the nature of slaughter.'²³⁷ The following day he added: 'I have never felt so anxious since the war began about this situation than I do about the Russian at the present time. Germany's might is proving to be terrific.'²³⁸ On 16 October 1941 Mackenzie King recorded his comments to the Cabinet.

I pointed out there were signs of considerable trouble on the horizon. Some fomenting the conscription issue; others, march on Parliament by farmers to demand \$1. a bushel of wheat; others stirring up labour. That with Russia and Japan on the verge of war, the whole situation might get very unsettled. The minds of the

²³³ Mark Stoler, *Allies and Adversaries: The Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Grand Alliance, and U.S. Strategy in World War II* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), pp. 54-56.

²³⁴ Carl Boyd, *Hitler's Japanese Confidant: General Oshima Hiroshi and MAGIC Intelligence, 1941-1945* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1993), p. 58.

²³⁵ Lowe, *Great Britain and the Origins of the Pacific War*, p. 209.

²³⁶ Fleming, *The New Dealers' War*, p. 21.

²³⁷ NAC, Diaries of William Lyon Mackenzie King; 9 October 1941.

²³⁸ NAC, Diaries of William Lyon Mackenzie King; 10 October 1941.

Canadian people might get very unsettled and the whole situation get easily out of hand.²³⁹

Extending Allied aid to the Soviet Union was greatly desired and China was a theatre where indirect support could be provided swiftly.

The timing and pace of global military events made China the central question of Far Eastern Affairs during the latter half of 1941 and Canada's involvement in Asia took a major step forward.²⁴⁰ After leaving Canada, Major General Grasett met with the Chiefs of Staff in London on 3 September 1941 to present his proposal for the Canadian reinforcement of Hong Kong stating that an attack could be expected at any time. He added: 'Everything possible had been done to assure General Chiang Kai Shek that the garrison intended to fight to the last man.'²⁴¹ A reinforcement of Hong Kong by two battalions would further help in this regard, but not simply because it would strengthen the garrison. As a political gesture it seemingly demonstrated Allied solidarity and commitment to China and the potential moral effect throughout the 'whole of the Far East' was emphasized in Cabinet.²⁴²

That same day, as the noose was beginning to tighten around Kiev, Churchill received one of the more urgent telegrams sent by Stalin demanding a second front in Europe and significant quantities of material aid. Due to material shortages fulfillment of his requirements would prove difficult, as can be seen in appendix seven, but without these he stated the USSR would be unable to continue the war.²⁴³ Concurrent with his demands, however, Stalin maintained a domestic war against the Russian people with up to one million NKVD men

²³⁹ NAC, Diaries of William Lyon Mackenzie King; 16 October 1941.

²⁴⁰ Memorandum by Hornbeck, in *FRUS, 1941, Volume IV*, p. 427.

²⁴¹ TNA, CAB 79/14/4, COS (41) 308; Minutes, 3 September 1941.

²⁴² Bell, 'Our Most Exposed Outpost', p. 82, and Fedorowich, 'Cocked Hats and Swords and Small, Little Garrisons', p. 155.

²⁴³ TNA, CAB 121/464; Telegram by Stalin, 3 September 1941.

working on internal security. Their duties largely consisted of managing mass deportation, organized terror and genocide.²⁴⁴ Nevertheless, on 29 August Churchill had informed Stalin that he was anxious to render additional support to Chiang Kai Shek as an immediate stop gap.²⁴⁵ Cabinet was determined to help Stalin in any way possible and the most vocal for support was the Minister of Aircraft Production, Lord Beaverbrook. According to Brian Farrell, Beaverbrook once remarked: ‘anything that furthers Russia’s effort in the war is worth any price, no matter how high.’²⁴⁶ Because of Britain’s military weakness Churchill upheld his rejection of Stalin’s persistent demand for a second front, but he told Soviet Ambassador Ivan Maisky that, ‘If by our action we could draw the weight of attack off Russia we would not hesitate to take such action, even at the risk of losing 50,000 men.’²⁴⁷ On 13 September 1941 Stalin acknowledged Britain’s inability to open a second front in France but made an alternative suggestion. ‘Perhaps another method could be found to render to the Soviet Union an active military help?’²⁴⁸ Appeals for British divisions to fight inside the southern USSR were also considered but ultimately dismissed.²⁴⁹ According to Peter Clarke, as a response to pleas issued by Ambassador Sir Stafford Cripps in October for acceptance of such a plan, Churchill replied that, ‘it would be silly to send two or three British or British-Indian divisions into the heart of Russia to be surrounded and cut to pieces as a symbolic sacrifice’.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁴ Nikolai Tolstoy, *Stalin’s Secret War* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1981), p. 247.

²⁴⁵ TNA, CAB 121/464; Telegram by Churchill, 29 August 1941.

²⁴⁶ Farrell, *The Basis and Making of British Grand Strategy*, p. 305.

²⁴⁷ TNA, FO 954/24B N 5096/78/G; Memorandum No. 227 by Eden, 4 September 1941.

²⁴⁸ TNA, CAB 121/464; Telegram by Stalin, 13 September 1941.

²⁴⁹ Carlton, *Churchill and the Soviet Union*, p. 89, and Farrell, *The Basis and Making of British Grand Strategy*, pp. 163-164.

²⁵⁰ Peter Clarke, *The Cripps Version: the Life of Sir Stafford Cripps, 1889-1952* (London: Allen Lane, 2002), p. 234.

While visiting Britain from 20 August to 7 September, Mackenzie King was present for numerous Cabinet discussions involving the destruction then occurring within the Soviet Union.²⁵¹ His visit also coincided with Grasett's meeting with the COS. In lending diplomatic support, Mackenzie King delivered a speech at the Mansion House on 5 September in which he called for increased American involvement in the war and for the establishment of a new world order to be led by Britain and the United States.²⁵² After returning to Ottawa the Prime Minister reported to Cabinet how British military opinion had not been optimistic as to the capacity of the Soviets for long resistance.²⁵³ At the same time, Grasett's recommendation to request Canadian reinforcements for Hong Kong had been approved by the British COS and it was immediately submitted to Churchill. The Canadian government was officially notified on 19 September 1941.²⁵⁴

The British request was then considered by the Canadian Cabinet for a decision.²⁵⁵ During a meeting on 2 October:

Mr. King expressed the view that Canada should do whatever was possible for the U.S.S.R., in the present critical circumstances. Stalin's requests to the U.K. government for the despatch of British expeditionary forces to the Continent had, of necessity, been refused by the U.K. government. This made it all the more important to aid in other ways, and Canada should adopt all means within her power of assisting and encouraging Russia.²⁵⁶

²⁵¹ Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments*, p. 151.

²⁵² Speech by Mackenzie King in *The Times*, 5 September 1941.

²⁵³ NAC, MG 26 J4, Volume 424, File War Cabinet Minutes July 1941-December 1941; Minutes, 10 September 1941, and Minutes, 18 September 1941.

²⁵⁴ Brian Nolan, *King's War: Mackenzie King and the Politics of War, 1939-1945* (Toronto: Random House, 1988), p. 58.

²⁵⁵ Paul Dickson, *A Thoroughly Canadian General: A Biography of General H.D.G. Crerar* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), pp. 169-170.

²⁵⁶ NAC, MG 26 J4, Volume 424, File War Cabinet Minutes July 1941-December 1941; Minutes, 2 October 1941.

During this meeting final approval was given for the reinforcement of Hong Kong.²⁵⁷ In the Soviet Union, Army Group Centre launched Operation Typhoon to begin the battle for Moscow.²⁵⁸

Just over a fortnight later in Tokyo the Konoye Cabinet fell over the failure to reach agreement with Roosevelt and leadership of the government was assumed by the aggressive Prime Minister, General Tojo Hideki.²⁵⁹ A *New York Times* editorial surmised that the likelihood of war had increased greatly as a result. It noted,

as long ago as 1937 he [Tojo] declared that Japan must prepare to fight China and Russia simultaneously. His advent to a position of power at this crucial time in the Battle for Russia cannot help but be a matter of concern.²⁶⁰

Compounding the problem, Stalin began to transfer a significant portion of the Red Army's Far Eastern forces westward in the latter half of October.²⁶¹ After the Soviet spy Richard Sorge reported from Tokyo that the Japanese had chosen to advance south, approximately ten divisions along with 1,000 tanks and aircraft were withdrawn from Siberia and these reliable units were thrown against the Germans.²⁶² As the force ratio in Manchuria began to shift towards the Japanese a surprise offensive into Siberia remained a distinct possibility. Against this backdrop, C Force left Vancouver aboard the *SS Awatea* on 27 October 1941 and arrived in Hong Kong on 16 November.²⁶³

A few days before their departure, Dominion Office telegram M-337 arrived in Ottawa to fully explain the importance of the deployment as an

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁸ Evan Mawdsley. *Thunder in the East, 1941-1945* (London: Hodder Arnold, 2005), p. 94.

²⁵⁹ Utley, *Going to War with Japan*, pp. 161-162.

²⁶⁰ Editorial in *The New York Times*, 18 October 1941.

²⁶¹ TNA, CAB 121/464; Memorandum by Davidson, 24 October 1941, and TNA, WO 193/921; Telegram No. I/102, 10 December 1941.

²⁶² John Erickson, *The Road to Stalingrad: Stalin's War with Germany, Volume I* (London: Phoenix Giant, 1998), p. 218-220, 239.

²⁶³ Oliver Lindsay, *The Lasting Honour* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1978), pp. 11-12.

application of collective security in Asia. Lord Cranborne provided the primary rationale.

Since our conversation with Mr. Hull, Japanese Government has fallen, apparently on issue of Washington conversations and conduct of affairs has been put into extremists hands. It is therefore necessary, in conjunction with United States Government, to take stock of situation having regard to (a) the stimulus which German advance on Moscow is giving to those in Japan in favour of early action and (b) the effective pressure of our economic embargo on Japan.

2) It is possible direction which Japanese will take is southwards, e.g. into Thailand, and we have had an urgent appeal from Thai Prime Minister for cooperation ... Japan knows, however, that this choice is likely to bring her into collision with ABCD front. This risk is less in the north where Japan had already a strong concentration of military forces. Japan may also hope that departure of Government from Moscow and consequent weakening of its authority may lead to some disintegration of Soviet forces in Siberia. We have [to] reckon therefore with possibility of an attack upon Russia in the fairly near future.

3) Even though there is little effective action that we could take in this eventuality (and you should make it clear that we have taken no decision on the point) it is desirable that we should enter into consultation with the United States Government at once. So long as our Russian Allies are resisting Germany in the west it is important that we should not weaken or discourage their resistance by a failure to support them to the best of our ability in the Far East. We have also to consider position of our Dutch Allies and effect on spirit on Netherlands East Indies if we were to fail the Russians ...

He went on to clarify that it was in Washington where Allied Far Eastern policy was being formed.

We have been well content to leave handling of Japanese problem to the United States and to follow United States in their policy of maximum economic pressure. Prime Minister made it clear moreover in his broadcast of August 24th that should their attempt to reach a peaceful solution fail we should arrange ourselves by their side. This remains the position. While as stated above, positive action by ourselves alone is unlikely to be very effective, we are prepared to support any action however serious which the United States may decide to take ...²⁶⁴

²⁶⁴ NAC, RG 25, Volume 2920, File 2670-C-40C; Telegram No. M-337 by Cranborne, 24 October 1941.

As can been seen in this message Soviet Far Eastern security was an important consideration behind the deployment of C Force as was following America's lead.

At the end of October only four days after C Force set sail from Vancouver another DO telegram arrived in Ottawa in which Cranborne provided a change in Whitehall's appraisal of the situation based on updated intelligence from Japan. He wrote:

His Majesty's Ambassador at Tokyo considers indications of a Japanese attack on Russian line somewhat decreasing since August...

Sir Robert Craigie adds that this view relates merely to situation as he sees it today and would naturally cease to apply if there were to be a complete collapse of the Soviet armies in the west, or any serious weakening of their forces in the east.²⁶⁵

Whitehall's message to Ottawa reveals that anxiety over Soviet survival had diminished somewhat from the time C Force's deployment had been approved. However, it continued to remain strong pending further developments in front of Moscow. In any event, C Force had already departed Canada for Hong Kong by the time this reappraisal was made.

While C Force was in transit Mackenzie King reflected on the importance of their mission.

I do not know of any day when I have felt a greater concern about the outcome of the war than today. It is now perfectly clear that Japan intends to fight and that, very soon. China has made it quite clear that without further assistance, she cannot hope to effectively resist and that her resistance will end unless such assistance is speedily given. If China's resistance falls and breaks, Japan will have a free field, no enemy at her rear in Asia, and will be able to go after both the British and the Russians but what is worse is that

²⁶⁵ LAC, RG 25, Volume 2920, File 2670-C-40C; Telegram No. M-343 by Cranborne, 31 October 1941.

a break in Chinese resistance will probably mean a break in Russian resistance.²⁶⁶

C Force was sent to Hong Kong to help prevent this scenario.

Mackenzie King was not confused over the threat posed to the colony.

Nor is ignorance plausible concerning Churchill's view that there was, 'not the slightest chance of relieving it'.²⁶⁷ Mackenzie King was certain that war with Japan was inevitable in 1941 and he commented on this many times.²⁶⁸ He did so once during August in conversation with the reporter Grant Dexter who subsequently related this to his boss in private correspondence.

Official information shows that Japan is feinting both north and south. King thinks the blow will strike southward, but if Russia crumbled up in Europe, it would be into Siberia. One point on which the P.M. is quite emphatic is that "Japan is planning to go a long way now" -- it will be a shooting war before long.²⁶⁹

Much of Mackenzie King's information came from Roosevelt. As Colonel Charles Stacey noted, Dexter again mentioned how on 7 November 1941, 'Roosevelt told him that war between United States and Japan regarded as certain and almost certain to come within 30 days.'²⁷⁰ On Friday 5 December 1941 another highly prescient note is recorded in Mackenzie King's diary. 'The situation is tenser than ever, and I shall be amazed if, before the week is out, war does not take place in the Far East, possibly Sunday'.²⁷¹ On cue, the disastrous battle of Hong Kong began almost simultaneously with the attack on Pearl Harbor and ended on Christmas Day. More on Mackenzie King's background on Far Eastern affairs can be found in appendix eight.

²⁶⁶ NAC, Diaries of William Lyon Mackenzie King; 6 November 1941.

²⁶⁷ TNA, CAB 120/570; Note by Churchill, 7 January 1941.

²⁶⁸ NAC, Diaries of William Lyon Mackenzie King; 11 February 1941, 13 November 1941, 17 November 1941, and 27 November 1941. See also NAC, MG 26 J1, Reel C-4866; Telegram by Mackenzie King, 3 May 1941.

²⁶⁹ NAC, MG 30 D45, Reel M-79; Letter by Dexter to Dafoe, 6 August 1941.

²⁷⁰ NAC, MG 30 D45, Reel M-79; Letter by Dexter to Dafoe, 7 November 1941, and Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments*, p. 47.

²⁷¹ NAC, Diaries of William Lyon Mackenzie King; 5 December 1941.

Domestic political fallout was not long in coming, and statements by senior Canadian officials further show how the deployment was a diplomatic issue of significance as well as a military affair. Under heavy criticism Mackenzie King wrote that the decision was made in support of American objectives.

Our political enemies were taking the ground out from under our feet through our not having power under the Mobilization Statute to even move men across the border to the United States or into Newfoundland or to an Island on the Pacific though we had mutual obligations with the States to defend each other.²⁷²

General Crerar explained to the Royal Commission of Inquiry headed by Sir Lyman Duff how the deployment was similar to the British action in Greece.²⁷³ Intervention in the Balkans was made as a demonstration of British commitment towards Turkey with the aim of maintaining that country's neutrality.²⁷⁴ The alternative hope of arranging a solid Balkan bloc encompassing Greece, Yugoslavia and Turkey met with failure.²⁷⁵

Mackenzie King wanted to make public the contents of telegram M-337 in order to explain his reasons for the deployment of C Force explicitly, and to blunt parliamentary furor over his Cabinet's decision, but his appeal was rejected in London.²⁷⁶ Under similar political fire Churchill was advised by General Hastings Ismay in June 1942 that, 'the less said on this subject the better'.²⁷⁷ He added, 'It would not be in the public interest to give any further information on this subject.'²⁷⁸ Prime Minister Clement Attlee rejected another Mackenzie King request in 1948 to publish the contents of telegram M-337 after the release of Major General Christopher Maltby's postwar report of the battle reignited the

²⁷² NAC, Diaries of William Lyon Mackenzie King; 22 January 1942.

²⁷³ NAC, RG 25, Volume 2920, File 2670-C-40C; Telegram No. 1000 by Crerar, 11 April 1942.

²⁷⁴ NAC, MG 26 J4, Reel H-1561; Telegram No. Z-398 by Massey, 9 December 1940.

²⁷⁵ NAC, MG 30 D45, Reel M-79; Letter by Dexter to Dafoe, 22 April 1941.

²⁷⁶ LAC, RG 25, Volume 2920, File 2670-C-40C; Memorandum, 19 March 1942.

²⁷⁷ TNA, CAB 121/718; Memorandum, 10 June 1942.

²⁷⁸ TNA, CAB 121/718; File notation, 10 June 1942.

issue in Ottawa.²⁷⁹ Out of five telegrams identified in correspondence between External Affairs and Whitehall, telegram M-337 was singled out specifically by the DO and Attlee as it identified the Soviet crisis as being a fundamental reason behind the deployment.²⁸⁰

There were several reasons for official silence. First, motivations had to be concealed to maintain public support for the war. It would have been politically inconvenient to explain why soldiers had been sent on a forlorn mission widely expected to fail in defence of a dictator whose despotism paralleled Adolf Hitler's. Thus, Canadian troops had been dispatched to Hong Kong ostensibly as a deterrent measure against further Japanese aggression but War Office correspondence with Sterndale Bennett and others at the Foreign Office clarified that deterrence explanations, 'should be treated for publicity and propaganda purposes'.²⁸¹ Because of its limited strength, the deployment of C Force was not an act of deterrence; it was instead a provocation. Moreover, few were eager to announce how within the United States the propaganda value of the garrison's destruction would be increased by the participation of Canadian troops. Second, disclosure would have created unwanted diplomatic trouble. Any mention of encouraging the Chinese or impressing the Americans was to be minimized as the deployment was not solely a British manoeuvre. Sir John Brenan noted, 'the American authorities are obviously objecting to exaggerated publicity by us about their part in the joint defence programme.'²⁸² F.E. Evans added that, 'commentaries should, I suppose, avoid any suggestion that the arrival of these

²⁷⁹ LAC, RG 25, Volume 5769, 152-A(s) Pt I; Telegram No. 225 by Robertson, 26 February 1948.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁸¹ TNA, FO 371/27622 F 11189/98/10; Letter from Browne to Sterndale Bennett, 22 October 1941, and Letter by Clarke to Nichol, 2 November 1941.

²⁸² TNA, FO 371/27622 F 11189/98/10; File notation by Brenan, 28 October 1941.

forces represents pursuit of a joint Anglo-U.S. policy.²⁸³ Five days prior to the arrival of C Force in Hong Kong, London officials received a rude shock when a front page article appeared in *The Daily Telegraph* indicating that the colony was to be transformed into a vital bastion ‘of democratic defence’ after consultations with American authorities had resulted in the deployment of Canadian soldiers.²⁸⁴

The full article can be found in appendix nine.

Anglo-American strategic discussions for southern China were developed throughout the year. After agreeing to a Europe first strategy during secret talks held in Washington from late January to early March 1941, US officials stated they would concentrate their forces in the Atlantic so that Commonwealth units could be made available for the Far East.²⁸⁵ The primary military objectives in defending Hong Kong were to deny use of the port facilities to the Japanese for as long as possible and to draw off forces from an attack on Singapore.²⁸⁶ Officers in theatre, however, held on to the dangerous premise that it might have been possible to keep Hong Kong open as a forward base of operations.²⁸⁷ They were optimistic that an overland relief of the colony could have been mounted by the Chinese army. Faith in such a plan was strengthened following a meeting on 10 October 1941 between Chiang Kai Shek and General Dennys. According to Catherine Baxter, Chiang stated firmly during the meeting that Hong Kong ‘was

²⁸³ TNA, FO 371/27622 F 11189/98/10; File notation by Evans, 30 October 1941.

²⁸⁴ NAC, RG 25, Volume 2920, File 2670-A-40C-1; Telegram No. 2132 by Massey, and ‘Hong Kong as Vital Bastion’, *The Daily Telegraph*, 11 November 1941.

²⁸⁵ LAC, MG 26 J4, Volume 422, File WWII Anglo-American Strategy ABC-1 1941; Joint Letter of Transmittal, 27 March 1941.

²⁸⁶ TNA, CAB 121/718, COS (41) 559; Memorandum by Dill, 8 September 1941. See also Perras, ‘Our Position in the Far East would be Stronger Without this Unsatisfactory Commitment’, p. 249.

²⁸⁷ NARA, RG 165, Entry 281, Box 154, File 3793-161; Memorandum by O’Rear, 16 December 1941, and TNA, FO 371/27622 F 10344/98/10; File notation by Sterndale Bennett, 6 October 1941. See also Bell, ‘Our Most Exposed Outpost’, pp. 79-80, and Oliver Lindsay, *The Battle for Hong Kong 1941-1945: Hostage to Fortune* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005), p. 56.

just as much China's battle as it was Britain's.²⁸⁸ Japanese officers shared the same view and they designed their offensive for southern China accordingly.

They would support their attack on Hong Kong with a corresponding attack on Changsha.²⁸⁹

Due to limited Allied resources reliance was placed upon small guerrilla and commando units, supported by airpower, to operate in conjunction with Chinese regular forces in any potential relief of a siege at Hong Kong.²⁹⁰ As part of this plan, the AVG was based in Kunming to provide air defence for supplies transiting the Burma Road.²⁹¹ Initially, two RAF squadrons were also to be deployed to Kunming and Kweilin for the same purpose and to support ground operations closer to Hong Kong, but their deployment was cancelled later in the year.²⁹² Guerrilla forces led or dominated by British personnel such as Detachment 204 and the China Commando Group were to be supplied overland from Kunming and these were to fight in collaboration with Chinese regular army units in Hunan and Kwangtung.²⁹³ It was hoped that heavy bombers based in the Philippines might also become available to support Asian mainland operations should they be required.²⁹⁴ In Hong Kong itself, the garrison was to hold for as

²⁸⁸ Baxter, 'Britain and the War in China', p. 125.

²⁸⁹ 'Japanese Monograph No. 71', Japanese Monographs: Area Operations in China, December 1941–December 1943 (Washington: Library of Congress Photoduplication Service, 1963).

²⁹⁰ TNA, CAB 121/718, and TNA, FO 371/27678; Telegram No. 135 by Brooke-Popham, 6 January 1941. See also Baxter, 'Britain and the War in China', pp. 123–125.

²⁹¹ NARA, RG 18, Entry 300, Box 934, Folder Misc A; Memorandum by Spaatz, 26 November 1941.

²⁹² NARA, RG 165, Entry 184, Box 959; Telegram No. 119 by Mayer, 8 July 1941, and TNA, FO 371/27643 F 11410/145/10; Telegram, 25 October 1941.

²⁹³ NARA, RG 165, Entry 184, Box 959; Telegram No. 119 by Mayer, 8 July 1941. See also Lowe, *Great Britain and the Origins of the Pacific War*, p. 215.

²⁹⁴ NARA, RG 18, Entry 300, Box 934, File Misc A; Reinforcement Study, October 1941, and NARA, RG 165, Entry 281, Box 154, File 3793-161; Memorandum by O'Rear, 16 December 1941. See also TNA, FO 371/27596 F 4375/1/10; Telegram No. 345 by Brooke-Popham, 21 April 1941, and file notation by Gage, 26 May 1941.

long as possible and link up with Allied relieving forces if able.²⁹⁵ Odds for success were not rated highly in London or Washington but belated arrangements were nevertheless made to coordinate with the Chinese.²⁹⁶ Had such a plan been cultivated in 1938-1939 prior to the outbreak of war in Europe, it might have deterred Japanese aggression if supported by sufficient British military strength. Once war against Germany was underway, however, the lack of available resources for Far Eastern defence doomed it to failure.

Momentum for the development of the Hong Kong relief plan was generated from military commanders in the region. In the process they contributed substantially to strengthening military ties with China and in facilitating greater United States involvement in the war, but still on a limited scale. British Far Eastern officials eagerly outpaced Whitehall in establishing military links with the Chinese and in presenting a firmer front to the Japanese. Although Whitehall remained quite cautious on this issue to avoid provocations, senior commanders in the field such as Grasett and Brooke-Popham pushed the limits of official restraint when confronted with operational problems first hand.²⁹⁷ General Grasett demonstrated this by establishing, on his own initiative, a joint Sino-British military communication radio net in late 1940.²⁹⁸ Prior to this he had already created Z Force as a small special operations unit to fight behind enemy lines.²⁹⁹ In December 1940 General Dennys was instructed by Grasett to develop plans with the Chinese for fully coordinated operations between their

²⁹⁵ DHH, File 593.013 (D21), Telegram No. 1489 by Maltby, 19 November 1941, and Notes on Telegram No. 192/6 and 243/6 by Brooke-Popham, 25 November 1941.

²⁹⁶ NARA, RG 59, USSDCF, Reel 25; Report No. 893.20/736 by Lee, 7 November 1941. See also DHH, File 593.013 (D21); Notes on Telegram No. 192/6 and 243/6 by Brooke-Popham, 25 November 1941.

²⁹⁷ TNA, FO 371/27624 F 1622/125/10; JPS Report (41) 166, 1 March 1941.

²⁹⁸ TNA, WO 106/2389; Telegram No. 701 by Smith, 3 November 1940.

²⁹⁹ Charles Cruickshank, *SOE in the Far East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 75.

military forces and British units at Hong Kong.³⁰⁰ Through the spring and summer of 1941, both Brooke-Popham and Dennys engaged in discussions with Chinese officers along these lines and coordination with the AVG was also included.³⁰¹ Until the German invasion of the USSR Whitehall was cool to the idea of collaboration with China, and although limited cooperation was accepted for the relief of Hong Kong, the offer of Chinese troops for Burma was rejected in London until 23 December 1941.³⁰² By then it was too late.

Enthusiasm for the Hong Kong relief plan peaked in October after the second battle of Changsha and the Chinese attack on Ichang, when General Dennys reported that the Chinese army was incapable of sustaining large scale offensives, but was capable of limited offensive action under favourable conditions if assisted by Allied airpower.³⁰³ As the military situation in the Soviet Union became more serious, some resources were delivered and positioned for use by allied air and special operation forces in southern China. In July, Sino-British agreement was reached for the deployment of Detachment 204 and by September they were made ready.³⁰⁴ Seven hundred thousand gallons of aviation fuel had also been delivered to storage depots in China for use by the AVG, and

³⁰⁰ Baxter, ‘Britain and the War in China’, p. 105.

³⁰¹ NARA, RG 165, Entry 184, Box 959; Telegram No. 106 by Mayer, 25 June 1941, and NARA, RG 165, Entry 184, Box 959; Telegram No. 119 by Mayer, 8 July 1941. TNA, FO 371/27639 F 4624/145/10; Telegram No. 104 by Dennys, and TNA, FO 371/27639 F 4661/145/10; Telegram No. 142/3 by Brooke-Popham, 27 May 1941. See also TNA, FO 371/27640 F 5511/145/10; Telegram No. 293/3 by Dennys, 18 June 1941. See also Lowe, *Great Britain and the Origins of the Pacific War*, p. 214.

³⁰² NAC, MG 26 J4, Reel H-1561; Dominions Office Telegram No. M-476 Part 2, 23 December 1941. TNA, FO 371/27638 F 3543/145/10; File notation by Brenan, 2 May 1941, and TNA, FO 371/27639 F 5030/145/10; Air Ministry Telegram No. X.17, 8 June 1941. TNA, FO 371/27639 F 5248/145/10; Minutes of Interdepartmental Meeting, 6 June 1941.

³⁰³ NARA, RG 59, USSDCF, Reel 25; Report No. 893.20/736 by Lee, 7 November 1941.

³⁰⁴ NARA, RG 319, Entry 57, Box 164, File 4; Telegram No. 49 by Barrett, 29 September 1941. See also TNA, FO 371/27640 F 6092/145/10; File cover notation by Scott, 12 July 1941, and TNA, FO 371/27640 F 6619/145/10; File notation by Butler, 11 July 1941.

the deployment of this unit was accelerated.³⁰⁵ The diversion of additional aircraft above those already allocated, however, was still discouraged from London.³⁰⁶ There are also indications that in the fall of 1941 Colonel Mayer worked on the formation of a small US led special operations group to fight alongside Detachment 204.³⁰⁷ Amongst other factors, the future commander of Merrill's Marauders, Captain Frank Merrill, was present in the colony during October 1941 for approximately one month while working out of the American attaché office.³⁰⁸ With the start of the Pacific War Mayer requested that personnel from the *USS Tutuosa* be trained at Maymyo, Burma and moulded into an American commando company.³⁰⁹ The commander of C Force, Brigadier General John Lawson, followed this trend soon after arrival by requesting an additional battalion to transform his unit into a full brigade group. He told the new G.O.C. China, Major General Christopher Maltby, that additional reinforcements, 'will be thrown at us', and the COS began to lean in that direction.³¹⁰ Lawson also discussed plans with Captain E.J. Hudson, commander of the United States Navy Asiatic Fleet Southern Patrol, while visiting the *USS Mindanao* on 1 December

³⁰⁵ NAC, RG 25, Volume 5740, File 25-F(s); Dominions Office Telegram No. M-266, 25 August 1941. NARA, RG 18, Entry 300, Box 934, File Miscellaneous A; Memorandum by Spaatz, 26 November 1941, and NARA, RG 165, Entry 184, Box 959; Telegram No. 119 by Mayer, 8 July 1941. See also TNA, FO 371/27640 F 5787/145/10; File notation by Gage, 16 August 1941, and TNA, FO 371/27640 F 6253/145/10; Telegram, 14 July 1941. See also TNA, FO 371/27640 F 6327/145/10; Telegram, 15 July 1941 and TNA, FO 371/27640 F 6619/145/10; File notation by Sterndale Bennett, 10 July 1941. TNA, FO 371/27641 F 7496/145/10; Telegram No. 171/4 by Brooke-Popham, 1 August 1941, and TNA, FO 371/27644 F 11824/145/10; War Office Telegram No. 99905, 5 November 1941.

³⁰⁶ NARA, RG 18, Entry 300, Box 934, File Miscellaneous A; Letter by Arnold to British Air Commission, 19 August 1941.

³⁰⁷ NARA, RG 319, Entry 57, Box 169, File 1; Telegram No. 35 and Telegram No. 36 by Mayer, 27 September 1941.

³⁰⁸ NARA, RG 59, Decimal File No. 121.5493/214, Box 269; File notation, 27 October 1941, and NARA, RG 319, Entry 57, Box 169, File 1; Telegram No. 34, 27 September 1941.

³⁰⁹ NARA, RG 319, Entry 57, Box 164, Folder 6; Telegram No. C 112 by Mayer, 9 December 1941.

³¹⁰ DHH, File 593.013 (D21); Notes on Telegram No. 192/6 and 243/6 by Brooke-Popham, 25 November 1941.

1941.³¹¹ It was Whitehall's reluctance to cooperate with the Chinese throughout much of the year, however, that hindered full implementation of joint action.³¹²

Over time Anglo-American strategy underwent several alterations but its essence remained the same with Hong Kong fixed as the strategic objective in southern China. During 1942 General Joseph Stilwell embraced the XYZ plan which was implemented with the objective of immobilizing Japanese forces, but the country's liberation was also meant to support the Pacific campaign. X and Y Forces included Chinese divisions in India and Yunnan, respectively, and these saw action in Burma. Once the Burma Road was re-opened the focus of operations was to shift east of Kweilin where Sino-American Z Force units would drive on Hong Kong.³¹³ With Hong Kong secured supplies could then be delivered north to the Yangtze River and beyond. This plan was temporarily abandoned in 1944 because of Japanese success during Operation Ichigo but was revived under General Albert Wedemeyer to become Operation Carbonado in 1945.³¹⁴

Until that time Canada in many ways served as an Anglo-American proxy in the Far East. The reinforcement of Hong Kong did not greatly affect military events in China at the operational level but the geostrategic impact may not have been altogether insignificant. It was the principle mission of General Dennys to prevent a Sino-Japanese peace as the Far Eastern crisis deteriorated.³¹⁵ Following his discussions with Chiang during the summer of 1941 concerning joint military action at Hong Kong, his position was made more credible by the arrival of C

³¹¹ NARA, RG 24, Deck Log of *USS Mindanao*; Log entry, 1 December 1941.

³¹² NAC, RG 24, Volume 12299, Reel T-17901, File 3/Cdn Ops OS/1; Memorandum by Montague, 3 February 1942.

³¹³ Jacoby and White, *Thunder Out of China*, p. 156.

³¹⁴ Charles Romanus and Riley Sunderland, *United States Army in World War II, China-Burma-India Theater (Vol. 3): Time Runs Out in CBI* (Washington: United States Army, 1959), pp. 355, 360.

³¹⁵ NARA, RG 165, Entry 184, Box 959; Telegram No. 106 by Mayer, 25 June 1941.

Force. After the war Brooke Popham stated that the Chinese clearly understood the importance of Hong Kong for their own supplies and had they not been convinced of British determination to defend it militarily then they may have come to terms with the Japanese beforehand.³¹⁶ Ironically, Mackenzie King would not have reinforced Hong Kong simply to defend the British Empire, as his government's refusal to reinforce Australia and the Falkland Islands during the winter of 1941-42 both demonstrated, but he did so with less hesitation in order to aid Josef Stalin.³¹⁷ An equally obfuscated scenario unfolded eight months later at Dieppe after Roosevelt suggested, according to Brigadier General Denis Whitaker, that Churchill make a 'sacrifice landing' in France for the very same reason.³¹⁸ Whether or not China would have quit the war remains a mystery. It matters less than the fact that enough Allied leaders believed it was possible and on this question they were not willing to gamble during the fall of 1941. In the end Major General Grasett was awarded the Order of the Red Banner for his service.³¹⁹ Presumably, this followed Clark Kerr's reassignment to the USSR in 1942 and his advocacy of the general to Stalin. The Order of the Red Banner was one of the most coveted decorations for bravery in the Red Army but it was also bestowed upon foreign NKVD agents for their outstanding performance on, 'Special Tasks'.³²⁰ More biographical data on Grasett can be found in appendix

³¹⁶ Baxter, 'Britain and the War in China', p. 167.

³¹⁷ NAC, RG 2, Volume 32, File D-19-1 1945-Aug 12, Falkland Islands; Memorandum by Robertson, 13 March 1942. See also J.F. Hilliker, 'Distant Ally: Canadian Relations with Australia during the Second World War,' *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 13:1 (1984), p. 53.

³¹⁸ NAC, RG 2, Volume 32, File D-19-1 1945-Aug 12; Letter by Robertson to MacDonald, 13 March 1942. See also Brian Villa, *Unauthorized Action: Mountbatten and the Dieppe Raid* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 72. See also Denis Whitaker, *Dieppe: Tragedy to Triumph* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1992), pp. 111-112.

³¹⁹ A.L. Tunnell, *The Canadian Who's Who*, Vol. XII, 1970-1972 (Toronto: Who's Who Canadian Publications, 1972), p. 431.

³²⁰ Eric Breindel and Herbert Romerstein, *The Venona Secrets: Exposing Soviet Espionage and America's Traitors* (Washington: Regnery, 2000), pp. 158, 512. See also Walter Krivitsky, *I was Stalin's Agent* (London: The Right Book Club, 1940), p. 131, and Pavel Sudoplatov, *Special*

ten but in this affair the general did not act alone. Others were involved in the decision to reinforce Hong Kong yet the ultimate responsibility rests with Mackenzie King.³²¹ As Canada's Prime Minister and External Affairs Minister, he was the official most responsible for the deployment as well as for the undemocratic manner in which the reason behind it was concealed.

Conclusion

Once Roosevelt had been re-elected American intervention in the war evolved steadily throughout the year and this transpired at the expense of British wealth and power. Contributing to this process was Mackenzie King and the Canadian government. Canada served as a catalyst in forging the trans-Atlantic alliance but the country also served the same function in Asia. Until the German invasion of the Soviet Union, China was not a great priority in London or in Washington, but as the Red Army was being destroyed Anglo-American strategic plans became more dependent on the continuation of the Sino-Japanese War. A two-front war inside the USSR would in all likelihood have ended in an Axis victory, and thus, neither Roosevelt nor Churchill would allow the Japanese army to deliver the death blow by attacking the Soviet Far East.

The problem, however, was the lack of faith remaining in Chungking over Allied assurances of commitment and support. The British were never overly eager to ally themselves fully with the Chinese and in any event had few forces available to spare for a meaningful military effort. Roosevelt endeavoured to do more but was encumbered by the democratic will and the lawful authority of

Tasks: the Memoirs of an Unwanted Witness - A Soviet Spymaster (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1994).

³²¹ Nicholas Evan Sarantakes, *Allies Against the Rising Sun: the United States, the British Nations, and the Defeat of Imperial Japan* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2009), p. 133.

Congress to remain neutral. Loans had provided sufficient inducement to keep the Sino-Japanese War from ending, but as diplomatic manoeuvring at China's expense once again appeared during the Nomura-Hull negotiations in Washington, Chinese patience with their unreliable allies had potentially reached the breaking point.

British weakness at Hong Kong did nothing to assuage their fears as the colony had fully become a strategic centre of global significance. Without the use of the port Chinese resistance would have become much more difficult, but more importantly, if the British and the Americans would not defend their own interests in southern China, then it would be reasonable for the Chinese to have assumed that their promises were utterly worthless. Another problem to be faced was that the level of violence building around Hong Kong threatened to spark a premature war before America was sufficiently committed, and with only weak military forces available British officers in the region had been making this situation worse. At this point Mackenzie King entered the fray. Guns were sold to China to help Roosevelt out of a bind while Canadian troops were dispatched to Hong Kong to demonstrate Allied commitment, but ulterior motives guided this development. Western political leaders were less concerned about aiding their Chinese allies than they were in supporting the USSR and the net result of Allied efforts was to help protect Stalin in the Soviet Far East. The application of collective security doctrine at Hong Kong ultimately did not provide any useful deterrence against Japanese aggression south; instead, it produced the opposite effect by helping to ignite the Pacific War.

Chapter 9

Empires Derailed: the War in South China

from September 1941 to January 1942

Lack of clear Japanese strategic planning greatly contributed to the outbreak of the Pacific War. Until 1941, the Japanese had enlarged their empire by reacting to opportunities created from Anglo-French military weakness. Moves such as the occupation of northern French Indochina were also conducted primarily to sever China's external lines of communication. Conversely, the invasion of southern Indochina was a more ambitious and aggressive empire-building endeavour meant to support the extension of Japanese hegemony throughout Asia, and it heralded the onset of a long expected advance further south against other Western colonial powers. In preparing for such a move, the Japanese were hesitant to join their German partners in the invasion of the Soviet Union. In Tokyo it had been decided to wait for a reduction of Red Army Far Eastern forces while building up their own strength in Manchoukuo, and once the Soviets were sufficiently weakened, the opportunity to invade Siberia might then be seized. In the meantime, a southward offensive against Anglo-US forces was approved and preparations were carried out while the Hull-Nomura negotiations continued in Washington.¹

Concurrently, the Japanese also continued to seek for military solutions in order to deal with their problems in China but their efforts proved counterproductive. Chinese morale was under great strain, partly due to the ongoing discussions in Washington, and it was thought that by seizing the rice

¹ Edward J. Drea, *Japan's Imperial Army: Its Rise and Fall, 1853-1945* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2009), pp. 217-218.

bowl of Hunan while simultaneously cutting lines of communication to British controlled areas victory would be assured.² Thus, during the fall and winter of 1941 two important battles were fought for control of Hunan in order to knock China out of the war. It was hoped that the fall of Changsha would finally discredit the Chinese sufficiently on the international stage to prevent further third power intervention, but after four years of war elements of the Chinese army were seen to be more combat effective than had often been witnessed before. Consequently, Chinese military victories in the second and third battles of Changsha were significant geopolitical events as they encouraged additional foreign aid which thereby sustained the country as an active belligerent. With the Japanese army contained the resulting military stalemate ensured that Allied indirect support for the Soviet Far East was not disrupted. In preventing a two front war from developing within the USSR, the south China front had become a globally significant theatre of operations during the latter half of 1941 and early 1942.

Japanese failure in the second battle of Changsha, fought during September and October 1941, also accelerated the onset of war against Britain and America. Faced with gridlock in China, and a crippling American oil embargo, the Japanese attacked the Western powers on 7 December 1941 with the expectation of fighting a war for limited objectives. It was hoped that through the rapid seizure and fortification of forward positions in the Pacific, the Allies would balk at the cost of a prolonged campaign of re-conquest and quickly sue for

² National Archives and Records Administration (College Park) [hereafter NARA], RG 165, Entry 184, Box 959; Telegram No. C-70 by Lieutenant Colonel William Mayer, 17 October 1941. See also The National Archives (London) [hereafter TNA], FO 371/27626 F 6700/125/10; Telegram No. 357 by Archibald Clark Kerr, 23 July 1941.

peace.³ Acting on this assumption was one of the greatest strategic mistakes of the war to be made by any belligerent.

The Sino-Japanese war had finally reached its crescendo with the combined offensives at Hong Kong and the third battle of Changsha, and this culmination of the conflict opened the door to a vastly more terrible struggle. With the start of the Pacific War both of these cities were attacked as twin objectives within the same plan, the goal of which remained a termination of the war.⁴ Both were in the same theatre of operations and the railway linking Kukong and Changsha made Kwangtung and Hunan mutually supportive regions. This internal line of communication was a tremendous Chinese advantage. Most of the supplies that had been entering China from Hong Kong were transported overland to the railhead and then sent north to 9th War Zone forces defending Hunan. Armies based in the province could also be easily moved south to defend northern Kwangtung as needed. Getting troops to Hong Kong, however, was a different matter. Infrastructure problems north of the colony made movement of military forces difficult and this contributed to a premature surrender on 25 December 1941. Yet, Japanese success at Hong Kong was insufficient to offset the disaster that was inflicted upon the 11th Army under Lieutenant General Anami Korechika in Hunan. The third battle of Changsha was the only major battle of the period to end as an Allied Far Eastern victory and because of this Chinese morale was sustained at a time when the country's physical isolation was made virtually complete.

³ Drea, *Japan's Imperial Army*, p. 217.

⁴ Chi Hsi Sheng, 'The Military Dimension, 1942-1945', in *China's Bitter Victory: The War with Japan, 1937-1945*, eds. James C. Hsiung and S. I. Levine, (London: M.E. Sharpe Inc. (East Gate), 1992), p. 158.

In turn, British policy on Hong Kong was also counterproductive although to a lesser degree. By inviting Japanese attack the decline of British global power was greatly hastened. The British were unable to meet the threat in the Far East as they were heavily engaged in Europe and North Africa. Thus, in a relatively short time they too would be eclipsed by American hegemonic power. The expedient of waging a proxy war to contain the Japanese was prejudicial to their imperial longevity or to the maintenance of global power. Because of the flow of military supplies that had passed through Hong Kong into China, low intensity conflict in the Pearl River Delta had slowly escalated to become another significant factor in producing an open Anglo-Japanese war. The British, however, were slow to fully integrate both Hong Kong and south China as a single theatre of operations into their Pacific War strategy and the colony surrendered within three weeks of the opening attack. Lack of mutual trust prevented full coordination with the Chinese despite initial steps taken towards joint military action. The relief of the garrison by the Chinese army was therefore delayed and the early fall of Hong Kong on Christmas Day shattered expectations. Defeat also produced sufficient animosity amongst many Chinese to prevent military cooperation between the two countries for the remainder of the war.

By 1942 the Americans assumed a dominant role in China and catalyzing this transition in part was the Canadian war effort. American commitment had increased steadily during 1941, and in early 1942 China effectively became a US sphere of influence.⁵ Allied military reverses in Asia meant that President Roosevelt was largely constrained to the extension of financial and diplomatic support to the Chinese, but at his behest Prime Minister W.L. Mackenzie King

⁵ National Archives of Canada (Ottawa) [hereafter NAC], RG 25, Volume 2135, File 572-1943.

ensured that Canadian military hardware was made available in order to bolster Chinese morale.⁶ Canadian diplomatic assistance was also considered useful as it came at a time when Allied prestige was low and Generalissimo Chiang Kai Shek was hoping to make China the dominant power in Asia. As Chiang moved to support Indian leaders in their bid to gain independence from Britain, Mackenzie King thus offered him his full backing as a leading figure within the British Commonwealth.⁷ Amicable official Sino-Canadian relations were subsequently established during the war as a result of the personal diplomacy conducted between Mackenzie King and China's Foreign Minister T.V. Soong, and their discussions helped foster the growth of a close personal friendship between them.⁸ The degree of impact which these issues had on Chinese morale was limited, but it shows that Canadian efforts in China, and the defence of Hong Kong itself, were not aimed at promoting British imperial ambitions. Canada was supporting US foreign policy.

The Second Battle of Changsha and the Battle of Ichang: Twilight of Soviet Support for Chungking

At a time when the Germans were inflicting great destruction upon the Soviet Red Army, Allied strategy for Asia was being formulated with the aim of diverting Japanese attention southward by increasing material support for China in Yunnan, Hunan, Kwangsi and Kwangtung. In the event of war with Japan it was hoped by some British and American military officers in the Far East to keep Hong Kong

⁶ NAC, RG 24, Reel C-5281, File 8865; Letter by Howe to Ralston, 15 November 1941. See also NAC, RG 25, Volume 3343, File 4929-F-40C Pt 1; Letter by Sheils to Robertson, 14 April 1942.

⁷ NAC, MG 26 J1, Reel C-6805; Letter by Mackenzie King to Currie, 16 March 1942, and NAC, MG 26 J1, Reel C-6813; Letter by Mackenzie King to Soong, 16 March 1942. See also NAC, www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/databases/king/001059-100.01-e.php; Diaries of William Lyon Mackenzie King, 13 March 1942.

⁸ NAC, MG 26 J1, Reel C-6813; Letter by Soong to Mackenzie King, 24 March 1942.

open as a forward base of operations astride Japanese lines of communication in the South China Sea. As part of this strategy American long range airpower was based in the Philippines as was the AVG in Burma and Yunnan. At this time, the British strengthened their position at Hong Kong while Soviet advisers under the command of General Chuikov simultaneously continued to thwart Japanese ambitions in Hunan.⁹ In the second battle of Changsha, Chinese and Soviet artillery officers in the mountains north and west of the city inflicted considerable damage upon the Japanese 11th Army, as Ninth War Zone forces under General Hsueh Yueh [Xue Yue] attacked the exposed Japanese flanks to cut their lines of communication. During this battle General Chuikov also assisted Chinese leaders by helping to direct a decisive strategic counterstroke at Ichang.¹⁰ The second battle of Changsha in September and October of 1941 was the high point of Soviet success in southern China. Hunan was kept out of Japanese hands and military supplies for 9th War Zone forces continued to arrive from British controlled areas. As a result of their victory Chinese morale was buoyed and the country continued the war. Stung with defeat in Hunan, Japanese determination to cut off external sources of aid to China coalesced into a final decision for war against both Britain and the United States. Taken together, the second battle of Changsha and the Chinese counterattack at Ichang were significant geostrategic events. Allied cooperation in south China served to enhance Soviet Far Eastern security but this ultimately came at British expense in Hong Kong and elsewhere.

⁹ TNA, FO 371/27628 F 11035/125/10; Telegram No. 1510 by Major General Lance Dennys, 15 October 1941.

¹⁰ NARA, RG 319, Entry 57, Box 164, File 4; Telegram No. 44 by Lieutenant Colonel David D. Barrett, 25 September 1941. See also David Barrett and Vasilii Chuikov, *Mission to China: Memoirs of a Soviet Military Adviser to Chiang Kaishek* (Norwalk: EastBridge, 2004), pp. 129-131.

It was following the invasion of south Indochina that the Imperial General Headquarters in Tokyo gave approval for an offensive to be made in Hunan. General Anami's objectives were to capture the important city of Changsha and destroy Chinese military forces located within the province. In doing so it was hoped to bring the war in China to a final conclusion, but Anami was a highly aggressive officer whose zeal and persistence were betrayed by an overconfident recklessness that resulted in Japanese defeat. By exceeding 11th Army capabilities Anami suffered a reverse that only stiffened Chinese resolve. US-Japanese peace negotiations were underway in Washington at the time and attempts to demonstrate the military worthlessness of China as a potential American ally were partly undone by Anami's ineffective leadership.¹¹

With only a handful of provinces left unoccupied by Japanese forces, Hunan was an important region sustaining Chinese resistance. It was one of the principal rice growing areas of the country in addition to being a significant source of manpower for the army.¹² Strategic resources needed by the Allies were found in abundance with tungsten being one of the more important.¹³ Railway lines also made Hunan the nexus of south China's transportation infrastructure. Politically, it was vital for Generalissimo Chiang Kai Shek to keep Hunan from falling into Japanese hands since it was one of the few provinces in Free China still directly under the control of the central government. Doubts about the loyalty of several provincial leaders continued to persist. Yunnan, for example, remained

¹¹ Drea, *Japan's Imperial Army*, p. 219.

¹² NAC, RG 25, Volume 3233, File 5548-40C; Report No. 291, Enclosure 1 by Ralph Collins, 8 June 1944. See also Hans Van de Ven, *War and Nationalism in China, 1925-1945* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), p. 263.

