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Galahad Redux: An Assessment of the Disintegration of Merrill's Marauders

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Final report 6 June 1975

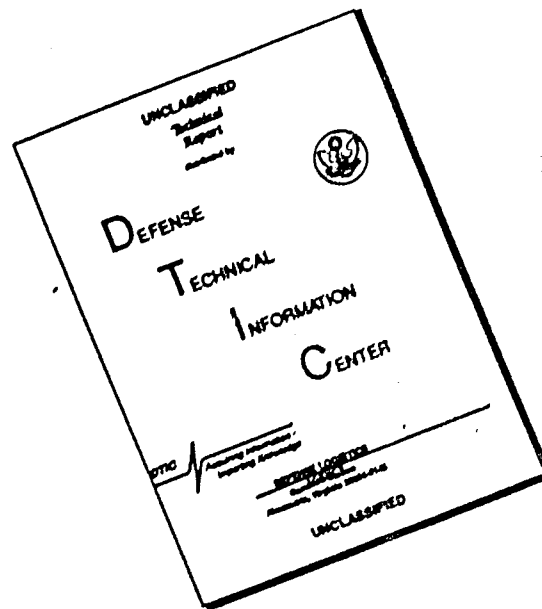
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Galahad Redux is an attempt to analyze the disintegration of Merrill's Marauders, by emphasizing the intangible, subjective factors present in the leadership environment. The focus is on the disbandment of the 5307th in August 1944. The causes of the unit's loss of integrity are related through the perceptions of five men who were there. Their recorded testimony makes it clear that poor discipline, the effect of rotating commanders, a feeling that the unit was not good enough, a lack of attention, and broken promises led to a complete breakdown of morale in June 1944.