¹³ NARA, RG 165, M1444, *Correspondence of the Military Intelligence Division Relating to General, Political, Economic, and Military Conditions in China; 1918-1941*, (Washington: National Archives and Records Administration, 1986), Reel 15; Report No. 9130 by Lieutenant-Colonel W.S. Drysdale, 4 June 1935. See also Van de Ven, *War and Nationalism in China*, pp. 256-258.

largely autonomous under the leadership of General Lung Yun. General Chang Fa Kwei in Kwangsi and officials in Szechwan similarly continued to exhibit an independent attitude against the grip of centralized power held by Chiang.¹⁴ Hunan was one of the few provinces that remained more or less loyal to Chungking, even under the leadership of the Cantonese General Hsueh, and it would continue to stay that way throughout 1941 and 1942. Hunan had been defended with determination in 1939, and in two rare instances where superiority in artillery was mustered greater efforts were exerted in the fall and winter of 1941 to keep the province out of Japanese hands yet again.¹⁵

Bilateral Sino-British military cooperation for the defence of south China was hindered by mutual mistrust.¹⁶ Aside from assisting the Soviets, the British had other reasons for keeping the war in China active, with the threat posed to India being one of the most significant, but British anxiety was not solely directed towards the Japanese. A.L. Scott at the Foreign Office made note of this a month before the outbreak of war in the USSR. He wrote: 'It will not be long before the Chinese persuade themselves that they have won the war unaided ... and actively promoting anti-Imperialist movements in adjacent countries - we do not want Japan therefore to be utterly crushed'.¹⁷ Imperial sentimentality was not the guiding principle behind this policy but India was still considered to be useful in the war against Germany. It was only after Stalin switched camps that China became more desirable as an ally and British support then slowly increased.¹⁸ Several military training facilities, including a guerrilla warfare school at

¹⁴ NARA, RG 165, U.S. Military Intelligence Reports: China, 1911-1941 (Frederick: University Publications of America, Inc., 1983) [hereafter USMIR], Reel 3; Report No. 11 by Lieutenant Colonel David Barrett, 3 December 1940.

¹⁵ TNA, WO 208/366; Report by Major General Lance Dennys, 25 October 1941.

¹⁶ Brian Farrell, *The Basis and Making of British Grand Strategy, 1940-1943: Was There a Plan?* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1998), pp. 408-409.

¹⁷ TNA, FO 371/27715 F 4091/3653/10; File cover notation by A.L. Scott, 21 May 1941.

¹⁸ TNA, FO 371/27641 F 6700/145/10; Telegram No. 357 by Archibald Clark Kerr, 23 July 1941.

Manchiang, had been established in places such as Kiangsi to strengthen Sino-British cooperation.¹⁹ The development of such forces as Detachment 204 and the China Commando Group soon followed.²⁰ Chiang, however, was similarly suspicious of British motives and these units were prevented from reaching their full potential as they were only supplied with the poorest quality of recruits.²¹ Being largely ineffective, these units did not greatly enhance Sino-British military cooperation.²²

Confidence in Chinese military capabilities was not high amongst many foreign military officers either in London or Washington with recent setbacks along the Yellow River providing little reason for optimism on future operations.²³ Some bullishness on Chinese military capabilities nevertheless did exist amongst a few high ranking individuals with one of these being British Military Attaché, Major General Lance Dennys. The General was also head of the British Military Mission.²⁴ Combat effectiveness within the Chinese army was never uniform but units stationed in Hunan and Yunnan tended to be of better quality than those posted in other parts of the country.²⁵ Being closely involved with arrangements to increase military cooperation, Dennys had inspected many Chinese army units in the south and this included the 5th Army which was earmarked for service in Burma. Fitness, equipment and morale were at relatively

¹⁹ TNA, FO 371/27643 F 10789/145/10; Report by Major K. Millar, 23 July 1941, and TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 8/41 by Major R. Giles, 1 September 1941.

²⁰ NARA, RG 165, Entry 184, Box 959; Telegram No. 106 by Mayer, 25 June 1941.

²¹ NAC, RG 24, Reel C-8301, File 5147; Memorandum by Colonel W. Murray, 13 October 1943. See also Catherine Baxter, ‘Britain and the War in China, 1937-1945’ (University of Wales, unpublished PhD Dissertation, 1993), pp. 115-116, 188-189.

²² Imperial War Museum (London) [hereafter IWM], Conservation Shelf, ‘Thunder in the East’ by Major General G.E. Grimsdale, 1947, pp. 87-88.

²³ NARA, RG 319, Entry 57, Box 164, File 5; Telegram No. 55 by Barrett, 6 October 1941.

²⁴ Peter Lowe, *Great Britain and the Origins of the Pacific War: A Study of British Policy in East Asia, 1937-1941* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), p. 211.

²⁵ NAC, RG 25, Volume 3233, File 5548-40C; Report No. 291, Enclosure 1 by Collins, 8 June 1944, and NARA, RG 165, M1444, Reel 15; Report No. Report No. 9316 by Stilwell, 5 March 1936. See also Diana Lary, *Warlord Soldiers: Chinese Common Soldiers, 1911-1937* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 20.

high levels but the significant shortcoming he noticed was a lack of artillery.²⁶

Another optimist was Major K. Millar and in one report he included some prophetic comments.

It is only when one compares the China of ten or even five years ago with the China of today, that it is possible to appreciate what tremendous progress has been made under the most difficult conditions. This comparison affords a fair measure of the progress which can, and I think will, take place in the future.

Another point which must be borne in mind is that Chinese methods, although to us they may appear to be clumsy and inefficient, are often the most effective when dealing with Chinese conditions. Attempts at super-imposing purely Foreign methods, generally end in failure.²⁷

Dennys and Millar at this time still considered the Chinese army incapable of offensive action but they did not discount its potential.²⁸ Their observations were also received in Washington and appeared to be widely circulated.²⁹

Success for Allied plans in south China centred on the defence of Hunan and this was partly due to the province's topography which played to Chinese strengths. Since 1939 the Chinese had prepared their defences and Major General Dennys reported on this to the War Office:

The country to the North of Changsha is moderately hilly and intersected by rivers running East and West into the Siang Kiang which form good defensive positions. All roads running North from Changsha and the railway between it and Yoyang have been destroyed by the Chinese.³⁰

The all-important road and rail centre at Hengyang ensured that the Chinese could greatly exploit their interior lines of communication. Reinforcements could easily be dispatched north to Changsha or south into Kwangtung as needed. Hengyang

²⁶ Baxter, 'Britain and the War in China', pp. 115-116.

²⁷ TNA, FO 371/27643 F 10789/145/10; Report by Millar, 23 July 1941.

²⁸ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 8/41 by Giles, 1 September 1941

²⁹ NARA, RG 59, Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files: China, Internal Affairs, 1940-1944 (Frederick: University Publications of America, Inc., 1984) [hereafter USSDCF], Reel 3; Report No. 893.00/14809 by Mayer, 12 September 1941.

³⁰ TNA, WO 208/366; Report by Dennys, 25 October 1941.

was also the location of the 9th War Zone headquarters, and because of this its defence was augmented with the addition of a valuable armoured regiment comprised of forty-four medium and twenty-six light tanks.³¹ Most important for the defence of Hunan, however, was the city of Changsha situated south of Tungting Lake [Dongting], and being on the northern end of the railway lines stretching from Kukong and Kweilin, it was relatively easy for supplies entering the country to reach armies in the field. The significance of Hunan was reiterated to Whitehall by General Dennys on 25 September. He wrote: ‘The threat to Changsha and possibly Henyang must not be overlooked. Occupation of the latter place would interfere with our plans.’³² American military intelligence officers also took note of this problem.³³

In contrast, conditions in Hunan made a Japanese offensive a difficult endeavour. South of the Milo River Japanese motorized and mechanized units were unable to move, with only infantry and horse drawn transport being able to transit the narrow and broken trails that interlaced the innumerable rice paddies.³⁴ The Japanese 11th Army also had limited forces available. General Anami selected three divisions plus elements of two others to begin the offensive. These forces included the 3rd, 4th, 6th, 13th, and 33rd Divisions with the 40th held in reserve, and they would be supported by four lower-quality independent brigades guarding their lines of communication.³⁵ With two years to rebuild, the 9th War Zone order of battle included almost twenty five Chinese divisions by the time the

³¹ NARA, RG 165, M1513, The Military Intelligence Division Regional File Relating to China, 1922-1944, Reel 38; Report No. 9854 by Mayer, 28 February 1940. See also TNA, WO 208/366; Report by Dennys, 25 October 1941.

³² TNA, FO 371/27627 F 10051/125/10; Telegram No. M.33 24/9 by Dennys, 25 September 1941.

³³ NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 57; Memorandum, 28 September 1941.

³⁴ NARA, RG 38, Entry 98A, Box 705; Report No. 70/41 by Major F.J. McQuillen, 4 November 1941.

³⁵ NARA, RG 319, Entry 57, Box 164, File 5; Telegram No. 53 by Barrett, 3 October 1941. See also TNA, FO 371/27627 F 10043/125/10, and TNA, WO 208/366; Report by Dennys, 25 October 1941.

Japanese began their attack.³⁶ These were organized into ten armies including the 4th, 10th, 20th, 26th, 37th, 58th, 72nd, 74th, 79th, and the 99th, which in turn comprised the 31st and 33rd Group Armies.³⁷ Anami's march through Hunan was going to be a hazardous undertaking.

Prior to the commencement of September's operations the Japanese prepared and made preliminary moves. An air offensive over Szechwan had taken a heavy toll on the Chinese air force and a series of costly setbacks were experienced at Chengdu during the spring and summer months.³⁸ Japanese naval aircraft also shifted away from their summer assault on the Burma Road in Yunnan to concentrate on targets situated between Hengyang and Changsha.³⁹ After ground operations north of the Yellow River in Shansi were successfully concluded in June, the Japanese also built up their strength near their base at Yochow.⁴⁰

The offensive was launched on 16 September 1941.⁴¹ Advancing south, the initial phase went well enough as the Chinese only anticipated a foraging expedition and the weight of attack had caught them somewhat off guard. Chinese forces north of the Milo River were outflanked and quickly fell back

³⁶ TNA, WO 208/366; Report by Dennys, 25 October 1941. Dick Wilson, *When Tigers Fight: The Story of the Sino-Japanese War, 1937-1945* (New York: The Viking Press, 1982), p. 185.

³⁷ TNA, WO 208/366; Report by Dennys, 25 October 1941.

³⁸ NARA, RG 38, Entry 98A, Box 705; Report No. 86-41 by Lieutenant M.R. Stone, 23 August, 1941. See also NARA, RG 165, Entry 184, Box 959; Telegram No. 34 and Telegram No. 37 by Barrett, 19 March 1941, and 26 March 1941, and NARA, RG 165, Entry 184, Box 959; Telegram No. 97 by Mayer, 10 June 1941. TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 3/41 by Major R. Giles, 1 April 1941.

³⁹ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 8/41 by Giles, 1 September 1941.

⁴⁰ NARA, RG 165, Entry 184, Box 959; Telegram No. 31 by Barrett, 27 August 1941. See also TNA, FO 371/27626 F 5757/125/10; Telegram No. M.135 by Dennys, 26 June 1941, and TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 5/41 by Major R. Giles, 1 June 1941. Wilson, *When Tigers Fight*, p. 184.

⁴¹ NARA, RG 165, Entry 184, Box 959; Telegram No. 42 by Barrett, 23 September 1941. See also TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 9/41 by Major R. Giles, 1 October 1941, and TNA, WO 208/366; Report by Dennys, 25 October 1941.

without offering any serious resistance.⁴² The Japanese hoped to avoid a repetition of the 1939 fiasco by supporting the attack with additional forces. Thus, another eastward advance of the 33rd Division on the far left was made through the neighbourhood of Tungcheng and Pingkiang. The Chinese achieved victory two years before by debouching from this hilly terrain into the Japanese flank thereby forcing a retreat.⁴³ Japanese units advanced in three main columns on the eastern side of the Canton-Hankow rail line with an additional column consisting solely of the 4th Division to the west.⁴⁴ The Milo River was crossed by the right wing and the centre from 21 to 23 September and the subsequent breakthrough to Changsha occurred from 25 to 27 September.⁴⁵ These forces were aided by an amphibious assault made by a battalion of infantry on the south shore of Tungting Lake, and approximately two battalions of the 4th Division entered Changsha itself on 27 September without much difficulty.⁴⁶

Despite wild claims made by Chinese officials there was no fighting whatsoever inside the city or in the immediate area.⁴⁷ Reports of Japanese airborne landings were equally false and these were later properly identified as supply drops.⁴⁸ Part of the Japanese 6th Division secured the eastern approach to Changsha while a cavalry detachment of the Japanese 3rd Division also made an enveloping move around the city to take the important rail and road junction thirty

⁴² TNA, WO 208/366; Report by Dennys, 25 October 1941.

⁴³ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 9/41 by Giles, 1 October 1941.

⁴⁴ NARA, RG 165, Entry 184, Box 959; Telegram No. 42 by Barrett, 23 September 1941, and NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 40; Telegram No. 40 by Barrett, 24 September 1941.

⁴⁵ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 9/41 by Giles, 1 October 1941. Barrett and Chuikov, *Mission to China*, p. 128.

⁴⁶ NARA, RG 38, Entry 98A, Box 705; Report No. 70-41 by Major F. McQuillen, 4 November 1941, and NARA, RG 165, Entry 184, Box 959; Telegram No. 42 by Barrett, 23 September 1941. NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 40; Telegram No. 67 by Spiker, 24 September 1941. See also TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 9/41 by Giles, 1 October 1941.

⁴⁷ NARA, RG 38, Entry 98A, Box 705; Report No. 70-41 by McQuillen, 4 November 1941, and NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 40; Report No. 10579 by Major C.S. Babcock, 22 October 1941.

⁴⁸ TNA, FO 371/27628 F 10705/125/10; Telegram No. M.82 by Dennys, 10 October 1941, and TNA, WO 208/366; Report by Dennys, 25 October 1941.

five miles further south at Chuchow.⁴⁹ Two years after the initial attempt,

Changsha was finally occupied but the prize was rapidly abandoned.⁵⁰

With the Japanese 33rd Division delayed near the Kiangsi border, and once the bulk of the 11th Army had crossed the Milo River, three Chinese armies emerged from the eastern hills and descended upon the extended left flank starting on 24 September.⁵¹ This move was much more successful than the initial defence. Chinese forces were able to regain positions north of the Milo and after taking many casualties they managed to block Japanese lines of communication for a period of four days.⁵² Anticipating such a move, the Japanese unleashed the 40th Division to disrupt the Chinese counterattack.⁵³ Approximately one hundred eighty aircraft were also committed to provide ground support but the Chinese had advanced with ‘unusual vigour’ and inflicted considerable damage on Anami’s forces.⁵⁴ Contributing further to Japanese problems was the dismal weather conditions which limited the value of airpower.⁵⁵ Rain had already prevented Japanese armour and heavy artillery from keeping up with the initial assault and poor weather persisted from 24 to 29 September.⁵⁶ The weather worsened to such an extent that an early blizzard hit the region on 26 September.⁵⁷ Partly because

⁴⁹ NARA, RG 165, Entry 184, Box 959; Telegram No. 51 by Barrett, 30 September 1941. See also TNA, WO 208/366; Report by Dennys, 25 October 1941, and TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 9/41 by Giles, 1 October 1941.

⁵⁰ NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 40; Telegram No. 57 by Barrett, 8 October 1941.

⁵¹ NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 40; Telegram No. 51 by Barrett, 1 October 1941. See also TNA, WO 208/366; Report by Dennys, 25 October 1941.

⁵² NARA, RG 165, Entry 184, Box 959; Telegram No. 50 by Barrett, 30 September 1941. TNA, WO 208/366; Report by Dennys, 25 October 1941.

⁵³ NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 40; Telegram No. 40 by Barrett, 24 September 1941.

⁵⁴ TNA, WO 208/366; Report by Dennys, 25 October 1941.

⁵⁵ TNA, FO 371/27627 F 10252/125/10; Telegram M.43 by Dennys, 29 September 1941.

⁵⁶ Wilson, *When Tigers Fight*, p. 186.

⁵⁷ Edward Hume, *Dauntless Adventurer: the Story of Dr. Winston Pettus* (New Haven: Yale-in-China Association, 1952), p. 98.

of the Chinese success in cutting the overstretched Japanese supply lines,

Changsha was abandoned after only four days of occupation.⁵⁸

By the start of October Japanese forces were in full retreat. Many casualties were sustained by the 11th Army as they fought their way through Chinese blocking forces positioned along the Milo River and areas further north.⁵⁹ Compounding their difficulties Soviet and Chinese artillery units entrenched atop Tamoshan Mountain maintained a relatively constant bombardment.⁶⁰ To prevent further damage a diversionary attack was launched by the 23rd Army at Canton to keep General Yu Han Mou's 7th War Zone forces from deploying up the railway into Hunan. The 23rd Army advanced along the North River starting on 22 September but the offensive was brought to a halt two weeks later after reaching positions approximately one hundred kilometres north of the city.⁶¹ While combat in Kwangtung continued, the 11th Army eventually crossed the Milo River and Japanese forces returned to their starting point at Yochow by 8 October. Except for a few wounded troops, evacuation through Tungting Lake was prevented despite the deployment of about thirty gunboats; the Chinese navy had mined much of the lower Hsiang River to Changsha.⁶²

The Chinese army had many great deficiencies but several reasons combined to help make the second battle of Changsha a scarce but much needed victory. In addition to troop quality, leadership in 9th War Zone was of a higher calibre than in many other regions of the country. General Hsueh was competent and sufficiently aggressive to challenge the Japanese successfully on several

⁵⁸ NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 40; Telegram No. 37 by Brink, 8 October 1941, and TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 10/41 by Major R. Giles, 1 November 1941.

⁵⁹ TNA, WO 208/366; Report by Dennys, 25 October 1941.

⁶⁰ Barrett and Chuikov, *Mission to China*, p. 129.

⁶¹ NARA, RG 165, Entry 184, Box 959; Telegram No. 50 by Barrett, 30 September 1941. See also NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 40; Telegram No. 37 by Barrett, 8 October 1941.

⁶² TNA, WO 208/366; Report by Dennys, 25 October 1941.

occasions.⁶³ Although initially surprised at the scale of attack, when it became clear that Changsha was threatened, Chiang issued orders that the city be held and the General Staff defence plan, made with Soviet advice, was quickly implemented.⁶⁴ Moreover, General Chuikov made his presence felt during the planning and execution of a defensive strategy that played well to Chinese strengths and exploited Japanese logistical weaknesses. He and his staff were also joined by British officers.⁶⁵ Once the battle was underway, however, Chinese counterattacks north of Hunan made by 6th War Zone forces under the command of General Chen Cheng and 5th War Zone Forces under General Li Tsung-ren were of the greatest significance to the outcome of events as the Japanese position in central China became seriously imperilled.⁶⁶

While the battle raged in Hunan Soviet advisers encouraged the Chinese to launch an offensive against the reduced garrison at Ichang. The strategically important city was located to the northwest near the eastern end of the Yangtze River gorges, and the Chinese attack was primarily meant to divert Japanese pressure from Hunan.⁶⁷ Anticipating a Japanese offensive against Changsha, Chinese preparations for a Yangtze River offensive were begun during the summer, with reinforcements including artillery being deployed further up the river.⁶⁸ The normal strength of the 11th Army garrison in the region between Hankow and Ichang was three divisions and two brigades but General Anami had pulled one third of the units defending this region for operations in Hunan. A

⁶³ Major General Claire Chennault, *Way of a Fighter* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1949), p. 223.

⁶⁴ TNA, WO 208/366; Report by Dennys, 25 October 1941.

⁶⁵ NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 40; Telegram No. 44 by Barrett, 24 September 1941.

⁶⁶ NARA, RG 165, Entry 184, Box 959; AMMISCA Telegram No. 12 by Brigadier General John Magruder, 22 October 1941, and NARA, RG 165, Entry 184, Box 959; Telegram No. 59 by Barrett, 8 October 1941. See also NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 38; Report No. 52 by Mayer, 21 December 1941.

⁶⁷ TNA, WO 208/366; Report by Dennys, 25 October 1941.

⁶⁸ NARA, RG 165, Entry 184, Box 959; Telegram No. 6 by Mayer, 6 August 1941.

large-scale Chinese attack was not expected and the city of Ichang was foolishly left with a garrison of only two battalions totalling approximately 2,000 men. Very little artillery was left to support them. Ichang was ringed with eighty concrete fortified positions but after these were manned, few troops remained to form any useful reserve.⁶⁹

After a few days of delay, and after strong Soviet urging, two divisions of the 5th War Zone launched the operation on 26 September by attacking Japanese posts north and northwest of Ichang. The Chinese had the unusual experience of finding themselves with equality, and at times, a local superiority in artillery. This allowed them to unexpectedly capture over twenty of the Japanese posts early and reach the walls of the city.⁷⁰ Heavy fighting soon spread further south in 6th War Zone and Chinese morale soared as the battle was achieving success.⁷¹ By 8 October 1941 the Chinese army forced their way inside Ichang itself while the 5th and 6th War Zone armies also linked up between the Yangtze and the Han Rivers. Chinese morale continued to climb as over fifty of the fortified Japanese posts were soon captured and the Japanese position at Hankow became threatened.⁷² By this point the battle was still proceeding well for the Chinese. It had also forced the Japanese army to abandon their offensive in Hunan.⁷³ Elements of the Japanese 13th and 39th Divisions had to be rushed to Ichang as reinforcements for the beleaguered garrison.⁷⁴ The Japanese attempted to distract

⁶⁹ TNA, WO 208/366; Report by Dennys, 25 October 1941.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ NARA, RG 319, Entry 57, Box 164, File 5; Telegram No. 68 by Mayer, 16 October 1941.

⁷² TNA, WO 208/366; Report by Dennys, 25 October 1941.

⁷³ TNA, FO 371/27628 F 10908/125/10.

⁷⁴ NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 38; Report No. 67 by Mayer, 14 October 1941.

the Chinese further north with an attack in Honan [Henan] but this met with little effective result.⁷⁵

The decisive turning point occurred during the heaviest fighting between 8 and 10 October 1941 as Soviet advisers encouraged the Chinese to push home the attack.⁷⁶ After several uphill assaults the Chinese had bent the Japanese line, but as Ichang was about to be taken, a strong counterattack with recently arrived reinforcements hit their northern flank. Heavy air strikes, and more ominously, a large scale use of chemical weapons supported this attack.⁷⁷ Mustard Gas and Phosgene were employed and over one thousand shells weighing twenty to fifty pounds each were fired into Chinese positions.⁷⁸ The battle of Ichang marked the heaviest use of gas in the war with munitions impacting an area 2,000 yards in length by 1,500 yards in width. Chinese troops had no defence against chemical weapons and gas casualties numbered approximately 1,350 of which 750 were killed.⁷⁹ Japanese chemical weapons attacks had been on the increase since July 1940 but occurrences were generally scattered and of limited intensity. General Magruder noted that: ‘Attacks in August and October Nineteen Forty One were concentrated and heavy.’⁸⁰ Against this pressure Chiang broke off the attack and

⁷⁵ NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 40; Telegram No. 58 by Barrett, 8 October 1941. See also Barrett and Chuikov, *Mission to China*, p. 134.

⁷⁶ NARA, RG 165, Entry 184, Box 962; Weekly State Department Report, 9 October 1941.

NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 40; Report No. 65-41 by Major J.M. McHugh, 17 October 1941.

⁷⁷ NARA, RG 165, Entry 184, Box 961; Report by Colonel Ralph Smith, 12 November 1941. See also NARA, RG 319, Entry 57, Box 164, File 5; Telegram No. C-85 by Mayer, 30 October 1941, and TNA, WO 208/366; Report by Dennys, 25 October 1941.

⁷⁸ NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 38; Report No. 33 by Mayer, 30 October 1941. See also NARA, RG 319, Entry 57, Box 164, File 5; Telegram No. C-85 by Mayer, 30 October 1941.

⁷⁹ NARA, RG 319, Entry 57, Box 164, File 5; Telegram No. C-85 by Mayer, 30 October 1941.

⁸⁰ NARA, RG 319, Entry 57, Box 164, File 6; Telegram No. 122 by Magruder, 22 December 1941.

ordered a westward withdrawal from Ichang.⁸¹ The Sino-Japanese War was stalemated once again.⁸²

Although the heavy employment of chemical weapons was a significant development in the war, there were larger geopolitical factors behind Chiang's decision to withdraw from Ichang. Chinese military spokesmen stated that the withdrawal was made to preserve their forces from the effects of further combat but explanations such as this were not widely believed.⁸³ Foreign observers, especially the Soviet advisers who helped plan the attack, were resentful over the outcome of events and they expressed their displeasure to British and American counterparts. With the battle for Moscow underway a reduction of conflict in China was of great concern to Stalin and the Soviets were loud in their complaints.⁸⁴ At the 14th Military Attaché Conference Colonel Bedniakoff stated that Chinese field commanders had opposed the order to withdraw. The Chinese had superiority in artillery, terrain, and position. Morale was high from success. Nevertheless, the withdrawal was ordered despite the likelihood of retaking Ichang and it was done so as a political, rather than military manoeuvre.⁸⁵ The withdrawal from Ichang was ordered to remind President Roosevelt that while Japanese-American peace talks continued in Washington, a termination of hostilities in China remained a possibility and Chiang expected better support.

Other foreign military officers commented on the significance of these events including military intelligence personnel in Hong Kong.

⁸¹ NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 38; Report No. 68 by Mayer, 15 October 1941. See also TNA, WO 208/366; Report by Dennys, 25 October 1941.

⁸² NARA, RG 165, Entry 184, Box 962; Weekly State Department Report, 16 October 1941. NARA, RG 165.

⁸³ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 10/41 by Giles, 1 November 1941.

⁸⁴ NARA, RG 165, Entry 184, Box 959; Telegram No. 68 by Mayer, 15 October 1941.

⁸⁵ NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 40; Telegram by Mayer, 15 October 1941, and Report No. 65-41 by McHugh, 17 October 1941.

... The Chinese came within an ace of success in their attack on the heavily reduced garrison, although their offensive was a rather belated one. According to the Soviet A.M.A., now in Hong Kong, the attack was called off when the Chinese had mopped up the majority of the outlying defences and were in an excellent position to break into the city itself.⁸⁶

Lieutenant Colonel James McHugh (USMC), amongst others, reported to Washington that the Chinese did not want to inflict greater damage on Japanese forces along the Yangtze River because they did not wish to discourage any planned offensives into the USSR or against the British and Americans to the south.⁸⁷ He snidely added that a close analysis of the factors involved revealed ‘that maybe the Chinese were not as stupid and fatuous as they appear to have been’.⁸⁸ Chiang had maintained the security of Hunan, but his withdrawal of forces at Ichang was a signal and a threat to Allied leaders that he was serious about receiving additional support from abroad. It is useful to note that the timing of the withdrawal also corresponded with the assembly of Canadian forces for Hong Kong. Ultimately, in the fall of 1941 Chiang may have been successful in using the battles within Hunan and Hupeh as leverage in maintaining pressure on his allies.

Notwithstanding Chiang’s withdrawal order some Allied officers in the region remained sufficiently satisfied by Chinese military abilities to comment favourably on their performance. General Chuikov claimed that the Chinese seized the initiative and executed a bold strategic counterstroke at Ichang that was estimated to have inflicted about 10,000 Japanese casualties. Chuikov commented on Chinese army deficiencies in leadership but he further stated, ‘that

⁸⁶ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 10/41 by Giles, 1 November 1941.

⁸⁷ NARA, RG 165, Entry 184, Box 959; Telegram No. C-70 by Mayer, 17 October 1941. See also NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 40; Telegram by Mayer, 15 October 1941, and Report No. 65-41 by McHugh, 17 October 1941, and NARA, RG 319, Entry 57, Box 164, File 5; Original Telegram No. 68 by Mayer, 16 October 1941.

⁸⁸ NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 40; Report No. 65-41 by McHugh, 17 October 1941.

they were capable of waging vigorous defensive operations (so-called offensive defense) and that they were capable of scoring victories in limited-scale offensive operations ...⁸⁹ Lieutenant Colonel McHugh further reported to Washington that the Japanese had either underestimated Chinese strength and overestimated their own prior to the attack on Changsha, or alternatively, the Commander-in-Chief of the China Expeditionary Force, Field Marshal Hata Shunroku ‘with equal stupidity initiated the campaign without prior approval from Tokyo’.⁹⁰

British officers were similarly encouraged by the overall outcome of events to recommend further support be extended to China.⁹¹ One of the most outspoken of these was General Dennys and he remarked how foreign perceptions of the Chinese army needed adjustment.

The Changsha and Ichang operations, which took place in September and early October were of considerable military and political importance. The practice of the Chinese press and foreign news agencies in Chungking of ‘writing up’ the Chinese Army and publishing extravagant claims of Chinese victories for every action fought is too well known to require any comment, except to say that it does more harm than good. On the other hand there is a noticeable tendency on the part of our intelligence organisations in the Far East to pour immediate scorn, sometimes without waiting for full information, on any military achievements claimed by the Chinese, on the analogy of ‘can any good come out of Samaria?’ This does no good either.⁹²

General Dennys’ reasoning was similar to General Chuikov’s when he reported how:

The Chinese, with the assistance of Russian advisers, did what they are popularly supposed to be incapable of doing - namely, co-ordinate a strategic plan in two separate areas. The co-ordination was not by any means perfect, for the Ichang offensive started several days late, but it was none the less a major factor in effecting the hurried Japanese withdrawal from Changsha.

⁸⁹ Barrett and Chuikov, *Mission to China*, pp. xxxvi, xli.

⁹⁰ NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 40; Report No. 65-41 by McHugh, 17 October 1941.

⁹¹ TNA, WO 208/366; Report by Dennys, 25 October 1941. See also TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 8/41 by Giles, 1 September 1941.

⁹² TNA, WO 208/366; Report by Dennys, 25 October 1941.

(b) The Chinese Army is capable of offensive action under favourable circumstances. At Changsha circumstances were favourable because the Japanese were overconfident and had a bad line of communication owing to their failure to open up the river. At Ichang conditions were favourable because the Japanese had no marked superiority in artillery and their air force was fully occupied elsewhere. There is little doubt that the Japanese were completely surprised by the Chinese offensive, having believed them incapable of anything but passive defence. For obvious reasons Chinese offensives must be infrequent and on a limited scale for some time to come, but their nature and scope can be increased if the Chinese Army can be given air support and/or more equipment.

(c) The Japanese failure to bring up reinforcements to the Ichang battle points to considerable exhaustion after the Changsha operations. The Russian advisers are convinced the Chinese could have taken up their old positions along the Han River and mopped up any Japanese troops to the West of it. This seems a reasonable assumption. It is equally reasonable to assume that, in that case, the Japanese would have had to stage a larger scale counter attack against them.

(d) The effect of both operations on Chinese morale has been good and it must be disturbing to the Japanese General Staff, at this juncture, to get practical proof that the Chinese Army is improving.⁹³

More of General Dennys' report can be found in appendix eleven.

Dennys' views on the Second Battle of Changsha and the battle of Ichang are of importance as it fuelled the belief amongst some Allied officers in the region that Hong Kong might be held in the event of an Anglo-American war with Japan, since it seemed possible that Chinese forces could relieve the garrison in the event of a siege. As events transpired his assessment of Chinese capabilities may have been correct but what was needed for the plan to succeed was for far greater numbers of troops to have been posted somewhere closer to Hong Kong, perhaps at Waichow, prior to the start of battle. Chinese assistance, however, was not greatly desired in Whitehall as British officials did not wish to create further obligations to China. After the fall of Hong Kong, it was David MacDougall of

⁹³ *Ibid.*

the War Department's Hong Kong Planning Unit who according to Andrew Whitfield wrote: 'The feeling was that Britain would rather have lost the colony than accept Chinese help. For my own part, I agree with them.'⁹⁴ Prior to the German invasion of the USSR, British support for China had remained lukewarm, but greater cooperation, even if still limited, began to coalesce in Sino-British military planning after the second battle of Changsha.⁹⁵ Guerrilla warfare and Allied airpower were to be used in cooperation with regular Chinese army units in Kwangtung and Hunan, but effective Sino-British collaboration for Hong Kong itself was slow to develop. Unfortunately, for the men of the garrison, officials in Whitehall were still dragging their feet.

The Japanese offensive in Hunan had been launched for several reasons. Seizure of the provincial rice harvest was one factor behind the move. Aside from replenishing their own stocks, capturing large quantities of rice was also a form of economic warfare that could further damage Chinese morale by increasing economic pressure on the population.⁹⁶ Rice hoarding in Szechwan was already making inflation such a serious problem that Chiang issued an order against such practices under the threat of severe punishment.⁹⁷ Yet, the Hunan offensive was not merely another rice raid and the augmentation of Japanese food supplies was only a secondary motivation. General Chuikov wrote that the battle was fought to convince the British and the Americans that the Chinese were weak and valueless as allies, whereas Chiang desperately needed a victory to convince them

⁹⁴ Andrew Whitfield, *Hong Kong, Empire and the Anglo-American Alliance at War, 1941-45* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2001), p. 65.

⁹⁵ TNA, FO 371/27641 F 6700/145/10; File cover notation by A.L. Scott, 26 July 1941, and file cover notation by J. Sterndale Bennett, 3 August 1941.

⁹⁶ TNA, FO 371/27627 F 10051/125/10; Telegram No. M.33 24/9 by Dennys, 25 September 1941.

⁹⁷ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3; Report No. 11 by Barrett, 3 December 1940.

otherwise.⁹⁸ In this Chiang was successful, at least with Allied officers in China such as General Dennys.⁹⁹ Anami also hoped that by capturing Changsha and destroying 9th War Zone forces it would be possible to remove the Chinese threat to Hankow and to physically link their positions in the central and southern regions of the country.¹⁰⁰ The Japanese were also eager to counter Chinese propaganda that withdrawals along the Yangtze River were being made for an attack on the USSR.¹⁰¹ In the final tally, however, the stakes were much higher. An official Japanese military announcement clarified that the Second Hunan offensive against Changsha was launched in order to bring a military solution to their problems in China.¹⁰² The Japanese wanted to end the war before they began their advance to the south and in this objective they failed.¹⁰³

The Battle of Hong Kong and the Third Battle of Changsha: the Rupture in Sino-British Relations

Unable to knock China into submission, the Japanese adjusted their strategic plans by preparing for war against the Western powers and the 23rd Army was reinforced for future operations in Kwangtung. In fulfilment of Chiang's hope, the attack on Hong Kong finally meant that the escalation of low intensity conflict in the Pearl River Delta would complete its metamorphosis into a full scale war that included Britain and potentially America. Yet, the battle of Hong Kong was the penultimate act in the Japanese Army's strangulation of China and the coup de grace was almost delivered during the Burma campaign shortly thereafter. By

⁹⁸ Barrett and Chuikov, *Mission to China*, p. 124.

⁹⁹ TNA, WO 208/366; Report by Dennys, 25 October 1941.

¹⁰⁰ Barrett and Chuikov, *Mission to China*, pp. 125-126.

¹⁰¹ TNA, FO 371/27627 F 10356/125/10; Telegram No. 640 by Dennys, 30 September 1941.

¹⁰² NARA, RG 165, Entry 184, Box 962; Weekly State Department Report, 2 October 1941.

¹⁰³ Roy Stanley, *Prelude to Pearl Harbor* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1982), p. 128.

January 1942 Allied strategy within southern China had started to unravel, but the battle of Hong Kong was the crescendo of a crisis that set the stage for a new and vastly wider catastrophe. In bringing Japanese offensive power south, Soviet Far Eastern Security was enhanced, and when events at Hong Kong are tallied with the simultaneous attack on Pearl Harbor, the result was a tremendous strategic defeat for Japan. In launching the Pacific War the Japanese immediately engaged a coalition of enemies without the slightest chance of long-term success.¹⁰⁴ Although the scale of Japanese folly was assuming greater proportions, their actions did not mitigate the consequences of Allied recklessness in the reinforcement and defence of Hong Kong.

The Japanese assault on the British colony was only half of their offensive in southern China with the other half being the third battle for Changsha. Both of these battles were part of the same operational plan to complete the country's isolation and thereby force the Chinese to surrender.¹⁰⁵ In early 1942 the Chinese remained hopeful of direct large-scale Anglo-American intervention, but Allied reverses during the opening stages of the expanded conflict made this impossible. This in turn greatly damaged Chinese morale.¹⁰⁶ With the fall of Hong Kong British wartime influence in China effectively came to an end but the impact of Japanese victory was nullified by their defeat in Hunan as the country remained a belligerent power. The third battle for Changsha helped prevent Chinese morale from breaking completely for two reasons. First, it was the only major Allied victory during the first six months of the Pacific War and it demonstrated China's

¹⁰⁴ David Evans and Mark Peattie, *Kaigun: Strategy, Tactics, and Technology in the Imperial Japanese Navy, 1887-1941* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1997), p. 493.

¹⁰⁵ Library of Congress [hereafter LOC], Japanese Monographs [microform]; Japanese Monograph No. 71, Army Operations in China, December 1941-December 1943 by Lieutenant Colonel Ishiwari Heizo, Special Staff U.S. Army Historical Section, 1963, p. 54. See also Chi, 'The Military Dimension', p. 158.

¹⁰⁶ Chennault, *Way of a Fighter*, p. 140.

value as a military ally both at home and abroad. Second, although the Chinese finally fought as a coalition partner, on this occasion they were able to beat the Japanese virtually unaided in a large scale defensive engagement and it was partly due to these events that the war in China became an element of the Pacific War.¹⁰⁷

On 6 November 1941 the Imperial General Headquarters ordered the 23rd Army to ready itself for an attack on Hong Kong and plans were coordinated with the navy.¹⁰⁸ The Japanese 2nd Fleet designated a small force to assist in the isolation of Hong Kong and to prevent reinforcement or escape, while the 11th Air Fleet in Formosa supplied units of the 21st and 23rd Air Flotillas to ensure air superiority and provide ground support.¹⁰⁹ Within the 23rd Army some changes in command were made in advance of operations and these included Major General Kuribayashi Tadashi, who as the former military attaché in Ottawa assumed his new duties as the Chief of Staff from Major General Kato, while Lieutenant General Sano Tadayoshi was appointed as the new commander of the 38th Division.¹¹⁰ Overall command of the 23rd Army still rested with Lieutenant General Sakai Takashi.¹¹¹ During the summer the number of troops at Canton and its immediate area had fallen to about one and a half divisions, but these were raised to almost four divisions or approximately 60,000 men with some of these reinforcing the area just north of Hong Kong.¹¹² This meant that the strength of

¹⁰⁷ Chi, ‘The Military Dimension, 1942-1945’, p. 158.

¹⁰⁸ NAC, RG 24, Volume 20538, File 982.013 (D3); Operation Record in China Theatre, Vol. II by Colonel Shimoda Chiyoshi, December 1946, and NAC, RG 24, Volume 20539, File 982.045 (D1); Report on the Japanese 38th Division Order of Battle, 30 July 1951.

¹⁰⁹ NAC, RG 24, Volume 20538, File 982.013 (D6); British Official History Report, Appendix 5, Japanese Order of Battle, 17 February 1955.

¹¹⁰ NAC, RG 24, Volume 20538, File 982.013 (D5); History of the 38th Japanese Division. See also TNA, FO 371/27628 F 12048/125/10; Telegram No. 1356 by Maltby, 7 November 1941.

¹¹¹ Philip Snow, *The Fall of Hong Kong: Britain, China and the Japanese Occupation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), p. 39.

¹¹² NAC, RG 24, Volume 3913, File 1037-5-3 Vol. 1; Telegram FEW 53, 22 October 1941, and NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 40; Telegram No. 83 by Mayer, 28 October 1941. See also TNA, FO 371/27628 F 11658/125/10; Telegram No. 25263, 1 November 1941.

the Japanese Army in Kwangtung had returned to the springtime levels observed prior to the commencement of operations in southern Indochina.¹¹³ Hainan was also strongly reinforced with units destined for other regions further south.¹¹⁴

Aside from the 38th Division the 23rd Army order of battle included some elements of the 18th Division positioned along both the East River and the Hong Kong border, as well as the 104th Division which was based largely in Canton and along the North River. After its arrival, the newly activated 51st Division was handed responsibility for the lower East River. Smaller elements of the Formosan Division reinforced Chungshan, Namtau and Bocca Tigris after being withdrawn from Foochow in September and spending a period of time in the Marianas for rest and recuperation.¹¹⁵ More worrying for Hong Kong was the arrival of several battalions of siege artillery which were also landed at Bocca Tigris and Namtau; units equipped with 150 mm and 240 mm guns.¹¹⁶ These were part of the 23rd Army artillery group under the command of Lieutenant General Katajima.¹¹⁷ In garrison at Hainan, Swatow and Chaoyang were units of the 19th Mixed Independent Brigade.¹¹⁸

By 26 November the decision had been made in Tokyo to wage war against Britain and America, and General Sakai soon deployed his army for the

¹¹³ NARA, RG 165, Entry 184, Box 962; Weekly State Department Report, 30 October 1941, and TNA, FO 371/27628 F 11172/125/10; Telegram No. 1136 by Major General Christopher Maltby, 20 October 1941. See also TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 10/41 by Giles, 1 November 1941.

¹¹⁴ TNA, FO 371/27628 F 12898/125/10, and TNA, FO 371/27628 F 12933/125/10.

¹¹⁵ LOC, Japanese Monographs; Japanese Monograph No. 71 by Ishiwari, 1963. NAC, RG 24, Volume 20538, File 982.013 (D3); Operation Record in China Theatre, Vol. II by Shimoda, December 1946, and NAC, RG 24, Volume 20539, File 982.045 (D1); Report on the Japanese 38th Division Order of Battle, 30 July 1951. See also TNA, FO 371/27628 F 10897/125/10; Telegram No. 1033 by Maltby, 13 October 1941. TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 10/41 by Giles, 1 November 1941.

¹¹⁶ TNA, FO 371/27628 F 11033/125/10; Telegram No. 1057 by Maltby, 15 October 1941, and TNA, FO 371/27628 F 11093/125/10; Telegram No. 1106 by Maltby, 18 October 1941. See also TNA, FO 371/27628 F 11172/125/10; Telegram No. 1136 by Maltby, 20 October 1941, and TNA, FO 371/27628 F 12898/125/10, and TNA, FO 371/27628 F 12933/125/10.

¹¹⁷ TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 9/41 by Giles, 1 October 1941.

¹¹⁸ LOC, Japanese Monographs; Japanese Monograph No. 71 by Ishiwari, 1963. TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 10/41 by Giles, 1 November 1941.

assault on Hong Kong. On 1 December the bulk of the 38th Division began its move from Samshui and Foshan towards the British colony. Advance elements were already positioned at Shumchun along with some of Katajima's heavy artillery from Namtau.¹¹⁹ Road repair was intensified while tanks were also seen moving east through Canton.¹²⁰ Final fortification work on the defence line running east to west approximately fifteen miles north of the city was also completed resulting in the addition of several thousand pill boxes.¹²¹ The 66th Infantry Regiment of the 51st Division, otherwise known as the Araki Detachment, marched on Tamshui to protect lines of communication against Chinese ground forces that were anticipated to attempt a relief of the garrison, and the 104th Division similarly braced themselves at Canton.¹²² Many Chinese puppet soldiers and Formosans had already been sent into Hong Kong itself to join other fifth columnists once the battle was underway.¹²³

Even though little effort was made to conceal these deployments in Kwangtung many British officers misread Japanese moves.¹²⁴ Most noteworthy was the new G.O.C. China, Major General Christopher Maltby. In contrast to his predecessor, Major General Grasett, Maltby was not as alert to the threat posed by

¹¹⁹ LOC, Japanese Monographs; Japanese Monograph No. 71 by Ishiari, 1963. See also NAC, RG 24, Volume 20538, File 982.013 (D3); Operation Record in China Theatre, Vol. II by Shimoda, December 1946.

¹²⁰ NARA, RG 165, Entry 184, Box 962; Weekly State Department Report, 4 December 1941. TNA, FO 371/27628 F 13386/125/10; Telegram No. 1678 by Maltby, 4 December 1941.

¹²¹ NARA, RG 59, USSDCF, Reel 10; Report No. 893.00 P. R. Canton/166 PS/TL by Consul General M. Myers, 16 August 1942.

¹²² NAC, RG 24, Volume 20538, File 982.013 (D3); Operation Record in China Theatre, Vol. II by Shimoda, December 1946. See also George Endacott, *Hong Kong Eclipse* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 65-66.

¹²³ NARA, RG 165, Entry 184, Box 959; Summary of British Military Intelligence, 28 August 1941, and TNA, WO 106/2402; Telegram No. 919 by Governor Geoffry Northcote, 25 August 1941.

¹²⁴ NAC, RG 24, Volume 3913, File 1037-5-3 Vol. 1; Telegram FEW 53, 22 October 1941, and NARA, RG 319, Entry 57, Box 169, File 1; Telegram No. 48 by Major Reynolds Condon, 14 October 1941. TNA, FO 371/27628 F 10703/125/10; Telegram No. 1012 by Maltby, 10 October 1941. See also TNA, FO 371/27628 F 10897/125/10; Telegram No. 1033 by Maltby, 13 October 1941, and TNA, FO 371/27628 F 13192/125/10; Telegram No. 1658 by Maltby, 3 December 1941.

the Japanese army nor did he adequately heed the reports issued by his intelligence staff. RAF reconnaissance flights of the area provided intelligence on Japanese movements, as did Chinese radio detachments located at Bocca Tigris, but Maltby was not overly alarmed by the Japanese deployments.¹²⁵ As Japanese reinforcements continued to arrive he informed the War Office that the frontier was relatively quiet. He stated that units in the region were likely training for operations against Thailand or making preparations for an advance up the East River.¹²⁶ In following previous complaints that the British were in violation of agreed no-fly zones the Japanese initiated their own naval reconnaissance flights over the colony's fortifications on 4 December 1941, but Maltby remained confident that there was little reason for worry.¹²⁷

Maltby had been misinterpreting events for some time and his poor judgement was an unfortunate encumbrance burdening the defenders. As early as 23 October the head of military intelligence at Singapore had grown anxious over the general's laxity in reporting on Japanese moves. A telegram was sent expressing concern and it was felt that clarification of Maltby's responsibilities was necessary in order to improve the flow of information and to ascertain the true extent of the danger facing Hong Kong.

Concentration of approximately one division has been taking place in Bocca Tigris Namtau area for at least ten days but no identifications received here. Assume you are doing your best through your own sources and not relying solely on S.I.S. to whom I have already made strong representations here. Standard required is that you should know name of every commander of major unit

¹²⁵ TNA, FO 371/27628 F 10703/125/10; Telegram No. 1012 by Maltby, 10 October 1941, and TNA, FO 371/27628 F 13386/125/10; Telegram No. 1678 by Maltby, 4 December 1941. TNA, WO 106/2402; Telegram No. 2198 by Ambassador Sir Robert Craigie, 2 November 1941.

¹²⁶ TNA, TNA, FO 371/27628 F 12381/125/10; Telegram No. 1454 by Maltby, 14 November 1941.

¹²⁷ TNA, FO 371/27628 F 13386/125/10; Telegram No. 1678 by Maltby, 4 December 1941, and TNA, WO 106/2402; Telegram No. 1346 by Governor Mark Young, 15 November 1941.

within 48 hours of landing and no effort must be spared to reach and maintain this standard.¹²⁸

As late as 3 December 1941 Maltby thought that the 38th Division had been sent to Indochina and he remained confident that the Japanese were still preparing solely for an attack further south. Maltby sent another telegram to the War Office that day and he noted:

Despite flood of local rumours that Japanese intend attacking colony in near future there are no concrete signs of this and present Japanese dispositions in Frontier Area indicate balance of movement in last few days outward. Although Japanese Consul General urged all Japanese to evacuate yesterday only thirty three did so and one hundred and seven still remain.¹²⁹

The following day he estimated that there were three Japanese divisions positioned in south China with support, but he felt certain that these were insufficient for a powerful attack to be made against the colony.¹³⁰ In contrast, the Americans were more circumspect over Japanese moves and the *USS Mindanao* departed Hong Kong for the Philippines on 4 December (it was last reported to be anchored off Bataan on 31 March 1942).¹³¹

The day before the battle began Maltby sent another appraisal of the situation facing the colony, after ignoring what turned out to be timely intelligence reports of the arrival of large numbers of Japanese troops eight miles to the north.¹³² Maltby reported how:

Two independent frontier sources report 10 to 20000 Japanese troops expected to arrive Namtau Shumchun area Dec. 4th (?5th) preparatory to attack on colony.

1. SIS sources have similar reports. So far no substantial reinforcements are known to have arrived in this area although

¹²⁸ TNA, FO 371/27622 F 11379/98/10; Telegram No. 24862, 23 October 1941.

¹²⁹ TNA, FO 371/27628 F 13192/125/10; Telegram No. 1658 by Maltby, 3 December 1941.

¹³⁰ TNA, FO 371/27628 F 13386/125/10; Telegram No. 1678 by Maltby, 4 December 1941.

¹³¹ NARA, RG 24, Deck Log of *USS Mindanao*; Log entries, 4 December 1941 and 31 March 1942. See also NARA, RG 59, USSDCF, Reel 3; Report No. 893.00/14828 by Ambassador Clarence Gauss, 6 December 1941.

¹³² Oliver Lindsay, *The Battle for Hong Kong 1941-1945: Hostage to Fortune* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005), p. 64.

independent Bocca-Tigris source states 20,000 men left for Namtau during last 4 days in Dec.

2. Above reports are certainly exaggerated and have appearance of being deliberately fostered by Japanese who judging by their defensive preparations around Canton and in frontier area appear distinctly nervous of being attacked. It is considered they are disseminating these reports to cover up their numerical weakness in South China although some (?reinforcement to) skeleton Japanese force in frontier area is extremely likely in near future. M.T. traffic on Namtau-Shumchun road notably increased in last 48 hours and 206 loaded lorries proceeding to latter place on 5th Dec.¹³³

Thirty minutes later he added the following:

Bocca-Tigris W/T.set now functioning again reports 20,000 men majority infantry and artillery with 4,000 horse arrived from direction of East River between 1st. and 4th. December and proceeded down coastal road towards Namtau.

2. Above is probably grossly exaggerated version of recent troop movements eastward from Canton reported in my 1678 of 4th. December and he has been asked whether his report is hearsay or eye-witness.

3. Same source also reports Japanese are issuing shells and S.A.A. in Bocca-Tigris which are being sent same destination.¹³⁴

At the Foreign Office, A.L. Scott's wry response was recorded on a file jacket a few days later. He wrote that the reports were, 'Not "grossly exaggerated" at all, as it turned out!',¹³⁵

Hong Kong was attacked along with the American Fleet at Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941 and the long anticipated Japanese advance into the Southwest Pacific Area was begun. The date in Hong Kong was 8 December due to the difference in time zones and the bisection of the Pacific Ocean by the International Date Line. The bombardment of Kai Tak airfield marked the opening phase of the battle when a squadron of dive bombers of the 45th light bomber regiment, along with three squadrons of fighter escorts succeeded in destroying most of the civilian aircraft and all five RAF reconnaissance planes

¹³³ TNA, FO 371/27628 F 13447/125/10; Telegram No. 1704 by Maltby, 7 December 1941.

¹³⁴ TNA, FO 371/27628 F 13452/125/10; Telegram No. 1705 by Maltby, 7 December 1941.

¹³⁵ TNA, FO 371/27628 F 13452/125/10; File cover notation by Scott, 13 December 1941.

still parked on the ground.¹³⁶ Much of the damage was caused by the fighters during numerous low level strafing runs as the only air defence available was the fire from three light machineguns. Wing Commander Ginger Sullivan had limited options to protect his aircraft.¹³⁷ Kai Tak airfield was too short to accommodate modern fighters and there were no antiaircraft guns positioned at the airfield. Hong Kong anti-aircraft defences as of November 1941 included only sixteen heavy and two light guns of the 5th Anti-Aircraft Regiment, Royal Artillery and these were primarily defending the port facilities.¹³⁸ When a handful of mobile antiaircraft troops finally arrived they were too late to offer any useful assistance. Despite these opening losses CNAC was able to make sixteen flights on the night of 8/9 December and evacuate two hundred seventy five people.¹³⁹ One of the more prominent of these was the Green Gang leader Tu Yueh Sheng.¹⁴⁰

More dangerous were British deficiencies in infantry and artillery. After General Maltby learned that Canadian troops were to be sent as reinforcements for his garrison, he revived the 1938 defence plan which was based upon the deployment of two brigades; one on Hong Kong Island and the other on the mainland north of Kowloon.¹⁴¹ The Mainland Brigade was under the command of Brigadier General Cedric Wallis, who was appointed after the departure of Brigadier Reeve in mid November.¹⁴² Wallis' brigade consisted of three

¹³⁶ NAC, RG 24, Volume 20539, File 982.045 (D1); Report on the Japanese 38th Division Order of Battle, 30 July 1951. NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 40; Report by Major Richard Grussendorf, 19 August 1942. TNA, WO 106/5360; Report No. 163 by Colonel C.P. Stacey, November 1946.

¹³⁷ Tony Banham, *Not the Slightest Chance: the Defence of Hong Kong, 1941* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2003), p. 12.

¹³⁸ TNA, CAB 121/718, COS (41) 398; Minutes, 26 November 1941, and TNA, WO 106/5360; Report No. 163 by Stacey, November 1946.

¹³⁹ NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 40; Report by Grussendorf, 19 August 1942, and NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 58; Telegram by Major Roberts, 9 December 1941.

¹⁴⁰ NAC, RG 25, Volume 8517, File 6605-40; FO Biographies, Tu Yueh-sen, 16 April 1943.

¹⁴¹ Endacott, *Hong Kong Eclipse*, p. 60. See also Carl Vincent, *No Reason Why: The Canadian Hong Kong Tragedy, an Examination* (Stittsville: Canada's Wings, 1981), p. 106.

¹⁴² NAC, RG 24, Volume 12299, Reel T-17901, File 3/Cdn Ops OS/1; Telegram No. 1455 by Maltby, 18 November 1941.

battalions of infantry including the Royal Scots, the 5/7th Rajputs, and the 2/14th Punjabs. It was deployed along the Gindrinkers' Line without significant reserves. The other brigade was positioned on Hong Kong Island and this included the Middlesex Regiment along with C Force, together commanded by Canadian Brigadier General John Lawson. Several Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corps (HKVDC) companies further strengthened the Brigade. The Middlesex Regiment manned the fortified posts constructed near the waterline to defend against amphibious assault, but the maintenance of a perimeter defence along the shoreline meant that the establishment of an effective reserve was still a problem to be addressed.¹⁴³ Artillery forces were also limited in strength and of the total sixty five guns only twenty eight were mobile.¹⁴⁴ These primarily belonged to the 1st Medium Regiment of the Hong Kong and Singapore Royal Artillery, and four gun troops of 3.7 inch mountain guns (four guns apiece) were all that was available to be positioned behind the Gindrinkers' Line.¹⁴⁵

Maltby's defence plan was inadequate for the situation as his forces were too thinly spread making the Gindrinkers' Line vulnerable to aggressive Japanese night infiltration tactics.¹⁴⁶ The length of the Gindrinkers' Line was over ten miles and the frontage each battalion had to cover was approximately 5,000 yards. This was about five times the normal requirement.¹⁴⁷ Maltby did not have

¹⁴³ Endacott, *Hong Kong Eclipse*, p. 79. See also Compton Mackenzie, *Eastern Epic: Volume 1, September 1939–March 1943, Defence* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1951), p. 199.

¹⁴⁴ NARA, RG 165, Entry 77 NM 84, Box 1738, File Islands, Hong Kong; Report by Major Reynolds Condon, 20 August 1942. TNA, WO 106/5360; Report No. 163 by Stacey, November 1946. See also Sir Martin Farndale, *History of the Royal Regiment of Artillery: The Far East Theatre, 1939 – 1946* (London: Brassey's, 2002), p. 14.

¹⁴⁵ TNA, WO 106/5360; Report No. 163 by Stacey, November 1946.

¹⁴⁶ LOC, Japanese Night Combat Study, Part 3; U.S. Army Report by Lieutenant Colonel Tanaka Kengoro and Lieutenant Colonel Ida Masataka, 1962. NAC, RG 24, Volume 12299, Reel T-17901, File 3/Cdn Ops OS/1; Memorandum, 3 February 1942. See also Endacott, *Hong Kong Eclipse*, p. 109.

¹⁴⁷ TNA, WO 106/5360; Report No. 163 by Stacey, November 1946. See also Sir B.H. Liddell Hart, 'The Ratio of Troops to Space', *Military Review*, 40 (1) 1960: 3-14, p. 8. Lindsay, *The Battle for Hong Kong*, p. 61.

sufficient forces to defend the line nor did he have effective reserves to counterattack the Japanese in strength.¹⁴⁸ Fortified positions along the line such as the Shingmun Redoubt were considered sufficiently strong to hold the Japanese for at least a month and by defending the colony this far north it was considered possible to maintain a measure of control over the Jubilee Reservoir. Although much of the colony's water came from the reservoir, its retention was not absolutely vital owing to the existence of alternate sources. According to US Army Attaché Major Reynolds Condon, an American officer who led Commonwealth troops during the battle, water supplies were not a critical problem. In a post-battle report he wrote: 'In the city the water supply had failed due to bursting of exposed mains. This was not as serious as might be imagined since the population promptly reopened long unused wells as well as making use of several running streams.'¹⁴⁹

General Sano's 38th Division began ground operations by crossing the border and rapidly advancing south. Sano held the initiative and had the advantage of being able to concentrate his forces at a point of his choosing. Major General Ito Takeo, the former commander of the 104th Division, was in charge of the 38th Division's infantry group and he originally deployed the 228th Regiment under Lieutenant Colonel Doi Teihichi, and the 230th Regiment under Lieutenant Colonel Shoji Toshishige, as the western assault group. They were supported by three battalions of mountain artillery. The 229th Infantry Regiment under

¹⁴⁸ Terry Copp, 'The Defence of Hong Kong, December 1941', *Canadian Military History*, 10 (4) 2001: 5-20, p. 10. See also Oliver Lindsay, *The Lasting Honour* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1978), p. 95.

¹⁴⁹ NARA, RG 165, Entry 77 NM 84, Box 1738, File Islands, Hong Kong; Report by Condon, 20 August 1942.

Lieutenant Colonel Tanaka Ryosaburo comprised the eastern group.¹⁵⁰ The advance went forward without great difficulty as can be seen in figure 9.1. Sensibly, there were no British forces of consequence deployed along the frontier and despite Maltby's earlier misinterpretation of Japanese intentions the garrison was not caught by surprise. Some demolition and sabotage work was carried out by Z Force and other small detachments which resulted in minor delays to the Japanese.¹⁵¹

By the night of 9 December a large reconnaissance force of the 228th Regiment had positioned itself for a surprise attack on the Gindrinkers' Line, and the vital Shingmun Redoubt was overrun on 10 December at about 0100 hours.¹⁵² To defend the position properly at least a company was required but with only a platoon of the Royal Scots in place the position fell after a brief period of combat.¹⁵³ Inadequate artillery and insufficient patrolling may have contributed to the rapid fall of the post and the Royal Scots were forced to withdraw onto Golden Hill with the Japanese soon following behind.¹⁵⁴ The loss of the position was not their fault, however, as Lieutenant Colonel Simon White and the Royal Scots were given an impossible task.¹⁵⁵

During the morning of 10 December it was clear that the Gindrinkers' Line had been cracked and after some hard fighting for Golden Hill during that

¹⁵⁰ NAC, RG 24, Volume 20537, File 982.011 (D1); Statement of Major General Shoji Toshishige, 18 November 1946, and NAC, RG 24, Volume 20538, File 982.013 (D6); British Official History Report, Appendix 5, Japanese Order of Battle, 17 February 1955. See also Farndale, *History of the Royal Regiment of Artillery: The Far East Theatre*, p. 15.

¹⁵¹ Copp, 'The Defence of Hong Kong', p. 10.

¹⁵² National Defence and the Canadian Forces, Directorate of History and Heritage Library [hereafter DHH], File 593.013 (D7); Statement by Major General Doi Teishichi, September 1952.

¹⁵³ Imperial War Museum (London) [hereafter IWM]; War Diary of the 2nd Battalion, Royal Scots, 9-10 December 1941.

¹⁵⁴ Tim Carew, *Fall of Hong Kong* (London: Pan Books, 1963), p. 76-77. See also Lindsay, *The Battle for Hong Kong*, pp. 74-77.

¹⁵⁵ Copp, 'The Defence of Hong Kong', p. 11.

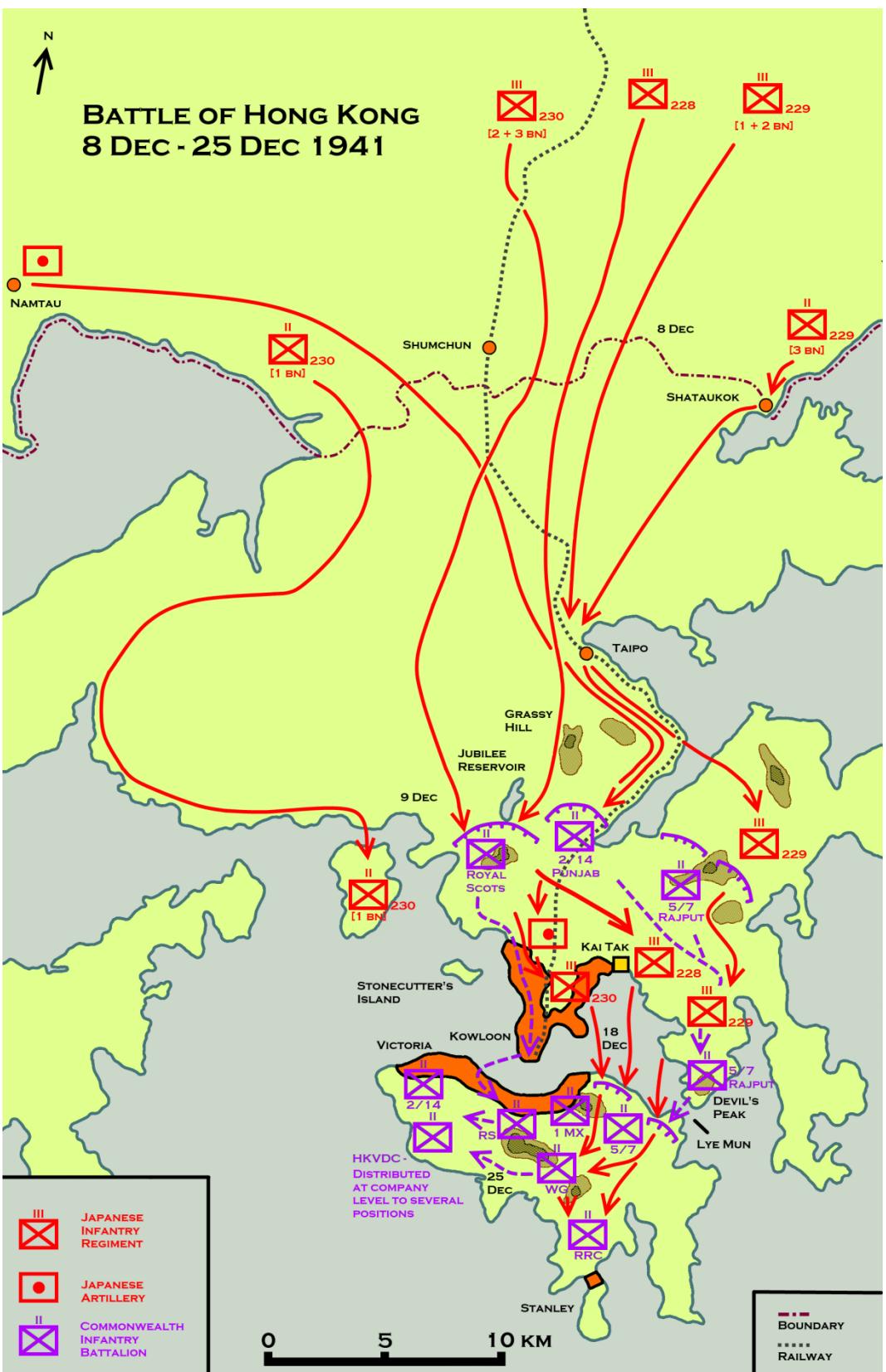


Figure 9.1: Japanese 23rd Army Attack on Hong Kong, December 1941. [Source: Based on LOC; Japanese Monograph No. 71, by Ishiwari. See also Lindsay, *The Battle for Hong Kong*, p. 90]

day and the next, General Maltby ordered the evacuation of the mainland with the exception of the 5/7th Rajputs who were sent to defend the Devil's Peak peninsula. Devil's Peak dominated Lye Mun Passage on the eastern end of the harbour. Its retention made a Japanese amphibious assault upon the island extremely difficult at the narrowest and most likely point of attack.¹⁵⁶ After the Rajputs retreated onto Devil's Peak they fought off a Japanese battalion that optimistically assaulted their hastily prepared positions. It was later recorded how, 'The attack broke down in wire defences, and the enemy suffered heavy casualties.'¹⁵⁷ Unwisely, Maltby abandoned this strong defensive position in the early hours of 13 December and the Rajputs withdrew to the island.¹⁵⁸ Another American military witness to the battle was US Army Air Attaché Major Richard Grussendorff and he reported his surprise to these events later in 1942. He wrote that the Indians 'were well entrenched on Devil's Peak [with] an excellent OP, and were successfully fighting off all Japanese attacks at great expense to the attacker'.¹⁵⁹ In his criticism of the decision to withdraw he added that, 'the value of this hill as an OP commanding the Japanese rear and to which telephone [communication] was still in operation cannot be underestimated ... when the British still had nearly all their artillery available for use'.¹⁶⁰

Most of the Mainland Brigade was evacuated through Kowloon on the 12th but some artillery was destroyed or neutralized in the process.¹⁶¹ Royal Navy vessels had been moved to Aberdeen at the outset of the battle, but with the assistance of the 2nd MTB Flotilla, Stonecutter's Island was evacuated that day as

¹⁵⁶ Endacott, *Hong Kong Eclipse*, p. 75.

¹⁵⁷ TNA, WO 106/5360; Report No. 163 by Stacey, November 1946.

¹⁵⁸ NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 40; Report by Grussendorf, 19 August 1942. See also Copp, 'The Defence of Hong Kong', p. 11.

¹⁵⁹ NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 40; Report by Grussendorf, 19 August 1942.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ TNA, WO 106/5360; Report No. 163 by Stacey, November 1946.

was Kai Tak airfield and Devil's Peak.¹⁶² The Japanese followed up the British retreat and immediately occupied Kowloon. They soon brought forward their heavy 360 mm siege guns to begin the bombardment of Hong Kong Island from inside the city and the hills immediately north.¹⁶³ One of the first targets was the Hong Kong Dockyard where *HMS Moth* was in the process of refitting and could not be moved.¹⁶⁴ Lacking effective means of targeting the Japanese guns, British counter battery fire remained ineffective.¹⁶⁵ General Magruder reported the evacuation to Washington.¹⁶⁶

A temporary lull in ground operations ensued bringing a welcome respite but additional problems emerged to eat away at the morale of the garrison. The presence of over three quarters of a million civilians in Hong Kong created great difficulties for General Maltby and his officers.¹⁶⁷ With so many people living in the colony there were too many to care for in the event of a long siege and it quickly became apparent that there were many fifth columnists working in aid of the Japanese. Sabotage and sniping constituted the bulk of their activity.¹⁶⁸ Fifth columnists worked for the Chinese puppet government headed by Wang Ching Wei or alternatively for a variety of criminal organizations and secret societies. Earlier in the year the headquarters of a powerful puppet organization directing anti-colonial operations in Malaya and the Dutch East Indies had already been

¹⁶² TNA, ADM 199/1287; Report by Commander H.M. Montague, 11 January 1942.

¹⁶³ NAC, RG 24, Volume 20538, File 982.013 (D3); Operation Record in China Theatre, Vol. II by Shimoda, December 1946. NARA, RG 165, Entry 77 NM 84, Box 1738, File Islands, Hong Kong; Report by Condon, 20 August 1942.

¹⁶⁴ TNA, ADM 199/1287; Report by Montague, 11 January 1942.

¹⁶⁵ NARA, RG 165, Entry 77 NM 84, Box 1738, File Islands, Hong Kong; Report by Condon, 20 August 1942.

¹⁶⁶ NARA, RG 407, Entry 360, Box 736, File 400.3295 4-14-41 Sec. 2; Telegram No. 100 by Magruder, 14 December 1941.

¹⁶⁷ NAC, RG 24, Volume 12299, Reel T-17901, File 3/Cdn Ops OS/1; Canadian Military Headquarters Telegram No. GS 2877, 15 December 1941.

¹⁶⁸ TNA, FO 371/27752 F 14211/13456/10; Telegram No. 717 by Commodore Alfred Collinson, 22 December 1941.

uncovered.¹⁶⁹ Most worked simply for money or because family members had been physically threatened in some manner.¹⁷⁰

Another worry for the men of the garrison was the damage inflicted upon Royal Navy forces throughout the Far East. After the invasion of Malaya and the sinking of *HMS Prince of Wales* and *HMS Repulse* on 10 December, the spectre of defeat became a reality as relief from the south was made obviously impossible to all.¹⁷¹ At Hong Kong, Japanese troops had already landed on Lamma Island and with naval units patrolling nearby waters the isolation of the garrison was complete.¹⁷² By the 18th of December only the gunboat *HMS Cicala* and the remnants of the 2nd MTB Flotilla remained seaworthy and ready for battle.¹⁷³

Prior to the Japanese assault on Hong Kong Island the first of three surrender demands sent by General Sakai was rejected on 13 December and Maltby reorganized his forces to prepare for an attack.¹⁷⁴ East Brigade came under the command of Brigadier Wallis. His forces included the Royal Rifles of Canada, along with the 5/7th Rajputs, two companies of the Middlesex Regiment, and two companies of the HKVDC. West Brigade was formed under Brigadier General Lawson. It comprised the Winnipeg Grenadiers, the 2/14th Punjabs, and the remainder of the Middlesex Regiment. These were joined by the Royal Scots along with five companies of the HKVDC.¹⁷⁵

To meet the rapidly changing situation the British command structure in Asia was also adjusted accordingly. On 14 December Brigadier General

¹⁶⁹ NARA, RG 226, Entry 92, Box 130, File 4; Report on Stanley Camp, 2 September 1942. TNA, WO 208/720; Extract of Malaya Summary No. 27, 5 September 1941.

¹⁷⁰ TNA, WO 106/5356; H.K.I.R. No. 10/39 by Captain C.J. Edwards, 9 May 1939. See also Wilson, *When Tigers Fight*, p. 142.

¹⁷¹ Copp, 'The Defence of Hong Kong', p. 12.

¹⁷² Mackenzie, *Eastern Epic*, p. 199.

¹⁷³ TNA, ADM 199/1287; Report by Montague, 11 January 1942.

¹⁷⁴ TNA, FO 371/27752 F 13889/13456/10; Telegram, 13 December 1941.

¹⁷⁵ Endacott, *Hong Kong Eclipse*, pp. 184-186.

Grimsdale was made head of the British Military Mission to China while General Dennys was ordered to take command of Detachment 204.¹⁷⁶ General Archibald Wavell, as Commander-in-Chief India and head of the new ABDA Command (America-British-Dutch-Australia), entered the thorny copse of Sino-British military relations by further placing General Dennys' guerrilla forces under his overall authority.¹⁷⁷

Prior to these adjustments, on 9 December the Chinese government officially declared war on Japan and Allied arrangements for the relief of Hong Kong were put into action.¹⁷⁸ On that day a meeting chaired by Chiang was attended by the US and British ambassadors along with their military attaches in Chungking. Magruder reported how Dennys attempted to allay some of Chiang's concerns by stating that the garrison at Hong Kong could hold with support. In response to Chiang's query:

The British Military Attaché informed him that the leased area or (territory) could be held for a month also that if the Chinese would assist they could hold it longer than that. In regards to the island they could hold that for a much longer period. The Generalissimo assured the British attaché his entire and full support for Hongkong. He further stated he was moving his troops to the upper area about Canton. He stated that he could attack using a force of 3 corps - they are made up of 3 divisions each [Magruder substituted the more familiar US designation of corps to describe a Chinese army]. This would take about 3 weeks to get his men there and ready.¹⁷⁹

Chiang ordered guerrilla warfare to be initiated around Canton while regular Chinese army forces in Kwangtung began to advance on the Pearl River Delta.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁶ University of Hong Kong Archive [hereafter HKU], B.A.A.G. Series, Volume II, 'Capture, Escape and the Early B.A.A.G.'; Mission 204 War Diary, 14 December 1941.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 15 December 1941.

¹⁷⁸ TNA, FO 371/27628 F 13602/125/10; Telegram No. M.292 by Dennys, 9 December 1941. See also Wilson, *When Tigers Fight*, p. 192.

¹⁷⁹ NARA, RG 407, Entry 360, Box 736, File 400.3295 4-14-41 Sec. 2; Telegram No. 90 by Magruder, 9 December 1941.

¹⁸⁰ NAC, RG 24, Volume 20538, File 982.013 (D3); Operation Record in China Theatre, Vol. II by Shimoda, December 1946.

Additional details of the plan to relieve Hong Kong discussed at this meeting were recorded by British officers in the Detachment 204 War Diary.

GO attended conference under the chairmanship of General Ho Ying Chin, War Minister and attended by members of the British and American Military Missions, to discuss joint military action. The discussion was under two headings - direct and indirect assistance.

Direct assistance to Hongkong: the Generalissimo ordered immediate preparations from the three armies under General Yu Han Mou to carry out an offensive from the East against general line of Kowloon-Canton Railway with the object of clearing the enemy West of the leased territory and joining up with the garrison at Hongkong. GO stressed the importance of getting in supplies and evacuating civilians. A simultaneous attack to be made by three armies on Canton in order to contain Japanese reinforcements and guerilla action by one Division in the Swatow district. War Minister stated the action could commence on 1st January but would prefer 10th January; the Chinese considered the attack had a good chance of success if air support could be provided; they were, however, prepared to undertake the operations without air support. They urged that bombs for Area 'B' should be sent in at once and promised to provide the necessary transport. Lieut. Col. Hughes was present during this discussion.¹⁸¹

Being closest to Canton, the Chinese 9th Independent Brigade, supported by two other regiments, commenced guerrilla operations by 14 December, while the 65th Army began its move to the south of the province and was scheduled to arrive on the 20th.¹⁸²

As part of this effort Detachment 204 personnel worked with General Yu's 7th War Zone Headquarters in Kukong to coordinate with Chinese army commanders north of the colony. Some of the officers involved included Lieutenant Colonel W. Lovat-Fraser, Lieutenant Colonel Count Bentick, Lieutenant Colonel Johnson, Major Munro-Faure, Major Gill Davies, and Major H. Chauvin. Lieutenant Colonel Owen Hughes was also serving as a Liaison

¹⁸¹ HKU, B.A.A.G. Series, Volume II, 'Capture, Escape and the Early B.A.A.G.'; Mission 204 War Diary, 9 December 1941.

¹⁸² NARA, RG 407, Entry 360, Box 736, File 400.3295 4-14-41 Sec. 2; Telegram No. 101 by Magruder, 14 December 1941.

Officer between Hong Kong and Kukong. Another officer attached to Detachment 204 was Flight Lieutenant James who had arrived in Kweilin from Chungking to supervise the provisioning of aviation fuel to airfields that were to be used in support of ground operations.¹⁸³ This plan to relieve Hong Kong was the only hope the garrison had and Major General John Kennedy at the War Office acknowledged the fact in his memoirs by quoting a note he had penned to Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Field Marshal Alanbrooke.

The garrison of Hong Kong is now in the process of withdrawing to the island. Here the only hope of a protracted defence is based on the feasibility of pressure by Chiang Kai Chek's troops on the mainland. This is not a strong hope. If a strong Chinese offensive does not materialize it seems fairly certain that Hong Kong will be captured within a month or six weeks at the outside.¹⁸⁴

General Yu Han Mou, commander of 7th War Zone, had a sizeable force with over 250,000 troops supported by twelve 150 mm guns of the 14th Medium Artillery Regiment (in two battalions) and nineteen 150 mm tubes of the 2nd Heavy Mortar Regiment. Additional artillery forces included twenty-eight Soviet guns and an antiaircraft battery with four 37 mm guns.¹⁸⁵ Although Yu issued orders for three armies to march on Hong Kong along with a similar force to move for an attack on Canton, the earliest possible start date for the attack was set at 1 January 1942 but this was soon pushed back to the more realistic date of the 10th.¹⁸⁶ As events transpired January was too late. Despite assurances of resistance on the mainland lasting a month, the garrison had been pushed out of Kowloon three days after the initial assault on the Gindrinkers' Line and Hong Kong Island was immediately threatened with amphibious assault.

¹⁸³ HKU, B.A.A.G. Series, Volume II, 'Capture, Escape and the Early B.A.A.G.'; Mission 204 War Diary, 8-9 December 1941.

¹⁸⁴ Sir John Kennedy, *The Business of War: The War Narrative of Major-General Sir John Kennedy* (London: Hutchinson, 1957), p. 186.

¹⁸⁵ NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 39; Report No. 53, 14 January 1942.

¹⁸⁶ TNA, FO 371/27628 F 13602/125/10; Telegram No. M.292 by Dennys, 9 December 1941.

Chinese forces south of the Yangtze River were deployed to meet an array of threats in several regions but time was required to reach southern Kwangtung. Infrastructure problems contributed to the delay. Within a radius of approximately one hundred miles from Canton, all roads, railways, and bridges had been destroyed so that no vehicular traffic of any kind existed within this area. All goods had to be transported either by river craft or by carrier. Movement of troops and equipment was entirely on foot and twenty five miles per day was the most that could be expected.¹⁸⁷ The movement of Chinese divisions was a time consuming endeavour.

Three armies of 4th War Zone were also sent into Yunnan for possible use in Burma but Anglo-Chinese friction was building steadily in the face of the worsening military situation, and Chiang had become frustrated over delays in British agreement for the assistance of Chinese ground forces there.¹⁸⁸ Because the British did not wish to increase their obligations to Chiang, they insisted on limiting Chinese help to the provision of indirect support in the form of guerrilla warfare in China. Still recalling the previous withdrawal from Canton in October 1938 the War Office had low expectations of Chinese military forces.¹⁸⁹ Hence, on 16 December General Magruder reported that because of the Japanese invasion of Burma and the threat posed to Rangoon, the British requested the use of Chinese Lend Lease weapons still awaiting shipment north, and for the transfer of Claire Chennault's AVG to serve in Burma. This only exacerbated relations with

¹⁸⁷ NAC, RG 25, Volume 3233, File 5548-40C; Military Situation Memorandum by Lieutenant Colonel Hiram F. Wooster, 20 May 1944.

¹⁸⁸ NARA, RG 407, Entry 360, Box 736, File 400.3295 4-14-41 Sec. 2; Telegram No. 106 by Magruder, 16 December 1941. See also Chiang Wego, *How Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek Won the Eight-Year Sino-Japanese War, 1937-1945* (Taipei: Li Ming Culture Enterprise Co., 1979), p. 107.

¹⁸⁹ NAC, RG 24, Volume 12299, Reel T-17901, File 3/Cdn Ops OS/1; Canadian Military Headquarters Telegram No. GS 2868, 15 December 1941.

Chiang.¹⁹⁰ As the Far Eastern situation deteriorated the British eventually reversed their policy but only when it was too late.

The attempted relief of Hong Kong continued nevertheless. On 13 December the Chinese air force began to bombard the Japanese main airfields at Canton with a force of about twenty bombers and by 20 December two AVG squadrons had arrived in Kunming from Burma.¹⁹¹ Also on the 20th at least one air strike was seen to have been made against Japanese artillery positions in Kowloon.¹⁹² On the ground eight out of ten Chinese divisions of the 7th War Zone were en route to Canton and the lower East River to confront the Japanese Araki Detachment at Tamshui.¹⁹³ These were elements of the 44th Army which was originally situated two hundred kilometres north of Canton and the 63rd Army located about one hundred forty kilometres northeast of the city at Sinfeng. The movement of these troops began on 16 December and following behind them were additional forces of the 2nd Army which were due to arrive on 31 December.¹⁹⁴ By 20 December approximately one and a half divisions had already arrived at Waichow, but the attack on the Araki Detachment was not yet

¹⁹⁰ Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum [hereafter FDRL], Harry Hopkins Papers , Box 135, File China; Telegram No. 124 by Magruder. NARA, RG 407, Entry 360, Box 736, File 400.3295 4-14-41 Sec. 2; Telegram No. 105 by Magruder, 15 December 1941, and Telegram No. 106 by Magruder, 16 December 1941. See also Chennault, *Way of a Fighter*, p. 141, and B.H. Liddell Hart, *History of the Second World War* (New York: Cassell & Company, 1971), pp. 234-235.

¹⁹¹ HKU, B.A.A.G. Series, Volume II, 'Capture, Escape and the Early B.A.A.G.'; Mission 204 War Diary, 18 and 20 December 1941. See also NAC, RG 2, Volume 80, File F-12 Hong Kong 1941-1949; Telegram No. 59713 by Governor Young, 23 December 1941, and NARA, RG 165, Entry 184, Box 960; War Department Intelligence Journal of General Sherman Miles, 13 December 1941.

¹⁹² IWM; War Diary of the 2nd Battalion, Royal Scots, 20 December 1941, and TNA, FO 371/27752 F 14187/13456/10; Telegram No. 720 by Young, 22 December 1941.

¹⁹³ DHH, File 593.013 (D21); Memorandum, Annex 1, 1 January 1942. NAC, RG 24, Volume 20538, File 982.013 (D3); Operation Record in China Theatre, Vol. II by Shimoda, December 1946.

¹⁹⁴ NARA, RG 407, Entry 360, Box 736, File 400.3295 4-14-41 Sec. 2; Telegram No. 101 by Magruder, 14 December 1941, and Telegram No. 107 by Magruder, 16 December 1941.

begun as the arrival of additional units was still required.¹⁹⁵ The 4th and 74th Armies of 4th War Zone were also dispatched from Kwangsi to an area north of Canton while the victor of Changsha, General Hsueh Yueh, was ordered to take command of the situation.¹⁹⁶ To encourage the defenders General Yu Han Mou sent a message to Governor Mark Young stating that his troops were a short distance from Hong Kong.¹⁹⁷ The Chinese 80th Division in Fukien was also scheduled to attack Swatow by the end of December.¹⁹⁸

General Sakai did not wait idly for Chinese forces to gather in strength. After Governor Young rejected his call for surrender Sakai readied his forces to assault Hong Kong Island and an infantry brigade of the 18th Division, still headquartered at Shumchun, was brought forward to reinforce the 38th Division in Kowloon.¹⁹⁹ An initial attempt to land on the island with one battalion was made on the night of 15-16 December. This first effort to land at Pak Sha Wan ended in failure resulting in many Japanese casualties but hope that the garrison might hold did not last for very long.²⁰⁰

After a second surrender demand was refused by the British on 17 December, Sakai intensified his army's bombardment in preparation for a larger

¹⁹⁵ NAC, RG 24, Volume 20538, File 982.013 (D6); British Official History Appendices, Appendix 5, 17 February 1955. See also TNA, FO 371/27628 F 13911/125/10; Telegram No. 687 by Clark Kerr, 17 December 1941. Lindsay, *The Battle for Hong Kong*, p. 87.

¹⁹⁶ NAC, RG 24, Volume 20538, File 982.013 (D3); Operation Record in China Theatre, Vol. II by Shimoda, December 1946. TNA, FO 371/27752 F 13765/13456/10; Telegram No. 1758 by Maltby, 14 December 1941.

¹⁹⁷ NAC, RG 25, Volume 2920, File 2670-A-40C-1; Telegram No. 720, 23 December 1941.

¹⁹⁸ NARA, RG 407, Entry 360, Box 736, File 400.3295 4-14-41 Sec. 2; Telegram No. 107 by Magruder, 16 December 1941.

¹⁹⁹ NARA, RG 407, Entry 360, Box 736, File 400.3295 4-14-41 Sec. 2; Telegram No. 105 by Magruder, 15 December 1941, and TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 9/41 by Giles, 1 October 1941. See also Evan Stewart, *Hong Kong Volunteers in Battle: A Record of the Actions of the Hongkong Volunteer Defence Corps in the Battle for Hong Kong December, 1941* (Hong Kong: RHKR (The Volunteers) Association Ltd. - Blacksmith Books, 2005), p. 20.

²⁰⁰ NAC, RG 25, Volume 2920, File 2670-A-40C-2; Diary of Rifleman S. Skelton, 16 December 1941. See also Endacott, *Hong Kong Eclipse*, p. 81.

assault on the island the following night.²⁰¹ Colonel Doi's 228th Regiment began their attack after loading into collapsible assault boats on the eastern side of Kai Tak airfield with each carrying approximately fourteen men.²⁰² They crossed the harbour along with elements of the 230th Regiment to secure a western landing area near North Point. General Tanaka's 229th Regiment was sent across farther east at Lye Mun to attack the Rajputs covering Aldrich Bay and Sai Wan.²⁰³ The artillery had destroyed many defensive positions along the shoreline and after a stealthy approach the 229th Regiment rushed ashore at about 2030 hours. While sustaining numerous casualties they eliminated most of the surviving Rajputs. After executing prisoners at Lye Mun the frequency and scale of Japanese atrocities only increased as the battle progressed.²⁰⁴ Landings near North Point were similarly made, and by moving rapidly with the aid of fifth columnists the assault forces converged in the centre of the island at Wong Nei Chong Gap by dawn on 19 December.²⁰⁵ Night combat proficiency was a significant key to Japanese success.²⁰⁶

The period of fighting between 18 and 20 December 1941 was the most decisive period of the battle.²⁰⁷ After advancing swiftly inland towards the centre of the island, the Japanese 229th Regiment took Mount Parker and then Mount Butler to drive a wedge between East and West Brigades. In linking up with the 228th and 230th Regiments, however, the Japanese found themselves to be partially blocked at the Wong Nei Chong Gap. West Brigade had stubbornly

²⁰¹ Endacott, *Hong Kong Eclipse*, p. 82.

²⁰² DHH; File 593.013 (D7); Statement by Doi, September 1952.

²⁰³ Charles Stacey, *Official History of the Canadian Army in the Second World War. Volume 1. Six Years of War, the Army in Canada, Britain and the Pacific* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1967), pp. 471-472.

²⁰⁴ NARA, RG 226, Entry 92, Box 59, File 58; Statement by S.E. Lavrov, 10 August 1942. See also TNA, ADM 199/1287; Memorandum by W.G. Poy, 31 July 1942.

²⁰⁵ Stacey, *Official History of the Canadian Army*, p. 474.

²⁰⁶ TNA, FO 371/27752 F 14211/13456/10; Telegram No. 717 by Collinson, 22 December 1941.

²⁰⁷ Endacott, *Hong Kong Eclipse*, p. 93.

refused to be pushed off this crossroad and heavy fighting ensued resulting in large numbers of casualties on both sides. The defenders included the HKVDC, the Royal Scots, the Middlesex, a few surviving Indians and various support troops lacking other duties to perform, but many of the men were from the Winnipeg Grenadiers.²⁰⁸ To clear the eastern half of the gap Brigadier General Lawson ordered A Company of the Grenadiers to counterattack Colonel Tanaka's 229th Regiment on the morning of the 19th, but the effort turned into a costly failure. The company was encircled on Mount Butler with many casualties sustained including Sergeant Major J.R. Osborn who was killed and posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross.²⁰⁹ Soon afterward West Brigade's headquarters was also overrun with Brigadier Lawson himself killed in action after being cut down by machinegun fire during an attempted retreat.²¹⁰ Colonel H.B. Rose would not be appointed as his replacement until the following day.²¹¹ Losses amongst the Winnipeg Grenadiers were severe and their experience of battle was quite difficult. Many of the men were new to the army and there were a high proportion of brothers who were killed in the fighting. Details of their experiences can be found in appendix twelve. An American perspective on the events at Wong Nei Chong Gap can be examined by reading the post-battle critique written by Major Condon reproduced in appendix thirteen.

Despite continued Commonwealth resistance in the Gap which persisted until 22 December, the Japanese 229th Regiment had been able to swing units around the defenders and infiltrate farther south along the high ground east of the

²⁰⁸ Copp, 'The Defence of Hong Kong', pp. 16-17. See also Stacey, *Official History of the Canadian Army*, pp. 480-481, and Stewart, *Hong Kong Volunteers in Battle*, pp. 26-30.

²⁰⁹ Cameron Pulsifer, 'John Robert Osborn, Canada's Hong Kong VC', *Canadian Military History*, 6 (2) 1997: 79-89, p. 88.

²¹⁰ Stacey, *Official History of the Canadian Army*, pp. 480-481.

²¹¹ Endacott, *Hong Kong Eclipse*, p. 91.

road.²¹² Their new positions were advantageous as they dominated the north-south movement of Commonwealth units and on 20 December they were able to ambush reinforcements moving towards the fighting. A force of three platoons of Royal Navy men reassigned as infantry was one such group. After being attacked in their trucks they sustained about forty men killed.²¹³

Another group to be ambushed were the men of the Hong Kong Chinese Regiment (HKCR). This was still a small unit of about fifty Hong Kong Chinese commanded by Major Mayer of the Middlesex Regiment and the senior Chinese NCO was Sergeant Chu Chan Mun.²¹⁴ Recruitment for this unit had only begun in November following the urging of American military officers posted within the colony.²¹⁵ By the time the Japanese attacked Hong Kong, however, it was still only at platoon strength.²¹⁶ As with the men of the HKVDC, these troops were also eager to fight in the defence of their families and homes.²¹⁷ According to Captain R. Scriven, the men of the HKCR accredited themselves well during the battle and were spoken of highly by officers from other units when asked. Unfortunately for the HKCR, most of the unit including Second Lieutenant Pigott and Colour Sergeant Bond, were similarly killed after being ambushed south of the Gap while retreating with a group of Canadians towards the Repulse Bay Hotel. One of the few survivors was Corporal Tong Po Hing, who managed to make his way back to the city of Victoria before the end of the battle and was ordered to go into hiding by Scriven.²¹⁸ Had recruitment of Hong Kong Chinese soldiers been started earlier in larger numbers perhaps the HKCR might have had

²¹² TNA, CAB 106/88; Report on the Hong Kong Chinese Regiment, 25 July 1942.

²¹³ TNA, ADM 199/1287; Report by Montague, 11 January 1942.

²¹⁴ TNA, CAB 106/88; Report on the Hong Kong Chinese Regiment, 25 July 1942.

²¹⁵ NARA, RG 165, Entry 77 NM 84, Box 1738, File Islands, Hong Kong; Report by Condon, 20 August 1942.

²¹⁶ TNA, CAB 106/88; Report on the Hong Kong Chinese Regiment, 25 July 1942.

²¹⁷ Baxter, 'Britain and the War in China', pp. 388, 414.

²¹⁸ TNA, CAB 106/88; Report on the Hong Kong Chinese Regiment, 25 July 1942.

a greater impact on the battle. As it was, many Chinese were eager to aid in the defence of Hong Kong but political considerations prevented the British from seeking greater Chinese support and the opportunity to mount a more effective defence was lost.

By 22 December the end of the battle was approaching as the Japanese were in command of the north-south axis bisecting the island. Their progress, however, was costly. Colonel Shoji explained some of his difficulties to Canadian officers after the war in a passage quoted by Colonel Charles Stacey, author of the Canadian Army's official history. In 1946 Shoji stated:

The first assault wave by the troops to the right of our right flank came upon a powerful group of sheltered positions, provided with emplacements at the Eastern foot of Nicholson Hill. The enemy fire from those positions was so heavy that not only was the advance balked, but our troops were thrown into confusion. Our left flank units also faced heavy enemy fire from the defenders occupying a hotel on the Southern side of Tsu-Lo-Lan Hill, and their advance was impeded.²¹⁹

Shoji claimed that his regiment suffered eight hundred casualties during this part of the battle.²²⁰ Japanese problems were compounded by the loss of many additional men in the harbour. As Japanese troops pushed inland from their beachheads reinforcements were ferried across in small boats and these were attacked by the 2nd MTB Flotilla on 19 December. The attack was quite successful with many boats being shot up and four having been sunk.²²¹ The remaining Japanese vessels steered hard for their starting point at Kai Tak, but Royal Navy losses mounted as they pressed forward in pursuit. Several MTBs sustained damage and two were destroyed by shellfire.²²² Unimpeded due to the lack of shore-based British artillery the Japanese soon resumed their

²¹⁹ Stacey, *Official History of the Canadian Army*, p. 482.

²²⁰ NAC, RG 24, Volume 20537, File 982.011 (D1); Statement by Shoji, 18 November 1946.

²²¹ NAC, RG 24, Volume 3914, File 1037-5-14 Vol. 2; Telegram No. 522, 23 December 1941.

²²² TNA, ADM 199/1287; Report by Montague, 11 January 1942.

reinforcement operations and they began to land their own guns on the island the following day.²²³

With the addition of this firepower and with the defenders being split into two groups, the outcome of the battle was no longer in doubt. After the Japanese occupied the Repulse Bay Hotel on 22 December, Colonel Rose's Brigade was pushed west along its entire front while Tanaka's 229th Regiment advanced on Brigadier Wallis' East Brigade pushing them further southeast into the village of Stanley. On Christmas Day Company Sergeant Major George MacDonell led D Company of the Royal Rifles in a final attack against Japanese forces through the village before the garrison finally laid down its arms.²²⁴ His account of events is found in appendix fourteen. In accepting defeat Governor Young surrendered Hong Kong that day and the surviving defenders spent the remainder of the war in captivity under brutal conditions as prisoners of war. The Japanese 23rd Army had won.

The end of the battle was a difficult period as many of the worst Japanese atrocities were committed during these days.²²⁵ The slaughter of prisoners at places such as Eucliffe Castle was followed by the massacre of wounded troops and civilians at the hospital in St. Stephen's College. The rape and murder of civilian nurses at more than one location once again typified the bestial irrationality of Japanese methods in China.²²⁶ One group to escape that day did so by sea. A party of senior British and Chinese officials led by Admiral Chan Chak

²²³ NAC, RG 24, Volume 20537, File 982.011 (D1); Statement by Shoji, 18 November 1946.

²²⁴ Copp, 'The Defence of Hong Kong', p. 18.

²²⁵ NAC, RG 24, Volume 12299, Reel T-17901, File 3/Cdn Ops OS/1; Telegram M 407 by Grimsdale, 20 February 1942.

²²⁶ Endacott, *Hong Kong Eclipse*, pp. 97, 104-105.

fled through Mirs Bay and continued onwards to Waichow.²²⁷ This group was guided by Major Francis Kendall, leader of the garrison's special operations Z Force detachment.²²⁸ With the garrison being marched into captivity many non-Chinese civilians were soon similarly interned. In all, roughly 1,560 Commonwealth troops were killed in battle with twice that number dying as prisoners. Approximately 2,000 Japanese were killed with another 6,000 being wounded.²²⁹ The Foreign Office estimated civilian casualties to be about 4,000, of whom 1,000 were killed.²³⁰ The Japanese 38th Division was quickly withdrawn from Hong Kong during January 1942, and a garrison of about 5,000 men was left to defend the Island and the port.²³¹ The 38th Division went on to see further combat in the Netherlands East Indies including the battle for Amboina, but most of the unit was destroyed during the battle of Guadalcanal.²³²

Many problems contributed to the defeat of the Hong Kong garrison but lack of courage was certainly not amongst them.²³³ In the historiography of the battle some authors have apportioned blame unfairly to one unit or another but this is not useful and it is certainly not accurate.²³⁴ As Tony Banham rightly noted, 'casualty figures imply that all units fought with equal determination'.²³⁵ The need to place blame by one party or the other was likely inevitable due to the embarrassment associated with what has widely been accepted as a rapid defeat. Although defeat came before operations could be coordinated with the Chinese, it

²²⁷ TNA, ADM 199/1287; Report by Montague, 11 January 1942. See also *South China Morning Post*, 13 November 2009.

²²⁸ Endacott, *Hong Kong Eclipse*, p. 185.

²²⁹ Banham, *Not the Slightest Chance*, pp. ix, 317-318.

²³⁰ TNA, FO 371/27752 F 14206/13456/10; Telegram No. 740, 23 December 1941.

²³¹ NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 39; Report on Hong Kong Defences, 25 April 1942.

²³² NAC, RG 24, Volume 20538, File 982.013 (D5); History of the 38th Japanese Division.

²³³ Fardale, *History of the Royal Regiment of Artillery: The Far East Theatre*, p. 28.

²³⁴ Carew, *Fall of Hong Kong*, pp. 76-77, 189, 200. See also Snow, *The Fall of Hong Kong*, p. 65, and Whitfield, *Hong Kong, Empire and the Anglo-American Alliance at War*, pp. 15, 219.

²³⁵ Banham, *Not the Slightest Chance*, p. 334.

should still be remembered that the length of the battle, at eighteen days, or about two and a half weeks, was not at great variance with other larger campaigns witnessed during the first two years of the war in Europe. Entire countries succumbed to invasion after only a few weeks or less. Nevertheless, the colony surrendered before a relief operation could be mounted and resistance did not slow the Japanese advance further south.²³⁶ The problem with British Commonwealth forces originated not with the men on the ground but with inadequate military resource allocation by their respective governments during the interwar period which resulted in a general lack of preparedness overall. Given their limitations the officers and men of the garrison performed admirably.

Commonwealth problems at Hong Kong were numerous and hastened the defeat, but from this battle there were potentially many military and diplomatic lessons to be learned. The unnecessary tragedy at Hong Kong exposed the fragility of British power, and to avoid shedding light on the geopolitical realities associated with the sacrifice of the garrison, such as the cost of maintaining an alliance with the Soviet Union, official reaction in London and Ottawa focused primarily on military issues so as to diminish and divert unwanted public curiosity on questions of high policy; the most important being the purpose of the war. Maintaining popular support was the primary function of the Royal Canadian Commission of Inquiry headed by Sir Lyman Duff in the spring and early summer of 1942. The Duff Commission also served to contain domestic political damage by exonerating the government from blame and by helping Mackenzie King deflect Opposition demands for the introduction of conscription.²³⁷ An honest

²³⁶ Lindsay, *The Battle for Hong Kong*, p. 143.

²³⁷ NARA, RG 165, Entry 77, Box 438; Report No. 1647 by Major R. Ervin, 17 July 1941, and NARA, RG 165, Entry 77, Box 438; Report on the Canadian Expeditionary Force to the Crown Colony of Hong Kong by Sir Lyman Duff, 4 June 1942.

appraisal of Canada's involvement at Hong Kong, however, would have arrived at a different verdict. It would have fully explained how democratic countries are generally at a great disadvantage upon the outbreak of war with authoritarian states, but in doing so it would have exposed the hypocrisy and culpability of those responsible for sending men into combat after years of embracing disarmament as military policy. Unfortunately this did not happen.

The battle of Hong Kong serves as a useful example of what will often happen to weak military forces of democratic societies that pursue an aggressive foreign policy based upon the principles of collective security. In Canada's case, lack of political will to maintain an adequately prepared army during times of peace, even when comprised largely of reservists, meant that combat experience had to make up for the shortfalls in equipment, training and especially doctrine during the first years of the war. C Force was deficient in all of these. To defeat the Axis, the Allies had to employ an effective combined arms warfare doctrine that took years to develop at the cost of many lives.²³⁸ Canadian Lieutenant-General Charles Foulkes, Chief of the General Staff, commented on this when recommending to the Cabinet that the reinforcement issue remain closed following the release of the Maltby Report in early 1948. He wrote:

I would strongly recommend that every effort should be made to avoid reopening this Hong Kong enquiry. Much of the evidence given at the time of the enquiry in respect to quality of training and equipment of these troops was based on the very limited experience of Canadian officers gained in the first two years of war before Canadian troops were actively engaged in operations. A great deal has been learned since then about training and equipment and it is very doubtful if the same officers who gave the evidence at the time of the Duff report would make similar statements in view of the lessons learnt from the last war. I doubt

²³⁸ Paul Dickson, 'The Limits of Professionalism: General H.D.G. Crerar and the Canadian Army, 1914 – 1944' (University of Guelph, PhD Dissertation, 1993), p. 331. See also Douglas Ford, *Britain's Secret War against Japan, 1937-1945* (New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 57-59, 63-65, 118.

if Home, Price and others would agree now that they considered that these troops were adequately trained for war.²³⁹

Hong Kong's defenders were not the same soldiers as those who served in Normandy in 1944 or even those fighting in North Africa beforehand. In 1941, many Canadian troops at Hong Kong were only partly trained and officers possessing combat experience were for the most part ready to re-fight World War One. The garrison also lacked cohesion to fight together as a single unit. According to General Martin Farndale, senior Japanese commanders were well trained at the operational level as were the men of their units. At Hong Kong the garrison was a collection of units hastily cobbled together on an *ad hoc* basis. Furthermore, there was not enough firepower for a garrison of this size.²⁴⁰ In contrast, the Japanese developed the infiltration tactics and night fighting capabilities to usher in a new form of infantry combat founded upon the application of both speed and stealth. Most importantly they had been refining their methods against the Chinese for four and a half years.²⁴¹

General Maltby's leadership and battle plan also hastened defeat.²⁴² Being roughly the size of an under-strength division, or about 12,000 to 14,000 men, the garrison was too small to adequately man the Gindrinkers' Line as well as a perimeter defence of the island.²⁴³ Few good options were available to defend Hong Kong, but one possible alternative would have been to reduce the number of vulnerable beach defences on the island in order to create a larger reserve with mobile artillery. Maintaining a defence of Devil's Peak and the southernmost

²³⁹ Laurier Centre for Military Strategic and Disarmament Studies (Waterloo, Canada), Hong Kong Papers; Memorandum by Lieutenant General C. Foulkes, 9 February 1948.

²⁴⁰ Farndale, *History of the Royal Regiment of Artillery: The Far East Theatre*, p. 28.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.* See also Lindsay, *The Battle for Hong Kong*, p. 83.

²⁴² DHH, File 1-5-8 Vol. 2; Memorandum HQS 1453-10 (DHS) by Stacey, 19 February 1951.

²⁴³ Copp, 'The Defence of Hong Kong', p. 10. See also Farndale, *History of the Royal Regiment of Artillery: The Far East Theatre*, p. 15.

built up section of Kowloon would also have made the Japanese advance more costly. By defending the island on the beach there were insufficient troops to mount an effective counterattack. Command at the brigade level was also ineffective with Brigadier General Wallis losing confidence in Maltby's leadership, and both Wallis and Colonel W.J. Home most probably having become battle exhaustion casualties during the final days.²⁴⁴

Other command problems were evident such as Maltby's lack of diligence in preventing the loss of resources to the Japanese.²⁴⁵ Due to the presence of a nearby civil hospital, Maltby failed to ensure the destruction of the strategically important oil storage tanks at Laichikok. Oil from Kowloon was subsequently used by the Japanese in Malaya.²⁴⁶ Furthermore, a two year supply of drugs and medicine sufficient to meet the needs of the population of Hong Kong was also seized and shipped to Japan.²⁴⁷

In contrast, combat experience and effective leadership were the main factors in laying the groundwork for Allied victory in Hunan. The first indication of this was during the struggle for Wong Nei Chong Gap, when the Chinese correctly determined that the battle for Hong Kong had already been lost and General Hsueh re-directed his energies and resources to the defence of Changsha. On 21 December 1941 *The New York Times* announced that the Chinese expected Hong Kong to fall and most of the relieving forces marching in Kwangtung were brought to a halt.²⁴⁸ Many in Hong Kong blamed the Chinese Army for not

²⁴⁴ DHH, File 1-5-8 Vol. 2; Memorandum HQS 1453-10 (DHS) by Stacey, 19 February 1951. See also Copp, 'The Defence of Hong Kong', p. 10, and Lindsay, *The Battle for Hong Kong*, p. 138.

²⁴⁵ TNA, FO 371/27622 F 13284/98/10; File cover notation, 15 December 1941.

²⁴⁶ DHH, File 593.013 (D21); Memorandum by G.E. Gent, 27 December 1941. John Toland, *But Not in Shame: The Six Months After Pearl Harbor* (New York: Random House, 1961), p. 138.

²⁴⁷ NARA, RG 226, Entry 92, Box 128, File 4; Memorandum by William Taylor, 10 September 1942.

²⁴⁸ DHH, File 593.013 (D21); Memorandum, Annex 1, 1 January 1942. See also *The New York Times*, 21 December 1941.

coming to their aid or claimed they had not made any attempt to do so but this was not the case.²⁴⁹ Hong Kong fell to the Japanese army before it was expected and before Chinese forces could assemble for an attack.

Reverend V. Mills was a credible eyewitness who explained this to Canadian authorities in September 1943. His statement indicates how the Chinese readied themselves to fight alongside their allies in defence of southern China, but in this instance their commanders were not inclined to commit troops into battle once defeat had already been assured. Mills was a young Canadian missionary working along the East River since 1931; at that time he was eighteen years of age. Originally born in Birmingham his family had moved to Winnipeg when he was only six.²⁵⁰ Considered reliable by future Canadian embassy officials, Mills also worked periodically for British intelligence and he would eventually provide useful information to the USAAF 14th Air Force once the air war over southern China was fully underway.²⁵¹ Reverend Mills made the following statement:

I witnessed for ten days and nights a continuous stream of men going to the front via the East River and other companies going across country via Yungyuen making for Waichow with other troops travelling down the river making preparation to drive on Canton. At that time the morale of the Kwangtung soldiers was extremely high in spite of the fact that many had been walking for nine days, their feet covered with blisters and the majority of them had not enjoyed one night's good sleep during their long-trek. These men were pressing forward with an eagerness that I had never witnessed in the Kwangtung Army before. I never ascertained the strength of this army. However, I noticed that their equipment was very light. Besides their rifles, they had a good number of machine guns and a very small number of field pieces. One of the Chinese generals in charge was Chang Tek-nang, the brother of a very intimate friend of mine.

2. It was a great disappointment to these men when news was received that Hongkong had fallen. I never saw an army that

²⁴⁹ Baxter, 'Britain and the War in China', p. 165.

²⁵⁰ NAC, RG 25, Volume 3264, File 6161-40C; Telegram No. 138 by Victor Odlum, 9 October 1943. See also NAC, RG 25, Volume 3264, File 6161-40C; Telegram No. 152 by Odlum, 18 October 1943.

²⁵¹ NAC, RG 25, Volume 3264, File 6161-40C; Telegram No. 152 by Odlum, 18 October 1943.

looked so down in the dumps. After walking nine days and then told that they must recover their steps without even firing a shot at the Japs was almost more than these boys could bear.²⁵²

A Chinese offensive on Japanese lines of communication would have been useful in diverting 23rd Army resources but the pace of events in Hong Kong made such an offensive an unnecessary expense.

What is also revealing in Mills' statement is the effect the fall of Hong Kong had produced on Chinese morale. For the first time since the start of the Sino-Japanese War the Chinese were fighting as a full ally of Great Britain and the United States and they were eager to assist the garrison at Hong Kong. The Chinese found themselves in a position to render direct material aid to Great Britain and this occurred at a time when their country had become a significant theatre of war.²⁵³ Chiang had been assured that the Colony was able to hold long enough for his armies to attack the Japanese rear, but with the fall of Hong Kong, Allied plans for southern China had come to nothing. The defeat of British forces at Hong Kong, however, was only the first of a series of Allied military disasters resulting in China's physical isolation.

Widespread expectations and plans for foreign intervention had started to disintegrate and this greatly impacted Chinese morale over the next few months. The Dominions Office commented on the prospect of a separate peace in China as Hong Kong was falling to the Japanese and Allied political leaders took note at that time. On 25 December 1941 the following message was sent from London:

His Majesty's Ambassador at Chungking is concerned at the reaction of the Chinese to British reversals, particularly at Hong Kong and in Malaya. He reports that the Chinese were ready to write off the attacks at Pearl Harbour and on our ships, but are alarmed at the series of setbacks, particularly at Hong Kong where

²⁵² NAC, RG 25, Volume 3264, File 6161-40C; Telegram No. 138 by Odlum, Enclosure Memorandum by V.J.R. Mills, 30 September 1943.

²⁵³ *The New York Times*, 16 January 1942.

the quick deterioration of the situation has taken them by surprise, and where large numbers of the leading Chinese have their wives and families. His Majesty's Ambassador reports that Chiang Kai shek himself still remains rock-like in his faith and determination, but that if the fall of Hong Kong were to be followed by the occupation of Burma and the cutting of the Burma Road, there is the possibility of Japanese offer of quick peace which certain disillusioned elements in China might find it hard to resist.

3. United States Ambassador shares these fears, and agrees with Sir A. Clark Kerr that, to avert this possible danger, we should lose no time in signing pact for which Chiang Kai Shek has asked. Chinese are apparently working on a tentative text.²⁵⁴

The Chinese did not quit the war but the fall of Hong Kong effectively brought further Sino-British military cooperation to an end. Later in 1942 the China Commando Group and Detachment 204 would both be withdrawn.²⁵⁵

Before being transferred to the Soviet Union in February 1942, Ambassador Archibald Clark Kerr again commented on the political impact Allied military reverses would have in Chungking. In one of his last official memorandums on China sent to Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden he wrote:

When I first came to this country, early in the spring of 1938, the Central Government had been driven, bruised and breathless, from Nanking to Hankow. But the hesitations of the Japanese had given time for the licking of wounds, and already Government, armies and people alike had got their second wind and were showing striking signs of the spirit that had carried China, undaunted and unbeaten, through trials under which many another country would have collapsed

... It was at that time that I ventured to express the opinion that, if they were given the help they sought and deserved, and so long as Chiang Kai-shek was at their head, the people of China would hold, and would in the end themselves frustrate the Japanese attempt to subjugate them. From this opinion I have not swerved. But the Chinese are a mercurial people and at all times they have needed, as they will still need, careful nursing and sustained encouragement. Today this need is all the keener because they are fallen into a state of bewilderment and disillusionment.

²⁵⁴ NAC, RG 25, Volume 5740, File 25-G(s); Dominions Office Telegram No. 769, 25 December 1941.

²⁵⁵ Baxter, 'Britain and the War in China', p. 195. See also Yu Maochun, "'In God we Trusted, In China we Busted': The China Commando Group of the Special Operations Executive (SOE)', *Intelligence and National Security*, 16 (4) 2001: 37-60, pp. 51-52.

... You will be aware that, since the earliest days of their struggle against Japan, the dearest hope of the Chinese has been to become the allies of ourselves and the Americans, for in this their salvation seemed to lie ... They felt that, if they could hold out until Great Britain and the United States became involved in their war, all would be well; that Japan would be disposed of in a few months and that they, who had borne the brunt of her attack for so many years alone, would be eased of their burden and would indeed be free to enjoy to the full the exquisite emotion of stamping on the corpse of the aggressor.

... To say that this hope was high falls short of reality. It was something so strong and so eager that upon it were built all Chinese plans. It was in some measure a part of the essence of their will to resist. Now it has been cruelly dashed by a series of tragic events which have followed each other in quick succession-- Pearl Harbour, Hong Kong, Manila and today the disturbing threat to Singapore. For myself I feel that nevertheless they will survive all these blows, even the fall of Singapore. My anxiety would only become acute if Burma were to be overrun, for the effects of this might well be to stretch the threads of China's resistance to the point of breaking. If, therefore, the Chinese seem at the moment to waver and even to despair, we must not blame them. We must set about finding fresh and convincing means to sustain them both materially and morally. We still have good ground to work upon for their hearts are with us and set deep in the Grand Alliance, to which they are proud to belong.²⁵⁶

Chinese resolve to continue the war was buttressed by the faith of future American support but another largely overlooked factor was the growing ability of their own armed forces to contain the Japanese army.²⁵⁷

Anticipating another Japanese offensive against Changsha in support of the 23rd Army at Hong Kong, Chiang deployed four additional armies into Hunan to face the bulk of the 11th Army still based at Hankow and Yochow.²⁵⁸ General Anami wanted to draw Chinese forces north out of Kwangtung and his plan for another foray into Hunan had been approved in mid-November by Lieutenant General Ushiroku Jun, Chief of Staff of the China Expeditionary Army, as well as

²⁵⁶ NAC, RG 25, Volume 4717, File No. 50055-40 Pt I; FO Document Page F 4351/113/10, Memorandum by Clark Kerr, 3 February 1942.

²⁵⁷ Chiang, *How Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek Won the Eight-Year Sino-Japanese War*, pp. 111-112.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid*, p. 107.

General Hata Shunroku, the senior Japanese commander in China.²⁵⁹ After licking its wounds from the earlier defeat in the fall, the 11th Army began to assemble its forces on 16 December 1941.²⁶⁰

The third battle of Changsha began in the second last week of December 1941, and it would be the only significant Allied victory in Asia or the Pacific for the next several months.²⁶¹ The battles of Changsha and Hong Kong were two elements of the same Japanese plan, but in the end, their victory in the Pearl River Delta did not compensate for the losses sustained or for the geopolitical impact of defeat in Hunan.²⁶² The third battle of Changsha was much more damaging to the Japanese than either of the two previous battles for the city in 1939 or the fall of 1941 and although Chinese forces were withdrawn from Kwangtung to deal with the threat in Hunan, this occurred only after it had become clear that the defence of Hong Kong had virtually come to an end. In capturing Changsha Anami hoped to force Chiang to negotiate and bring an end to the war but instead he achieved the opposite effect.²⁶³

As in September the first stage of the battle went relatively well for the Japanese. Minor fighting preceded the attack in the northern portion of the province while the Japanese finalized their preparations.²⁶⁴ By 23 December 1941 the attack was fully underway with the 11th Army advancing south to the Milo

²⁵⁹ LOC, Japanese Monographs; Japanese Monograph No. 71 by Ishiwari, 1963. See also NAC, RG 24, Volume 20538, File 982.013 (D3); Operation Record in China Theatre, Vol. II by Shimoda, December 1946. TNA, WO 208/722; H.K.I.R. No. 4/41 by Major R. Giles, 1 May 1941, and TNA, WO 208/720; H.K.I.R. No. 7/41 by Giles, 1 August 1941. See also Charles Romanus and Riley Sunderland, *United States Army in World War II, China-Burma-India Theater (Vol. 2): Stilwell's Command Problems* (Washington: United States Army, 1956), p. 372.

²⁶⁰ NAC, RG 24, Volume 20538, File 982.013 (D3); Operation Record in China Theatre, Vol. II by Shimoda, December 1946.

²⁶¹ Jay Taylor, *The Generalissimo: Chiang Kai-Shek and the Struggle for Modern China* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press, 2009), p. 189.

²⁶² Richard Webb, 'The War in China', *Far Eastern Survey*, 11 (4) 1942: 49-50, pp. 49-50.

²⁶³ Barrett and Chuikov, *Mission to China*, p. 161.

²⁶⁴ Hume, *Dauntless Adventurer: the Story of Dr. Winston Pettus*, p. 95.

River but unlike September's foray, fewer troops were assigned to this offensive. Japanese divisions included the 6th and the 40th in the centre and eastern columns with elements of the 3rd further west.²⁶⁵ The 9th Mixed Independent Brigade was also brought south from Hankow along with the 14th Independent Brigade in order to protect lines of communication back to Yochow. Defending Hunan under Hsueh were the 20th, 37th and 99th Chinese armies, while the 10th army of General Li Yu Tang was positioned further south at Changsha.²⁶⁶ The Chinese 79th Army's scheduled move from Hengyang to Kwangtung had already been abandoned and the 58th Army was held in reserve to attack the Japanese eastern flank.²⁶⁷ To prevent a similar reverse as was experienced during the previous battle for Changsha, the Japanese 34th Division attacked in a south-westerly direction from Nanchang beginning on 24 December. It was hoped to prevent a Chinese move against the 11th Army's supply lines but once again Anami underestimated his opposition and attacked with insufficient forces.²⁶⁸

Japanese difficulties began with the crossing of the Milo River starting on 26 December 1941. These moves can be seen in figure 9.2. Weather conditions were almost as poor as they were in September and freezing temperatures combined with a violently turbulent river to make fording impossible. Crossing in

²⁶⁵ LOC, Japanese Monographs; Japanese Monograph No. 71 by Ishiwari, 1963. NARA, RG 319, Entry 57, Box 164, File 6; Telegram No. 125 by Magruder, 26 December 1941. See also Robert Payne, *Chinese Diaries, 1941-1946* (New York: Weybright and Talley, 1970), p. 43.

²⁶⁶ LOC, Japanese Monographs; Japanese Monograph No. 71 by Ishiwari, 1963, and NAC, RG 24, Volume 20538, File 982.013 (D3); Operation Record in China Theatre, Vol. II by Shimoda, December 1946. See also NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 40; Report on Third Battle of Changsha, 7 January 1942, and NARA, RG 319, Entry 57, Box 164, File 6; Telegram No. 125 by Magruder, 26 December 1941.

²⁶⁷ NARA, RG 319, Entry 57, Box 164, File 6; Telegram No. 123 by Magruder, 22 December 1941. NARA, RG 319, Entry 57, Box 164, File 6; Telegram No. 125 by Magruder, 26 December 1941.

²⁶⁸ NAC, RG 24, Volume 20538, File 982.013 (D3); Operation Record in China Theatre, Vol. II by Shimoda, December 1946.

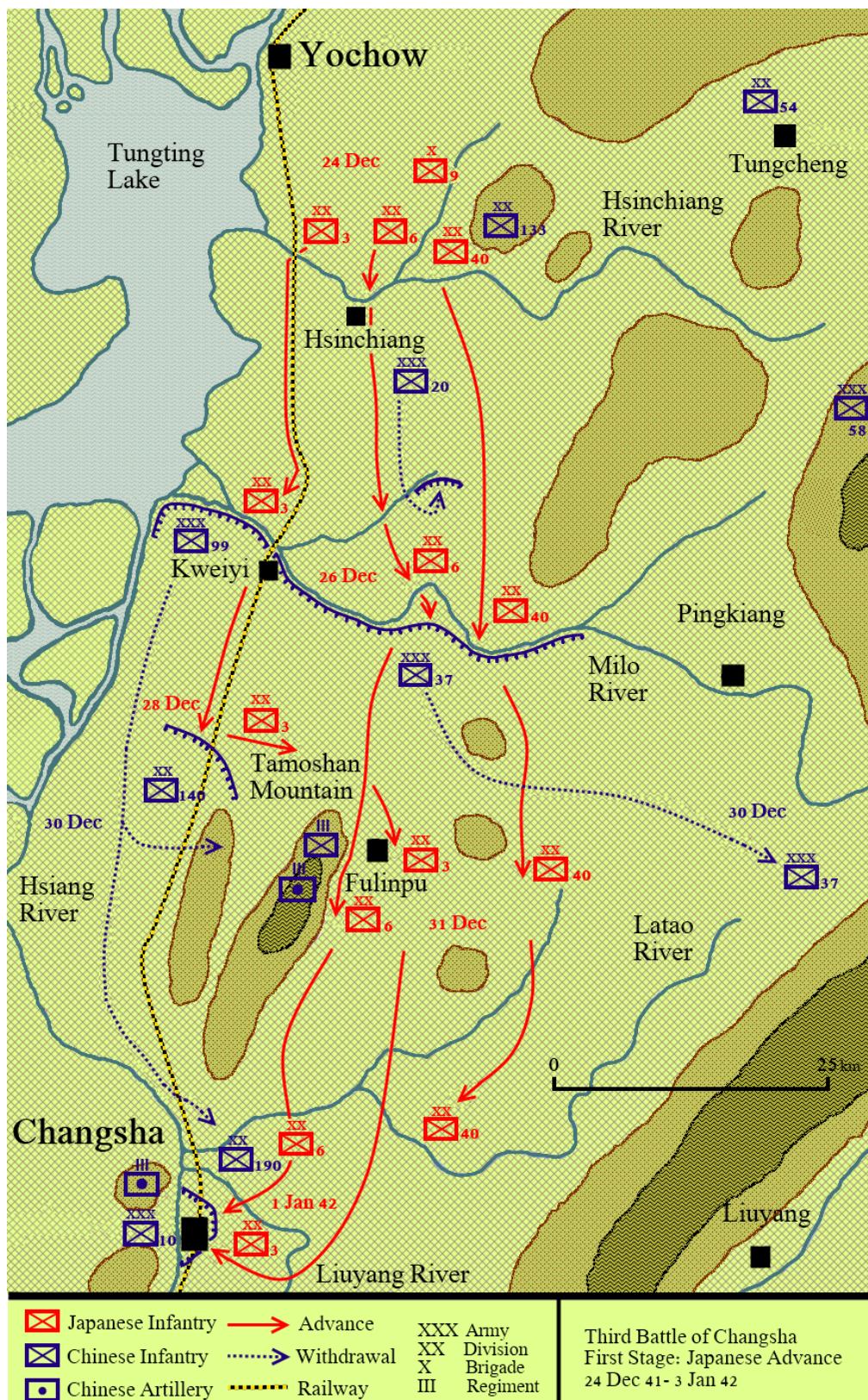


Figure 9.2: Japanese Offensive in Hunan, 24 December 1941. Note that the Japanese referred to the September and December 1941 battles for Changsha as the first and second battles respectively whereas the Chinese identified the 1939 battle for Changsha as the first battle. [Source: Based on LOC; Japanese Monograph No. 71, by Ishiari. See also Chang Ming Kai and Hsu Long Hsuen, *History of the Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945)*, translated by Wen Ha Hsiung (Taipei: Chung Wu Publishing, 1971).]

strength required the use of several pontoon bridges.²⁶⁹ Opposing Anami's forces directly were the 99th and 37th Armies on the Chinese left and right respectively, and they were dug in along the south side of the river. Fighting was heavy but brief and the 37th Army was hit hard by the Japanese 6th and 40th Divisions. After several Japanese bridgeheads were established a Chinese withdrawal from the river was ordered, but instead of falling back on Changsha the 37th Army turned east and retreated towards the mountains.²⁷⁰ Once there they waited along with the 58th Army further north for the Japanese to continue moving south.²⁷¹

After breaching the Milo River line few Chinese forces appeared to be blocking his line of advance and General Anami pushed on to capture Changsha. The 11th Army's march was somewhat disorganized, however, as Anami did not wait for the assembly of all of his forces. Nevertheless, by 29 December the 3rd and 6th Divisions were closing on Changsha under the gaze of Chinese gunners perched atop Tamoshan Mountain. In bypassing this feature Anami's western flank was left dangerously exposed but the 40th Division followed close behind leaving a few units to cover their tenuous line of communication back to Yochow. Once through the gap the 3rd and 6th Divisions drove directly on to Changsha arriving at the city on 31 December. Its fall appeared certain to many foreign military and diplomatic officials.²⁷² Changsha was soon surrounded on three sides

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.* See also Hume, *Dauntless Adventurer: the Story of Dr. Winston Pettus*, pp. 98-99, and Payne, *Chinese Diaries*, p. 59.

²⁷⁰ LOC, Japanese Monographs; Japanese Monograph No. 71 by Ishiari, 1963, and NAC, RG 24, Volume 20538, File 982.013 (D3); Operation Record in China Theatre, Vol. II by Shimoda, December 1946.

²⁷¹ Chang Ming-kai and Hsu Long-hsuen, *History of the Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945)* trans. Wen Ha-hsiung (Taipei: Chung Wu Publishing Co., 1971), pp. 366-367.

²⁷² LOC, Japanese Monographs; Japanese Monograph No. 71 by Ishiari, 1963, and NAC, RG 24, Volume 20538, File 982.013 (D3); Operation Record in China Theatre, Vol. II by Shimoda, December 1946. NARA, RG 319, Entry 57, Box 164, File 6; Telegram by Magruder, 30 December 1941, and TNA, FO 371/27628 F 14368/125/10; Telegram No. M 405 by Dennys, 27 December 1941.

but the Chinese 10th Army was able to keep its western base along the river clear of Japanese troops. In doing so, General Li's line of supply remained secure.

Anami could not afford a protracted siege of Changsha and so a quick but ineffective assault was launched against the city's gates on New Year's Day.²⁷³ Some of the most serious fighting occurred between 1 and 3 January 1942 and unlike the second battle of Changsha, there was heavy urban combat during these three days.²⁷⁴ The city had been evacuated of most of its residents while troops had constructed many fortified positions.²⁷⁵ Doctor Winston Pettus of the Yale in China University Hospital described the situation to a colleague:

This time there was a pitched battle, first at the South Gate, then at the East, and finally at the North. The city itself was a maze of barriers, trenches and blockades, which got thicker around the edges of the city.²⁷⁶

Anami's biggest problem was that 9th War Zone forces continued to enjoy the advantage of artillery superiority from their positions atop the mountains just west and north of the city.²⁷⁷ With his infantry mired down in the cold mud below, Chinese artillery units were able to rain fire down upon them at will. One prominent structure, however, that was not bombarded even after two days of fierce combat was the hospital located near the north gate.²⁷⁸ Many 9th War Zone officers were from Hunan and they hoped to preserve the hospital for future use.²⁷⁹ Conversely, the Japanese had great difficulty in bringing their artillery south and they were forced to assault Changsha without sufficient firepower. Japanese artillery problems began with the crossing of the Milo River. According

²⁷³ NAC, RG 24, Volume 20538, File 982.013 (D3); Operation Record in China Theatre, Vol. II by Shimoda, December 1946.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.* See also Payne, *Chinese Diaries*, p. 43.

²⁷⁵ Hume, *Dauntless Adventurer: the Story of Dr. Winston Pettus*, p. 98.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.* p. 104.

²⁷⁷ Hume, *Dauntless Adventurer: the Story of Dr. Winston Pettus*, p. 114.

²⁷⁸ Payne, *Chinese Diaries*, pp. 50, 52.

²⁷⁹ Hume, *Dauntless Adventurer: the Story of Dr. Winston Pettus*, p. 115.

to *The Times*, ‘The Chinese were able to shell the Japanese lines on the outskirts of Changsha without fear of reprisals, except from mortars and mountain guns, because the Japanese lost their artillery in the battle at the Milo River.’²⁸⁰ The entire force had just six mountain guns in total and reliance was placed upon air strikes to make up for the shortfall in heavy weapons but with overcast weather conditions sometimes prevailing this proved difficult.²⁸¹

The bulk of the Japanese 3rd and 6th Divisions fought the Chinese 10th Army largely along the city’s outer ring, first most heavily on the southern rim against the 10th Division and then more intensely against the 190th Division to the north. The Chinese 3rd Division was held in reserve. Street fighting continued and casualties mounted in great numbers on both sides as close quarter combat was common in conjunction with the widespread use of flamethrowers.²⁸²

As the battle for Changsha raged pressure started to build in other regions of 9th War Zone. On 4 January 1942, the Chinese 4th and 79th Armies arrived from Hengyang to break through to the 10th Army from the south. They were joined by the 26th and 78th Armies arriving from Kiangsi.²⁸³ An area of dominant high ground southeast of the city labelled by Western reporters as Graveyard Hill became another scene of heavy fighting with the position changing hands eleven times. One Japanese regimental charge was wiped out during these engagements and the Japanese 3rd Division in particular sustained great casualties.²⁸⁴

²⁸⁰ *The Times*, 12 January 1942.

²⁸¹ NARA, RG 319, Entry 57, Box 164, File 7; Telegram No. 162 by Magruder, 3 January 1942.

²⁸² NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 40; Report on Third Battle of Changsha, 7 January 1942, and NARA, RG 165, M1513, Report No. 15 by Mayer, 14 January 1942. See also *The New York Times*, 3 January 1942.

²⁸³ Chang and Hsu, *History of the Sino-Japanese War*, pp. 367, 369.

²⁸⁴ *The New York Times*, 15 January 1942.

Much more dangerous, however, was the Chinese counterattack against Japanese lines of communication further north. Once the assault on the city was underway the Chinese quickly marched the 58th and 37th Armies out of the eastern mountains and advanced them in a westerly manner through the fields and along the rivers below. The Japanese 34th Division sent down from northern Kiangsi was meant to prevent such a move but it had been halted by Chinese diversionary attacks to the north of Nanchang and by blocking forces along the 34th Division's line of advance.²⁸⁵ The Chinese 58th Army moved rapidly to take up positions left unoccupied along the north bank of the Milo River while the 37th Army also secured portions of the Latao River only a few miles northeast of Changsha. Defensive positions were prepared in anticipation of sustained combat. With the addition of the Chinese 99th and 73rd Armies moving in from the west the Japanese retreat was also blocked along the Hsiang River running north into Tungting Lake.²⁸⁶ Subsequent combat between 99th Army forces and Japanese troops positioned at Kweiyi on the Milo River quickly produced many additional casualties.²⁸⁷

Anami had overextended the 11th Army yet again, and consequently, the 3rd, 6th and much of the 40th Divisions were cut off with nine Chinese armies surrounding them.²⁸⁸ By getting astride the Latao and Liuyang Rivers elements of the Chinese 37th and 99th Armies had also managed to separate the 40th Division from the bulk of 3rd and the 6th still fighting near the city. Japanese supplies ran

²⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 30 December 1941 and 1 January 1942. See also Chang and Hsu, *History of the Sino-Japanese War*, p. 367.

²⁸⁶ Chang and Hsu, *History of the Sino-Japanese War*, pp. 369-371.

²⁸⁷ *The New York Times*, 30 December 1941.

²⁸⁸ NAC, RG 24, Volume 20538, File 982.013 (D3); Operation Record in China Theatre, Vol. II by Shimoda, December 1946.

out rapidly and airborne supply drops were required to prevent a catastrophe.²⁸⁹

One prisoner by the name of Kyoshi Kowahara was captured near the eastern gate of the city after a grenade he tried to kill himself with failed to explode. Kyoshi informed his captors how the cold and the rain were damaging morale and that he and his comrades had not eaten for three days. The prisoner also stated that morale amongst most Japanese soldiers had not improved with the expansion of the war.²⁹⁰

The worst stage of the battle was set to begin. Amidst muddy icy conditions between the 4th and the 11th of January, the Japanese 11th Army had to fight its way north from Changsha through numerous Chinese armies and over a total of four different rivers. This can be seen in figure 9.3. Fighting was difficult and severe casualties were the result.²⁹¹ The retreat began on the very cold night of 3 January 1942 and as a parting gesture the Japanese burned the university hospital after killing those wounded who could not be moved, along with several of the nursing staff. The fire was used as a funeral pyre.²⁹² The first engagements occurred during the Japanese crossings of the Liuyang and the Latao Rivers running just north of the city. Rubber boats were used but these were limited in number. Two bridgeheads were eventually secured on 4 and 5 January yet Chinese resistance was stiff and only one of these routes was used effectively.²⁹³ It was largely because of Japanese airpower that the divisions were able to extricate themselves at all.²⁹⁴ The Chinese air force had challenged

²⁸⁹ Chang and Hsu, *History of the Sino-Japanese War*, p. 371.

²⁹⁰ Payne, *Chinese Diaries*, pp. 58-59, 62.

²⁹¹ NAC, RG 24, Volume 20538, File 982.013 (D3); Operation Record in China Theatre, Vol. II by Shimoda, December 1946.

²⁹² Payne, *Chinese Diaries*, p. 52.

²⁹³ NAC, RG 24, Volume 20538, File 982.013 (D3); Operation Record in China Theatre, Vol. II by Shimoda, December 1946. See also Payne, *Chinese Diaries*, pp. 55-57.

²⁹⁴ LOC, Japanese Monographs; Japanese Monograph No. 71 by Ishiwari, 1963.

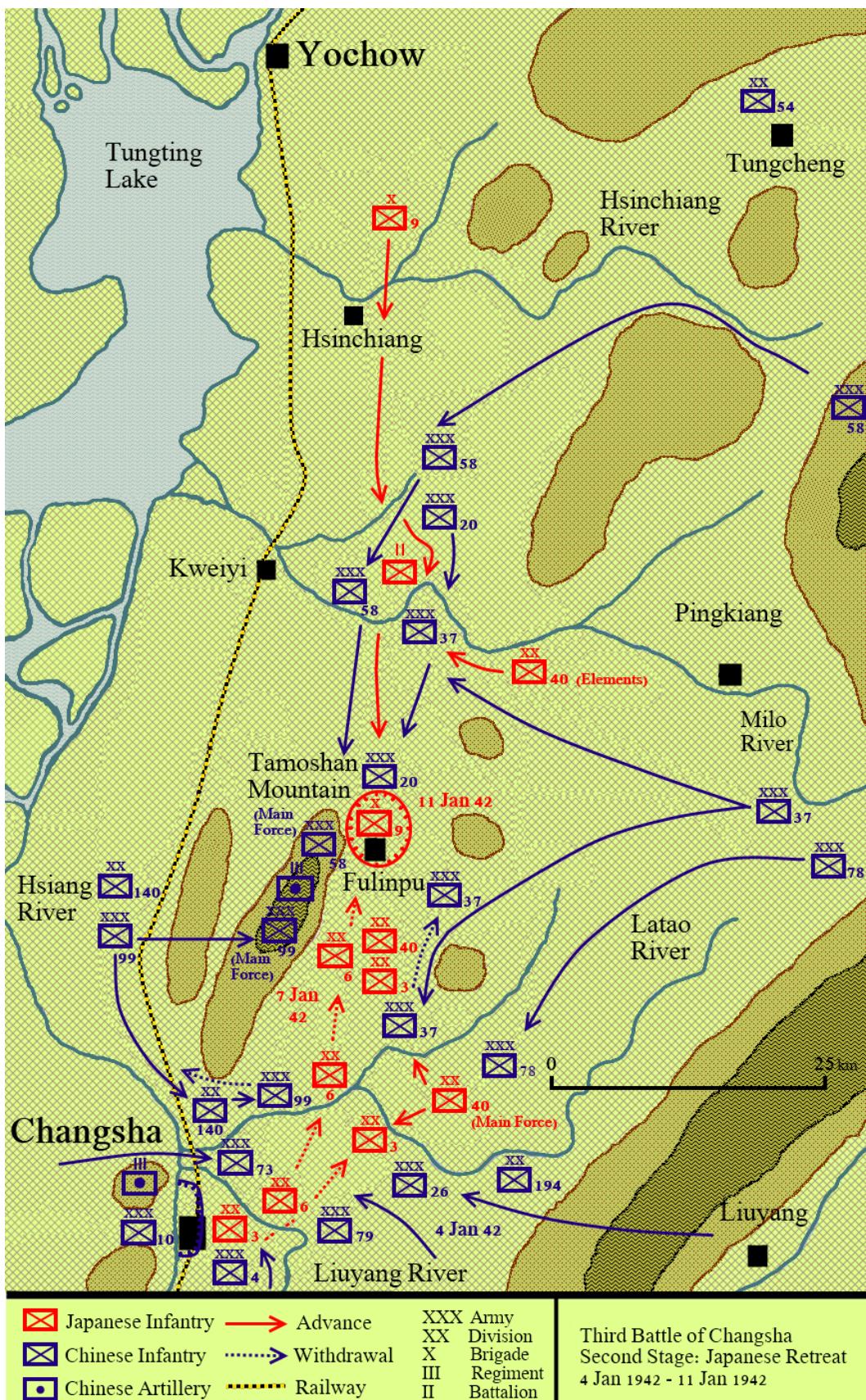


Figure 9.3: Japanese Retreat in Hunan, 4 January 1942. [Source: Based on LOC; Japanese Monograph No. 71, by Ishiari. See also Chang and Hsu, *History of the Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945)*, trans. Wen (Taipei: Chung Wu Publishing, 1971).]

Japanese air superiority, but on 6 January 1942 four Chinese planes were lost in exchange for a single Japanese fighter in a small air battle north of the city. No further air combat was reported after the Chinese squadron withdrew to Chengtu.²⁹⁵ While the 3rd and 6th Divisions fought their way across the first two rivers, elements of the Japanese 40th Division attacked from the northeast to re-establish a link between them south of the town of Fulinpu. This town was approximately one third of the way to Yochow.²⁹⁶ Both groups re-established contact by 7 January 1942 but casualties were severe.²⁹⁷

After breaking through the first set of Chinese defences the remnants of the 11th Army's main force reorganized to resume the advance northwards in two separate columns. Only on 11 January 1942 were they able to link up with part of the 9th Independent Mixed Brigade which had forced its way into Fulinpu. The 9th Brigade had been rushed south earlier to secure the town while the 40th Division was extricating the 3rd and 6th from Changsha, but in holding position at Fulinpu the 9th Brigade was also subjected to heavy Chinese pressure.²⁹⁸

Other elements of the 40th Division further to the north were already attacking across the all important Milo River. These were aided by a battalion of the 9th Brigade which had been left behind to hit the defending Chinese forces from the rear.²⁹⁹ Battle for the north bank of the Milo intensified and many Japanese soldiers drowned in the icy water, but again with the help of airpower

²⁹⁵ NARA, RG 319, Entry 57, Box 164, File 7; Telegram No. C 9 by Mayer, 11 January 1942.

²⁹⁶ NAC, RG 24, Volume 20538, File 982.013 (D3); Operation Record in China Theatre, Vol. II by Shimoda, December 1946.

²⁹⁷ NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 40; Report on Third Battle of Changsha, 7 January 1942.

²⁹⁸ LOC, Japanese Monographs; Japanese Monograph No. 71 by Ishiari, 1963, and NAC, RG 24, Volume 20538, File 982.013 (D3); Operation Record in China Theatre, Vol. II by Shimoda, December 1946.

²⁹⁹ NAC, RG 24, Volume 20538, File 982.013 (D3); Operation Record in China Theatre, Vol. II by Shimoda, December 1946.

they were able to secure and defend two bridgeheads.³⁰⁰ The bulk of the 11th Army, however, was still fighting their way north to reach them. After crossing the Milo on 13 January Anami's army was able to continue its retreat with diminished interference but Japanese rearguard pockets were less fortunate as they were cut off from the rest of the main body and sustained heavy casualties.³⁰¹ This stage of the battle can be seen in figure 9.4. The final river to be crossed before reaching their base at Yochow was the Hsinchiang and this was completed by 15 January 1942.³⁰² In summing up events an article in *The Times* reported how 'After suffering heavy losses of men and supplies during his abortive advance over four rivers, the frost-bitten enemy is now in full retreat across the wintry brown plains of northern Hunan.'³⁰³ Upon reaching Yochow the following day the third battle of Changsha came to an end.

Japanese defeat was a result of several factors combined. In Hunan geography and poor weather conditions greatly aided the defence. Further northwest, additional encouragement for a speedy retreat came in the form of another Chinese attack near Ichang in which a Japanese force suffered approximately two hundred casualties.³⁰⁴ Most important, however, was General Anami's ineffective leadership. As in September 1941, the 11th Army was able to advance a considerable distance into Hunan, but again Anami recklessly invited defeat by pushing ahead without his artillery and by overextending his forces.³⁰⁵ With Hong Kong already conquered Anami should have ended his advance and returned to Yochow but his search for glory resulted in disaster. Upon arriving at

³⁰⁰ *The New York Times*, 15 January 1942.

³⁰¹ NARA, RG 319, Entry 57, Box 164, File 7; Telegram No. 173 by Magruder, 11 January 1942. See also *The Times*, 10 January 1942.

³⁰² LOC, Japanese Monographs; Japanese Monograph No. 71 by Ishiwari, 1963.

³⁰³ *The Times*, 12 January 1942.

³⁰⁴ *The Times*, 10 January 1942.

³⁰⁵ Drea, *Japan's Imperial Army*, p. 224.

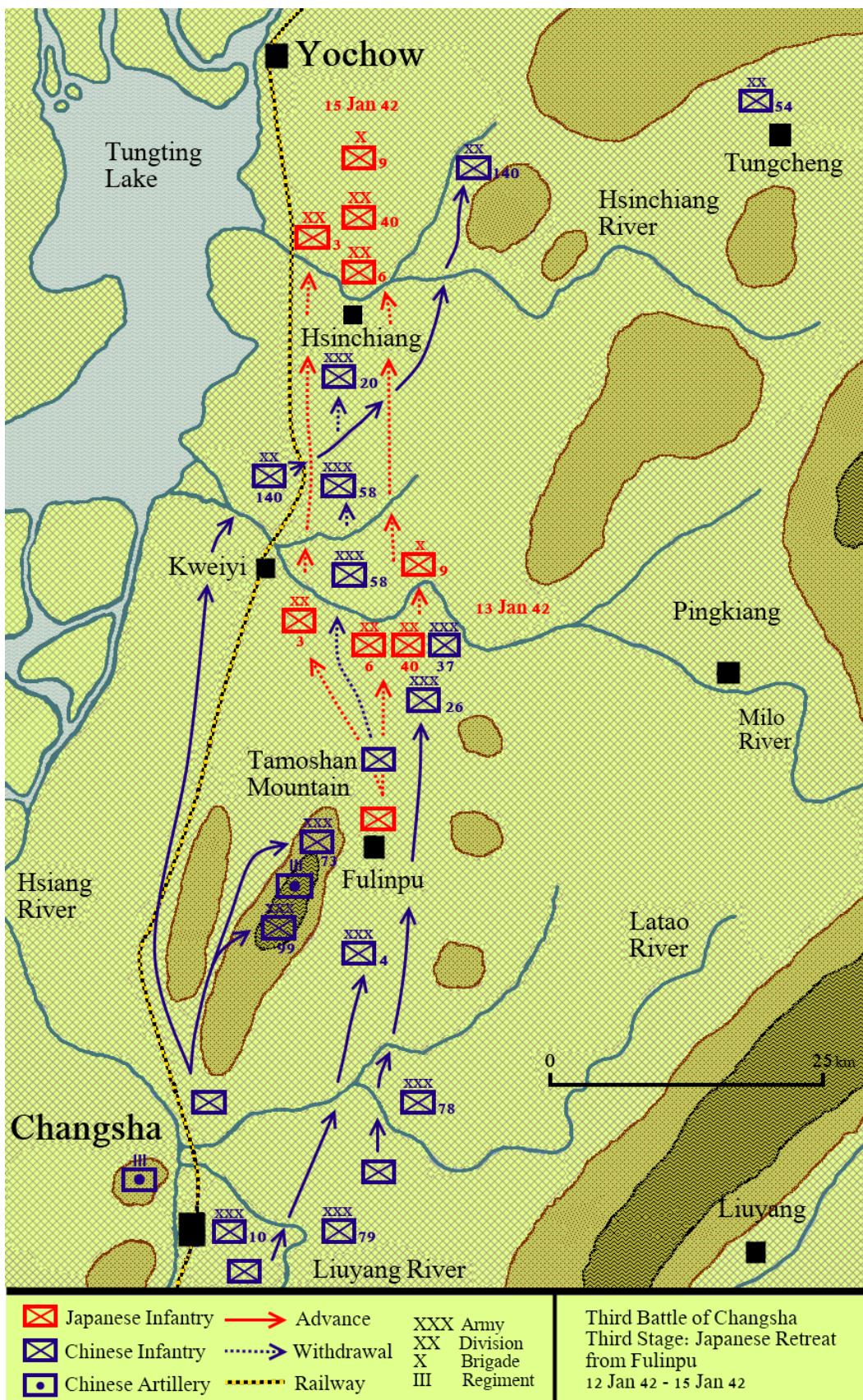


Figure 9.4: Japanese Retreat in Hunan, 11 January 1942. [Source: Based on LOC; Japanese Monograph No. 71, by Ishiware. See also Chang and Hsu, *History of the Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945)*, trans. Wen (Taipei: Chung Wu Publishing, 1971).]

the gates of Changsha, Anami's men fruitlessly battled the Chinese 10th Army in the rubble strewn outer ring of the city. Once encircled, he was forced to retreat as his army ran out of supplies. In 1945 Anami would serve as Minister of War in Tokyo, and at that time he remained the most senior official to still favour a continuation of hostilities after the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.³⁰⁶ Although his generalship in Hunan was less than inspiring, it can be said with some justice that his strongest characteristic was demonstrated in both instances to be stubbornness.³⁰⁷

In contrast, the Chinese had a rare combination of superior firepower as well as leadership. Early in the battle Hsueh decided to cut Chinese losses in Kwangtung and he wisely concentrated his 9th War Zone forces for the defence of Hunan. The garrison at Hong Kong was unable to hold and Governor Young surrendered the colony on Christmas Day. As 7th War Zone forces under General Yu Han Mou were sufficiently strong to maintain the defence of northern Kwangtung Hsueh's decision was sound. North of Changsha General Hsueh seized the initiative and counterattacked Anami's exposed lines of communication. This he was able to do since General Li maintained a stalwart defence of Changsha. Li had the respect of his men and 10th Army morale was sufficiently strong to make this possible.³⁰⁸ Hsueh's mountain based artillery then took a terrible toll on the encircled Japanese 11th Army which was forced to traverse the cold muddy ground below directly under their barrels. Some isolated units were wiped out through bombardment. In his memoirs, Major General Claire Chennault claimed that Hsueh was one of China's best generals and later in

³⁰⁶ Ienaga Saburo, *The Pacific War: World War II and the Japanese, 1931-1945* (New York: Pantheon, 1978), p. 232.

³⁰⁷ *The New York Times*, 15 January 1942.

³⁰⁸ Payne, *Chinese Diaries*, p. 47.

the war, ‘Japanese intelligence reports rated Hsueh as the most capable war area-commander in China.’³⁰⁹ Because of this victory Hsueh subsequently became known as the ‘Tiger’ of Changsha.³¹⁰

After the battle there was a great deal of evidence to support Chinese claims of victory. Many bodies and large quantities of damaged or abandoned equipment were seen by numerous eyewitnesses.³¹¹ Casualty figures claimed publicly by both sides were grossly exaggerated, but reports filed by US Army officers such as Lieutenant Colonel David Barrett provide more reliable estimates. Barrett travelled to Changsha and saw firsthand the extent of the damage as well as the unburied dead. By the time the Japanese crossed the Milo River he reported that out of a total original force of 80,000 men there were somewhere between 10,000 and 20,000 Japanese dead already accounted for.³¹² *The Times* reporter Robert Payne had also toured the region and he wrote how evidence for this number was vast. By the end of the battle he estimated that the Japanese had sustained a total of 23,000 dead, and many of these were from the 3rd Division.³¹³ Colonel Mayer reported Japanese casualties to be in the range of 10,000 to 15,000 and the number of Chinese killed as approximately 4,000.³¹⁴ Japanese losses could have been much higher but Hsueh did not press home his advantage by pursuing Anami’s army hard north of the Milo River.³¹⁵ This may have been partly due to a limited offensive staged by the 23rd Army which was launched on

³⁰⁹ Chennault, *Way of a Fighter*, p. 261.

³¹⁰ *The Times*, 12 January 1942.

³¹¹ NARA, RG 319, Entry 57, Box 164, File 7; Telegram No. 173 by Magruder, 11 January 1942. See also Hume, *Dauntless Adventurer: the Story of Dr. Winston Pettus*, p. 104, and Payne, *Chinese Diaries*, pp. 56-57.

³¹² NARA, RG 319, Entry 57, Box 164, File 7; Telegram No. C 15 by Mayer, 15 January 1942.

³¹³ *The Times*, 15 January 1942.

³¹⁴ NARA, RG 165, M1513, Report No. 15 by Mayer, 14 January 1942.

³¹⁵ NAC, RG 24, Volume 20538, File 982.013 (D3); Operation Record in China Theatre, Vol. II by Shimoda, December 1946. NARA, RG 319, Entry 57, Box 164, File 7; Telegram No. C 15 by Mayer, 15 January 1942.

12 January 1942 towards Kukong, and the subsequent need to maintain forces in Hunan capable of meeting any unexpected thrust in northern Kwangtung.³¹⁶ By not pursuing, the bulk of the 11th Army was able to make good their escape.³¹⁷

The primary significance of the battle was the psychological impact on Chinese morale.³¹⁸ Japanese operations in Hunan, and in the Southwest Pacific, were aimed at removing Western influence in Asia and forcing the Chinese to come to terms, but the third battle of Changsha helped prevent this.³¹⁹ The Chinese had been greatly shocked by the fall of Hong Kong, and US Ambassador Clarence Gauss commented on this to the State Department when he recommended the approval of another loan. He wrote: 'Now that the Chinese have overcome the severe shock of our initial reverses, of which the fall of Hong Kong was psychologically the most serious, I feel that morale has steadied.'³²⁰ At the State Department's Far Eastern Desk in Washington, Stanley Hornbeck concurred.³²¹ Changsha also helped mitigate the impact of the announcement made by Churchill and Roosevelt that Allied grand strategy would be oriented towards the defeat of Germany first.³²² According to Chiang Kai Shek's son, Chiang Wego, the effect on morale was most important. He wrote:

The psychological effect was tremendous. The Chinese rank and file felt that under the direction of our Generalissimo, they, too, could execute the Japanese favorite encircling maneuver and nearly annihilate our enemy in battle. Morale was boosted...³²³

³¹⁶ *The New York Times*, 15 January 1942.

³¹⁷ NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 40; Report on Third Battle of Changsha, 7 January 1942.

³¹⁸ NAC, RG 25, Volume 3233, File 5548-40C; Telegram No. 291, Enclosure 1 by Collins, 8 June 1944.

³¹⁹ NAC, RG 24, Volume 20538, File 982.013 (D3); Operation Record in China Theatre, Vol. II by Shimoda, December 1946.

³²⁰ Telegram by Ambassador Clarence Gauss, in *Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers, 1942, China* [hereafter *FRUS*], ed. Historical Office, Bureau of Public Affairs, Department of State, (Washington: United States Department of State, 1956), pp. 4-5.

³²¹ Memorandum by Stanley Hornbeck, in *FRUS, 1942, China*, p. 445.

³²² *The New York Times*, 22 January 1942.

³²³ Chiang, *How Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek Won the Eight-Year Sino-Japanese War*, pp. 111-112.

At a time of repeated devastating Allied defeats in the Far East, the Chinese had been able to beat the Japanese on their own and by doing so they were encouraged to maintain resistance against Japan.³²⁴

In the aftermath of the battle, international reaction was quite often expressed in tones of positive surprise and for a time this too helped buoy Chinese morale. In Washington on 14 January 1942 General Dwight Eisenhower met with the Chinese Military Attaché, General Chu Shih Ming, and amongst other issues they discussed both recent victories at Changsha.³²⁵ In February Wavell's Chief of Staff, General Henry Pownall, recorded that the British had underestimated both the Japanese as well as the Chinese.³²⁶ As might be expected, the foreign media were most eager to exaggerate successes as good news was scarce at the time. An example is provided in figure 9.5. It was George Orwell, however, who penned a relatively measured commentary while working for the BBC. On 10 January 1942 he wrote:

The greatest military event of this week has occurred on a battlefield about which we have not lately heard so much, as we have heard about either Russia or Malaya, and that battlefield is China. The Japanese invaders have suffered a great defeat at the city of Changsha ...

This event is not important only for the heroic defenders of China. It cannot be too much emphasized that this is a world war, and every success or failure upon each of the various fronts has its effect upon every other front, from Norway to the Philippine Islands.³²⁷

³²⁴ NAC, RG 25, Volume 5740, File 25-G(s); Dominions Office Telegram, 30 March 1942.

³²⁵ NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 38; Memorandum by Lieutenant Colonel F. Roberts, 14 January 1942.

³²⁶ Lowe, *Great Britain and the Origins of the Pacific War*, pp. 280-281.

³²⁷ George Orwell, *All Propaganda is Lies, 1941-1942: The Complete Works of George Orwell, Volume 13* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1998), p. 121.



Figure 9.5: Newspaper Cartoon on the Third Battle of Changsha. [Source: NAC, Graphic, LAC 00243; 'Been Neglecting the "Little Woman" Lately, Mister?' *Toronto Daily Star*, by Les Callan, 7 January 1942.]

In February 1942 Richard Webb wrote how both Changsha and Hong Kong were part of the same Japanese operation and he commented on the impact these battles had made on the war.

The price Japan paid for Hongkong must include the casualties she suffered at Changsha ...

... the Changsha push was the biggest of a general Japanese offensive designed to prevent China from aiding the Allies ...

The Japanese drive to eliminate British power in China was successful, but the effort to stop the movement of Chinese troops into Burma failed.³²⁸

The majority of newspaper reports and editorials, however, clearly sacrificed any pretence towards objectivity in publicizing this Far Eastern success in order to help boost home-front morale. Grossly inflated claims on Japanese casualties, for example, were common.

The Chinese also viewed Changsha as a contribution to the Allied effort. With the battle virtually over General Hsueh discussed China's role in the war with reporters, and on 12 January 1942 it was recorded in *The Times* how the general drank a toast to Allied victory. He 'said, "I told my soldiers that we were fighting at Changsha not only for our own soil but also for a world cause".'³²⁹ The Japanese attack was intended to keep the Chinese from assisting Allied forces at Hong Kong and Burma, but Chiang had built up adequate forces to conduct operations in all three regions. The battle of Changsha did not cause a redirection of Chinese troops that led to the fall of Hong Kong. Chinese armies were assembling in Kwangtung as quickly as possible in order to begin their attacks on Canton as well as the Japanese rear at Hong Kong. These were to begin by the second week of January as agreed between Chiang, Dennys, and Magruder, but Hong Kong fell before the Chinese could help.³³⁰ The Chinese had moved in accordance with Allied plans but once defeat was obvious at Hong Kong they focused their attention to meet the threat in Hunan. Ultimately, it was more important to defend Hunan than it was to reinforce defeat at Hong Kong.

Moreover, the military value of Hong Kong rested in its capacity to keep 9th War

³²⁸ Webb, 'The War in China', pp. 49-50.

³²⁹ *The Times*, 12 January 1942.

³³⁰ NARA, RG 407, Entry 360, Box 736, File 400.3295 4-14-41 Sec. 2; Telegram No. 90 by Magruder, 9 December 1941. TNA, FO 371/27628 F 13602/125/10; Telegram No. M.292 by Dennys, 9 December 1941.

Zone forces supplied, and this could no longer be accomplished even if the colony was relieved.

The battle of Changsha similarly did not prevent the Chinese from sending troops into Burma.³³¹ This was the result of British hesitation to cooperate. As Hong Kong was falling to the Japanese, General Wavell met with Chiang and he refused the offer of the Chinese 5th and 6th Armies for Burma.³³² With the exception of some temporary help provided by Chennault's AVG, the British were reluctant to accept armed forces into the region because of concerns over Chiang's foreign policy ambitions.³³³ Chinese ground forces were accepted only when it was too late and although the fall of Burma did not bring Chinese resistance to an end, without victory at Changsha it had the potential to do so.³³⁴

Conclusion

The fall and winter of 1941 was a critical period of the war marked by a series of devastating Allied defeats in the Far East but the exception was seen in China. Despite the strongest Japanese efforts the Chinese army had not broken and indirect support for the Soviet Far East was maintained when the Allied situation was at its most dire. The attack on Hong Kong and the third battle of Changsha were elements of the same Japanese operational plan and partly because of their victory in Hunan the Chinese continued the war at a time when their morale had been greatly undermined. In attacking Changsha Japanese commanders had wanted to demonstrate China's worthlessness as an ally but the opposite effect

³³¹ Webb, 'The War in China', p. 50.

³³² NARA, RG 319, Entry 57, Box 164, File 7; Telegram No. C 11 by Mayer, 13 January 1942. See also NARA, RG 493, CBI AG Subject File, Box 614; Memorandum of Wavell-Chiang Conference of 22 December 1941 by Colonel E. MacMorland, 23 December 1941.

³³³ Christopher Bayly and Tim Harper, *Forgotten Armies: The Fall of British Asia, 1941-1945* (London: Penguin Books, 2004), p. 159.

³³⁴ Chennault, *Way of a Fighter*, pp. 140-142.

was produced.³³⁵ The Japanese lacked sufficient troops to achieve a military victory and once the Pacific War had begun this problem did not improve.³³⁶ Although the Chinese had many difficulties to contend with the army was sufficiently strong to maintain a defence of the country. What they still required, however, was artillery. The third battle of Changsha demonstrated that even with limited firepower the Chinese army was capable of defending some strategically important regions of the country unaided. The victory at Changsha boosted Chinese morale and even after the fall of Burma it was still anticipated that previous material shortages could be made good with America's introduction to the war. Chinese faith rested upon assurances provided by President Franklin Roosevelt for the continued provision of American aid. During the battles for Changsha the Chinese evinced an ability to defend themselves and Chiang's strategy of trading space for time appeared to be validated.³³⁷

For the Japanese Hong Kong was a hollow victory spawned by a disastrously ineffective grand strategy. Success in Burma and Hong Kong made the Japanese army appear invincible for a time, but events in southern China ultimately made their difficulties worse. By attacking Hawaii as well as Hong Kong and Malaya the Japanese started a suicidal war against the United States and Great Britain. The offensive into the Southwest Pacific during December 1941 was one of the greatest strategic mistakes made by the Axis during the entire conflict and according to Evan Mawdsley, it was at the end of the war that Adolf Hitler greatly regretted his encouragement for this Japanese action.³³⁸ Instead of striking south the Japanese would have been better off either coming to terms with

³³⁵ Barrett and Chuikov, *Mission to China*, p. 124.

³³⁶ *Ibid*, p. xli.

³³⁷ *The New York Times*, 25 January 1942.

³³⁸ Evan Mawdsley, *Thunder in the East, 1941-1945* (London: Hodder Arnold, 2005), pp. 16-17.

Chiang or attacking the Soviet Union.³³⁹ Many factors combined to bring about their fateful decision and of these the escalation of violence and Allied intervention in the Pearl River Delta was an important one that indicated how time was running short. The addition of Canadian troops in November was a contributory element to this problem. Hong Kong was a growing obstacle impeding Japanese plans and because of this the Colony became one of the first points of attack at the start of the Pacific War. After the battle of Midway in June 1942 the Empire of Japan would be destroyed in just over three year's time but it was China that served as its noose.

Defeats in Hong Kong, Burma and Malaya were also disastrous to the British. The loss of prestige associated with these campaigns effectively brought Britain's military role in China to an end. Sino-British military cooperation in the form of such units as Detachment 204 and the China Commando Group did not long survive the death of Major General Dennys. The general had been appointed GOC China after battle of Hong Kong but he was killed in a CNAC plane crash after leaving Kunming on 14 February 1942.³⁴⁰ Having had a positive working relationship with Chiang perhaps Dennys could have maintained better Sino-British relations and kept Detachment 204 operational but this remains speculative.

British Far Eastern strategy would have been more effective had they cooperated closely with the Chinese army or recruited large numbers of colonial Chinese soldiers to bolster the defence of Hong Kong. A prolonged battle of attrition in the Pearl River Delta would have tied up Japanese units and

³³⁹ Henry Gole, *The Road to Rainbow: Army Planning for Global War, 1934-1940* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2003), p. 151.

³⁴⁰ NAC, RG 25, Volume 2661, File 6045-40; Summary of News in China (March), F 3751/1689/10, by Ambassador Horace Seymour, 1 April 1942.

replacements badly needed further south. Given enough time and persistence, however, and even if the Hong Kong garrison had been relieved, Japanese naval and airpower advantages would have eventually reduced the defenders sufficiently to bring about the fall of the Colony. In any case, lacking greater cooperation with China, Hong Kong should have been demilitarized at an earlier date.³⁴¹ If the New Territories were not worth buying in 1938-39, then Hong Kong was not worth defending in 1941.

The expansion of the war made the reduction of British global power a certainty. American entry to the conflict virtually ensured an Allied victory but this came at British expense, both financially and imperially. During the postwar period the British Empire would greatly diminish as one colony after another secured its independence. Decolonization was likely in any event but an irony of the battle of Hong Kong was the impermanent return of the colony to British control in 1945. British credibility had been badly damaged in 1941-42, but had Hong Kong not been defended it is doubtful that the Union Jack would have been hoisted there again.³⁴² Ultimately, burgeoning Cold War realities emerged to encourage such an event to transpire.³⁴³

Also contributing to this outcome were the activities of the sole remaining British military unit still permitted to operate in China throughout the rest of the war. This was the British Army Aid Group [BAAG] under the command of Colonel Lindsay Ride which was headquartered in Kweilin but had a base at

³⁴¹ IWM, Conservation Shelf; ‘Thunder in the East’ by Grimsdale, 1947, p. 16.

³⁴² Lawrence Lai, ‘The Battle of Hong Kong: A Note on the Literature and the Effectiveness of the Defence’, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Hong Kong Branch*, 39 1999: 115-136, pp. 120-121.

³⁴³ NAC, RG 25, Volume 3345, File 6812-40C; Telegram by Odlum No. 405, 16 September 1945. See also Kent Fedorowich, ‘Decolonization Deferred? The Re-establishment of Colonial Rule in Hong Kong, 1942-45’, *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 28 (3) 2000: 25-50, p. 44.

Waichow.³⁴⁴ The Colonel was a medical professor at the University of Hong Kong and he was one of the first POWs to escape Japanese captivity.³⁴⁵ The BAAG was originally established to assist other escaping prisoners and throughout the war they were able to maintain positive relations with the people of Kwangtung. Because of the necessity to cooperate with the communist East River Brigade (ERB) friction with the Chinese army was common, but the BAAG soon evolved into an intelligence unit assisting General Chennault's 14th Air Force based in Kunming and was therefore allowed to continue its work.³⁴⁶

A major beneficiary of the battle of Hong Kong and the war in China generally was the Chinese Communist Party. Following the battle and the subsequent withdrawal of the 38th Division few Japanese troops remained in Hong Kong. The Chinese Army maintained the 187th Division at its base in Waichow under the command of General Chan Kee but Tamshui marked the farthest extent of central government authority south towards Hong Kong. The resulting power vacuum in the New Territories was filled by the ERB which moved in from their base further to the northeast.³⁴⁷ This expansion was understood by some British and American military intelligence officers working in southern China to have been planned prior to the start of the battle.³⁴⁸ Most of their weapons were of British origin and Major Kendall was the officer in contact

³⁴⁴ Fedorowich, 'Decolonization Deferred', p. 43.

³⁴⁵ HKU, B.A.A.G. Series, Volume II, 'Capture, Escape and the Early B.A.A.G.'; Report by Colonel Lindsay Ride, 20 August 1942.

³⁴⁶ HKU, B.A.A.G. Series, Volume VII, 'Coast Watching and the "Red" Question'; Telegram by Captain E. Cooper, 7 June 1943.

³⁴⁷ HKU, B.A.A.G. Series, Volume II, 'Capture, Escape and the Early B.A.A.G.'; Report by Ride, 20 August 1942. See also HKU, B.A.A.G. Series, Volume IV, 'Advance Headquarters, Waichow, Field Operations Group'; Report by Major Ronnie Holmes, 12 July 1944.

³⁴⁸ HKU, B.A.A.G. Series, Volume IV, 'Advance Headquarters, Waichow, Field Operations Group'; Report by Holmes, 6 December 1942, and Report by Holmes, 12 July 1944. See also NARA, RG 493, Entry 531, Box 51; Z Force Report, 25 May 1944.

with the ERB commander Tseng Sheng.³⁴⁹ The ERB would benefit from considerable popular support in the New Territories, as many in the region sought to join in order to defend their families and homes throughout the remainder of the war.

The third battle for Changsha also effectively ended Soviet military aid to the Chinese central government but Soviet Far Eastern security was maintained for the duration of the war even as China became an American sphere of interest. Hard pressed against the Germans there were no further resources that the Soviets could spare for the Far East and just over a year after being sent to Chungking, General Vasilii Chuikov's Mission to China was terminated before he was ordered to return home in February 1942. Over the following winter Chuikov became famous for his role in the defence of Stalingrad. In his memoirs he explained the primary rationale why Soviet support was withdrawn; quite simply, he had completed his mission.³⁵⁰ The Soviet Far East was secure.

³⁴⁹ HKU, B.A.A.G. Series, Volume IV, 'Advance Headquarters, Waichow, Field Operations Group'; Report by Holmes, 6 December 1942, and Report by Holmes, 12 July 1944.

³⁵⁰ Barrett and Chuikov, *Mission to China*, pp. 20, 162-163.

Chapter 10

Conclusion

From the start of the German invasion of the USSR until US entry into the war, the conflict in China assumed great geostrategic significance. Aided by difficult winter conditions, General Georgy Zhukov and the Red Army blunted the German offensive for Moscow on 6 December 1941 by launching a major counterattack against Field Marshall Fedor von Bock's Army Group Centre. By using freshly organized forces, albeit of mixed quality, the Soviets won a decisive victory.¹ Zhukov later claimed that he and other officers doubted their ability to hold in front of Moscow but the addition of several strong divisions transferred across the country from Siberia was one of the most significant factors that tipped the balance in his favour.² Had Stalin not been assured of the Japanese intention to strike south instead of north it is most doubtful these units would have been available in sufficient numbers to aid in the defence of Moscow. One of the most important reasons behind the Japanese decision to move south was the desire to bring the war in China to a close and the increasing level of Anglo-American intervention meant that time was running short to achieve victory.

A clear example of Western commitment to China was the reinforcement of Hong Kong as the British colony was the primary point of entry for military supplies from abroad. This made Hong Kong a significant Chinese military logistical base. The decision to strengthen the colony's garrison with Canadian soldiers in the fall of 1941 had far reaching ramifications but the reason that

¹ Evan Mawdsley, *Thunder in the East: The Nazi-Soviet War, 1941-1945* (London: Hodder Arnold, 2005), pp. 112, 116.

² 'Soviet Commander Admits USSR Came Close to Defeat by Nazis', *The Telegraph*, 5 May 2010.

underpinned the deployment remains distinct from the factors that led to the battle fought shortly thereafter. The reinforcement of Hong Kong was the most significant geopolitical event in the colony's wartime experience. It demonstrated that the Anglo-American proxy war in China was primarily designed to keep the Japanese army bogged down and thereby provide indirect support to the Soviet Far East. C Force was sent to Hong Kong when the Soviets faced defeat in Europe and it was done largely because of American influence. A Japanese attack into Siberia during this period was a scenario that the Allies wished to avoid at all costs, and the reinforcement of Hong Kong was meant to prevent this eventuality by sustaining Chinese morale. As an exercise in collective security its impact was felt globally. Indirect support was provided to the Soviet Union and the deployment helped expand the scale of the war in the Far East. The battle of Hong Kong itself, however, was a direct Allied attempt to stem further Japanese aggression but it was an event of regional significance. In the end both events were largely hatched from a combination of dangerous military and foreign policies. These included a limited number of British alternatives in implementing the Singapore Strategy, successive years of disarmament, and a confrontational foreign policy based upon the tenets of collective security. The result was a tragic, counterproductive disaster.

British alternatives included disengagement from the war in China and the demilitarization of Hong Kong. This was largely discounted due to the country's economic interests in the region and because of the damaging impact this would have had on British influence. Another option was to hold their position in southern China with an overt military agreement that included the acceptance of Chiang's offer of 200,000 Chinese troops for the defence of Hong Kong.

Airfields were available at Kweilin and elsewhere to provide support for such a plan but Sino-British cooperation was never fully developed. Instead, the proxy war in China was continued at the risk of igniting an Anglo-Japanese War at Hong Kong. Throughout this period the Chinese required substantial support and Hong Kong remained the most vital logistical centre for the importation of Western military supplies. With the Japanese lodged in Canton low intensity conflict against Britain within the Pearl River Delta thus became a significant factor in escalating the crisis towards the outbreak of the Pacific War; a prospect which became evident with the invasion of southern Indochina.

Because of British military weakness it was in the country's interest to help broker a Sino-Japanese peace but prior to 1941 numerous officials in Whitehall hoped that support for the Chinese war effort could be leveraged to encourage greater cooperation from Stalin against Hitler. When collaboration appeared possible the transhipment of war supplies from Hong Kong was continued. When it did not, such as in mid 1940, the flow of weapons into China was restricted as was seen during the closure of the Burma Road. Ultimately, the pursuit of collective security in southern China was a counterproductive endeavour as it failed to induce reciprocity from Stalin and it helped to ignite the Pacific War. By challenging the Japanese it was hoped to improve Anglo-Soviet relations but Britain faced too many enemies from a position of military weakness to elicit external support, except at great cost. In the end, British power was sacrificed to the United States in order to safeguard the Soviet Union.

Anglo-American strategy during World War II also failed to adequately address the long term implications of forging an alliance with the USSR. Intervention in southern China and Hong Kong helped to secure the Soviet Far

East but by concentrating solely on the destruction of Nazi Germany while propping up Stalin little was accomplished in promoting global peace and security. Despite the totalitarian nature of Stalin's rule in the USSR, Germany was considered to be the single most dangerous threat to global security and Anglo-American strategy was shaped around this belief. Foreign policy makers in the West were often deeply influenced in their views by previous experience derived from the First World War and many eyes remained closed to the long term consequences of supporting Stalin.

Britain's China policy was flawed not only because it imperilled the long term security of the Empire, but also because it was dishonestly formulated and falsely represented to the British public. The same can also be said for Canada. Hong Kong was not reinforced and defended primarily to protect the Empire or the Dominions, and the ulterior geostrategic issue underpinning events in the region was suppressed from public scrutiny. Commonwealth soldiers were expected to fight against Nazi totalitarianism only to help prop up a Soviet variation from Hong Kong. Had people been aware of the facts surrounding Allied efforts in China then governmental credibility and legitimacy would not be called into question. Official obfuscation, however, makes this inevitable. Secrecy on this issue enabled the government to continue the war unhindered by intrusive questions as to why it was being fought even though the cost of total war was exorbitant. In Britain's case this amounted to an overall loss of global power, financial ruin at home, and the deaths of hundreds of thousands of servicemen. An informed public may have pressed for alternative solutions.

Results in China were similarly poor. In attempting to exploit the conflict enveloping Hong Kong the Chinese were only partially successful in solidifying

an anti-Japanese alliance. Britain and America had finally become Chinese allies in large part because of events leading up to the battle of Hong Kong, but it took over four years to accomplish this. Moreover, inter-Allied distrust still prevented effective large scale military cooperation from developing. The Chinese abandonment of Canton in 1938 did little to encourage Anglo-American officials. Conversely, the surrender of Hong Kong prior to the anticipated duration of resistance produced tremendous loss of prestige for the British in China. British reversals in Asia left China dangerously isolated by the spring of 1942 and had it not been for Chinese victory during the third battle of Changsha, resistance against Japan might have come to an end. The battles of Changsha demonstrated that large elements of the Chinese army were more combat effective than many foreign observers were willing to admit, but nevertheless, the intensity of the war in China diminished after this point as Chinese logistical problems became acute. Some military supplies would soon be flown over the Himalayas by the USAAF, but from 1942 onwards the war in China reverted to being a minor sideshow.³

Aside from logistical considerations there were other reasons for the low priority assigned to the war in China including the simple fact that the Chinese were physically exhausted. It was also understood that the maintenance of Chinese security was never as great a priority within the Allied camp as was China's ability to neutralize a large segment of the Japanese army.⁴ Respect for Chinese sovereignty was even less important, especially after the Americans began to assume greater control of the war in the fall and winter of 1941.

Although T.V. Soong had been appointed as Foreign Minister because of his

³ Yu Maochun, *The Dragon's War: Allied Operations and the Fate of China* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2006), p. 92.

⁴ NARA, RG 165, Entry 421, Box 407, OPD ABC Files 1940-48; Joint Chiefs of Staff Memorandum No. 14, 4 July 1942.

connections in America, and this was done to demonstrate solidarity to the Allied cause, Allied military reverses and the announcement of the Europe first strategy established by Roosevelt and Churchill in turn generated great criticism in China.⁵ Concerns were also expressed over Ambassador Clark Kerr's posting to the Soviet Union as this further reflected the diminished significance attached to the Far East in London, but anxiety over these events had begun to lessen by the summer of 1942.⁶ Nevertheless, these problems created considerable drag on the Chinese war effort and limited Allied enthusiasm to increase support. As time progressed the Chinese became less inclined to carry the fight to the Japanese so long as they were not accepted as a full partner of the alliance.

Despite China's military liabilities there was another political issue that motivated some Western officials into urging continued support for China. Concerns were expressed that racial divisions threatened to undermine the attainment of long term alliance objectives and this friction was aggravated by Japanese propaganda.⁷ The Japanese had billed the war in China as a struggle against the domination of Asia by white Europeans, and in February 1941 Japanese Foreign Minister Matsuoka Yosuke extended this charge to demand publicly the expulsion of all white men from Oceania, with the exception of Australia and New Zealand.⁸ After being assigned to Washington as the head of the British Joint Staff Mission in America, Field Marshal Sir John Dill discussed this problem with Prime Minister W.L. Mackenzie King while in Ottawa. Mackenzie King recorded this in his diary.

⁵ NARA, RG 165, Entry 184, Box 962; Weekly State Department Report, 26 December 1941 and 22 January 1942. TNA, WO 208/849; Review of Foreign Press, No. 122, February 1942. See also Kent Fedorowich, 'Decolonization Deferred? The Re-establishment of Colonial Rule in Hong Kong, 1942-45', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 28 (3) 2000: 25-50, p. 27.

⁶ *The New York Times*, 18 January 1942.

⁷ NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 58; Naval Intelligence Report, 30 June 1943.

⁸ NARA, RG 38, Entry 98A, Box 705, F-6-c 23213 to F-6-e 22379; 'Southward Advance of the Japanese Navy'.

He spoke feelingly of our losses at Hong Kong. They had been advised that a few detachments would be all that was needed. He is much concerned about China not holding on. Says that if the Japanese should demonstrate that they can destroy the British, take Singapore etc., it is altogether possible that they will come to make a peace with Japan on the basis of Asia for the Asiatics feeling that it is better to keep the white man out altogether. He agreed that this would certainly precipitate further difficulties in India.⁹

Although the idea of Pan-Asian unity was undone by Japanese conduct against civilians in occupied territory, such as was witnessed at Nanking in 1937 and with even worse barbarity exhibited by organizations such as Unit 731, the fear of an anti-Caucasian front led from Tokyo persisted nonetheless.¹⁰ A formal peace between Japan and China would have been a political disaster for the Allies and it would have given credence to Japanese claims of ‘Asia for the Asiatics’. Richard Webb also wrote on this subject for the Institute of Pacific Relations:

China’s importance as an ally cannot be easily overestimated; her strategic position and man power are obvious. The political value of China’s resistance is even more important – she makes Japan’s claim to be leading Asiatic peoples a hollow mockery. American interest in China’s fight is therefore fundamental ...¹¹

A memorandum for the War Department’s Operational Planning Division further emphasized the racial component later in the war. It was noted that:

Above all, the significance of the Asiatics resisting the encroachments of other Asiatics is of tremendous political and psychological importance. For all these reasons it is essential to uphold, even at considerable cost, the prestige and capacity to resist of Chiang Kai Shek.¹²

Asian allies were needed as the Japanese claim of fighting against white domination was exemplified with the internment of people from Japanese ancestry

⁹ NAC, www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/databases/king/001059-100.01-e.php; Diaries of William Lyon Mackenzie King, 19 January 1942.

¹⁰ John Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), pp. 6-7; and Hal Gold, *Unit 731: Testimony* (Tokyo: Yenbooks, 1996), pp. 50-51.

¹¹ Richard Webb, ‘The War in China’, *Far Eastern Survey*, 11 (4) 1942: 49-50, p. 50.

¹² NARA 165, Entry 421, Box 407; Joint Intelligence Committee Memorandum No. 201/1 by J.S. Lay, 2 August 1944.

living in North America. Successful exploitation of such issues by the Japanese resulting in an end of hostilities in China would have been a blow to Allied prestige and an unwelcome shock to US public opinion.¹³

Chinese confidence in Allied military power had been greatly shaken in the winter of 1941-42 and after the fall of Hong Kong the British were effectively pushed out of China.¹⁴ China in turn became a US sphere of interest and Roosevelt bolstered Chinese morale by strengthening Sino-American relations with promises of greater material and diplomatic support. General Joseph Stilwell was dispatched to China to secure America's position by becoming the Army Chief of Staff for Chiang Kai Shek, and the China-Burma-India command was soon organized as a single Allied theatre of operations.¹⁵ To support China, however, the President turned to Mackenzie King for additional help.

Canada became involved in China because of White House pressure to support Allied collective security arrangements. The value of Canadian aid, however, proved eventually to be only symbolic, while the costs of helping others meet international commitments in the Far East continued to expand. The sale of Bren guns to China in the summer and fall of 1941 was followed by the deployment of Canadian troops to Hong Kong.¹⁶ It has been noted elsewhere that 'U.S. Marines were not going to fight for Hong Kong.'¹⁷ This was indeed true. Further Canadian support consisted of the sale of heavy weapons and with Roosevelt's urging it was on 27 February 1942 that Soong travelled by train from America along with FDR's representative Lauchlin Currie to meet Mackenzie

¹³ NARA, RG 165, M1513, Reel 58; Naval Intelligence Report, 30 June 1943.

¹⁴ NARA, RG 319, Entry 57, Box 164, File 6; Telegram No. 121 by Mayer, 20 December 1941.

¹⁵ NARA, RG 493, Entry 531, Box 50; Z Force Journal.

¹⁶ NAC, RG 24, Reel C-5281, File 8865; Letter by Howe to Ralston, 15 November 1941, and NAC, RG 25, Volume 3343, File 4929-F-40C Pt 1; Letter by Sheils to Robertson, 14 April 1942.

¹⁷ Patrick Buchanan, *Churchill, Hitler, and the Unnecessary War: How Britain Lost its Empire and the West Lost the World* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2008), p. 116.

King in Ottawa.¹⁸ Another meeting was held in Washington later that April and on this occasion Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter was also in attendance.¹⁹ During these visits Mackenzie King and Soong began a close personal friendship, and the Prime Minister offered to extend all possible manner of assistance to China including support for Chiang Kai Shek in his efforts to secure Indian independence, but only after the war was won.²⁰ This pledge was well received as was the assurance of American backing towards the same goal.²¹ Negotiations for military hardware went equally smoothly, at least initially. Amongst other equipment, deals were concluded for the sale of three hundred 25-pounder guns with ammunition and artillery tractors.²² The short term significance of these developments on Sino-Canadian relations was positive but the long term effects of collective security doctrine in Asia proved otherwise.

After the winter of 1941-42, Canadian support for China became less useful in fostering Allied cohesion, or even in promoting bilateral US-Canadian relations, as assistance from both countries expanded along two conflicting paths. Friction between the two became evident the following year. The United States Army was quick to dominate the war effort in China by monopolizing Allied aid, and a degree of diplomatic tension was produced in Washington between the US Army and Canadian authorities.²³ Military supplies sent to China from Canada were included as part of the Mutual Aid plan which was implemented during

¹⁸ NAC, Diaries of William Lyon Mackenzie King; 28 February 1942.

¹⁹ NAC, MG 26 J1, Reel C-6813; Letter by Mackenzie King to Soong, 4 May 1942.

²⁰ NAC, Diaries of William Lyon Mackenzie King; 13 March 1942. NAC, MG 26 J1, Reel C-6805; Letter by Mackenzie King to Currie, 16 March 1942, and NAC, MG 26 J1, Reel C-6813; Letter by Mackenzie King to Soong, 16 March 1942.

²¹ NAC, MG 26 J1, Reel C-6813; Letter by Mackenzie King to Soong, 16 March 1942, and Letter by Soong to Mackenzie King, 24 March 1942.

²² NAC, RG 25, Volume 3343, File 4929-F-40C Pt 1; Letter by Sheils to Robertson, 14 April 1942.

²³ NAC, MG 26 J1, Reel C-7042; External Affairs Telegram No. 94 to Odlum, 15 October 1943. See also NAC, RG 25, Volume 3343, File 4929-F-40C Pt 1; Telegram No. 94, 15 October 1943.

1942. It was established formally at the Quebec Conference in August 1943.

This Canadian version of Lend Lease was a billion dollar military aid program designed primarily for the benefit of Great Britain and the USSR.²⁴ The Mutual Aid plan followed Canada's initial billion dollar gift to Britain provided early in 1942. In addition to thirty-six US supplied Chinese divisions, ten armies were also to be created or upgraded with Mutual Aid weapons, each receiving twelve 25-pounders apiece but these plans ran afoul of General Stilwell during 1943 and few of these supplies were allowed to be flown into China over the Himalayan Hump.²⁵ Canadian Mutual Aid weapons were earmarked for the Chinese central government without restriction on use, but US Lend Lease material was administered by Stilwell for the forces under his command in Yunnan, and India.²⁶ Thus, shipment of the Canadian supplies was assigned a very low priority within CBI and by early 1944 twelve thousand five hundred tons of Canadian produced weapons and vehicles had accumulated at storage depots in Karachi awaiting delivery through the USSR.²⁷ More supplies awaited shipment in Canada but inter-Allied friction was created when Soong pressed Roosevelt to facilitate the shipment of these weapons.²⁸ Soong failed in his efforts and the shipment of most of the Canadian produced munitions was delayed until mid 1945 and 1946.²⁹

²⁴ NAC, RG 25, Volume 3343, File 4929-F-40C Pt 2; Memorandum, 27 March 1944. See also R. Warren James, *Wartime Economic Co-operation: A Study of Relations Between Canada and the United States* (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1949), pp. 228-229.

²⁵ NAC, RG 25, Volume 3343, File 4929-F-40C Pt 3; File notation, 21 August 1944, and Telegram No. 109 by Odlum, 24 April 1945. See also Kim Nossal, 'Strange Bedfellows: Canada and China in War and Revolution, 1942-1947' (University of Toronto: Unpublished PhD Dissertation, 1977), p. 220.

²⁶ NAC, RG 25, Volume 3343, File 4929-F-40C Pt 3; Memorandum, 31 May 1944.

²⁷ NAC, MG 26 J4, Reel H-1476; Memorandum, 2 August 1944, and NAC, RG 25, Volume 3343, File 4929-F-40C Pt 2; Memorandum, 6 April 1944.

²⁸ NAC, RG 25, Volume 3343, File 4929-F-40C Pt 1; Letter Pearson to Robertson, 17 September 1943 and Letter by Robertson to Howe, 23 September 1943.

²⁹ NAC, RG 25, Volume 3343, File 4929-F-40C Pt 1; Telegram No. 505 by Major General Maurice Pope, 17 September 1943, and NAC, RG 25, Volume 3343, File 4929-F-40C Pt 3;

Part of the reason Canadian efforts were impeded was that Allied leaders and officials endeavoured to keep military support to the Chinese central government both limited and indirect. Allied collective security doctrine failed when applied in China because military aid was also conditioned upon Chungking's acquiescence to American interference in the country's domestic affairs. Most prominent in this issue was General Stilwell who in seeking to control the Chinese army kept much of the material flown into China between 1942 and 1944 under his direct control. He also wanted to supply CCP military forces in Yenan.³⁰ Furthering this agenda were many Western foreign policy makers sympathetic to the communists who were concerned that any heavy weapons supplied to Chiang, such as those stockpiled in Karachi, would be used against the CCP.³¹ In the south, Stilwell's lack of appreciation for the logistical limitations of the CBI theatre also caused him to squander scarce transport capacity in an effort to create a Chinese military force in the image of the US Army.³² This was a wasted effort within the projected time scale of the war. What the Chinese army required, as the battles for Changsha had proven, was a modest and sustainable artillery program. Field guns provided without restrictions together with a minimal amount of gasoline and bombs for the air force would have been sufficient to maintain Chinese morale and to keep the country fighting.

Telegram No. 109 by Odlum, 24 April 1945. See also NAC, RG 25, Volume 4201, File 4851-40 Pt 1; Telegram No. 1134 by Ronning, 22 October 1946.

³⁰ NAC, MG 26 J4, Volume 244, Reel H-1476, File China; Telegram No. 29 by Patterson, 31 January 1945. Romanus and Sunderland, *Stilwell's Command Problems*, p. 452. See also Taylor, *The Generalissimo*, p. 235, and Barbara Tuchman, *Stilwell and the American Experience in China, 1911-1945* (New York: Macmillan, 1970), p. 495.

³¹ NAC, RG 25, Volume 3343, File 4929-F-40C Pt 2; Memorandum by Arthur Menzies, 14 March 1944.

³² IWM, Conservation Shelf; 'Thunder in the East' by Grimsdale, 1947, pp. 76-77.

Canada's Asian wartime experience continued to illustrate that the disaster at Hong Kong was not an aberration of sound policy or merely bad luck, but rather, was the unsurprising consequence of maintaining the primacy of Soviet security atop other Allied objectives. Despite the assistance that was provided to the USSR in China and elsewhere in previous years Stalin worked against Allied strategy by destabilizing Sinkiang in 1943-44. This greatly undermined morale in Chungking as did Allied protection of the CCP. Canadian military hardware destined for Chungking remained undelivered when it was needed most because of this interference. During the 1944 Japanese offensive codenamed Operation Ichigo these weapons were blocked from transiting the overland route through Siberia while the psychological and material impact of their arrival in 1944 might have mitigated morale problems that contributed to the collapse of Chinese armies in 4th and 9th War Zones.³³ The subsequent loss of south China resulted in the ejection of US army and air forces from Kwangsi. Throughout this period Stalin was not pressured to permit passage of these weapons through Siberia. By yielding priority to Soviet security concerns in the Far East the implementation of an effective Allied strategy in China was prevented and long term Western interests were not served. Although Japan was eventually defeated in the Pacific, by the end of the war the Chinese army remained under-gunned and the country's long term security was imperilled.

Prior to the unfolding of the Mutual Aid fiasco, however, Canada's involvement in Far Eastern Affairs on behalf of the alliance had already proven to be a particularly lopsided deal and fault for this rests with Mackenzie King. For all of Canada's efforts in China to safeguard Soviet security, in addition to the

³³ NARA, RG 160, Entry 116, Box 9, File 25/10/1943; Direct Lend Lease Aid to China, 25 October 1943. NAC, RG25, Volume 3343, File 4929-F-40C Pt 2; Telegram No. 789 by Massey, 8 April 1944.

subsequent losses sustained at Dieppe in August 1942 for the same reason, Stalin most certainly did not reciprocate nor did Canadian political leaders press him to do so. In early 1942 for example, the subject of approaching Stalin to pressure the Japanese for improved treatment of Canadian POWs was put to Mackenzie King by a colleague with influence inside the USSR, but the scheme was quietly jettisoned in an attempt to limit the dictator's diplomatic leverage for a second front in France. Details of the Soviet connection to the Hong Kong POWs can be found in appendix fifteen. Official Sino-Canadian relations expanded as a result of Canada's support, and this was due in part to the close personal friendship that had grown between Soong and Mackenzie King, but in the framework of larger events positive official relations did not amount to much.³⁴ Ambassadors were exchanged by 1943, but Canada was not a great power and could do little to influence events in China unilaterally. In the end, once the Chinese communists assumed control of the country Sino-Canadian relations were disrupted thoroughly, and by 1951 Canadian and Chinese soldiers would be killing each other in South Korea for control of the village of Kapyong.³⁵

The primary aim of this study has been to raise the level of understanding regarding the Second World War but critical judgements on Allied strategy during the conflict, such as those presented here, are sometimes claimed to have been formed with the benefit of hindsight. It has also been suggested that government officials and policy makers of the 1930s and 40s had no way of knowing future events, especially with regard to the threat that would be posed by Stalin to

³⁴ NAC, MG 26 J1, Reel C-6813; Soong/Mackenzie King correspondence: 3 March 1942, 4 May 1942, and 11 May 1942. See also NAC, MG 26 J1, Reel C-7059; Letter by Mackenzie King to Madame Laura Soong, 31 December 1944, and NAC, MG 26 J1, Reel C-11044; Soong/Mackenzie King correspondence: 30 January 1947, and 11 October 1947.

³⁵ Akira Ichikawa and Quo F.Q., 'Sino-Canadian Relations: A New Chapter', *Asian Survey* 12 (5) 1972: 386-398, p. 388. See also F.D. Macri, 'Remembering the Deadly Battle for Kapyong', *Ulsan Pear*, 1 (12) March 2005, p. 9. <http://www.ulسانonline.com/2005-03.pdf>

Western security during the Cold War. The alliance with the USSR was therefore justified as a necessary expedient in fighting against the fascist dictatorships. This argument is a canard. It was not possible for conditions of freedom or democracy to be maintained in many regions of the world by allying with a regime such as existed within the Soviet Union. Furthermore, there was ample evidence available throughout the interwar period and during the war itself to demonstrate the true nature of Stalin's methods. Thus, in addition to increasing our understanding of the war, a secondary outcome has been to illustrate the danger of allowing ideological considerations to dominate the planning and execution of foreign and military policy. Aside from ideology there was little to choose between the fascist dictatorships or the USSR, and this study of the war in southern China and Hong Kong has suggested that the cost of Anglo-American short-sightedness in forming an alliance with Moscow was indeed far heavier than is currently accepted.

After detailing the steps taken by all of the powers involved in southern China as they moved towards global war, this study has developed a clearer picture to explain the shifts in US, British and Soviet relations that provoked a Japanese attack and resulted in the formation of an anti-Axis alliance in 1941. Because the conflict in southern China was fundamentally about the movement of munitions and supplies, it has been essential to examine the military logistics involved in sustaining Chinese resistance from Hong Kong. To understand the colony's importance, Hong Kong must be combined with southern China and viewed together as a single military region. The connection between the battle of Hong Kong and the third battle of Changsha as elements of the same Japanese plan demonstrates this reality. No other study of the war has adequately

addressed the geopolitical significance of Hong Kong in this context because the role and impact of both Canada and the USSR within China have largely been ignored or downplayed. This is why the disaster at Hong Kong has not yet been correctly assessed. The battle of Hong Kong was not a battle for the preservation of Empire. There were other objectives involved, the most important of which was the British desire to build an anti-German coalition and since China was not only an area where Western and Soviet interests overlapped, but was also a region of frequent collaboration, the Sino-Japanese War requires further investigation in order to determine its full significance as a catalyst leading to a much more devastating global conflagration. This work will therefore hopefully serve as a marker from where the history of the Second World War in Asia can be written in new directions.

Appendix 1

Collective Security as Canadian Foreign Policy

After the fall of France during the Second World War many officials in Ottawa within the Department of External Affairs were quick to embrace foreign policy aims that were truly revolutionary in scope and ambition. Until the summer of 1940, however, there was a small doubtful minority who questioned the efficacy of policies such as collective security even amongst the most senior officials. One of these was Under-Secretary of State Oscar D. Skelton. In August 1939 Skelton sent Prime Minister W.L. Mackenzie King a memorandum on the merits of maintaining a neutral position. His primary objections to war were the lack of consultation from Britain in implementing a failed foreign policy and the overall lack of military preparedness of the West. Some within the department also viewed the conflict as another war for Empire. Skelton's credible arguments show that the Prime Minister faced a degree of rational opposition from within his own department (Mackenzie King was also the Minister of External Affairs) in bringing the country to war, but ultimately, his views were rejected as the momentum for war was too great.

Skelton expressed his concerns about Canada's position in the world and his lack of faith in British abilities strongly. After the signing of the Nazi-Soviet Pact the following document was submitted to the Prime Minister:

Europe is on the brink of war and Canada is apparently preparing to join in the stampede over the edge. A conflict may possibly be averted by a Polish retreat, but that will not alter the facts as to the potential attitude of Canada or the diplomatic methods of Britain. I wish therefore to record at this stage some brief personal observations on this situation.

First:

The first casualty in this war has been Canada's claim to independent control of her own destinies. In spite of a quarter century of proclamation and achievement of equal and independent status, we have thus far been relegated to the role of a Crown colony. We are drifting into a war resulting, so far as the United Kingdom's part is concerned, from policies and diplomatic actions initiated months ago without our knowledge or expectation. An Ottawa paper has gloated over the fact that the foreign policy of Canada is in the hands of the Prime Minister of Great Britain; it has not yet called attention to Inskip's sideshow, 'the Dominions Office as the Foreign Office of the British Empire'. If war comes in Poland and we take part, that war comes as the consequence of commitments made by the Government of Great Britain, about which we were not in one iota consulted, and about which we were given not the slightest inkling of information in advance. The British Government with bland arrogance has assumed that whatever its policy, whether it be appeasement or challenge, pro-Russian or anti-Russian, pro-Italian or anti-Italian, a Western European policy or an Eastern European policy, we could be counted on to trot behind, blindly and dumbly, to chaos. It was one of the more modest members of the Chamberlain family Austen, who, in speaking of the Locarno Agreement in 1935, expressed agreement with the view that formal consultation in Councils or otherwise with the Dominions would hamper Britain: she could go ahead in the assurance that if Great Britain got into peril, all the Dominions would stand behind her.

Sir Austen's view may be right as regards the present instance. Wide sections of Canadian opinion are prepared to accept the Polish policy and its consequences. This is partly due to a strange combination of forces in Canada. Imperialists and Communists have joined collective sanctionists and refugee sympathizers in acquiescing in the British course; London and Moscow, Geneva and Jerusalem have been our capitals rather than Ottawa. Many have accepted the clichés about freedom which are conveniently ignored when Britain does not consider her interests are involved, and are pressed with all the conviction of moral and gentlemanly superiority when their interests are considered involved. Impetus has been given by the genuine hatred of Hitler and of what he and his Nazi gangsters stand for. I fully share the detestation of Nazi and all other totalitarian barbarism. Sentiment as well as reason leads me to wish to see Britain retain as strong and secure a place in the world as actual realities make conceivable. I have therefore no exception whatever to such factors entering into the deciding of Canadian policy, along with equal consideration of the special factors in Canada's North American position. My objection is to our fate being determined without any participation or agreement on the part of the Government of Canada in the commitments made, being determined by policies and decisions of other governments without even the polite formality of consultation. Whatever the outcome of this war, if it comes, and whatever portion of our present civilization and freedom and our present empires and

maps of Europe, survive it, it might at least be assumed that this subordinate relationship will not survive. (But we assumed this in 1919).

But it is not merely a question of Canadian interests or Canadian independence. It is a question of British competence, of the wisdom of the guides who have assumed control of our destinies. Does the record of London policy give ground for the policy 'Trust Mother'?

People in Canada are shouting 'Stand by Britain' without pausing to consider where she stands and how long she can stand there. They are shouting 'Stop Hitler', without pausing to consider if it is wise to be maneuvered into fighting him in his own back yard, into choosing the very field where he is strongest and Britain and France are weakest.

Second:

Is there, then, ground for assurance that Britain's interests or Europe's interests have been served by the course pursued? Has peace been assured in Eastern Europe?

Grant that it was desirable to offer resistance to Hitler, has British policy in recent months been such as to ensure blocking of his aims without recourse to war, or if war came, to ensure a reasonable hope of attaining the objectives set and fulfilling the commitments given?

A stiffening of the course followed up to Munich, rapid and effective rearming, cooperation with France in the defence of Western Europe, would have been policies sanctioned by long experience and consistent with her present power and her place in the world picture of today. Instead, London plunged suddenly last March into a policy of guaranteeing the status quo in Eastern Europe, a policy of offering rapid and for the most part unilateral guarantees to all small Eastern European countries which would accept them. The reasons for this extraordinary shift of policy, as previously indicated, were mixed, good and bad:

- i. a widespread detestation of Nazi arrogance and ruthlessness;
- ii. a fear that if unchecked in the East, Germany would turn stronger in the West;
- iii. An uneasy sense that Britain was losing the prestige enjoyed in the days when it was easily the world's predominant power;
- iv. Bitter attacks by the Left on Mr. Chamberlain's appeasement policy;
- v. pique on the part of Mr. Chamberlain on Hitler's betrayal of his Munich pledges;
- vi. revolt of the Foreign Office against domination by No. 10 Downing Street and Horace Wilson;
- vii. backseat driving from Washington.

From the night of March 17th, when on a Rumanian false alarm telegrams were sent to practically every Eastern European state asking it to join in resistance to Hitler, down to the present, efforts to

build a stop Hitler wall in the east have continued without ceasing.

What have been the results?

1. Two military camps have been lined up in Europe; definite positions have been publicly taken and little room left for compromise or negotiations.
2. The only allies garnered by Britain and France after all these efforts have been Poland and Turkey.
3. Commitments have also been given to Rumania and Greece, which are military liabilities and not assets, and which asked Britain not to make it appear they wanted protection against Germany; Rumania has lately announced she will not lift a finger to help her co-guaranteed power, Poland.
4. The Foreign Office learned apparently to its surprise that most small states in West or North or Central Europe feared a guarantee as involving a violation of the neutrality they were fervently determined to maintain.
5. Equally to its surprise the Foreign Office found the eastern states profoundly suspicious of Russia and unwilling to accept a Soviet Bear's embraces.
6. Poland's readiness to accept a compromise has been lessened. In March, after Prague and Memel, but before the British guarantee, a British Minister, Hudson, was assured by the Polish Government, 'Poland would fight if attacked, but not for Danzig'. Now Poland has declared she will fight against any material change in Danzig, and Polish extremists shout for the conquest of East Prussia.
7. Germany's terms to Poland have hardened. Instead of return of Danzig and 'a little corridor across the Corridor', the return of all former German and Austrian territory will likely be demanded, and possibly some measure of political subordination to the Reich.
8. Danzig has become in all but name a part of Germany, stiffened by German soldiers and armaments and with a Nazi Gauleiter made head of the state.
9. Italy has been riveted to Germany as a dubious and very junior but hopelessly committed partner.
10. Italy has seized Albania, giving her control of the Adriatic and a basis of threat against Jugo-Slavia, Greece and Turkey; her nuisance power in the whole Mediterranean has been increased.
11. The German people were convinced they were being encircled; they may now be convinced Hitler can win again by the mere threat of war.
12. Above all, Russia, instead of joining the 'Stop Hitler' alliance, has practically joined the German camp. It was clear at the start that Britain and France could not implement their pledges of protection to Poland without Russia's help. It was equally clear the tactics adopted by London of giving a panic pledge to Poland without assurance of such help or even any consultation about its possibility, put all the cards in Russia's hands. The results have been even worse than might have been anticipated. Hitler's coup of last week has guaranteed him against fighting on two fronts; it has assured him of unlimited supplies and weakened the possibility of subduing Germany by an economic

blockade; it has scared every small state in Eastern Europe, except Turkey thus far, given a tremendous blow to British diplomatic prestige in their unawareness of what was going on, and strengthened American isolationist sentiment of ‘a pox on both your houses’. There is a definite offset in Japan’s sudden realisation she is out on a limb herself in the Far East. A further sour grapes consolation can be found in the view that after all Russia would not have been a trustworthy ally. But this goes to the root of Britain’s March policy: even if effective for the moment, there was no hope of permanent peace or even permanent war alliance with such uncertain and unstable countries as Russia or Poland or Rumania or Greece.

The net result of the five months of the New Policy is that instead of being deterred, Hitler has been strengthened and hardened. There is as yet no indication that the Anglo-French maneuvres in Eastern Europe will save peace - except through Polish surrender.

Third:

Not only is there no likelihood of peace being preserved by the Polish guarantee; there is no likelihood of Polish independence being preserved if war comes.

How can Britain and France protect Poland? They cannot send her military aid across Germany or through the neutral states; they can give little effective naval help in the Baltic; some air squadrons might be sent, but their aid could not be decisive. Lloyd George blurted out the truth on May 8: ‘Any member of the Imperial General Staff who advised the Government it could fulfil its new commitments to Poland and Rumania without the assistance of Soviet Russia should be confirmed in an asylum.’ (not that any General did so advise). Liddell Hart, the foremost military expert in England, and a strong opponent of ‘appeasement’, declares effective immediate protection of the Eastern European guaranteed states could come only from Russia; little direct military aid could be given.

Conceivably, in the event of an overwhelming victory over Germany, Poland could be set up again. But such a victory could only be secured by smashing the Siegfried line. There is as little chance of that as there is of Germany’s smashing the Maginot line. In other words, the defense has a tremendous advantage - Hart says two or three to one. Germany’s tactics would be to try to overrun the former German parts of Poland, then say she was ready for peace and throw on Britain and France the onus of starting the bombing of cities.

The weakest spot in the Axis is of course Italy. She could do great immediate damage in the narrow seas of the Mediterranean, but Britain and France should be able to smash her after some months. But what if at the start Italy remains formally neutral, with Germany’s consent, lending concealed support and depriving France and Britain of their easiest target? In that case, action in Poland or against the Siegfried line, or air raids on Germany are the only military objectives left. Strong economic pressure and naval blockades could be put into force and would help to give England and France success, but could they restore Poland – their announced immediate objectives?

These hurried comments are far from a complete or balanced survey. If war comes, we must all in our several ways do our utmost to ensure victory and what lies beyond victory, but nothing is to be gained by glossing over the failures and follies of recent months.¹

Skelton's objections were not borne solely out of a desire to avoid war, but primarily to avoid war because of military weakness, and to maintain national sovereignty.

In the spring of 1940 Skelton wrote of his concerns again with equal force after Eastern Europe had fallen under Nazi-Soviet domination. He wrote:

The imminent failure of the present Allied attempt to dislodge Germany from Norway, compels serious consideration. We can no longer shut our eyes to the fact that the war has steadily gone against us since September, and that, with present forces, policies and objectives, there is no certainty or even likelihood that it will soon turn for the better. The Poland which France and Britain guaranteed has been conquered, divided, crushed; Finland defeated after heroic resistance, the small Baltic states occupied by Russian forces, and Denmark taken over in a day without a gun being fired. Now nine-tenths of the populated area, ports, railways and industrial establishments of Norway are in German hands. Britain and France face the possibility of a second Gallipoli, which would damage their prestige and give the enemy new bases for direct attack. Guaranteed countries like Rumania are calling Nazi sympathizers back to favour. Most threatening of immediate effects is the danger that Mussolini, that "Knight in shining (black)mail", may decide that Germany is winning all along the line and that he must go in at once if there is to be any loot left...

Faced by a rearming and expanding Nazi Germany, several policies were possible. Germany might have been invaded and disarmed; but public opinion in the whole English speaking world was against that. The attempt might have been made, and was made, to turn the League of Nations into an alliance of states obliged to impose military or economic sanctions against an aggressor country; but the Manchurian and Chaco experience showed that England was not prepared to accept this role, the Ethiopian incident showed that France was not, and the present war, that small neutrals are not – as Canada had from the first believed they would not.

The policy actually adopted by the United Kingdom in the thirties was "to avoid making commitments in advance, to prevent the organization of Europe into two or three opposing camps, to refrain from aid or intervention in any area or dispute not of immediate and vital concern to her own interests, and to try to

¹ NAC, MG 26 J4, Reel C-4288, Volume 228, No. C155079; Memorandum by Skelton to Mackenzie King, 23 August 1939.

localize or draw a ring around any conflict that did break out". In the latter half of the thirties this policy was supplemented by an extensive rearmament programme. In other words, detachment, appeasement, rearmament. The policy was a realistic one, and with more energy might have succeeded. Italy might have been detached from Germany by timely concessions and a show of friendliness. A superiority in the air could have been secured by better organization of the vast resources available. But there was a tired and fumbling note in all the MacDonald-Baldwin period, and later, in the Spanish conflict of Eden-Chamberlain days, British interests and prestige were needlessly and disastrously thrown away. A large section of British public opinion opposed this policy when it found its most dubious expression in the Munich settlement. Six months later the occupation of Prague turned the scale.* There was a strong case for distrust of Hitler's policies and promises; a strong case for taking steps to safeguard Eastern Europe against his ambitions, whether by heightened armament, dependable alliances or adjustment of European grievances. Unfortunately, in the sharp reaction from appeasement, the British government plunged suddenly and blindly and without notice or discussion into a policy of challenging Hitler in Eastern Europe and offering guarantees to any and every Eastern European state that would join an anti-German bloc.

That policy was fundamentally unsound. There was "little prospect of building up a stable and dependable alliance from the states of Eastern Europe divided by race and religion, backward industrially, socially feudal or bolshevist, with not a morally reliable statesman at the helm in a single case". Given the map of Europe and the Maginot-Siegfried lines, Britain and France could give little help if an alliance were formed, and would receive less. "The candidates for the new collective security were sought in the

* In a memorandum of the 10th May the reasons for this sudden shift of policy were stated to have been:

- (a) a widespread dislike of the internal and external policies of the Axis powers – their arrogance, intolerance, brutality, and a feeling that war itself would not be worse than constant tension;
 - (b) the fear that if Germany remained unchecked in Eastern Europe, she would become a menace to Western Europe and the United Kingdom itself;
 - (c) an uneasy sense among the people of the United Kingdom of vanishing power and prestige;
 - (d) pique on the part of Mr. Chamberlain who saw crumbling his Munich triumph and his forecasts of "peace in our time";
 - (e) revolt of the Foreign Office against control by No. 10 Downing Street and Horace Wilson;
 - (f) the backseat driving from Washington.
-

hedges and byways of Europe, selected not according to their moral steadfastness or their military strength but according to the dangers of their position and in some cases their inability to help themselves or anyone else. To challenge Germany in her strongest and Britain's weakest front and to rely on fickle Beck for stability, Carol for moral fervour and Stalin and Metaxal for support of democracy, is another Charge of the Light Brigade". Only in one way could this Eastern policy have had any chance of success - by securing in advance the firm support of Russia. But by making sudden and public far-reaching commitments which it could not implement except by Russia's aid, without securing or even discussing any such assurance in advance, the British Government put itself at Russia's mercy". These are not post-fact conclusions; the comments quoted were made in April and July. By August it was apparent that most of the small Eastern powers feared Russia as much as Germany, and that Russia was taking advantage of the Anglo-French blunder to make better terms with Germany and encourage the Western powers to destroy one another while she remained aloof and gained in strength.

"The fact is", as was observed early in the summer of 1939, "that the advocates of the New Policy have overestimated the power and prestige of Britain (and France) in the present day world. They have failed to recognize the change in world centres of material power in the past generation, or the decline of their former prestige and accepted leadership. They have consequently extended their forces and their diplomacy too thin, 'exposed too wide a surface'." The result was to line Europe up into "two military camps, to take publicly positions from which there could be no retreat and little room for compromise or negotiation".

Was there any alternative to accepting Hitler's domination on the one hand, or challenging him in Eastern Europe on the other? There clearly was: "a stiffening of the course followed up to Munich, rapid and effective rearming, co-operation with France in the defence of Western Europe", leaving Germany and Russia to balance and hold each other in Eastern Europe, and making every effort to co-operate with the United States.

The New Policy of March, 1939, failed to avert war in Europe. It failed to protect Poland or the Baltic or Scandinavian states.

In executions the British and French peoples have shown determination and made great efforts and great sacrifices. They have kept war out of their own lands. They control the oceans. They are meeting a measure of success in blockading Germany. Turkey remains faithful. But they have not yet attained superiority in the air, and unfortunately, recent events have shown that air power exercised from nearby bases can challenge and perhaps block sea power.²

² NAC, RG 25, Reel T-1791, File 353; Memorandum by Skelton, 30 April 1940.

After the fall of France Skelton reversed his position and supported the government as he felt that the threat posed by a German-Italian-Soviet bloc was too dangerous to ignore. Skelton died in January 1941, and few voices emerged subsequently within the department of External Affairs to offer such cautious advice.

Many other Ottawa officials felt that the creation of a new world order encompassing all nations would make war a thing of the past, and this ideology laid the foundation for the establishment of the United Nations. Unfortunately, the universal peace promised in a new world order could only be achieved through war, but this Orwellian contradiction did not deter its adherents. Escott Reid was another External Affairs official who serves as a useful example in demonstrating how faith and hope helped to shape some of the thinking on this issue. His frustration was rooted much as it was for many others in the experience of the previous conflict. War profiteers greatly benefited during the First World War as Reid rightly noted in one of his memoranda. A third of the shells used in 1918 came from Canada while eighty percent of the government's war loans were subscribed by the wealthiest in the country. 'There were in Canada, in Lloyd George's phrase, many men in Canada whose hands were dripping with the fat of sacrifice'.³ But Reid and others wholeheartedly believed that this kind of exploitation and manipulation could be eliminated by fighting another war.

Strange thoughts on this were expressed in 1944. Disturbed over persistent American opposition to the loss of sovereignty that was required for global governance, Reid admiringly recalled Roosevelt's deceitfulness during a Boston campaign speech in October 1940 where he proclaimed that American

³ NAC, MG 31, E 46, Escott Reid Papers, Volume 27, File CIIA 1939-1941; Memorandum by Escott Reid, 12 February 1939.

boys would not be sent to fight in foreign wars.⁴ At that time he wrote, ‘Some competent observers do not take these declarations seriously. They think that the President is making them with his tongue in his cheek’.⁵ At the time Reid was hoping that Roosevelt might do more to sell the idea of the United Nations to the public. Expressing his views in true revolutionary zeal he noted, ‘there is a danger that if the American people are subjected to a five-month long process of miseducation on the necessities of an international order, they will need another war to purge themselves of the ill effects of the miseducation.’⁶ In collaboration with the very supportive wealth he was previously critical of, he and his associates pushed ahead.

Ultimately, the goal was the establishment of a world government.⁷ After the bombing of Hiroshima, Reid expressed his fears on this subject to his wife the following day.

I am in despair today about the kind of world our children are going to live in. I have hoped against hope until today that the atomic bomb would not be discovered. Now all the vistas of titanic gloom of chasmed fears open up ... I just haven’t enough faith in man or God to believe that we have enough time or intelligence or goodwill to reach the goal of world government before we obliterate civilization in another war. But there’s nothing to do except to live as if it were possible, and to try one’s best to make it possible.⁸

Reid and his colleagues at External Affairs sought to end war by centralizing power on a global scale despite all the evidence to the contrary that experiments along these lines had already failed both in the Soviet Union as well as in Nazi

⁴ Thomas Fleming, *The New Dealers’ War: Franklin D. Roosevelt and the War Within World War II* (New York: Perseus Books, 2001), p. 2.

⁵ NAC, MG 31, E 46, Escott Reid Papers, Volume 5, File 4; Memorandum by Escott Reid, 16 June 1944.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ NAC, RG 25, Volume 3116, File No. 4526-40C; Memorandum by Under-Secretary of State Norman Robertson, 16 February 1945. See also David Rockefeller, *Memoirs* (New York: Random House, 2002), p. 405, and Arthur Salter, *Security: Can we Retrieve it?* (London: MacMillan, 1939), pp. 106.

⁸ NAC, MG 31, E 46, Escott Reid Papers, Volume 13, File Atomic Bomb; Letter by Escott Reid, 7 August 1945.

Germany. Centralization of power had resulted in the deaths of untold millions, often at the hands of their own government, but in the estimation of Reid the only real flaw with the concept was that it had not yet been sufficiently expanded in scale. The fundamental problem at the root of this globalist ideology, however, went unaddressed. Once the machinery of global government could be fastened in place the danger of a usurpation of its power by a despotic few or even a single ruthless individual could emerge just as it did before. Although the peaceful rhetoric sounded hopeful, the evidence at that time was abundant to indicate that the price of utopia could very well be enslavement, state sponsored terror and genocide.

Appendix 2

The Potential for Peace in China

In May 1941 US Army Assistant Military Attaché Lieutenant Colonel David Barrett commented on the potential for long term Japanese success in China if they were to modify their military and economic tactics. Barrett noted that given sufficient time, peace would have likely developed across China if the Japanese had moderated the conduct of their troops and allowed a restoration of trade. As a long term observer of China, Barrett commented on this issue repeatedly. Two examples are cited here to illustrate why the Allies were concerned about the potential for Japanese victory by default in China. The first example was written in May 1941:

There were few military operations of importance carried on in China during the month except the occupation of some important coast cities which the Japanese could have closed at any time but which they have for various reasons permitted to remain open. Through these cities considerable export and import trade has been carried on with the full knowledge of, and doubtless, with considerable pecuniary benefit to the Japanese military and naval authorities. The principal cities occupied were Foochow (April 22nd), Taichow (April 21st), Wenchow (April 21st), and Ningpo (April 20th). Taichow and Wenchow have since been reoccupied by the Chinese, but from all appearances the Japanese have no intention of allowing the Chinese to regain Foochow and Ningpo.

Chinese military circles state that while the loss of these important coast cities will make it more difficult than in the past to get commodities in and out of China, it is impossible for the Japanese to effectively blockade the entire coast and ways to continue imports and exports can always be found. From past experience this statement would appear to be true, particularly as it is known that both the Japanese Army and Navy are willing to permit some trade to go on, provided their palms are sufficiently greased. An American who is now acting head of the Salt Gabelle states that arrangements have recently been completed with the Japanese to ship 60,000 piculs of salt from Hainan Island to Kwangchowan in Japanese Army transports. Kwangchowan is under lease to France, but as soon as the salt is landed it will be turned over to distributors who will sell it in the interior of China where it will help the people continue the war

against Japan. The report, which there is every reason to believe is correct, is an excellent indication of the venality of the Japanese Army or Navy, or possibly of both. Transporting salt in this way is certainly not the act of a Samurai or of the Japanese military and naval heroes who fought the war with Russia.

Considerably less pleasing to friends of China is another report from the source noted above to the effect that high Chinese military leaders in Kwangsi are now selling quantities of antimony, wolfram, and molybdenum to Japanese buyers in Kiangsi and are also exporting tin to Indo-China. If this latter report is correct, it supports to some extent an opinion previously expressed by the writer to the effect that the present war between China and Japan may not end in a military victory for either nation, but the Japanese may eventually come out on the winning side because a gradual restoration of trade relations between free and occupied China, and thus indirectly with Japan, may be accompanied by a gradual melting away of the fighting fronts and a slow disintegration of the Chinese armies which will permit the Japanese to withdraw most of their forces from China and still hold the best parts of the country. Trade, as the writer has remarked before, is the life blood of the Chinese, and if the Japanese Army had the foresight to permit enough of it to be carried on between occupied and free China, results favorable to Japan might long since have been attained which the use of no amount of armed force could have brought about.¹

Barrett was somewhat prophetic in his analysis.

Three years later during the opening stages of one of the most successful Japanese offensives in China (Operation Ichigo), Colonel Barrett returned to this subject while serving in a leadership position with the US Army's Z-Force headquartered in Kweilin (China-Burma-India Theatre).

A year or two before Pearl Harbor, when I was stationed in Chungking as Assistant Military Attaché to the American Embassy, China, I reported to the A. C. of S., G-2, War Department, that in my opinion there was little chance China would ever make a formal negotiated peace with Japan, particularly as long as Chiang Kai-shek remained in power. I felt at that time, however, there was a danger that Chinese forces might gradually cease to fight the Japanese, the fronts would melt away, and with the resumption of more or less normal trade conditions between Occupied and Free China, the difference between the two areas might eventually, for all intents and purposes, cease to exist, even though there might be maintained in these areas separate governments nominally hostile to one another.

¹ NARA, RG 165, USMIR, Reel 3; Report No. 16 by Lieutenant Colonel David Barrett, 1 May 1941.

3. It is a fact that trade is carried on openly and freely between Occupied and Free China, and stations of the Chinese Maritime Customs have been established at many points to collect revenue on the goods coming in, in order to eke out the already sadly depleted national income. Many of the agencies carrying on trade with occupied China are directly controlled by military leaders in areas adjacent to enemy territory. Such practice on the part of those supposedly fighting the Japs is perhaps justified on the grounds that the military must seek some means of securing enough money to feed and clothe the forces for which the National Government makes such pitifully inadequate provision.

4. In a very few areas in which occupied and free territory are contiguous is an active front maintained. The usual Chinese practice is to stay well away from the most advanced Japanese positions and to refrain from any operations, even patrolling, in the no-man's land between them and the enemy. The Japs have no objection to this practice as it enables them to conserve their forces in forward areas. The Japanese Army, moreover, is perfectly willing to turn an honest or dishonest penny by exactions on the trade passing through lines.

5. Accordingly, two of the conditions which I feared might result in a virtual peace with Japan have already at least been partially fulfilled in many areas. A third danger which did not occur to me at the time I made the report, would be for the Japanese Army to adopt a policy of treating the Chinese with some degree of fairness and decency. The Chinese are heartily sick of the war, for which no one can blame them much, and they long above all things for peace, order, and a chance to carry on business. If they found the Japanese in occupied areas willing to treat them even fairly well and to allow them even half a chance to make some money, many Chinese would undoubtedly feel that there would be little to be gained by prolonging the already too long continued struggle.

6. I still think that the chances are few that the Japanese Army, long renowned for stupidity everywhere except on the field of battle, would have sense enough to realize how much they could gain by decent treatment of the Chinese. The report in the Ta Kung Pao may not be correct. The conciliatory gestures, if they have actually been made, may be merely a potently hypocritical gesture accompanied by no real change in the treatment of the conquered people. I believe, however, that conditions in occupied China should be closely watched for any evidence of a wide spread policy of good treatment of the Chinese by the Japanese Army. Should such a policy be put into effect, it would call for the most drastic counter measures on the part of the United States and England.²

² NARA, RG 493, Entry 531, Box 51, Z Force Operations Adjutant General; Report by Colonel David Barrett, 20 May 1944.

With the neutralization of large segments of the Chinese army during 1944 his predictions were proven correct, but by then it was far too late in the war for the Japanese to gain any long term benefit.

Appendix 3

Covert British Support to China via Hong Kong

The embargo of fuel and spare parts to China from Hong Kong was approved by the Cabinet in July 1940 when the Burma Road was closed but this had little impact on actual business. Significant shipments of military supplies continued until the colony was attacked in December 1941. A letter written by a Mr. S. Caine to Mr. G.C. Clarke of the Asiatic Petroleum Company explains how widespread this covert activity was and the effect it had on local civil authorities.

16 October 1941

Dear Clarke,

I understand that James, at the meeting of the Foreign Office on the 1st October about oil supplies for occupied China, undertook to ask the Governor of Hong Kong for a report on the amount to which quantities of oil are now reaching Free China from that colony.

2. The question of illicit exports of oil from Hong Kong to China is one which has been engaging our attention on defence grounds for a considerable time. The prohibition of such exports is a legacy of the restrictions on the export to China of certain categories of war material (including oil) from Hong Kong and Burma imposed in 1940. The restrictions on these exports via the Burma Road itself were of course withdrawn after three months, but for political reasons in the main, it was decided to maintain the restrictions in Hong Kong in order not to provoke Japan by permitting what was expected to be at best merely a trickle of war material, insufficient to add appreciably to China's powers of resistance.

3. In the meantime, the Governor of Hong Kong has reported that he had learnt privately that the amount of petrol and aviation spirit smuggled out of the Colony in the first six months of the present year exceed 1,500,000 gallons. The amount getting through to Free China was unknown to him, but he considered that it was certainly very large.

The Governor has been pressing for the removal of the ban on such exports on the grounds that the considerable evasion of the prohibition which has already taken place adds to the corruption of the subordinate officials of the Government and lays the Government itself open to the accusation that it is 'playing fast and loose' with its own orders. He estimates further that the four C.N.A.C. freight planes now carrying cargo to China could, if the ban was removed, convey 75,000 gallons of aviation spirit monthly. The Governor has been supported in his representations by His Majesty's Ambassador in

China, but the proposal to remove the prohibition has been opposed by His Majesty's Ambassador at Tokyo, who has explained that his main apprehension arises from the exposed position of Hong Kong and the close proximity of Japanese naval and military forces. He feels that if the Colony were to resume exports of these materials and generally to seek by such means as are open to them to act as base of supplies to the Chinese Government, the danger of some incident provoked by the local Japanese forces would be a real one. Should the Japanese Government be thus presented with a fait accompli, they would certainly, in his view, support their local forces and general hostilities would result. The danger of a locally provoked incident is, in fact, greater in the case of Hong Kong than in that of any other British possessions in the Far East. In our view the arguments put forward by Sir R. Craigie seem to transcend in importance the Governor's arguments in favour of removing the embargo, and we have withheld authorisation of the rescinding of the restrictions.

I might mention that the question has been also indirectly considered by the Chiefs of Staff since the Commander-in-Chief Far East had proposed that the restriction should be removed as part of measures to be taken as palliatives in the event of a Japanese attack on the Burma Road being successful or partially successful. The Chiefs of Staff, however, did not recommend the lifting of the embargo even in these circumstances, as in their view it was unlikely materially to improve China's ability to operate and was almost certain to lead to incidents which might result in war. The War Cabinet subsequently approved the report by the Chiefs of Staff in which this recommendation was made.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Sterndale Bennett at the Foreign Office, Lieutenant Colonel F.C. Scott, M.O.10, at the War Office and to Bridgman at the Petroleum Department.

Yours sincerely,

S. Caine.¹

Governor Geoffry Northcote raised this issue from Hong Kong and in London following his departure from the colony in the summer of 1941 but the policy remained unaltered and military supplies continued to enter China from Hong Kong unofficially until the start of the Pacific War.²

¹ TNA, FO 371/27664 F 10950/218/10; Letter by Mr. S. Caine to Mr. G.C. Scott (Asiatic Petroleum Company), 16 October 1941.

² TNA, CO 967/70; Letter by Governor Geoffry Northcote to Lord Moyne, 9 June 1941. See also TNA, FO 371/27653 F 7186/188/10; Telegram No. 750 by Governor Sir Geoffry Northcote, 28 July 1941.

Appendix 4

Leon Trotsky: Assassination Politics

and the War in the Far East

Stalin's fear of a British withdrawal from either Europe or the Far East also increased his determination to strengthen his political influence internationally but by mid 1940 many on the British Left and others within government had finally found Stalin to be a hated and dangerous enemy.¹ Foreign Office Diplomatic Adviser to the Government Robert Vansittart noted how at this stage it was just as necessary to destroy 'Stalin and his pseudo-Communism' as it was to destroy Hitler.² Clement Attlee and Arthur Greenwood were similarly disposed and stood firmly against treating with Stalin.³ Against growing opposition to his leadership of the international communist movement Stalin took several steps to enhance his position. One method chosen in an attempt to secure greater cooperation from Britain and elsewhere was to have Leon Trotsky assassinated. This order was issued in March 1939 but the assassination did not finally succeed until 20 August 1940.⁴ With Trotsky out of the way and with his supporters eliminated during the Red Army purges there were no alternative figures to lead communist opposition against Hitler for the British Left to support, either in the Soviet Union or abroad. With Trotsky dead the Left could not afford to abandon Stalin. The NKVD agent

¹ Max Eastman, 'The Character and Fate of Leon Trotsky', *Foreign Affairs*, 19(2) 1941: 332-342, p. 333.

² Sir Curtis Keeble, *Britain, the Soviet Union and Russia* (London: MacMillan Press, 2000), p. 161.

³ David Carlton, *Churchill and the Soviet Union* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 75.

⁴ Anatoli Sudoplatov and Pavel Sudoplatov, *Special Tasks: the Memoirs of an Unwanted Witness - A Soviet Spymaster* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1994), pp. 64, 77.

responsible for organizing the assassination was Pavel Sudoplatov and he noted in his memoirs Stalin's reasoning behind the order.

Trotsky should be eliminated within a year, before war inevitably breaks out. Without the elimination of Trotsky, as the Spanish experience shows, when the imperialists attack the Soviet Union we cannot rely on our allies in the international Communist movement. They will face great difficulties in fulfilling their international duty to destabilize the rear of our enemies by sabotage operations and guerrilla warfare if they have to deal with treacherous infiltrations by Trotskyites in their ranks.⁵

Interference with the Burma Road was precisely the kind of opposition that Stalin would not tolerate by his enemies on the Left and Trotsky was killed one month after its closure.

In what seemed at the time the unlikely eventuality of a war between Germany and the Soviet Union, Trotsky's death helped to ensure that Stalin's enemies in Britain would be unable to wait for the destruction of his government and reinsert Trotsky into any rump Soviet state, just as had been done in 1917 following the Menshevik's internment in Canada.⁶ Trotsky was held for a one month period in 1917 while returning to Russia from New York aboard the S.S. *Kristianiafford*. He and his family were forcibly removed from the ship while docked at Halifax on 3 April 1917.⁷ That same day Vladimir Lenin arrived in Vyborg following his famous train ride through Germany.⁸ With \$10,000 on hand British authorities knew of Trotsky's intention to travel to Russia for the purpose of fomenting revolution against the new Provisional Government headed by

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 67.

⁶ NAC, MG 26-H, Reel C-4364, Borden Papers, Volume 152, No. 81547; Letter by E.L. Beurerich (illegible) to Sir George Foster, 14, May 1917. See also 'Britain Lost Chance to Halt Russian Revolution', *Telegraph*, 5 July 2001; and 'MI5 Detained Trotsky on Way to Revolution', *Guardian*, 5 July 2001.

⁷ Leon Trotsky, *My Life: An Attempt at an Autobiography* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975), p. 290.

⁸ Orlando Figes, *A People's Tragedy: The Russian Revolution, 1891-1924* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1996), p. 384.

Prince Georgii Lvov (and later by Alexander Kerensky).⁹ He was interned at a camp at Amherst Nova Scotia until 29 April 1917 when he was released under the orders of the Admiralty.¹⁰ One possible reason for this may have been a British hope to use the Mensheviks as a way of neutralizing the German financed Bolsheviks and Lenin. According to Orlando Figes, Trotsky ‘still harboured typically Menshevik doubts about Lenin’s strict centralism and extremism. It was not until July 1917 that he finally joined the Bolshevik Party, and only then, as he put it, because the Bolsheviks were, “becoming less Bolshevik”.’¹¹ A full explanation on British motives requires additional research. More on this can be found from the sources listed below.

NAC, MG 26 H, Volume 152, Reel C-4364; Trotsky, 1919.

NAC, RG 13, Volume 234, File 1919-676.

NAC, RG 25, Volume 1206, File 1706; Trotsky, 1917.

Leon Trotsky. *My Life: An Attempt at an Autobiography*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975.

Silver Cameron, ‘When Trotsky Was Interned In Amherst, N.S.’, *Canadian Geographic*, 108 (2) 1998: 60-66.

William Rodney, ‘Broken Journey: Trotsky in Canada, 1917.’ *Queen’s Quarterly*, 74 1967: 649-665.

Antony Sutton, *Wall Street and the Bolshevik Revolution*, New Rochelle, New York: Arlington House, 1974.

‘MI5 Detained Trotsky on Way to Revolution’, *Guardian*, 5 July 2001.

‘Britain Lost Chance to Halt Russian Revolution’, *Telegraph*, 5 July 2001.

⁹ NAC, RG 25, Volume 1206, File 1917-1706; Telegram No. 101 by Captain O.M. Makins to Admiralty, 29 March 1917; and NAC, RG 25, Volume 1206, File 1917-1706; Letter by Captain O.M. Makins to G.O.C. Halifax, 1 April 1917; and NAC, RG 25, Volume 1206, File 1917-1706; Letter by Undersecretary of State for External Affairs Joseph Pope to Consul Mr. Likatscheff, 10 April 1917.

¹⁰ NAC, MG 26-H, Reel C-4364, Borden Papers, Volume 152, No. 81547; Letter by E.L. Beurerich (illegible) to Sir George Foster, 14, May 1917. See also Antony Sutton, *Wall Street and the Bolshevik Revolution* (New Rochelle, New York: Arlington House, 1974), p. 31.

¹¹ Orlando Figes, *A People’s Tragedy*, p. 296.

Appendix 5

Paying for War

While business boomed the people of Canada paid for their country's war effort in dollars as well as in blood. They continued to pay into the post-war period under the hidden tax of inflation. Canadian Finance Minister James Ilsley once candidly related to Grant Dexter the realities underpinning Canada's monetary policy and how the government preferred to meet its financial obligations. According to Dexter:

He added that the average man didn't know anything about inflation anyhow and if hundreds of millions were borrowed from the banks, only a corporal's guard in the country would understand what it meant. He doubted very much if the business men of the country were half so much afraid of inflation as of taxation.¹

The day after final Cabinet approval was granted for the deployment of C Force Mackenzie King would self-servingly note in his diary: 'It is not safe to trust bankers which have to do with human nature and human forces.'² That, however, was the path he chose to follow.

¹ NAC, MG 30 D45, Reel M-79; Memorandum by Dexter, 9 April 1941.

² NAC, Diaries of William Lyon Mackenzie King; 3 October 1941.

Appendix 6

A California Connection

The exact dates of US-Canada consultations for Hong Kong are not clear but there are indications some meetings were conducted in September 1941 following General Grasett's discussion with the Chiefs of Staff in London. The scope of US-Canadian cooperation in China may also have included aid to the Chinese air force. By 1942 a few Chinese pilots were already being trained in Canada at private facilities located in British Columbia.¹ But as early as January 1941 James Roosevelt contacted Mackenzie King to help him on an urgent matter of business by way of a letter introducing Joseph Plosser.² Both Plosser and Roosevelt were involved with a private company conducting pilot training in Culver City, California, and presumably they were in need of aircraft. As with other military hardware, Canadian produced aircraft were available.³ On 23 January, the President's son requested that Mackenzie King help Plosser meet those in Canada with whom he could coordinate to get their new facility underway. He wrote:

Some friends of mine have started a company in which I am interested and whose purpose is so directly connected with the national defense of our two Countries ... This group to which I refer has organized a company to train pilots in California ... I am giving this letter of introduction to Mr. Joseph B. Plosser, who is the practical operating head of the company and who is anxious to prove that he has the facilities for co-operating in a Canadian program. Inasmuch as I do not know who are the proper authorities in the Dominion to refer him to, would it be asking too much to give him a steer in the right direction and let him sink or swim by the case which he is able to present?⁴

¹ NAC, MG 26 J1, Reel C-6808; Letter by Liu Shih Shun to Pearson, 28 April 1942.

² NAC, MG 26 J1, Reel C-4868; Letter by Roosevelt to Mackenzie King, 23 January 1941.

³ NARA, RG 38, Entry 98, Box 251; Report No. 596-41 by Lt. J. Fleischmann, 12 September 1941.

⁴ NAC, MG 26 J1, Reel C-4868; Letter by Roosevelt to Mackenzie King, 23 January 1941.

This letter came at a time when Chiang Kai Shek and Lauchlin Currie were both requesting aircraft and pilots for China and while Claire Chennault was recruiting personnel and acquiring aircraft for use with the Flying Tigers.⁵

During the spring, a request by Chiang Kai Shek for British assistance in training new Chinese air force pilots was refused in London, as they claimed their own demand for pilots was too pressing and that Far Eastern training facilities were having a difficult time in meeting RAF requirements.⁶ Over the summer and fall, the Flying Tigers were assembled and sent to Rangoon via Hong Kong and Singapore.⁷ Chennault met with most of the men in San Francisco before their embarkation during July and by the end of October they were busy training at their base at Toungoo, Burma.⁸ On 22 September, while many of the Flying Tigers were still travelling to Asia, one hundred twenty potential Chinese pilots and ground crew were awaiting visas in Hong Kong to begin the new Chinese air force pilot training program in America.⁹ This program had already been approved by the War Planning Division (WPD) in mid-July.¹⁰ By September 23, Canadian Minister of Defence J.L. Ralston and Minister of Munitions C.D. Howe had already travelled to Los Angeles on urgent business and on that day, a copy of Dominions Office Telegram No. 162 was dispatched to the Canadian Ministers by

⁵ TNA, FO 371/27596 F 4375/1/10; File cover notation by Scott, 24 May 1941, and TNA, FO 371/27638 F 607/145/10; Telegram No. 58 by Clark Kerr, 5 February 1941. See also Chennault, *Way of a Fighter*, pp. 90-91.

⁶ TNA, FO 371/27596 F 4375/1/10; Gleam telegram No. 54, 23 May 1941 and TNA, FO 371/27596 F 4375/1/10; File note by J.B., 26 May 1941. See also TNA, FO 371/27597 F 5461/1/10; Telegram by Captain Willette, 20 June 1941.

⁷ NARA, RG 165, Entry 184, Box 959; Telegram No. 8 by Mayer, 13 August 1941, and TNA, FO 371/27640 F 5330/145/10; Telegram, 17 June 1941.

⁸ TNA, WO 208/366; Report by Dennys, 25 October 1941. See also Chennault, *Way of a Fighter*, p. 104.

⁹ NARA, RG 319, Entry 57, Box 169, File 1; Telegram by Mayer, 22 September 1941.

¹⁰ NARA, RG 18, Entry 300, Box 934, File Miscellaneous A; Memorandum by R.W. Crawford, 23 September 1941, and NARA, RG 59, LM 65, Reel 21; Report No. 893.2311/2 and 893.2311/3 by Southard, 22 September 1941.

consular courier from Washington.¹¹ This telegram was the official British notification, sent on 19 September 1941, requesting Canadian reinforcements for Hong Kong and the ministers required a copy for their consideration while staying in California.¹² Both were in Ottawa to approve the deployment of C Force during a War Committee meeting held on 2 October but Ralston, and perhaps Howe, returned to California shortly thereafter. Ralston's time in Los Angeles may have then coincided with the arrival of Lord Louis Mountbatten on 8 October following his participation in United States naval exercises held near Hawaii.¹³ In light of the Canadian connection to Culver City these events seem to indicate that Canada may have played a role in the Chinese pilot training plan. Furthermore, it is likely that at least Ralston and perhaps Howe discussed the question of reinforcing Hong Kong with some US officials as well as Mountbatten during September and October. Additional research on this topic is required in order to form more solid conclusions.

¹¹ Laurier Centre of Military Strategic and Disarmament Studies (Waterloo, Canada) [hereafter LCMSDS], Hong Kong Documents; Memorandum of Ralston statement in House of Commons, 21 January 1942. NAC, MG 26 J1, Reel C-4867; Letter by William Munro to Mackenzie King, 29 September 1941.

¹² LCMSDS, Hong Kong Documents; Memorandum of Ralston statement in House of Commons, 21 January 1942.

¹³ LCMSDS, Hong Kong Documents; *Evening Citizen*, 8 October 1941.

Appendix 7

Arvida, Quebec

As elsewhere, interdepartmental rivalry was a problem within the Canadian government and it occasionally disrupted the country's war effort. This was demonstrated during an incident at an aluminum plant located at Arvida, Quebec in July 1941. It is useful to examine this event as it reveals the lengths to which some members of the government were willing to go towards meeting Allied requirements in the months leading up to the reinforcement of Hong Kong.

Being trusted by many within government for his discretion, the Winnipeg reporter Grant Dexter became privy to many of the interests and squabbles existing between the administrative arms of the government. He was able to provide his employer with many insights on bureaucratic turf wars that were common features of the Ottawa establishment. These were related in private correspondence to John Dafoe, his editor at the *Winnipeg Free Press*. Another useful source of information is the diary of the Prime Minister. W.L. Mackenzie King left a lengthy account of the Arvida incident and how a lack of coordination at the Ministerial level resulted in the loss of valuable aluminum production during a crucial period of the war.

Lack of Cabinet cohesion was evident in frequently expressed negative criticism about colleagues. Conflicts were common and the allocation of war material was one area where tensions usually ran high. In March, for example, Minister of Defence James Ralston had become frustrated over delays in delivery of 25-pounder guns from Munitions and Supply, the department headed by C.D.

Howe.¹ Dexter noted that Ralston distrusted Howe's ability to run his department and he was also very critical of Major General Harry Crerar, Chief of the General Staff. He stated that Crerar was a good enough soldier to run the army but was too ambitious and was trying to 'arrogate to himself the whole business' of running the Department of National Defence.² Friction with Munitions and Supply had become quite evident during the summer and fall when Bren guns were allocated for delivery to China originally without Crerar's knowledge.³ This prompted the letter from Howe to Ralston explaining President Roosevelt's involvement in the scheme.⁴ The establishment of the Canadian Allocation Committee in January 1942 was meant to prevent further problems in this area.⁵ Dexter recorded other observations. 'Crerar has surrounded himself with a staff which Ralston described as being as stupid as wooden Indians. He referred in these terms particularly to Col. Burns and Col. Penhill. Ralston likes Ken Stewart but his health is badly broken.'⁶ Some Cabinet members were also critical of Crerar due to his efforts later in the year in pushing for army expansion.⁷

A serious incident which was exacerbated by the lack of cooperation between departments played itself out at Arvida, Quebec on Friday 25 July 1941. Workers at the Aluminum Company of Canada plant began a strike which lasted the weekend, and consequently, aluminum had been allowed to cool in the pots resulting in approximately two and a half million dollars worth of damage and three weeks lost production. Enemy sabotage was suspected but legitimate grievances had been allowed to fester without redress resulting in the inopportune

¹ NAC, MG 30 D 45, Reel M-79; Memorandum by Dexter, 30 March 1941.

² NAC, MG 30 D 45, Reel M-79; Memorandum by Dexter, 25 March 1941.

³ NAC, RG 24, Reel C-5281, File 8865; Memorandum by Crerar, 11 November 1941.

⁴ NAC, RG 24, Reel C-5281, File 8865; Letter by Howe to Ralston, 15 November 1941.

⁵ NARA, RG 160, Entry 116, Box 9, File Canada 1942; Memorandum by W.S. Gaud, 18 October 1942.

⁶ NAC, MG 30 D 45, Reel M-79; Memorandum by Dexter, 25 March 1941.

⁷ NAC, MG 30 D 45, Reel M-79; Memorandum by Dexter, 20 November 1941.

strike. C.D. Howe informed the Prime Minister, ‘That the British as well as ourselves and the United States relied more on this plant for aluminum for aeroplanes than any other concern.’⁸ The three week halt in aluminum production at Arvida was significant because it came at a time when much of the Red Army had been badly damaged and Soviet airpower had been largely destroyed. Aside from Josef Stalin’s demand for a second front in Europe, he also required large quantities of material to rebuild his shattered military forces.⁹ Aluminum for aircraft production was also in great demand in Britain. On 9 September Churchill assured Stalin that he would meet his requirements of 30,000 tons of aluminum, and 5,000 of this was to sail from Canada with the first available shipping.¹⁰

Cabinet conflict diminished chances for an expeditious resolution. At the height of the Arvida incident Howe submitted his resignation to the Prime Minister citing the lack of cooperation from Cabinet colleagues as the reason for the physical damage. Howe wanted troops to have been sent into the plant to restore order and could not get immediate help from Ralston although two companies of militia eventually arrived. Crerar was reported to have rightfully said that the problem was not his responsibility. While time was wasted searching for troops provincial officials such as Quebec Premier, Joseph-Adélard Godbout had already begun to intervene and they relied upon various police agencies to contain the situation. Howe felt that an immediate show of force by the army would have prevented the destruction and because of his less than harmonious relations with Ralston, as well as the legitimate caution of Godbout, he quit and

⁸ NAC, Diaries of William Lyon Mackenzie King; 26 July 1941.

⁹ TNA, CAB 121/464; Telegram by Stalin, 3 September 1941. See also Erickson, *The Road to Stalingrad*, pp. 212, 223, 236.

¹⁰ TNA, CAB 121/464; Telegram by Churchill, 9 September 1941.

left the problem for Mackenzie King to deal with while spending the rest of the weekend at a golf club.¹¹ After consulting with the president of the company, R.E. Powell, and Quebec Treasurer James Mathewson, Mackenzie King noted:

Apparently, there is no outstanding leader, though there is evidence of leadership. Powell had told me that the Union concerned was a Catholic syndicate. Matheson and Godbout made it clear that this organization was not likely to stir up trouble itself. To me, it looked more and more like a case where men had not been dealt with and had let some smouldering situation suddenly burst into flame. Had taken steps which would compel the Company to deal with them. Mathewson said that the situation was well in hand. That the Chief of Police said he would have no difficulty in persuading the men to leave the Plant, but thought it was advisable to wait until Monday to do this, as on Sunday the people of the village would be round about and demonstrations might be staged. I expressed surprise at any delay, but Mathewson said he was in the office with Powell and they both apparently felt that that was the wise course to pursue.¹²

It was not until late Sunday, 27 July, that Mackenzie King was able to contact Howe, and the Prime Minister came to the conclusion that he had been under tremendous strain. He did not accept his resignation and mediated a Cabinet truce on Monday 28 July. Perhaps because of problems such as this, Cabinet members had become more inclined to support the Soviets in other ways when the request for Hong Kong reinforcements was made less than two months later.

¹¹ NAC, Diaries of William Lyon Mackenzie King; 26 July 1941, and 27 July 1941.

¹² NAC, Diaries of William Lyon Mackenzie King; 26 July 1941.

Appendix 8

Mackenzie King's 'Mission to the Orient' in 1909

It was under the Mackenzie King government that official relations were established between China and Canada and this was largely a product of Canadian wartime military and diplomatic support that was extended on behalf of the alliance. Embassies were established in both countries by 1943 and later in the war Canadian officials clarified to Ambassador Victor Odlum part of the reason why they considered it necessary to maintain a presence in Chungking.¹

Since Canada has no exclusive interests in the Pacific it is important that we work as closely as possible with those nations whose objectives are akin to ours. The principal such nation is the United States.²

Weapons sales and the deployment of troops to Hong Kong during 1941 made the establishment of official relations relevant.

Mackenzie King, however, had his own personal experience with China that also helped encourage these developments. In 1909, the then Minister of Labour in the Liberal Government of Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier, represented Canada at the International Opium Commission conference held in Shanghai.³ Mackenzie King's mission at that time was to investigate the possibility of establishing Sino-Canadian relations but Canadian immigration laws and extraterritoriality in China were not conducive policies promoting success. The Chinese revolution and the defeat of the Laurier government at the polls were claimed to have prevented any progress that could have been made between the

¹ NAC, MG 26 J1, Reel C-6814; Telegram by Mackenzie King, 7 November 1942, and NAC, MG 26 J4, Reel H-1476, File China; Memorandum by Robertson, 16 December 1943. See also NAC, RG 25, Volume 3116, File 4526-40C; Report No. 13 by Victor Odlum, 10 June 1943.

² NAC, RG 25, Volume 3116, File 4526-40C; Memorandum, 29 February 1945.

³ NAC, MG 26 J13, W.L. Mackenzie King Private Diary, 'Missions to the Orient', Volume II; 16 February 1909.

two countries at that time.⁴ Nevertheless, Mackenzie King came away from Asia with many prescient observations that he recorded in his diary and related to T.V. Soong during his February 1942 visit to Ottawa.⁵ Soong was appointed as China's Foreign Minister on 23 December 1941.⁶ These comments from 1909 show that the future Prime Minister was not ignorant of Far Eastern affairs and his personal experiences may have encouraged him to support Allied efforts in China during the 1940s.

Mackenzie King first connected with China in Hong Kong on 12 February 1909. He recorded his thoughts in his diary.

Shortly after lunch we came in sight of the main coast of China, and just as the sun was setting drew into the harbour of Hong Kong. It is impossible to over-state the beauty of this harbour. Beyond the gateway through which we passed the sun was setting. To the right arose the hills encircling the bay, terraced by stately constructed dwellings, while in the harbour itself were a multitude of small craft, many ocean-going vessels and the China fleet of the British navy. Twilight had given way to darkness before our anchor was dropped, and the scene of the myriad lights rising from the waters' edge to the summit of the encircling hill was one of great splendour. The whole scene in fact, was thrilling, and not the least pleasing of its many features was the sight of one of the Canadian Pacific Company's steamers, which found its place with other ocean-going vessels in this the greatest shipping port of the world. The first impressions of the mainland are not less impressive and gratifying than those of the harbour. The buildings in the business quarter are massive in size and artistic in design. The sight of ladies and gentlemen being carried in sedan chairs and innumerable rickshas threading about the narrow streets and the variety and splendour of colour gave an artistic touch to the ever varying scene that is most pleasing.⁷

The following day Mackenzie King went further.

If first impressions of Hong Kong harbour and the shore are a surprise and full of beauty they are as nothing compared with the wonderful panoramic view obtained from the summit of the

⁴ NAC, MG 26 J1, Reel C-6807; Letter by Mackenzie King to Howe, 16 March 1942.

⁵ NAC, Diaries of William Lyon Mackenzie King; 28 February 1942.

⁶ NARA, RG 165, Entry 184, Box 962; Far East Situation Report, 26 December 1941.

⁷ NAC, MG 26 J13, W.L. Mackenzie King Private Diary, 'Missions to the Orient', Volume I; 12 February 1909.

mountain which forms the backbone, so to speak, of the island. I called for Mrs. Wilson about 9:00 and we went together to the top of this mountain, making the ascent by inclined railway, which in places must be on an angle of 120 degrees. We were carried in sedan chairs from the hotel to the railway station. At this point we passed a regiment of British and Indian troops. The Mountain Peak Hotel is at the terminus of the railway, and at this point we secured other carriers who took us up several hundred feet higher. From there on we climbed to the top of the summit, which is crowned by an arched tower very similar to that of Arthur's seat at Edinburgh. I have never seen nothing in my life comparable with the view from this point. On the one side we looked down across the thousands of stately buildings which terraced the hill and which from this point look as though they were planted in forests of trees and bowers of flowers, across the roofs of warehouses which border the harbour, to the harbour itself, where the steamer we had left looked the size of Noah's ark. Large vessels plying at a rate of speed sufficient to create a wake, looked like shuttles with a white line like that of a needle behind them. The water was light green in colour, and beyond it rose the mountains of the mainland lying in the sun like flaky banks of tan bark. On the other side the view looked out across over the mountain summits to the distant sea and to land beyond. From every point the scene was one of vastness and magnificence. Coming down the railway we both remarked how like a picture of Greece the scene on the hillsides appeared.⁸

Mackenzie King obviously considered Hong Kong to be a valuable and useful place of beauty.

On the question of Far Eastern affairs, Mackenzie King held many idealistic views and these were expressed often. One example of this was recorded en route, while journeying through Port Said, Egypt, on 6 January 1909. Mackenzie King had commented on the greatness of the Empire and how much of the world it encompassed but he had also taken note of several United States Naval vessels which were at anchor. He wrote:

As I saw the American fleet, I could not help thinking that if the British and American nations could agree on an alliance against injustice they would be all powerful in controlling the peace of the world. This is what we must work for.⁹

⁸ *Ibid*; 13 February 1909.

⁹ *Ibid*; 6 January 1909.

After arriving in the Far East and meeting with many British colonial officials, Mackenzie King made other comments indicating a shared distaste for Japanese methods, especially in Korea, and how their power was still limited despite their recent victory over the Russians in 1905.¹⁰ He wrote that the Japanese were fortunate to gain what they did during the Russo-Japanese War and had the Russians ‘kept up the war longer would certainly have defeated them’.¹¹ He added that the Japanese had been ‘crippled financially and could not have held out longer’.¹² Although impressed by Japan’s victory, Mackenzie King questioned the direction British Far Eastern foreign policy had taken.¹³ ‘I think her [Britain’s] better policy would be to make herself solid with the Chinese and take the stand of conserving the rights which peoples have, instead of allowing any nation to rob other nations of their rights.’¹⁴ Japanese ambitions in Manchuria were a cause of his concern. ‘I think there is nothing truer than that Japan’s policy is to bring about a united Asia with Japan “topside”, but I believe the Chinese so despise the Japanese that they will never consent to any arrangement of this kind’.¹⁵

Once in Tokyo, additional anxiety was expressed over Japanese ambitions aimed farther south. These were recorded following discussions held with American diplomatic officials. Mackenzie King found suspicion ‘to be very strong in American circles everywhere’.¹⁶ He added:

The more I think about the matter, the more I feel that the United States will one of these days be pulled into a conflict with Japan. It will come about through the United States endeavouring to

¹⁰ NAC, MG 26 J13, W.L. Mackenzie King Private Diary, ‘Missions to the Orient’, Volume II; 14 March 1909, and 8 April 1909.

¹¹ *Ibid*; 5 March 1909.

¹² *Ibid*.

¹³ *Ibid*; 4 April 1909, and 5 April 1909.

¹⁴ *Ibid*; 4 April 1909.

¹⁵ *Ibid*.

¹⁶ *Ibid*; 17 April 1909.

champion the cause of China in the matter of the open door in Manchuria. I believe the statesmen of Japan realise this, and are preparing not only for a conflict with Russia or China, but to be in a position to deal with the American navy should that be necessary. I hardly think they hope to do much away from their own shores, unless it be with some island in the Pacific. Certainly I cannot believe that they have any thought of the mainland of North America.¹⁷

Mackenzie King's understanding of Far Eastern affairs was evidently strong from an early date.

Impressions of China's economic situation were also noteworthy.

Mackenzie King observed a nascent industrial strength that could potentially check Russian and Japanese power. After conferring with Sir John Jordan, the British Minister to Korea, he noted: 'If China as many hoped could become a strong country she could clean them both out of Manchuria and retain the country for herself.'¹⁸ Otherwise, 'Unless she gained in strength sufficiently, and it was quite uncertain whether she would, a conflict between Japan and Russia again over Manchuria would be perhaps inevitable.'¹⁹ After travelling down the Yangtze River Mackenzie King arrived at Woochang (Hankow) on 5 March 1909, and he stated that there was no place in China of greater significance. On this occasion he visited a steel works which employed over 22,000 people both in the mill and in the nearby mines.²⁰ He saw that the iron works was manned by 3,000 Chinese with sixteen foreigners present. Chinese essentially managed the entire operation and coolies earned ten dollars per month, or approximately forty cents Canadian.²¹ Steel exported to the USA and Ontario was of good quality and cheaper than North American steel even after the application of tariffs. 'How our

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*; 14 March 1909.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*; 5 March 1909.

²¹ *Ibid.*; 4 March 1909.

labour is ever to compete with a condition such as this reveals, it is impossible to say.²² Offsetting this advantage, however, was Chinese corruption. ‘It begins with the rotten manner in which appointments are made; until China has a reformed Civil Service it is doubtful if she will make any advance.’²³ Taken together, Mackenzie King’s remarks also show that as an economic internationalist he was already predisposed ideologically towards intervention in China should the right conditions arise.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*; 28 February 1909.

Appendix 9

Z is for Zebulon? America and Strategic Planning for Hong Kong

Great emphasis was placed on maintaining secrecy regarding the deployment of C Force to Hong Kong, primarily for the protection of the men during their transit across the Pacific. A well placed Japanese submarine would have made short work of the SS *Awatea*. United States naval protection was therefore provided out of Hawaii and following the safe arrival of the force in Hong Kong the codename Zebulon was sent in order that the deployment could be officially announced.¹

Until that time no public mention was to be made of the deployment of C Force. To the consternation of many in London and elsewhere, however, an article appeared on 11 November 1941 in *The Daily Telegraph*, as seen in figure A9.1,



Figure A9.1: *The Daily Telegraph*, 11 November 1941.

¹ DHH, BIOG L; Lawson, John Kelburne. NAC, RG 25, Volume 2920, File 2670-A-40C-1; Dominions Office Telegram No. 191, 7 November 1941.

heralding advance notice of the deployment five days before their actual arrival.²

Apart from the breach in security, what is more important is how the article reveals American involvement in the decision to reinforce Hong Kong. The short piece is reprinted below.

Hong Kong as Vital Bastion

Plan for Stronger Defences

Britain Consults United States

From Our Special Correspondent
Singapore, Monday.

Reports from Washington today of early concerted plans by Britain and the United States for strengthening their Far Eastern position have caused no surprise here.

Britain, as I indicated in my dispatch last Friday has already decided on important adjustments to her Pacific defence plans. These include the strengthening of certain Far East outposts which it had been thought impossible to hold permanently in the event of war with Japan.

Now one of those outposts – Hong Kong – is likely to become one of the most vital bastions of democratic defence, and America has been consulted about plans for strengthening this British port with men and materials.

Canada's Part

I have the strongest reasons for stating that Canada has also been consulted recently about the Far East position, and is believed to be planning to play her part in defending Hong Kong and other Far East bases.

² NAC, RG 25, Volume 2920, File 2670-A-40C-1; Telegram No. 2132 by Massey, 16 November 1941.

The dispatch of Canadian troops to certain places would not be entirely unexpected. In the light of this the recent references to the Far East by Mr. Mackenzie King, the Canadian Prime Minister, and its importance to Canada should be regarded as significant.

Mr. Mackenzie King stated in the Canadian Parliament last Monday that a way appeared to be opening further penetration south-westerly into Russia – one of the few areas in which Russia and Britain had direct communication by land and sea.

The interpretation put on the statement was that a new British continental front might be opened in Southern Russia.³

Hong Kong was reinforced partly because of decisions made in Washington.

³ ‘Hong Kong as Vital Bastion’, *The Daily Telegraph* (UK), 11 November 1941, p. 1.

Appendix 10

Biographical Sketch of Lieutenant General Sir A. Edward Grasett

Available records on General Grasett's career are less than abundant, but as a central figure in the history of wartime Hong Kong it has been useful to trace some of his background from limited open sources in order to better understand his actions. The Grasett family had a long tradition of military service. His own experience on Asian affairs was quite substantial and he was primarily concerned with intelligence work.

Born in 1888, he was the son of a prominent Toronto importer, Arthur W. Grasett; a partner in the firm Wyld, Grasett & Darling.¹ His uncle was Colonel Henry Grasett, Chief of Police of Toronto from 1886 to 1920 and was commander of the 10th Royal Grenadiers against the forces of Louis Riel at Fish Creek and Batouche during the Northwest Rebellion of 1885.² Grasett's grandfather, also named Henry, was originally born in Gibraltar but arrived in Toronto from Montreal in 1833 when he was a twenty-five-year-old Anglican minister and the population of the town was 9,000. Shortly after his arrival Reverend Grasett was appointed as the garrison chaplain at Old Fort York and ministered there on Sunday mornings. He became the Dean of Toronto in 1867. General Grasett's great-grandfather served in the Peninsular War and was sent to Montreal in 1813 or 1814 to become deputy inspector general of hospitals in Quebec with the rank of Major General.³ The surgeon's father-in-law was Captain Stevenson, an

¹ Castel Hopkins, *The Toronto Board of Trade, a Souvenir* (Toronto: Sabiston Lithographic & Publishing, 1893), p. 201.

² Metropolitan Toronto Reference Library (Canada) [hereafter TRL], 'Biographies of People', Scrapbook Volume 1, Frame No. 481; Newspaper clipping.

³ TRL, 'Biographies of People', Scrapbook Volume 7, Frame No. 602; Newspaper clipping, 5 July 1935.

officer who also served in Spain in the 25th Light Dragoons. Another of Grasett's forefathers was Colonel Green, who fought in the Revolutionary War and was taken prisoner with General Burgoyne in 1779. Many other distant and closer relatives had military experience, and this included his brother Sidney.⁴

Grasett's military career began at Royal Military College in Kingston, Canada, where he became known to his friends as Teddy.⁵ He left Canada for service with the Royal Engineers in either 1909 or 1910 and fought with the British Army in France during the First World War. Physically brave, Grasett was awarded the Distinguished Service Order and the Military Cross while being mentioned in dispatches on five different occasions. After the war he saw service in many different areas including the Northwest Frontier of India from 1921 to 1923. Grasett was also a graduate of both the Staff College at Camberley in 1920 and the Imperial Defence College in 1931 where he returned again from 1935 to 1937 as G.S.O. 1.⁶ In 1932 he had been appointed as head of the Intelligence Staff in India. That same year he returned home to pay a visit to his family, and was quoted a few years later by a Toronto newspaper in ironically predicting how the, 'Influence of Mahatma Gandhi was not of the lasting character and would soon wane.'⁷ A description of Grasett's career was given in the same article.

Before receiving high rank in India, the new O.C. at Hong Kong had wide experience, and acted in a variety of capacities. For two years he patrolled lonely frontiers, executed diplomatic missions and held various commands. He dealt with foreign propaganda effectively, so report says from England, and his labors have been rewarded.⁸

⁴ TRL, 'Biographies of People', Scrapbook Volume 1, Frame No. 456; Newspaper clipping, 15 May 1935, and TRL 'Biographies of People', Scrapbook Volume 5, Frame No. 55; Newspaper clipping, 17 March 1934.

⁵ TRL, 'Biographies of People', Scrapbook Volume 1, Frame No. 457; Newspaper clipping, 24 May 1938.

⁶ Tunnell, *The Canadian Who's Who, Vol. XII, 1970-1972*, p. 431.

⁷ TRL, 'Biographies of People', Scrapbook Volume 1, Frame No. 457; Newspaper clipping, 24 May 1938.

⁸ *Ibid.*

From 1937 to 1938 Grasett served as Brigadier General Staff, Northern Command until being posted to Hong Kong as General Officer Commanding British Forces in China. After his departure from Hong Kong, he was given command of a division and then a corps until 1943. Following a period at the War Office Grasett was then attached to SHAEF in 1944 as head of the civil affairs unit under the overall command of General Dwight Eisenhower.⁹ During the post-war period he received a knighthood and was made Lieutenant Governor of Jersey from 1945 until 1953.¹⁰ He was also appointed as Colonel Commandant, Royal Engineers from 1944 to 1955.¹¹ The Order of the Red Banner was one of several awards Grasett received for his wartime activities.¹² General Grasett died in England on Saturday 4 December 1971.¹³

⁹ Canadian War Museum (Ottawa) [hereafter CWM], Democracy at War: Canadian Newspapers and the Second World War, online at www.warmuseum.ca/cwm/exhibitions/newspapers/intro_e.shtml; Hamilton Spectator article, 12 May 1944. See also Tunnell, *The Canadian Who's Who*, Vol. XII, 1970-1972, p. 431.

¹⁰ CWM, Democracy at War; Globe and Mail article, 25 August 1945. See also General Grasett's obituary, *The Times*, 6 December 1971.

¹¹ Obituary, *The Times*, 6 December 1971.

¹² Tunnell, *The Canadian Who's Who*, Vol. XII, 1970-1972, p. 431.

¹³ Obituary, *The Times*, 6 December 1971.

Appendix 11

The Dennys Report

Following the Second Battle of Changsha and the battle of Ichang Major General Dennys sent his report of events to the War Office in London. His optimistic assessment of Chinese military capabilities is significant as it provides an underlying rationale for the development of the plan to relieve Hong Kong in the event of an Anglo-Japanese War. Japanese objectives in Hunan were varied and included the acquisition of rice crops in addition to securing Changsha for future operations against the all important railroad junction at Hengyang. More importantly, the capture of Changsha and the destruction of Chinese forces in 9th War Zone might have brought the war to an end. Dennys wrote how the Japanese plan had failed:

... because it was based on an under-estimate of the Chinese fighting capacity. The Japanese were forced to beat a hurried retreat from Changsha after four days of occupation. They probably got away with no stocks of rice at all, and, although they inflicted fairly heavy casualties on the Chinese the number was in no sense crippling.

According to information obtained by Col Lovat Fraser from foreign residents in Changsha it seems probable that the Japanese meant to stay there permanently or at least for a considerable time. Much work was done on telegraph and telephone communications and foreign residents were called to H.Q. to discuss measures connected with Japanese occupation. In any case there is no doubt that the Japanese withdrawal was un-premeditated and hurried - their fiasco in flying correspondents to Changsha from Shanghai to see the Japanese in occupation, only for them to arrive after the Chinese had reoccupied the town proves this. It was caused by the Chinese success in getting astride the Japanese line of communication to Yoyang, combined with their effective mining of the Siang River, and the success of the Chinese offensive at Ichang.

12. The result of these operations was a moral victory for the Chinese and a corresponding loss of face for the Japanese. In spite of their failure to prevent the Japanese reaching Changsha, the Chinese strategical success must not be overlooked. They deserve

credit for it when their almost complete lack of artillery and air support are considered, and some troops at least displayed more dash and offensive spirit than those who only knew the Chinese Army three or four years ago give them credit for possessing.¹

Dennys' report is significant as it demonstrates how he considered the Chinese army capable, under the right conditions, of attacking Japanese forces in Kwangtung once the assault on Hong Kong was underway.

¹ TNA, WO 208/366; Report by Dennys, 25 October 1941.

Appendix 12

Brothers in Arms: The Winnipeg Grenadiers at Hong Kong

The battle for Hong Kong in December 1941 was a hard fought struggle resulting in heavy casualties and many units of the garrison were badly affected. Losses were sustained to varying degrees but there is a largely unknown quality associated with the Winnipeg Grenadiers that made their experience in war somewhat unique and perhaps more tragic than the other battalions. The Grenadiers had the unfortunate distinction of sustaining five sets of brothers killed at Hong Kong. Most men in combat form close bonds with their comrades but the loss of so many brothers from a unit raised in a single geographic region can be potentially demoralizing both within the unit as well as the community at home. People living in the Winnipeg area are proud of their veterans and over the years certain individuals have been selected for special praise. In 1925 Pine Road was renamed Valour Road to honour three Victoria Cross winners who had lived on the street before going off to fight in the First World War. These were Leo Clarke and Frederick Hall who were killed in action, and Robert Shankland who died in 1968.¹ Water Avenue was also renamed William Stephenson Way in November 2009 to honour the man Winston Churchill had selected as head of the British intelligence organization in North America known as British Security Coordination.² That agency was established during 1940 and their mandate was

¹ Government of Manitoba Press Release, 4 November 2005.
<http://www.gov.mb.ca/ia/programs/bldgcomm/pdf/valour.pdf>

² CBC News, Street Named for WWII Spy Hero, 16 November 2009.
[www.cbc.ca/canada/manitoba/story/2009/11/16\(mb-stephenson-intrepid-street-rename-winnipeg.html](http://www.cbc.ca/canada/manitoba/story/2009/11/16(mb-stephenson-intrepid-street-rename-winnipeg.html)

to help bring America into the Second World War.³ The Grenadiers who fought at Hong Kong are equally deserving of remembrance, as are those who served in other units, but the deaths of so many brothers from this single battalion accentuates how the people of Winnipeg and the surrounding region paid a heavy price for the collective security of others. Unfortunately their efforts and sacrifice are not given much consideration in the place where they died.

Many Grenadiers were killed during the fight for the Wong Nei Chong Gap from 19 to 21 December 1941 and the impact on their families was hard. Corporal John Kelso and Corporal Henry Kelso were possibly amongst the first. Both of these men were sons of a Winnipeg policeman and they came from a family of nine. Henry had been born in Belfast and worked as a clerk while John was a painter and a native of Winnipeg. After the war Private R. Huard reported what he saw to Canadian military authorities.⁴ According to his statement both men were killed prior to the elimination of Brigadier General John Lawson's West Brigade Headquarters on 19 December 1941. 'Huard saw one brother shot through the forehead and other brother 200 feet away also dead'.⁵ Their father died just over two years later in May 1944.⁶

Private Gordon Land of Carman, Manitoba was similarly from a family of nine and both he and his brother Lance Corporal Roy Land had worked as truck drivers before going off to war. Gordon and Roy were killed on 19 December 1941 after A Company had been overrun on Jardine's Lookout.⁷ According to the statements of several eyewitnesses, it was after becoming a Japanese prisoner

³ NAC, MG 26 J1, Reel C-4864, Telegram No. 2917 by McCarthy, 26 September 1941. See also H. Montgomery Hyde, *The Quiet Canadian: the Secret Service Story of Sir William Stephenson* (London: The Quality Book Club, 1962), pp. 3, 30.

⁴ NAC, RG 24, Volume 26242, War Service File; Corporal John Robert Kelso, H6038.

⁵ NAC, RG 24, Volume 26242, War Service File; Corporal Henry Kelso, H6499.

⁶ NAC, RG 24, Volume 26242, War Service File; Corporal John Robert Kelso, H6038.

⁷ NAC, RG 24, War Service File; Private Gordon Stanley Land, H6289, No. 39-70690 M.

that Roy Land was taken out of line along with Private N. Osadchuk and Private B.B. Whalen while they were being marched down a hill. They were made to undress and then bayoneted by Japanese troops before an officer finally shot them.⁸

Lance Corporal Ewart Starrett was a former ironworker killed by rifle fire while advancing up a hill on that same day.⁹ His brother and fellow tradesman Lance Corporal William Starrett was killed on 20 December while being held prisoner along with several other Grenadiers in a hut close to the edge of battle.¹⁰ The Starrett brothers were from an equally large Manitoba family but their past was clouded by the deaths of other siblings in earlier years. Ewart Starrett married just prior to his departure for Hong Kong and his wife, a woman described by his mother as possessing somewhat flexible virtue, sadly lost custody of their daughter to the state while serving out prison sentences in British Columbia and Quebec later in the war and thereafter. Ewart and William's mother, Jane Starrett, explained how devastating the war was for her when writing to the army regarding pension claims. In 1943 she wrote 'My sons and I lived together until they were sent overseas to Jamaica.'¹¹ She later added that, 'Our home was broken up when my sons went overseas. I am sorry to say that I do not know my daughter-in-law's address.'¹²

A greater volume of information is available on the Mitchell brothers who were killed on 20 December 1941. After graduating from the University of Winnipeg in 1926 with a Bachelor's degree in history and economics, W. Vaughan Mitchell married his wife Doris and worked as a Mortgage Supervisor at

⁸ NAC, RG 24, Volume 26303, War Service File; Lance Corporal Roy Clarence Land, H6295.

⁹ NAC, RG 24, War Service File; Corporal Ewart Grenfell Starrett, H3031.

¹⁰ NAC, RG 24, Volume 27110, War Service File; Lance Corporal William J. Starrett, H2970.

¹¹ NAC, RG 24, War Service File; Corporal Ewart Grenfell Starrett, H3031.

¹² NAC, RG 24, Volume 27110, War Service File; Lance Corporal William J. Starrett, H2970.

the Great West Life Assurance Co. He was thirty six years old and he had a three year old son named Barry.¹³ His brother Eric, aged twenty three, was a pharmacist and likewise held the rank of Lieutenant.¹⁴ Both brothers died in the same hut as Lance Corporal William Starrett while they were all being held prisoner along with about one hundred others from a variety of different units.¹⁵

The Mitchell brothers were killed by what is euphemistically known as friendly fire. In August 1945 Lieutenant B.C. Field of Number Three Company, Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corps gave a statement describing the events leading up to their deaths.

Lt. Eric Mitchell commanded a platoon (Winnipeg Grenadiers) which was deployed for the defence of the Wang Nei Chong Gap area on the night of December 18, 1941. His area was somewhat to the north of Stanley Gap. He was attacked at dawn by strong Japanese infiltration units and after costly fighting over the rough hillside the survivors were taken prisoner and herded into a wooden hut at Stanley Gap with many others of various units captured in the neighborhood. One hut was so crowded that there was no room for all to sit or lie down, some had to remain standing, there being barely enough room for their feet.

A small group of four or five Canadian Officers including the Mitchell brothers had between them one space for sitting down and took it in turns (through the night of 19- Dec) to sit down. One hut was packed and in pitch darkness even the faint light from the night sky was shut out by black curtains.

Towards dawn our troops began bombarding the Stanley Gap area with mortar fire and just before daylight a mortar shell struck the roof of the hut killing and wounding many of the closely packed prisoners below. The result was indescribably tragic.

One of the Mitchell's was wounded and when the Japanese came to move the prisoners soon after daylight the wounded who were unable to walk were left. The unwounded Mitchell remained with his brother and so far as I know neither he nor any of the wounded (except one died shortly afterwards) have been heard of since and it can only be assumed that they were murdered.¹⁶

Private Frank Jones added more details.

¹³ NAC, RG 24, War Service File; Lieutenant William Vaughan Mitchell, No. 40-83393.

¹⁴ NAC, RG 24, War Service File, Lieutenant Eric Lawson Mitchell, No. 40-82473.

¹⁵ NAC, RG 24, War Service File; Lieutenant William Vaughan Mitchell, No. 40-83393.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

A Coy was in a shack at the foot of Mount Butler. One of the Mitchell brothers was dead. He was the younger and wore glasses. The other Mitchell stayed behind when the Japs took us out. He said he was staying with his brother and the Japs killed everyone who stayed.¹⁷

Private E.H. Wrigley of A Company further stated how:

All had just been taken prisoners ... One brother was lying on floor of a hut badly wounded in both legs and said he was done. The other brother was lying beside him, presumably dead having been both hit with mortar bomb which exploded in the hut. When other prisoners were moved out. The Japs would not take the badly wounded. These brothers were left behind and that was the last anyone heard of them.¹⁸

All of the survivors in the hut who could not move were bayoneted by the Japanese.¹⁹ Several others attested to the same description of events.

Private Donald Folster and Private Herbert Folster was another pair of brothers from a poor Manitoba family of nine to be similarly killed in Hong Kong.²⁰ Before the war Donald had been a mechanic while Herbert had driven trucks for a living. Their mother Flora Folster had no information on either of their deaths and they were eventually buried as unknown soldiers. Donald and Herbert's father had deserted the family when they were young boys and Flora was left to take care of the family on her own throughout the Great Depression. The family depended upon both boys for financial support and they were left even more destitute after their deaths. Flora subsequently continued to write the army in search of information. As time went on she also noted that her sister-in-law had lost three sons of her own in Belgium and France but Flora's queries went unresolved in Ottawa. Like many other boys in the Winnipeg Grenadiers, Donald and Herbert were recruited in the fall of 1941 and because they died in December

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ NAC, RG 24, Volume 25878, War Service File; Private Donald Hector Folster, H70208, and NAC, RG 24, Volume 25878, War Service File; Private Herbert Thomas Folster, H6911.

their time of active service was minimal. Thus, her sons' estates were quite limited and Flora eventually received money in later years to cover these amounts with \$17.80 listed in the personnel file for Donald and \$17.76 for Herbert.²¹

After the battle of Hong Kong was over the defenders were held as prisoners of war by the Japanese for almost four years and the number of those who died in captivity almost doubled the number of those killed in combat.²² Conditions were brutal and starvation was the primary cause of death. Other Grenadiers were executed in August 1942 and these included Sergeant John Payne, Corporal George Berzenski, Private John Henry Adams, and Private Percy Ellis.²³

Brigadier General Orville Kay was sent to Chungking in August 1943 to serve as the first Canadian military attaché to China and one of his primary duties was to discover the fate of Canadian troops held in captivity at Hong Kong. Kay had been transferred from his position as Deputy Adjutant General at National Defence Headquarters in Ottawa where his work involved managing Axis POWs, and he was in regular contact with the Department of External Affairs because of this.²⁴ Besides his experience relating to POWs, another reason likely behind his selection for duty in China was due to the fact that until October 1941 Brigadier Kay was the Officer Commanding the Winnipeg Grenadiers.²⁵ As such, he would have personally known, enlisted, and been a friend of many of the men held by the Japanese. It is likely that his sense of responsibility for their situation was

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Banham, *Not the Slightest Chance*, p. ix.

²³ NAC, RG 25, Volume 2920, File No. 2670-A-40C; Memorandum by Acting Under Secretary J.C. Read, 5 May 1945.

²⁴ NAC, RG 24, Reel C-5286, File 8901; British Security Coordination Report, 14 July 1942, and NAC, RG 25, Volume 2936, File 2960-E-40; Letter, 7 December 1942. See also NARA, RG 165, Entry 77, Box 380; Report No. 5935 by Colonel F.J. Graling, 16 May 1944, and *Montreal Daily Star* news clipping, 11 August 1943.

²⁵ NARA, RG 165, Entry 77, Box 380; Report No. 5935 by Colonel F.J. Graling, 16 May 1944, and *Montreal Daily Star* news clipping, 11 August 1943.

great. Hence, against the advice of External Affairs Kay oversaw the attachment of Captain Morris Perrault, a Canadian army intelligence officer, to Colonel Lindsay Ride's British Army Aid Group (BAAG) in order to gather information on Canadian POWs held at Hong Kong.²⁶ In return, Perrault assisted the colonel with his unit's operations inside French Indochina.²⁷ At war's end the Brigadier flew into Hong Kong to meet with the recently released prisoners. One of these was Grenadier Captain Harry White who had known Kay longer than any other officer in the camp. After finding his friend, Kay asked him if he knew where he could get a Japanese sword, and a lunch for the officers was arranged at the Peninsula Hotel.²⁸

In these much improved surroundings Kay heard firsthand about the hardships endured during the previous four years. Aside from Japanese neglect and brutality, however, White and others also indicated that Japanese actions were often matched by Chinese indifference and even hostility. It is true that many Chinese supported the British and that the East River Brigade (ERB) assisted POWs escape to Waichow, but even elements within that organization had kidnapped Allied personnel when the prospect of acquiring money seemed too good to let slip. For many months during 1943 a BAAG reconnaissance team had been detained in a bid to ransom them for half a million dollars. While negotiations continued for their release, the flow of valuable intelligence for the USAAF on Japanese shipping remained partially disrupted.²⁹

²⁶ NAC, RG 25, Volume 2920, File No. 2670-A-40C; Memorandum, 3 May 1945 and Telegram No. 495 by Odlum, 10 September 1944.

²⁷ NAC, RG 25, Volume 2920, File No. 2670-A-40C; Memorandum by Kay, 12 May 1944, Telegram No. 223 by Odlum, 1 May 1944, and Telegram No. 253 by Odlum, 16 May 1944.

²⁸ Canadian War Museum (Ottawa) [hereafter CWM], Diary of Captain Harry White, 58A 1 24.4; Entry 4 September 1945.

²⁹ HKU, B.A.A.G. Series, Volume VII, 'Coast Watching and the "Red" Question'; Letter by Hooper to Tseng, 20 November 1943.

During the battle of Hong Kong Chinese hostility was common. At that time many fifth columnists worked for the National Government of Wang Ching Wei to assist the Japanese and they killed Allied soldiers whenever possible. After the surrender, Chinese such as these mocked the men of the garrison as they were marched into captivity. Colonel Crawford recorded his experience of that event when he wrote how ‘the worthy citizens of Kowloon, who three weeks before had been British subjects, living with us and doing business with us, now jeered and spat upon us as we passed. It was all very jolly.’³⁰ Captain White recalled how the presence of so many fifth columnists deterred men from escaping when Japanese security was still lax in early 1942. He recorded in his diary how most Chinese were ‘so destitute they’d probably turn you in for a H.K. dollar. Of course we know nothing of the surrounding country either’.³¹ Had the men of the garrison known that the Japanese withdrew most of their forces from Hong Kong during January, perhaps more of them might have made good their escape, but without that knowledge and facing a population of unknown loyalties imbued with potentially hostile intent, it is easy to understand why so few were able to escape in early 1942.

Unlike in Winnipeg, the Hong Kong government and the vast majority of Hong Kong Chinese today do not consider the sacrifice of the garrison, including the Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corps or the Hong Kong Chinese Regiment, to be worthy of remembrance. Annual memorial services, for example, are widely ignored. Most Hong Kong residents are unaware of these wartime events, and for those few who know, most are indifferent while some view the efforts and sacrifices made by these men with a degree of disdain. In contrast, similar

³⁰ DHH, File 593.011 (D3); Article by Lieutenant Colonel J.N. Crawford (*Manitoba Medical Review*, 26 (2)), February 1946.

³¹ CWM, Diary of Captain Harry White, 58A 1 24.4; Entry 30 December 1941.

attitudes towards friends and former wartime allies are less common in places such as South Korea. The battle in December 1941 was a product of many factors, and even though it ended in defeat what remains significant is the fact that the garrison defended the people of Hong Kong from a dangerous enemy, and this is worthy of something more than public or official ambivalence.

Appendix 13

The Condon Report

During the battle of Hong Kong several US Army officers participated in events and were subsequently held by the Japanese army after the surrender of the Colony on 25 December 1941. One of these was Major Reynolds Condon, an artillery officer who was serving as an assistant military attaché. Major Condon was released along with other diplomatic personnel in mid 1942 and he presumably returned to the United States via Brazil aboard the Swedish registered *SS Gripsholm*, but details on his journey remain uncertain.¹ On 11 August 1942, Major Condon submitted a report to US Army Military Intelligence on the British defence of Hong Kong. His scathing criticism is often incorrect in the details and is strongly influenced by personal bias. He also fails to recognize that Far Eastern defences were inadequate in part because of previous American indifference, and his comments on the higher direction of Allied strategy in southern China are not completely accurate. Nevertheless, his report, especially the latter half, helps shed some light on aspects of the battle for which he was an eyewitness, and when Condon focuses on matters of which he had direct personal involvement he provides additional useful information on some significant actions and personalities. Given the circumstances of Hong Kong's isolation as well as the overall combat effectiveness of Allied forces in general at that time, his account can be considered unbalanced. His views are sometimes emblematic of the contemptuous attitudes often exhibited towards Chinese and British officers by Americans who later served under General Joseph Stilwell in the China-Burma-

¹ NARA, RG 165, Entry 360, Box 736; Newspaper clipping, 11 August 1942.

India command. Whether views such as those expressed were formed because of defeats at places like Hong Kong or were already established amongst American military officers is difficult to assess fully, but it is useful to remember that untried United States Army forces also performed poorly during their initiation to combat in a variety of different theatres. Condon's report is still significant, however, as it gives a third party account of the battle that has hitherto gone unnoticed. It is reproduced below.

SECRET

THE FALL OF HONGKONG

Source: Personal observation of U.S. Army Officers

In view of the nature of this report no copies will be distributed or shown to any of our co-belligerents.

MILITARY INTELLIGENCE DIVISION W.D.G.S.
Military Attaché Report China

Subject Fall of Hongkong
From Asst M.A. Hongkong Report No. Special Report No. 1 Date
August 20, 1942
Source and degree of reliability:
Personal observation of U.S. Army Officers.

Summary

Hongkong was attacked on December 8, 1941 by an estimated 2 Japanese divisions, 48 pieces of artillery, 20 planes. It capitulated December 25, 1941. Due to a combination of defeatism, lethargy, complacency, and stupidity, no resistance worthy of the name was offered by the British.

The undersigned was serving in the Hongkong office of the Military Attaché to China at the time of the Japanese attack on the Colony, December 8, 1941. With me at the time were Major R.A. Grussendorf, Military Attache for Air, and Captain William M. Clarkson, Adjutant of the American Military Mission to China, both in Hongkong for medical treatment. During the fighting we

visited and served with as many organizations as time, physical condition and other duties permitted. These officers are each submitting an individual report, Major Grussendorf's including the subject of air operations. Their verbal statements to me were of great value in forming a picture fitting in with that which I observed myself.

Major Stuart Wood, F.A., stationed in Hongkong, was invaluable in obtaining information on the defense plans. He was in Manila undergoing surgical treatment when the attack came so was not present during the battle.

Since it was quite impossible to save any notes, certain statements made are undoubtedly incorrect in detail; as a picture they are accurate.

Many stories were heard of good and intelligent fighting in unvisited sectors. While the reports may have been correct, it is believed the outcome of these engagements justifies the conclusion that the fighting was everywhere about the same as that observed.

Practically everything stated about the British is derogatory in the extreme. This is regrettable, but it is what we observed. It is firmly believed that had the teachings of our service schools been energetically put into practice Hongkong would have been held indefinitely against the comparatively light attack delivered.

If it appears that the undersigned exceeded his authority in meddling in the affairs of the British Army, it can only be said that as the senior American officer present I felt it my duty to use every effort to keep them fighting as long as possible.

In my opinion, the chief reason for the rapid fall of Hongkong was lack of the aggressive spirit, bred from a knowledge by all ranks that the Colony could not be held. From this basic attitude of mind it was an easy step into slipshod training, careless and faulty planning, which in turn led to disaster.

1. Plan.

The staff officers with whom from time to time Major Wood and I discussed the defense plan stated that they were authorized to reveal any information we asked for. In practice, a question was replied to in such a roundabout fashion that frequently it was not answered at all. One thing was definite: the mainland would be held for three months, the island an additional three.

The means were as reported to the Military Intelligence Division shortly prior to the outbreak of war and were, according to a faulty memory, about as follows: Navy, seven motor torpedo boats (other ships were to leave when hostilities started), several hundred dockyard workers: Air Force, four obsolete unarmed ships, no airfield suitable for fast pursuits: Army, six battalions of infantry (two Canadian, two Indian, one Scotch, one English), artillery sufficient to man nine 9.2" guns, eight 6" howitzers, eleven 4.5" mountain howitzers, eight 18 pounders, six or eight 4.5" AA guns and a few AA guns of lesser calibre, one battalion of

engineers, detachments of signals, ordnance etc., - a total of some 9,000 regulars. The Hongkong volunteer force, about 3,000, largely composed of Europeans, trained as infantry or artillery for about two years. Foodstuffs were ample. Pointed questions about ammunition were answered by, "I think we have plenty, you know," or "A goodish bit I believe."

The method to be employed was passive, consisting of a rapid withdrawal to the line of hills stretching across the Kowloon peninsula. When forced to evacuate, withdrawal would be made to the island. The Kowloon line consisted of concrete pillboxes. A few days before the war I still saw no barbed wire, except on the beaches, and no entrenchments. The infantry consisted of three battalions (Scots on the left, two Indian battalions in the center and right) supported by 4.5" howitzers manned by the Hongkong-Singapore artillery (Chinese and Indian, officered mostly by whites).

The island of Hongkong likewise was defended by pillboxes near the shoreline. The shoreline was wired, but wire nowhere was in sufficient abundance. There were no entrenchments. Pillboxes were equipped with two to six machineguns, many of them light Brens. There was a considerable number of small but excellent searchlights. About ten antitank guns and the eight 18-pounder field pieces were in position on the shore. The Middlesex battalion manned the pillboxes from the north to the southeast and the few on Aberdeen Island. They were supported by one Canadian battalion. The other Canadian battalion had the southeast sector. From east to north the shoreline was lightly held by the Volunteers; this sector was to be taken over by the Indians on withdrawal.

Defense against aircraft was necessarily largely passive. Antiaircraft guns were all located on Hongkong, sited to protect the triangle: Navy yards at Hongkong and Aberdeen, West Point. Tunnels had been dug for an estimated one-sixth of the population. Dispersal areas in the hills (stocked with foodstuffs and materials to construct light shelters) had been designated but not reported to the people. Air raid practices had been held frequently, wardens of various kinds seemed to be well instructed and to know their duties. Practice blackouts were good.

COMMENTS. At the time of taking up my duties in Hongkong about October 1, 1941, I was amazed at the carefree attitude of the officers of the garrison. A gradually increasing knowledge of the state of the defense filled me with consternation which was shared by Major Stuart Wood, F.A., and Captain Hudson, USN, Commanding the South China Patrol. Captain Hudson, for the Navy, Major Wood and myself, for the Army, tried our best to point out to the Commanding General by means of conversations with his staff officers what we could not consider basic errors. For the Army, these were:

A. The defense was not organized in depth. Behind the line of pillboxes there were no fortifications other than a few

concrete OP's, practically unarmed. We considered this the most grievous error, especially aggravated since the lines were not made continuous by trenches. The British stated they did not have sufficient men to man the fixed defenses and still have proper supports and reserves; they did not agree with our contention that the fewer the troops the more mobile should be the defense.

B. The disposition of the Middlesex, with its Canadian support, was extremely faulty. Each battalion should have been assigned its sector. This met with agreement, though nothing was done.

C. The 18-pounders should not have been in position. The guns were World War field pieces, the best weapon against landing craft the British had. Positions taken could not cover the entire shoreline. We believed these guns should have been held in readiness. With suitably selected positions, two guns could have been in action in any part of the island in a maximum of five minutes, and the eight pieces in about thirty. Guns remained where they were, largely in the west and south.

D. When the garrison was reinforced with Canadians, vital time was wasted in sending troops to their battle stations. The Canadians arrived on November 16th and were disembarked in Kowloon. Their one period of five days in the field was spent in Kowloon. The Scots and one battalion of the Indians remained at their old posts on the island. The reason for the delay in taking up their proper positions was given as lack of barrack space, though how that entered was not clear. The British apparently did not consider a thorough knowledge of the ground to be of much importance.

(Note: The move was started December 5th and was not completed until the night of December 7-8th)

E. The plan for immediate withdrawal to the Kowloon line gave up an excellent chance to harass the advancing enemy, slow down his advance, and cause casualties with little loss to us. It also gave up the chance of making contact with local Chinese guerrilla units.

F. The one airfield was inadequate but could have been promptly enlarged sufficiently to take care of fifty pursuit ships by razing a few blocks of dwelling houses. This the British thought was too costly. As the event turned out, it probably made no difference due to shortage of planes.

G. Not enough use was made of Chinese manpower. Our contention was that Chinese could be trained in a short time to man pillboxes and artillery pieces and to act as labor troops, thus releasing a number of trained good troops for reserves. After much discussion the British did commence the organization of a Chinese machine gun battalion. Enlistments were opened about the middle of November for the first cadre of fifty men. There were over 600 volunteers the first day.

H. There was no proper liaison with the Chinese Kwangtung forces and no proper scheme for operating in the

Japanese rear. The only plans were to send a liaison officer to Chinese headquarters and from one to three commandos from Burma, after the war should have started. We wanted the British to send a large liaison unit, equipped with radio, as soon as possible. We wanted officers from Hongkong to travel in unoccupied Kwangtung, make contact with local commanders, and so be available and equipped to serve as advisers in operations against the Japanese rear. We especially wanted a plan of concerted Sino-British action, even hoping the Chinese could be induced to make a surprise attack on the airfield at Canton. The military representative in Hongkong of Generalissimo Chiang was anxious to obtain British aid and to cooperate along the above lines. These ideas were still under advisement on December 8th.

I. While the foreign population was well instructed about air raids (almost all of them had specific duties in the ARP), the Chinese population was largely uninstructed. Assignments were not made to the inadequate dugouts. Those who could not be accommodated were not assigned dispersal areas or routes to reach them. We suggested that at least one person from each house be actually taken to the proper dispersal area; that definite assignments to shelters be made. The reply was that it would disrupt business for a day and that the Chinese when frightened always run for the hills anyway.

2. Outbreak of Hostilities.

About 5:30 a.m., December 8th, there was a clash with Japanese patrols at the Kowloon border. A raid of nine dive bombers on the Kai-tek airfield at 7:55 a.m. destroyed one clipper at her moorings, six CNAC ships and the four army planes on the ground.

3. December 8 – 10.

These days were largely dominated by confusion. Fighting was in progress in Kowloon, the withdrawal going according to plan. Planned demolitions were reported being carried out 100%. The end of the period saw the Kowloon line manned, everything presumably in order.

Air raids were light but frequent. At first everyone who could took cover in the dugouts and stone buildings; in a day or so most people went about their business unless ordered into cover by an air raid warden; within a short time it was realized that the sirens were doing more damage than the enemy and they were seldom sounded thereafter.

Few if any of the Chinese went to the dispersal areas, leaving those of us who had seen the slaughter of civilians at Chungking and Chengtu uneasy at the thought of what havoc just a few bombers might at any moment create in the overcrowded tenements of West Point or Wanchai.

The stores were thronged with officers. Some were hurriedly buying uniforms as they did not have the proper kit. Some were buying provisions, toilet articles, etc., for their families as uniformed personnel took precedence in being served. Everybody was busy in buying essentials.

Visits were made to the Intelligence Section in its old offices in the Naval Dockyard. Information was meagre in the extreme. They didn't know what units were attacking or how many, and did not seem to care. When the sirens went we all trooped out of the wooden building and stood about the yard gossiping until the all clear sounded. There was no unseemly haste in moving the office to its battle station in the colossal air-conditioned headquarters dugout known as the Battle Box. Visits to the front were delayed owing to difficulties in obtaining the requisite passes.

4. December 11 – 13.

On December 11th it was announced that Kowloon could no longer be held and would be evacuated that day. Unfortunately the order included the police force, leaving the inhabitants at the mercy of Chinese looters. So many stories were heard of the ensuing reign of terror that there must have been considerable pillage.

About this time the Japanese emplaced a battery of 360 mm howitzers within range of Hongkong and fired counterbattery and interdiction fires.

On December 12th it was revealed that one battalion of Indians, with a few 4.5" howitzers, were still on the mainland at Devil's Peak. They were evacuated that night across the eastern channel without loss.

The general opinion of the military at this time seemed to be that the situation was not too bad. The collapse of resistance in Kowloon was attributed to the fall of the one pillbox; considered to be an unlucky break with no particular blame attached to anyone. The withdrawal had been beautifully carried out with almost no loss.

By time the physical strain on military personnel was becoming increasingly evident. From the outbreak of hostilities key personnel had remained at their posts day and night taking almost no sleep, keeping awake on whiskey and tea. At Headquarters gossip seemed to be the order of the day, punctuated by interminable telephone conversations in which the personal element outweighed the official by three to one.

The police force was mobilized into the army but was, I believe, never used in the fighting.

Confusion in the city lessened somewhat as the various administrations and boards became slightly more efficient.

Air raids continued without causing much damage or excitement amongst the populace. The enemy brought up more long range guns but did not heavily bombard the city.

5. December 14 – 19.

These days were marked by inaction on our part while the enemy brought up means for a final assault. The Japanese brought up more artillery, to an estimated 48 pieces of 6" or greater calibre. However, they contended themselves with a minimum of shelling, still counterbattery and road interdiction. Counterbattery on our part was greatly hampered due to lack of sound ranging equipment. Flash ranging telescopes were eventually set up but were of little use as enemy guns were well behind the crest and there was no intercommunication between flash stations. The British seemed perfectly satisfied with sending over 10 or 20 rounds of 6" shells in the general direction of a battery firing; when the battery ceased firing it was announced as "silenced." As far as I know we fired not a round of interdiction fire.

The Japanese set up trench mortars on the Kowloon waterfront from which positions we could plainly see them working their mortars, shelling downtown Hongkong. The mortar bomb had a thin shell case, a super-quick fuse. Due to the very fine fragmentation, little damage was caused except to morale. I was informed that we could not fire on these targets with 18-pounders because we had no time shell or shrapnel, the short range making percussion shell nearly valueless on the hard-surfaced waterfront. I was informed that the 4.5" howitzers could not reach the target (this information was certainly false). To the best of my observation not even long range machine gun fire was turned on the at first exposed Japanese.

On the night of December 18-19 the Japanese effected a landing on North Point. How this happened I do not know, but from conversations with numerous people construct it as follows: A single motor driven fishing boat containing an officer and twenty men simply chugged up to the shore and disembarked unopposed. They proceeded inland rapidly, the first body to report them being a police patrol. A ferry service was immediately instituted, operated all night and the next day. Fire was not brought to bear on these boats though they were harried in one or two attacks by motor torpedo boats. By noon of the 19th a force of possible 2,000 men, equipped to include trench mortars, had been landed. They had advanced to Wongneicheong Gap, successfully cutting the main road of communication between the northern and southern parts of the island, leaving only the western coast road (partially dominated by fire) as communication between the two halves of the garrison.

A general counterattack was ordered for 3:30 p.m., December 19th, but this was a dismal failure.

6. December 20 – 25.

A continuation of the picture of lack of resolve and inefficiency, defeatism penetrated all ranks. There was no desire to go out after the enemy. Physical condition of the troops became steadily worse while that of the officers improved slightly, as they began to see the necessity of sleep.

The British never properly organized any position. Isolated groups took up position without mortars, machine guns, or artillery support. They did not entrench. They had no communication with their higher commanders or with each other. Supply even of food and ammunition was the worry of the smallest unit commanders, none ever being sent forward automatically.

In the city the water supply had failed due to bursting of exposed mains. This was not as serious as might be imagined since the population promptly reopened long unused wells as well as making use of several running streams.

Intermingling of units had reached what must surely have been the acme of confusion. Commanders everywhere took and used whatever men they could, not only making no attempt to return them to their proper units but actually forbidding them to return.

About noon December 25th a conference down to include battalion commanders was called. The decision to surrender unconditionally was undoubtedly the only one to make under the existing conditions. Surrender was made by individual units from about three to five o'clock.

7. Casualties.

It is most difficult to arrive at any reasonable estimate of casualties. British units were so inextricably mixed, and their administration so bad, that not even headquarters had any idea of the losses. Though most observers with whom I have talked put the figures much higher, it is my guess that casualties in killed and wounded did not exceed 3,000 for the Japanese and 2,000 for the British. Civilian casualties during the fighting probably did not exceed 500.

8. Leadership.

In an attempt to show how faulty was the leadership it is believed not amiss to discuss in detail some of my dealings with certain high ranking officers. Not all of the officers with whom I came in contact showed up in the same light as the following four, but in general all ranks displayed the same military ignorance.

A. Commanding Officer of the Western Group, Royal Artillery.

I reported to this major for duty about 10: p.m. the night of December 11th at his OP at Wanchai Gap. His command consisted of four 6" and four 4.5" howitzers. I found him literally bent double with lumbago. He dosed himself liberally with whiskey. At short intervals he groaned with pain. He stated he had not slept for three days; could not trust his orderly to awaken him for telephone calls. No fires were scheduled. To my query as to why the two enemy supply roads were not being interdicted he replied that he didn't know but presumed there must be some reason. For the time my duties were to merely stay awake and call him if the phone rang. I was supplied with the folder of orders and instructions for the artillery, to improve my time; he laboriously climbed into the high bunk hung on the wall. All night long, as soon as the telephone rang, he climbed down to talk, although the majority of calls could have been answered by me. He did not follow the obvious course of lying down on the map table, from which position he could talk over the wall telephone without much effort. The conversations were largely personal, including inquiries as to the well-being of the caller and mutual friends. Each call lasted several minutes. Then he would groan and say, "This bloody administration, administration all the time!" Not a round was fired by eight the next morning. At this time a captain, to be his executive, reported and I was relieved until dusk.

At 4:00 p.m. I found he was in much better physical condition. As I entered he and his executive were trying to think of what corrections to consider in plotting the direction of a battery recently fired upon. The battery plotted out in the bay. They were elated at having fired twenty rounds of 6" and silenced the battery.

A few days later I was acting as observer in an OP overlooking Aberdeen. Just at dawn three motor torpedo boats came in from patrol and tied up beside one such boat already at the dock. I telephoned this major with somewhat of the following conversation:

"Sir, there are four motor torpedo boats tied up beam to beam at Aberdeen."

"What's that old fellow? I say, how are you making out? Is your food coming out alright? What's this I hear about your sending in three signalmen, that's their post, you know, what?"

"I have no damned use for the signalmen and they had better get to work digging pits for your guns there at the Gap. How about those boats?"

"Well, what about them?

"The Japs will get them."

"Well, old fellow, that really is sort of a naval show you know. Not our business at all really. Hope you got your breakfast all right. If there is anything I can do for you let me know. Cheerio, old chap."

The first plane over at 8:00 a.m. sank the four boats with one bomb.

B. The Chief of Royal Artillery. On the morning of December 12th I spent two hours trying to find this Brigadier, eventually locating him at his living quarters. He was standing holding a necktie while his Chinese boy was packing trunks and suitcases. He apparently did not recognize me so I told him who I was, stated that I had been with his Western Group Commander the night before, and asked to see him on matters I considered urgent. He replied courteously that he would be glad to have a talk with me, but he was very busy. Could I wait for him in the Battle Box? After over an hour of waiting he still had not appeared.

About December 15th I again called on this gentleman at his office in the Battle Box. We discussed fires; I pointed out that Hongkong was falling while his guns were cold, suggested that his counterbattery was probably completely ineffective, requested him to fire instead on ships still floating in the harbor, the Standard Oil tanks, and interdiction on the two supply roads. He replied that he had no sound locator apparatus to spot the Japanese batteries, and couldn't we supply it to him? I said there was probably one chance in a thousand that Manila had some out-dated equipment that could be flown over. If I radioed to find out about that he would cease counterbattery and interdict the roads by which the shells were being brought up? He agreed. I sent a radio to General MacArthur asking if it was possible that he had any such equipment. I was not later in position to observe if the roads were interdicted.

On December 19th I called on the Brigadier at his position in the Battle Box. He did not deny a report I had heard that the Japanese were bringing troops across the channel in small boats and were not being fired upon. I asked why 18-pounders were not being rushed to the scene, to which he replied, "Sir, the guns are at their posts!"

C. The Commanding General. He spent almost his entire time in the Battle Box. He may have visited the troops but I did not hear of it. He did not sleep for the first three days and very little thereafter. On December 12th he seemed dazed from fatigue. He questioned me about conditions and seemed anxious to hear my views. I felt constrained to report as follows:

(1) His artillery was being very badly handled, and recommended that he either take over the functions himself or appoint a competent chief. He replied that he was not an artillerist, that the Brigadier seemed sure of his ground, and that he had nobody else for the post.

(2) Of all targets, the Standard Oil tanks with their thousands of gallons of gasoline stood out as the easiest and most promising. He was surprised that they had not been demolished. (The tanks were never fired upon.)

(3) The men, and to a great extent the officers, were terrifically impressed with the fact that the Japanese had control of the air, we had nothing. I pointed out that actually the Japanese were making little use of this superiority, that bombers were

causing comparatively small damage, that reconnaissance planes were seldom seen over the troop positions. I felt he should point this out to the command to offset to some degree the general loss of morale. He was interested, but said the men would find it out for themselves. They never did.

(4) Officers did little to bolster the morale of the men. They were largely interested in their own affairs, let the men look after themselves, did not call men to task when they made discouraged statements in their presence. He was apparently startled, stated he would see to a remedy at once. I heard of no action taken.

(5) Officers and men were destroying their own effectiveness due to unnecessary loss of sleep. It is believed a directive was issued to correct this but it was not widely disseminated.

D. Lieutenant Colonel of the Winnipeg Fusiliers. The colonel commanding this battalion had broken under the strain of battle and had been hospitalized, leaving the lieutenant-colonel in command.

On the night of December 24-25 he permitted a great deal of drinking in his CP dugout. He and the major who commanded the right of his line indulged in a several hours' long bitter argument over the proper method of representing troop positions on a map. It was continuing when I left at 1:00 a.m.

The morning of December 25th a staff officer of the commanding general visited the dugout to give orders for a counterattack that afternoon. The Lieutenant Colonel replied, "I'll tell you, sir, that I will not again order my troops out unprotected against mechanized forces, and you can tell that to anyone who wants to know!" The staff officer seemed embarrassed, took no action as far as I know. (Note: The only "mechanized forces" employed were the Bren machine gun carriers of the British.)

9. Incidents.

In the belief that the detailed reporting of certain personally observed happenings leads to a better understanding of events than can general observations, the following incidents are added to those reported in the previous paragraph. They add little to this report, serving only as background.

A. On December 11th great difficulty was experienced in locating an artillery C.P. The C.P. was in a little ravine and neither the sentinel on duty at the ravine entrance nor any member of the adjacent road block guard (which it was necessary to pass) knew of its existence. Upon being informed of this the officer in command at the dugout took no corrective action.

B. At dawn December 12th it was discovered that two artillery supply trucks were parked in a level space near a group of CP's. There was great excitement lest the trucks expose the

position of the CP. I was assigned to guide the trucks to the artillery supply headquarters. On the way we passed twenty loose pack mules, partially packed; a short while later saw an Indian detachment of an artillery pack train proceeding in our direction. They had neither officers nor orders. I sent men back for the loose animals, then took trucks and train to the supply station. The British captain in command of the station seemed at a loss as to what to do with them.

C. The afternoon of December 13th I saw two 4.5" howitzer in position in the center of a large level lawn. Guns were spaced at twelve yards. Camouflage consisted only of nets improperly stretched. There was no digging. Ammunition was neatly stacked outside the nets. Gun crews were resting on the porch of the house. In response to questions, the Gun Position Officer informed me that he could not occupy any of the several natural howitzer positions in the immediate vicinity as this was the position surveyed. He stated that proper fortification would be accomplished that night. After the surrender I again saw this position. Pits were geometric four yards square, one foot deep; removed earth had been placed in a parapet two feet high on three sides; there were no personnel trenches.

D. The night of December 13th I spent at an OP overlooking Hongkong harbor. The Lieutenant in charge and I had difficulty in locating the concrete OP, then found the view of the shoreline was blocked by a house in our immediate front. We moved to the veranda of the house. Wire was extended very slowly and routed badly. No map was available (except the one I carried) although target designation was normally by coordinates. This Lieutenant was to have instructed me in British artillery methods, but it developed that he knew less about them than I did.

E. On December 15th I was instructed to be at 9:00 a.m. at a point near an OP where a car was to pick me up. The car arrived at 12:30 p.m., the British sergeant driver stating that he had been unable to find the place.

F. On December 15th I relieved a lieutenant at a concrete OP overlooking Aberdeen. The OP was 8' square, so designed that one watcher had to alternate between the two ports in order to observe the entire sector. There was no map. No provision was made for blackout, other than laboriously closing the steel shutters. Furniture was one cot and one small table. Personnel (Indian) was one Battery Commander's Assistant (non-commissioned officer trained as observer) and three signalmen. These men with their equipment literally filled the dugout, their loud talking never ceased. Since the telephone wires were deeply buried there was no possible use for the signalmen so at dusk I had them report to their adjutant, informing him by telephone. He was most reluctant to take them. At dawn an Indian lieutenant came to relieve me. The orders were that the two officers would stand alternate reliefs of 24 hours; the BCA presumably never being relieved (this was actually being carried out in other OP's). The BCA had been on duty for

four days. I established reliefs to include the BCA of 24 hours on, 12 hours off. During three days only three meals were sent up, but the distinction between British and Indian rations was not forgotten.

G. On December 19th at about 2:30 p.m. the commander of the Winnipeg Fusiliers received telephone orders for a general counterattack at 3:30 p.m. First objective was Wongneicheong Gap, thence east about a mile, thence north about a mile to a certain hill. Scots would be on the left. That was all there was of the order.

The commander, his adjutant and a major then discussed who was available for the attack, units being referred to by the names of their commanders. As a name was thought of that officer was summoned to headquarters by telephone, sometimes told to bring his men, sometimes not. It was agreed that eight platoons were available. The major, who was present when the orders were received, was to lead the attack. No supplementary orders were issued.

At 3:30 p.m. only two provisional platoons, with one Bren gun carrier, were assembled. Included in the troops were about ten engineers and twenty Scots, a few dockyard workers. Each platoon had one officer.

No arrangements were made for communication, supply, artillery or mortar support. Each platoon carried one Bren gun in addition to the one in the single carrier. No medical personnel was present.

The path or secondary road to Wongneicheong Gap was perhaps a mile and a half long. After leaving the picket in the vicinity of Canadian headquarters there was not a single defending soldier between there and the Gap. At a gap about half way we ran into interdiction mortar fire at the rate of shell every fifteen seconds. By timing and dispatching his men in groups, the major traversed this spot with only one man wounded. Shortly thereafter one platoon was detached and sent over the crest of the mountain to attack the Gap. It was later disclosed that it had not yet reached the crest when darkness fell, at which time it returned to the CP.

The Major, with the other platoon, followed the path around the mountain. With the Bren gun carrier in the lead, we proceeded cautiously around each nose, reconnoitring the next stretch of road, through which we then ran. Around one such nose we could see a road beyond Wongneicheong Gap, stretching uphill directly away from us. The range was about 600 yards. For a space of some 200 yards the road was black with Japanese infantry resting. The two Brens were put in position off the road. My suggestion was not to open fire unless the target moved, to send back the carrier to report the target, ask for artillery fire, and bring us more firepower, in the meantime to put our riflemen behind the crest so they could quickly establish a firing line on signal. The decision was to open fire immediately with the two machine guns. One gunner could not identify the target and did not fire. The other

fired in bursts of five rounds, by the third or fourth of which the target had dissolved. There was no return fire.

We advanced to the next nose which, somewhat detached from the mountain, formed a ridge about 300 yards long. It ran north and south with its crest only 100 yards west of Wongneicheong Gap. The path by which we had arrived ran thirty feet below the crest. Both north and south the ground fell away steeply from the divide. Looking down from the north end we could see considerably below us at a distance of 200 yards the headquarters dugouts of in one of which the Canadian Brigadier had been killed the night before. At the point where the path rounded the southern end of the crest there was a shallow artificial cave which contained a quantity of abandoned material, including machine guns with ammunition, mortars without ammunition. There was no telephone instrument to connect to the line there. A few dead and two wounded British soldiers were found.

Three hundred yards to the south, but out of our reach, was a private house in which a British post was still holding out with one or more Vickers machine guns. Whenever the Japanese tried to cross the concrete road through the Gap they got a burst of fire in the flank. It was probably that one group of brave men that had prevented the Japanese from advancing all the way to Wanchai Gap in the West and Repulse Bay in the south within a day after the landing.

Dominating the opposite side of the Gap was a stone house, a police station, held by the Japanese.

Darkness was coming on. The Major had not heard from his detached platoon, his other six to follow, or the Scots. His men were tired and hungry, many had not eaten that day. After having just seen enemy troops outnumbering him three or four to one he decided to wait for reinforcements. We could hear the Japanese entrenching and talking on the hillside facing us, but in the gathering dusk could see nothing of them. A CP was designated on the path. While the Lieutenant posted local security detachments the Major went on reconnaissance from which he failed to return.

About 9:00 p.m. some 150 Scots arrived. They were obsessed with the idea of going to the headquarters dugouts to the north. I guided them part way and returned to the CP. Another platoon of Canadians had arrived, with four officers, including a major. They decided to storm the police station at once. If there were any orders given, I didn't hear them. The officers simply walked off, followed by as many men as felt the urge, and took the station with grenades and rifle fire. The Major and two other officers were killed in this attack. A strong detachment, with the surviving officer, was left at the building, the remainder withdrawn to the shelter of the ridge.

I slept at the CP for several hours. When I awakened the Lieutenant of the 1st platoon was not in evidence, nor had he left word of his whereabouts. I went out to inspect the pickets. The

northern one, posted by me in an antiaircraft machine gun pit, had disappeared. Their machine gun was in the pit, as was also a Japanese rifle. The center picket I could not locate. The personnel of the southern picket was found on the path well behind their post. The sergeant left in charge stated he thought there was no more use for the picket. I ordered him back immediately with the three Bren guns then available, with orders to support the police station by fire when it was attacked. Before having an opportunity to post other security detachments, I heard a great babble of voices from a road below us to the south. Going to investigate I met the Lieutenant of the 1st Platoon and several officers of the Scots. The noise was made by the Scots who had gone to the HQ dugouts, rested, then marched up the concrete road between us and the police station and were in a compact mass in a hollow below. They claimed they had been fired upon from the police station. Shouting brought out that it was indeed again in Japanese hands. As no one had heard the sound of fighting they must have been careless and been completely surprised.

The Scots wanted to attack at once, before daylight. They could not be persuaded to send a message back and let the artillery blow up the house for them. They requested that I give them one minute of fire from the Brens to cover their advance. The Lieutenant of the 1st Platoon was sent to collect his men and post them to protect our left flank. I went to the one picket, found them so lax that two Japanese with grenades were discovered less than twenty yards from the three machine guns. The guns were grouped closely together in a position with no field of fire. When moving them I found that in the group of fourteen men only one was a machine gunner, only two others had ever fired a machine gun. Our preparation was duly fired but was not very effective, one gunner sending every shot over the roof of the building.

The Scots made little use of grenades, though they came within grenade distance of the police station. The attack was repulsed with, I believe, two officers killed, two wounded. Losses in men (as in the case of the Canadian attack) were comparatively light.

As dawn broke the Scots decided to take over the ridge. I sent all my remaining men, 26, into the cave previously mentioned. The senior sergeant was carefully instructed to hold all the men there until my return, to find the Lieutenant and instruct him to assemble his men at the same place. I got the Bren gun carrier and returned to the Canadian CP. The carrier was sent to the cookhouse for rations and tea while I made my report. The CO had not previously had a single report of this action. He instructed me to bring all Canadians back for a rest, did not agree that they could rest where they were while remaining in a position to support the Scots if needed. My request for medical assistance could apparently not be complied with, nor could I be provided with morphine. Laying a telephone wire was for some reason not considered feasible.

At the cookhouse the NCO in charge refused to issue rations or make tea until I threatened him.

On the return to Wongneicheong Gap we passed several wounded men making their way to the rear. At one point we were hailed from the woods by a lieutenant of engineers who had a detachment with him. He wanted to know if he was needed at Wongneicheong Gap, said he had no orders. I told him he was badly needed. We were sniped at from the mountainside above us. When we arrived, one hour after having left it, the cave was empty except for a badly wounded sailor. No one was in sight at the CP or the ridge. I went up the ridge, found a number of Scots lying down, well scattered. They directed me to their lieutenant, also lying down and too tired to rise. He could tell me nothing of the Canadians. He didn't want any rations or tea; the men had rations and were too tired to walk to the tea. He did not want any ammunition. He ignored my suggestion that at least a guide be posted on the road. In the hearing of a number of his men he told me things were terrible, himself and the men exhausted.

The wounded sailor had died. The road back was deserted, the engineer detachment having disappeared, as had the walking wounded, some of whom we saw dead by the roadside.

At the Canadian CP I could not convince the commanding officer of the desirability of immediately reinforcing and holding the ridge and clearing out snipers in its rear. The ridge was a strong natural position, blocking advance to the west while dominating the roads from north and south, and seemed to me especially advantageous as an artillery forward OP.

H. Before dawn December 21st I was sent to report to the engineers at their headquarters in their private house in the vicinity of Wanchai Gap. When I reported to the Colonel commanding he was supervising the issue of rum, a half tumbler per man. He said a platoon was being sent out under a lieutenant to relieve a detachment on the southern crest of Mt. Cameron, and he requested me to join them. As again no map but mine was available I acted as guide.

The ascent of the steep mountain was exceedingly laborious; the men could not keep up with even the slow strength-saving pace set by me. It was necessary to halt for a rest every fifty yards.

Arriving at the position we found it deserted. Some abandoned equipment, including several rifles, was lying about. Prompt visual reconnaissance disclosed no Japanese troops in sight. The location was excellent for an artillery OP as all roads and trails to the west and south of Wongneicheong Gap were covered in part. The only pair of field glasses was a poor one carried by me. We could plainly see the house in which was located our headquarters, but a suggestion to establish a visual signalling station was vetoed.

It was decided to divide the command to cover the two routes of possible attack. Men were held on the reverse slope with a minimum of observers forward.

During the day my men were required to be separated and to be quiet, with the result that they were asleep when not on duty and were quite rested at night. The Lieutenant did not follow that policy. During the morning the peak of the mountain was shelled from Kowloon, the overs falling close to the Lieutenant's group. The bulk of this was withdrawn to dead space near my position, without casualty. The Lieutenant was quite worried over making contact with Canadians supposed to be on our left and took almost his entire unit on an expedition to make it. He returned, successful, after three hours of difficult crawling and climbing to his original position. The net result was merely to tire further his men since the half mile gap remained open.

Many of the men had brought beer, a few water. It was all consumed by noon. No rations were carried. By nightfall the Lieutenant expressed, in the hearing of some men, his dissatisfaction with the situation. He sent a runner with a verbal message to request (a) that the platoon be relieved as it was exhausted, (b) that rations, water and rum be sent up. No reply was received; the runner did not return. In the hearing of the men he said we were all too tired to put up much of a fight.

After dark we moved to the forward slopes where we could well cover the three important draws. We had no entrenching tools so did not improve the natural position.

During the day and night there was no enemy activity in our vicinity. What little activity we had observed in the distance during the daytime was not reported, even though the runner had been sent at dusk.

At dawn my relief was up. I returned to the engineer CP with two runners. The Colonel was astonished that rations had not been sent up but did not seem to know whom to blame. The two runners were returned heavily laden. I brought up the question of an OP, suitable observing instruments, a visual station, telephone wire, and entrenching. He said he would think about it, asked me if I would conduct the relief up that afternoon.

The relieving platoon was commanded by a captain. Again we took no entrenching tools, signal flags or lights. Few grenades were carried; we would take over the grenades there (the fifty were considered to be quite a number) as well as the two submachine guns. A large jug of rum was carried. We arrived at the position just before dark, again found it deserted, with more abandoned equipment and rifles in evidence. Rum was issued, the posts then manned as before. At dawn the Captain asserted he had no orders to man the position after daylight and withdrew the platoon. The Colonel displayed no perturbation at thus giving up a position which had not even been attacked.

I. About December 23rd the Governor visited the Canadian CP at Wanchai Gap. He made quite a speech, telling the officers

of the importance of Hongkong and why it must be held to the last ounce of fighting power. They were entirely unimpressed and upon his departure made disparaging remarks.

J. About 2:00 a.m., December 25th, a British Lieutenant of engineers reported to the Colonel of the Scots. He was directed to put his detachment in position about 300 yards from the CP, defending a trail from the south. When he expressed ignorance of the trail (although shown him on the map) a sergeant major was designated as his guide.

About 4:00 a.m. I took a patrol of Scots down this trail with instructions to proceed some two miles and return, driving back any enemy patrols encountered.

Arriving at the position presumably occupied by the engineers I found it vacant and sent back a runner to find out if the detachment had been ordered withdrawn. We proceeded down the path a half mile when we heard a body of men making their way up a dry watercourse below us. The patrol was in a beautiful position to drop grenades on them. Just in time, we found it was the engineer detachment, still with its guide. They had been lost, had covered in a roundabout route over five miles, and were well tired out. I showed the Lieutenant his position.

K. On the morning of December 25th the Japanese made the most intensive bombardment of the battle, using planes, guns and mortars against the British positions. Casualties were not heavy but the moral effect was considerable. From about 8:00 the Lieutenant-Colonel commanding the Canadians started receiving telephone calls from the Major with whom he had had the alcoholic argument the night before. The Major was in a key pillbox near Aberdeen and was being heavily attacked. He was very concerned about his badly wounded and insisted that an ambulance be sent (obviously impossible) to take them out. Some time during the morning he capitulated.

L. About noon December 25th the CO of the Scots said he had just received orders to go out with all personnel and defend the headquarters position to the last man. With security detachments on the hills above, the ravine could have been made hard to take. We abandoned it, climbed the steep ravine and took refuge in a private house and its yard near the crest of a hill. The Canadians occupied one slightly below us. The Colonel was at this time was called to a conference, to which he departed alone.

Left in the house were his adjutant and a young Canadian officer so drunk he could scarcely stand up, and perhaps eighty men with Scots predominating. The men drank freely until the liquor ran out.

Dive bombers were dropping large phosphorous bombs in the general area, setting fire to a few houses and starting brush fires. Artillery from Kowloon was bombarding house after house near us but fortunately did not register on the one we were in nor that of the Canadians. Many mortar shells fell in and around us without causing more than minor casualties, perhaps three or four

men killed or seriously wounded. Men commenced to leave singly, in pairs and threes, over an exposed path to the west; the adjutant made no effort to stop them. No attempt was made to fight back.

At 3:00 p.m. the Colonel returned, ordered the white flag raised.

10. Comments on the British.

While comments have been freely indulged in throughout this report it is believed the following two points may have been insufficiently stressed:

1. The individual courage shown by officers and men was amazing in view of their low morale. The officers especially went forward to their deaths without hesitancy although they had in their hearts no hope of success.

2. Destruction of valuable property was poorly carried out. The enemy captured large quantities of oil, arms, and munitions. It is probable that even some of the 9.2" seacoast guns were taken undamaged and still with a considerable supply of ammunition.

11. Comments on the Japanese.

1. Tactics of the Japanese seemed suited to the situation. On the occasion of landing at North Point, they advanced through difficult terrain with startling speed. Their quick exploitation of this landing was probably the outstanding feat of the battle. For the remainder of the time their advance was made cautiously, consolidating the ground as they went. They maintained light pressure on the British by means of small patrols, infiltrating through the British lines for short distances. British positions were located, probably by a combination of patrols, aerial and terrestrial observation, and were then mortared. The prompt withdrawal of the British was followed by methodical occupation by the Japanese.

2. The moral effect of the Air Corps in forcing the decision was great. The actual contribution was minor by comparison. Chief bombing targets were antiaircraft guns and emplaced artillery. I saw no bombing or machine gunning of troops in the open. The value of their aerial reconnaissance is unknown; they apparently employed no special planes for the purpose but relied on their pursuits and dive bombers for reports. In conjunction with artillery fire, great damage was done gun positions, but which factor was the more important is problematical.

3. Artillery fire was very light considering the number of guns available. This could no doubt be attributed to the difficulty of ammunition supply. There were stories of very accurate shooting but the firing which I personally observed was inaccurate, dispersion was great both in range and deflection. Interdiction firing was usually one round a minute, evenly spaced; on at least

one occasion the rounds were erratically spaced. Key roads were not interdicted constantly but were rather harassed for perhaps one hour, then let alone for several hours. During the off periods vehicles could proceed in full view of the enemy without drawing fire.

4. As indicated above, the infantry placed chief reliance on their light mortars. Machine guns were little used, rifles were used only at point blank range, a condition seldom met with. Patrolling was effective, especially at night, showing the result of long training. Their skill in camouflage was remarkable; this was undoubtedly a considerable factor in their success.

5. Discipline of the troops as observed after the capture was good. There was little drunkenness. The usual tendency to arrogance towards the conquered was observed. Looting by individuals is believed to have been on a minor scale. Many atrocities were undoubtedly committed (I saw one Chinese being beaten to death) but there was no general rape of the city.

12. Lessons.

The battle was a demonstration in blood of the correctness of military thought in the United States. Lessons to be drawn are believed obvious. Two points had such an influence on the outcome of the fighting that they are deemed of sufficient importance to mention again:

1. During maneuvers all ranks should be trained to take as much sleep as the situation allows. There is a natural tendency to remain unnecessarily "on the job" without rest, leading promptly to great reduction of the mental powers and later to physical collapse.

2. Men must be taught to overcome their natural fear of airplanes so that they may not be overly frightened by the roar of a few dive bombers.

13. Hongkong Under the Japanese.

The first thing immediately apparent after the fall of the Colony was the unreadiness of the Japanese to govern it. There was great confusion caused by a reported fight for power between the civil, military, and gendarmerie authorities. Orders were issued and countermanded, regulations made and changed or not enforced. Currency values, water, electricity, rental rates, business permits, and transportation were a few of the questions remaining unsolved on June 30th.

Immediately after the surrender shipping filled the harbor, engaged in the wholesale looting of the city. Estimates of up to one hundred shiploads, largely of foodstuffs and metals, were taken out the first month. Thereafter looting proceeded on a gradually diminishing scale. It was still in progress on June 30th. Looting of foodstuffs was exceedingly serious to the population as the Colony produces almost nothing.

Urged by the Japanese, perhaps half of the Chinese population returned to their villages in the provinces. Portuguese likewise returned to Macao. Citizens of belligerent or unfriendly countries were interned. Citizens of truly neutral countries received very summary treatment; some were imprisoned, their businesses all but confiscated outright.

No reports were received of any extensive fortifications, although there were rumors that the airport was being enlarged.

As of June 30th, the Colony was a picture of desolation and despair, with food the primary thought of all strata of the population. Many deaths have occurred from starvation, with many more to come. Medicine stocks are very low, with no prospects of alleviation.

The Chinese may not have loved their English masters, but it is a certainty that having seen the “New Order” at work they would welcome back the old with open arms.²

Condon’s report says a great deal but one of its most important aspects is how it expresses the prejudices held by some American officers against their new allies.

Condon had direct personal involvement in the course of the Battle of Hong Kong and that makes his report useful, especially in his description of events at the Wong Nei Chong Gap and his interaction with some of the garrison’s officers, but partly because of his own restricted field of view as a combatant on the ground as well as the colony’s relative isolation from outside events, comments on matters outside of his own personal experience tend to skew the report. His assertion, for example, that the Japanese did not commit armour to the battle is contradicted by Company Sergeant Major George MacDonell. While the fight for Wong Nei Chong Gap was winding down the Sergeant Major and a platoon of the Royal Rifles of Canada destroyed a light AFV with Molotov cocktails along the eastern side of the island near Red Hill. Major General P. Montague, in command of the Canadian Military Headquarters in London, also

² NARA, RG 165, Entry 77 NM 84, Box 1738, File Islands, Hong Kong; Report by Condon, 20 August 1942.

reported the presence of Japanese light AFVs during the battle.³ More significantly, comments about the absence of coordinated Allied strategic planning for south China are similarly contradicted by officers who served with Detachment 204.⁴ Coordinated plans were discussed in Chungking on 9 December 1941 for example, by Generalissimo Chiang Kai Shek, British Military Mission commander Major General Lance Dennys, and the head of the US Military Mission, Brigadier General John Magruder, in Chungking.⁵ Plans were also discussed in Washington prior to the outbreak of the Pacific War.⁶

Following his release from captivity, Major Condon was eventually promoted to Colonel and he went on to serve in Y Force under the command of Brigadier General Frank Dorn at Kunming.⁷

³ CSM George MacDonell, interview by the author, 16 August 2006. NAC, RG 24, Volume 12299, Reel T-17901, File 3/Cdn Ops OS/1; Memorandum, 3 February 1942.

⁴ HKU, B.A.A.G. Series, Volume II, ‘Capture, Escape and the Early B.A.A.G.’; Mission 204 War Diary, 8 December 1941.

⁵ NARA, RG 407, Entry 360, Box 736, File 400.3295 4-14-41 Sec. 2; Telegram No. 90 by Magruder, 9 December 1941.

⁶ NAC, RG 25, Volume 2920, File 2670-A-40C-1; Telegram No. 2132 by Massey, and ‘Hong Kong as Vital Bastion’, *The Daily Telegraph*, 11 November 1941.

⁷ NARA, RG 111-SC, New Series Box 412; Army Signal Corps Photo No. 241604, 23 October 1944.

Appendix 14

Esprit de Corps: the Royal Rifles of Canada

The men of C Force were dispatched to Hong Kong by the Canadian government for geopolitical reasons which were kept secret from the public.¹ Perhaps not well versed on some of the finer points of Allied grand strategy, these men from Canada would nonetheless have gone anywhere they were told, regardless of the underlying reasons. They were all volunteers and their morale was high. Although a great deal of acrimony on issues such as financial compensation was justifiably directed against the Canadian and Japanese governments by veterans after the war was over, many veterans remained proud of their actions in Hong Kong and they do not consider themselves to be victims. These were patriotic men with a sense of duty who fought and died for each other.

Company Sergeant Major (CSM) George MacDonell was an NCO in the Royal Rifles of Canada and he led the final attack by D Company on Christmas Day in Stanley. During an interview in later years he explained some of his thoughts on what motivated him to fight at Hong Kong. He stated that the deployment was a ‘great adventure. We were just kids. We knew nothing of Hong Kong. Nothing about China … we joined the army to fight wherever we were sent’.² He supported the decision made by the Canadian government in sending C Force to Hong Kong remarking that the country was simply unprepared for war and that officials in Ottawa did not know a Japanese attack was imminent. Prime Minister W.L. Mackenzie King had no choice but to accept the British

¹ NAC, RG 25, Volume 5769, File No. 152-A(s) Pt I; Canadian High Commission (London) Telegram No. 225, 26 February 1948.

² CSM George MacDonell, interview by the author, 3 August 2006.

request, he said. The understanding MacDonell had at the time was that C Force would be sent to Hong Kong where they could continue training. Afterwards they would redeploy to Europe. He added that they were not soldiers of convenience. ‘We were volunteers to fight where we were sent,’ and, ‘in the end, we made our contribution to defeating the Japanese.’³ MacDonell did not feel the sacrifice of C Force was a waste, but rather, he felt that he and his friends had likely bought the Allies some time in both Singapore and Australia. ‘The Canadians in Hong Kong did not die in vain, and they made their contribution. You don’t win a war by keeping your soldiers at home. We went to Hong Kong, we engaged them, and we killed as many of them as we could.’⁴

The Sergeant Major described some of the tactical problems he and his company had to contend with.

It takes a while for green troops to become acclimatized and realize that fire discipline is important, and never give your position away. Well it took us a long time to learn that, we were green, so they had an enormous advantage, they had, they had been fighting in China for two years. They were really tough professional soldiers, and constantly, when we stopped them, they would, the encirclement would begin. You see we didn’t have enough troops, so when we, when we stopped them cold somewhere, within an hour, they would start the encirclement, around the flanks, and the next thing you know, machinegun bullets would come, ploughing into your back. And again and again they almost closed the circle and trapped us, trapped my platoon and my company.⁵

Combat experience was emphasized as being more important than training.

MacDonell also described the Christmas Day attack he led against Japanese positions in Stanley and how morale was maintained at that time.

I think you just can’t believe how tough these Canadians were, from the Maritimes. After seventeen days of non-stop day and night battle, completely exhausted, covered with blood, dirt, wounds; on Christmas Day I woke them up from the first sleep

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

they'd had inside, behind a wall. We'd been pulled out for a day to get some rest, I called them together and said, "At one o'clock the company is going to attack Stanley village below us", in broad daylight, no support, no artillery, no heavy machineguns, nothing.⁶

MacDonell told his company the order to attack had come from Brigadier Wallis.

I stood in front of my company, and my platoon, and said, "Men, I want you to get your weapons cleaned, we had two corporals killed yesterday; I want to appoint two new corporals. I want to make sure we're in the proper attack formation, because we're going back into the village, at one o'clock." Now they looked at me, as if I had lost my mind. I knew this was suicide. I knew I would never live through that day and then I thought to myself, well, if they're gonna mutiny, now is the time because, this order is insane ... but I stood in front of my troops and said, "We're going in at one o'clock."⁷

After a period of stunned silence and a further acknowledgement of the lack of combat support, some hesitation was expressed by the men.

You mean we're gonna go back and take that village and they've been there for the last twenty four hours preparing the defences. Sergeant, you must be out of your mind. I said, "well, now look, listen to me, they don't, they aren't gonna like this as much, the secret is to close quickly, don't waste your ammunition, and shoot back." I gave them a big pep talk, on infantry tactics, and then I thought, wait'll the guys who are wounded, not badly, wait'll they start complaining, and saying that they're not fit to go, and do you know what happened? Not a single man said, "I can't do it, I wanna be relieved, I've been wounded," not a single person asked to be excused from that attack. Not a single man. When it wound up I was commanding the company ... and we lost, we had over one hundred casualties, twenty eight of them were killed that day; in two hours, but we took the objective, and we held it until they began to encircle us and we'd run out of ammunition once again, you know, you can only carry so much ammunition, as you know, and of course we couldn't be supplied, there was no supply for us, and their interlocking machinegun fire from the flanks made it impossible, to get back anyway.⁸

The distance D Company had to cover during the attack was approximately three hundred to four hundred yards but MacDonell stated that morale continued to remain strong.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

They all kept one bullet for themselves. No intention of surrendering. We knew, that after the slaughter we'd made of them, in the village, that afternoon ... there would be no mercy for us. We killed an awful lot of them. Oh my god.⁹

D Company caught many Japanese troops on an open road and they killed most of these with submachine guns and three Bren guns. MacDonell described it as a 'slaughter' and while burying the dead over the next two days he observed that a great deal of dried blood had remained stuck to the street.¹⁰ The company advanced through the position with a bayonet attack and they killed many more troops after forcing the Japanese to retreat. 'They were furious.'¹¹ The Japanese thought that the battle for Hong Kong was already over and they were puzzled by the Canadian attack. When asked if the fury of the attack was a reaction to the atrocities at St. Stephen's hospital MacDonell stated that his troops knew nothing about the incident until afterwards.¹²

Morale remained steady even during D Company's withdrawal. No one disobeyed orders and MacDonell stated that there was, 'no whining.' The men were prepared to die, and there was no discussion of surrender, he 'never heard of any Canadian troops going AWOL. Not a single case of discipline.'¹³ Stanley was mostly hand to hand combat and the majority of men had been lost going in. MacDonell and Sergeant Lance Ross stayed behind with Bren guns to cover the retreat while D Company withdrew down along some drainage ditches. The wounded were left behind. Japanese machineguns covered the exposed ground behind them. MacDonell stated, 'it was just a disaster', but he never heard

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

anyone who wished to surrender. The Japanese also never surrendered and the Canadians ‘had to kill every single one of them’.¹⁴

In response to queries about his POW experience MacDonell was not bitter as one might expect but he was frustrated about those who were critical of their abilities and about the attention that has been devoted within the historiography over the lack of training amongst the men. He stated,

We won the fucking war ... The people who are whining don’t understand that war is a terrible thing. If you volunteer to fight for your country it’s not going to be a Sunday school party ... It was tough but the Canadians in the prison camp were magnificent ... starved to death but they never disobeyed orders.¹⁵

Clearly, Sergeant Major MacDonell was willing to go wherever his country chose to send him and there were others who shared his views.

One of these was Sergeant Maurice D’Avignon, who wrote to Prime Minister Mackenzie King in 1948 after the release of Major General Christopher Maltby’s battle report created a political uproar in Ottawa. He wrote in similar tones as CSM MacDonell.

Dear Sir.

I have been listening to the radio about the investigations of the Royal Commission concerning the troops sent to Hong Kong in 1941.

Please allow me to identify myself first: I am ex-Provost Sergeant M. D’Avignon E-30547 of the Royal Rifles of Canada.

I can’t understand the attitude of people not concern cause the one that should asked for those investigations are the one concern and I never heard or seen any of us critisized the Government decision in sending us to Hong Kong. When we volunteered in the army we were ready to fight anywhere in the British Empire. If destiny have sent us to Hong Kong it was our duty has true Canadian to defend it the best we could. If we failed in our mission it is not to Mr. Drew or anybody else to have a post mortem inquiry on how we were trained.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

I have cutting of news paper calling us, "The Valliant Defender of Hong Kong, Canadians are fighting like lions in Hong Kong."

If such a battle was given to the Japanese and there casualties prove it sure wasn't given by untrained soldiers. It took the Japanese seventeen days to capture Hong Kong with 6000 untrained soldiers to defend it and it took the same army eight days to defeat 75000 trained soldiers of Singapore. Hong Kong was lost not through fault of untrained soldiers not the fault of any Government or incompetence of Officers it was lost because there was too many against us and too much equipment. If the Pill Boxes of Hong Kong were not well built or the guns could not turn inland it is not the fault of the Canadian Government. They were well organised before and during the battle there ammunition had been buried in the hills much before we arrived.

If during the seventeen days we fought it gave a chance to Australia to get reinforcement from England and U.S.A. I think it was an honor for Canadian soldiers to participate in saving Australia.

I can not emphasise too much the fact that if Canadian were sent to Hong Kong it was in good faith and if the going was hard this part is all in a soldier and a true defender's life.

I would sincerely ask the Royal Commission not to disturb the grave of my comrades whom fought for a good cause and certainly did not feel they had been sentenced by the Canadian Government when they gave their life for what they thought was their duty.

Very Sincerely yours
Maurice D'Avignon

173 3rd. St. Val D'Or Que.

P.S. I am the same fellow that wrote to you from Manila when I came back from Japan. If you remember our birthday happen to be on the same day.

M. D'Avignon.¹⁶

D'Avignon's views were similar to MacDonell's. Patriotism and duty were important personal motivations and they saw great utility in their service at Hong Kong. Ultimately they fought for their friends and both saw themselves as professional soldiers not victims.

The problem, however, is the cloak of secrecy which concealed the reasons for their deployment. Reflecting the attitudes held by many Canadians at

¹⁶ NAC, MG 26 J2, Volume 499, File W-30 1947-48; Letter by Maurice D'Avignon to Mackenzie King, 30 January 1948.

that time, the men of C Force trusted that their government would make sound decisions on issues as important as foreign policy and war. By not being honest about the geopolitical nature of their deployment the government of Canada undermined its own credibility and legitimacy. The reinforcement of Hong Kong was meant to be an Allied gesture of support to the Chinese government; an inducement to continue the war when forces for peace within the country had grown strong. The war in China was useful in maintaining Soviet Far Eastern security and C Force was sent to Hong Kong as an act of Allied solidarity with the Chinese but only to safeguard the Soviet Far East. Had the Canadian public been made aware that their soldiers were being sent to an indefensible Colony in aid of a dictator who had been until recently their enemy, then perhaps the deployment may not have been made, but at least the decision would have been a democratic one. Aside from the lack of military necessity in sending the men of C Force to their deaths at Hong Kong, the deployment was a shameful business as the Canadian government was not honest with the public over the reasons why they were sent. The men of C Force were honourable soldiers who fought the Japanese with determination but the democratic process at home was clearly a victim.

Appendix 15

John Mackie and the Fate of Hong Kong Prisoners of War

The Canadian government headed by William Lyon Mackenzie King reinforced Hong Kong with infantry in the fall of 1941 to support the Chinese war effort as a means of enhancing Soviet Far Eastern security. Ottawa was somewhat more circumspect in mounting attempts to provide aid to C Force after the Colony had fallen and the same men were made prisoners of war. In early 1942 a plan was presented in Ottawa to help alleviate their plight but as it involved securing Soviet diplomatic assistance it was considered too problematic for implementation. The scheme originated with a former Liberal member of Prime Minister Sir Robert Borden's Unionist Government of 1917 to 1921.¹ Lieutenant Colonel Herbert John Mackie presented his plan to Mackenzie King while concurrently jostling to become Canada's first ambassador to the USSR.² Mackie wanted to enlist the aid of Josef Stalin to pressure the Japanese into providing better treatment for the POWs at Hong Kong but the plan was ultimately rejected along with his petition for the ambassadorial post.³ Instead, former trade representative Dana Wilgress became Canada's first ambassador to the Soviet Union and the POWs were left to their own devices.⁴

Lieutenant Colonel Mackie was a reserve military officer who had been posted to a variety of countries. At the end of the nineteenth century he served in the Boer War, primarily in the region between Mafeking and the Orange River as

¹ J.K. Johnson, ed., *The Canadian Directory of Parliament, 1867-1967* (Ottawa: Public Archives of Canada, 1968), p. 345.

² NAC, MG 26 J1, Reel C-6809; Letter by H.J. Mackie to Mackenzie King, 30 June 1942.

³ NAC, RG 25, Volume 3017, File 3722-40; External Affairs Memorandum, 17 April 1942.

⁴ NAC, MG 26 J1, Reel C-7047; Memorandum by Wilgress, 27 March 1943.

the commander of the Warren Scouts.⁵ During the First World War he served in St. Petersburg from 1914 to 1915 for a four-month period at the army's artillery headquarters, followed by another twenty months at the department overseeing Russia's military proving grounds.⁶ It was during 1915 that Mackie helped to arrange a munitions deal with the Russian Government valued at eighty-five million dollars but most of his affairs were connected with the Bolsheviks after their coup d'état in 1917.⁷

According to Mackie's resume his connections to the Soviet Union were extensive. In 1921 he served on the British Mission to Moscow as Canada's representative.⁸ Writing to Prime Minister Mackenzie King the following year, Mackie noted that because of the time spent in St. Petersburg and Moscow he had become quite good friends with Foreign Trade Commissar Leonid Krasin as well as Foreign Affairs Commissar Georgy Chicherin and his successor Maxim Litvinov.⁹ Mackie in later years informed the Prime Minister that he was also on friendly terms with Marshal Semyon Timoshenko, and most importantly with Premier Josef Stalin himself.¹⁰ During the 1920s and 1930s Mackie maintained his connection to Moscow through his employment with Amtorg, the Soviet trading corporation in New York which served as a front organization used to cover NKVD operations in North America.¹¹ On average Mackie travelled to the USSR on at least two or three occasions each year, staying at the British legation

⁵ NAC, RG 38, Reel T-2080, Volume 75; Boer War Service File, 1 August 1901.

⁶ NAC, MG 26 J1, Reel C-2243; Letter by Mackie to Mackenzie King, 14 January 1922.

⁷ NAC, MG 26 J1, Reel C-3682; Letter by Mackie to Mackenzie King, 24 October 1935.

⁸ NAC, MG 26 J1, Reel C-2303; Foreign Office Memorandum, 16 October 1928.

⁹ NAC, MG 26 J1, Reel C-2243; Letter by Mackie to Mackenzie King, 14 January 1922, and NAC, MG 26 J1, Reel C-6809; Letter and attachment by Mackie to Mackenzie King, 30 June 1942.

¹⁰ NAC, RG 25, Volume 3017, File 3722-40; External Affairs Memorandum, 17 April 1942.

¹¹ NAC, MG 26 K, Reel M-1032; Letter by J.H. Wardroskie to William Bennett, 25 February, 1931. See also Walter Krivitsky, *I was Stalin's Agent* (London: The Right Book Club, 1940), p. 71.

when possible, and he consistently worked to secure foreign economic investment as well as Canadian official recognition for the Soviet government.¹² Towards this end he helped negotiate the establishment of a Soviet Trade Mission in Montreal during the 1920s but this was closed after two years of operation. He worked as an ‘Observer’ [Mackie’s quotes] for John D. Rockefeller’s Standard Oil Company while reporting on the Anglo-Soviet Trade Treaty.¹³ His résumé also included confidential service in Moscow on behalf of such figures as British Prime Minister J. Ramsay MacDonald, and Canadian Pacific Railway chief Sir Edward Beatty, in addition to assisting Averell Harriman while both were in the Soviet capital.¹⁴ Mackie at some point also completed a survey and a report for the Soviet government on lumbering operations at Archangel and along the Northern Dvina River.¹⁵ Immediately prior to the start of Operation Barbarossa Mackie informed Mackenzie King that the Germans were about to attack their eastern neighbour. He wrote: ‘Indications are the Germans will, in their own good time, make a surprise attack on Soviet frontiers in an attempt to reach the wheat fields of the Ukraine and Northern Caucasus … I will say nothing of the oil situation in this letter’.¹⁶

Based upon his experience and associations Mackie sought to become Canada’s first ambassador to the USSR in 1942. Mackie’s past, however, led some in Ottawa including Prime Ministers William Bennett and Arthur Meighen

¹² NAC, MG 26 J1, Reel C-2247; Letter by Mackie to Mackenzie King, 17 April 1922, and NAC, MG 26 J1, Reel C-2318; Letter by Andrew Haydon to Mackenzie King, 31 May 1930. See also NAC, MG 26 J1, Reel C-3682; Letter by Mackie to Mackenzie King, 24 October 1935, and NAC, MG 26 J1, Reel C-6809; Letter and attachment by Mackie to Mackenzie King, 30 June 1942. See also NAC, RG 25, Volume 1802, File 635; Letter by Mackie to Mackenzie King, 19 November 1941.

¹³ NAC, MG 26 J1, Reel C-6809; Letter and attachment by Mackie to Mackenzie King, 30 June 1942.

¹⁴ NAC, RG 25, Volume 1802, File 635; External Affairs Memorandum, 23 July 1936.

¹⁵ NAC, MG 26 J1, Reel C-3682; Letter by Mackie to Mackenzie King, 24 October 1935.

¹⁶ NAC, RG 25, Volume 1802, File 635; Letter by Mackie to Mackenzie King, 20 June 1941.

to consider the Colonel a Soviet intelligence agent.¹⁷ Questions regarding his loyalties, amongst other issues, were brought to the attention of Bennett in a letter written by J.H. Wardroskie in February 1931. Wardroskie's credibility and the accuracy of his claims are left for the reader to consider but nevertheless the following letter arrived on the Prime Minister's desk:

Dear Sir:-

Re Lieut, -Col Herbert J. Mackie and Soviet Offer

Through the Press I have become aware of Col Mackie's advances to you and your Cabinet, trade relation offer with Russia and your consideration of the offer etc.

Prior to doing any business implicating your people it would be to your advantage to investigate Col Mackies, interest and relation with the Soviet.

For your information would state that in my capacity for a foreign Power in close relation to your Government I have had Col Mackie under Surveillance for the past eight years and his relation to your Canadian Interests are anything but favorable.

Col Mackie has been in the employ of the Russian Government this past 14 years as an Official Espionage Agent in North America specializing in Canadian Reports and Canadian feelings during the last 14 years he has made yearly two, three and four trips to Moscow, and during the interval has been in the direct touch and employ of the Amtorg Trading Corp, New York the bed of Russian Secret Service of This Country camouflaged under a business heading.

If you will take the pains to investigate and apply to Mr Sauve Chef of The Department De Surete Paris (Secret Service Branch) and to Senor Jubodzeddler Chef of the Secret Service of the Swiss Police, I believe you will have a considerable change of opinion and that you will find our Col Mackie a subject for Court Martial by your Government.

Col Mackie's Dossier as a soldier is worth your attention as a preliminary look up his South African record and judge for yourself the Col retreated alone in disorder when he first heard the Zulu war cry in his second engagement and left his regiment stranded he blamed that his horse had bolted, but the horse must have been guided by Bridle to be able to dodge the troops in the rear his own regiment included, he was never seen until after engagement with heavy loss to his troops. His Political ambitions were ruined on that account he not having the nerve to stand up and receive public criticism's of his conduct.

¹⁷ NAC, MG 26 J1, Reel C-6809; Letter by Mackie to Mackenzie King, 30 June 1942.

Investigate the Col affairs and business in Russia you will find no Industrials interests whatsoever, he is merely a paid agent in their espionage service in touch with the U.S.S.R. but under the General Control of the Armtorg Trading Corporation the Russian Secret Service in North America, his reports are generally made verbally, but living as a retired Gentleman of means in the Suburban Town of Pembroke he has been overlooked by your Officials although our eye has been on him since 1913.

Prior to intering into business arrangements with a traitor who proved himself a Coward and just escaped Court Martial by the Skin of his teeth in S.Africa, look him up in the proper manner find out his patriotic interest in both Countries and what commissions has been his reward, better still make a raid on his private papers and if he has been careless you will be well rewarded and save yourself very embarrassing questions in the House at the coming session.

Sincerely J.H. Wardroskie
Home Address Leningrad
care Mr Assor B. Stremen.

Confidential WSCRW.¹⁸

In denying any communist affiliation Mackie placed himself and his views on the USSR in alignment with such notable figures as Lord Lothian (Philip Kerr) and Lady Nancy Astor, both members of Lord Milner's Kindergarten.¹⁹

It was because of his contacts and history in Moscow that Mackie became involved with the military disaster at Hong Kong. In March 1942 Mackie made a proposal to Mackenzie King stating that he would travel to Moscow and personally approach Stalin outside of official channels in order to gain his assistance in pressuring the Japanese to provide information and better treatment for Canadian POWs.²⁰ As the Soviet-Japanese Neutrality Pact was still in force it was assumed that Stalin had leverage in Tokyo that could be used in this instance. Canadian External Affairs officials strongly disagreed with the plan as they felt it

¹⁸ NAC, MG 26 K, Reel M-1032; Letter by Wardroskie to William Bennett, 25 February, 1931.

¹⁹ NAC, MG 26 J1, Reel C-6809; Letter by Mackie to Mackenzie King, 30 June 1942. See also Carroll Quigley, *The Anglo-American Establishment: From Rhodes to Cliveden* (San Pedro: GSG & Associates, 1981), pp. 48, 60, 91.

²⁰ NAC, MG 26 J1, Reel C-6809; Letter by Mackie to Mackenzie King, 28 March 1942. See also NAC, RG 25, Volume 3017, File 3722-40; External Affairs Memorandum, 17 April 1942.

essential to act in unison with both the British and the Americans on POW issues and that by acting separately they would likely have to do so again elsewhere in the future.²¹ Colonel Clarke, an officer working on Hong Kong POW matters at National Defence Headquarters in Ottawa, noted that the proposal ‘is full of dynamite’.²² It was also thought an approach of this kind would complicate Canada’s relations with the protecting power in the region which was Argentina, as well as with Switzerland and the Red Cross, as their work in Japan and the rest of East Asia had increased tremendously on behalf of the Allies.²³ As an aside it is worth noting how after the war the Canadian government sought to thank the former Argentinean Consul to Hong Kong Ramon Muniz Lavalle, because of his assistance to POWs during 1942. In one case he had purchased a pair of crutches for severely wounded Private Fred Herity of the Winnipeg Grenadiers and he had also helped others when possible.²⁴

Mackie’s plan was finally rejected in Ottawa for several reasons. To keep in step with the British and Americans it was not deemed useful to place any demands or requests upon Stalin as it would only have given him leverage in pressing for increased support elsewhere, specifically for a second front in France. Furthermore, Anglo-American officials did not wish to damage Soviet-Japanese relations with issues relating to Hong Kong as the avoidance of a Japanese invasion of the USSR was still a fundamental objective in Allied grand strategy.

Instead of seeking Soviet support against the Japanese, Ottawa officials sought to discourage public comment and criticism relating to the disaster. Canada’s High Commissioner to Great Britain during the war was Vincent

²¹ NAC, RG 25, Volume 3017, File 3722-40; External Affairs Memorandum, 17 April 1942.

²² NAC, RG 25, Volume 3017, File 3722-40; External Affairs Memorandum, 5 May 1942.

²³ NAC, MG 26 J1, Reel C-6814; Telegram, 11 March 1942, and NAC, RG 25, Volume 3017, File 3722-40; External Affairs Memorandum, 17 April 1942.

²⁴ NAC, RG 25, Volume 2920, File 2670-A-40C; Telegram by Felix Walter, 17 September 1946.

Massey, who was encouraged to remind British official commentators and pressmen not to talk about the inevitability of Hong Kong's capitulation. It was thought that 'if this line is emphasized it will be difficult to explain why it was necessary to send Canadian troops in the first place.'²⁵ Containment of public discussion was the purpose behind the establishment of the Royal Commission of Inquiry headed by Chief Justice Sir Lyman Duff in 1942, and the avoidance of placing responsibility was a primary objective. Mackenzie King's comments reflected this in 1948 following the release of the Maltby report.

I should be unhappy indeed if at the end of my public life, the Tories were able to pin on me as they seek now to do, responsibility for the fate of our battalion at Hong Kong. A damnable sort of effort in the light of all that Canada has done in the war ... It really has been a waste of a day, having to go over all this material which belongs to 6 years ago but which comes up now in ways to occasion embarrassment.²⁶

Mackenzie King blamed the army for sending two battalions to Hong Kong instead of one, but regardless of the number, the deployment was a political matter not a military one, and as Prime Minister as well as Minister of External Affairs, Mackenzie King was the single most responsible official behind the Canadian decision to send troops to Hong Kong.²⁷ In the end he had little to fear as the issue was successfully deflected and buried by the end of April 1948.²⁸

²⁵ NAC, RG 25, Volume 2920, File 2670-A-40C-1; External Affairs Telegram to Massey, 18 December 1941.

²⁶ NAC, Diaries of William Lyon Mackenzie King; 27 February 1948.

²⁷ Nicholas Evan Sarantakes, *Allies Against the Rising Sun: the United States, the British Nations, and the Defeat of Imperial Japan* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2009), p. 133.

²⁸ NAC, Diaries of William Lyon Mackenzie King; 27 February 1948, and 19 April 1948.

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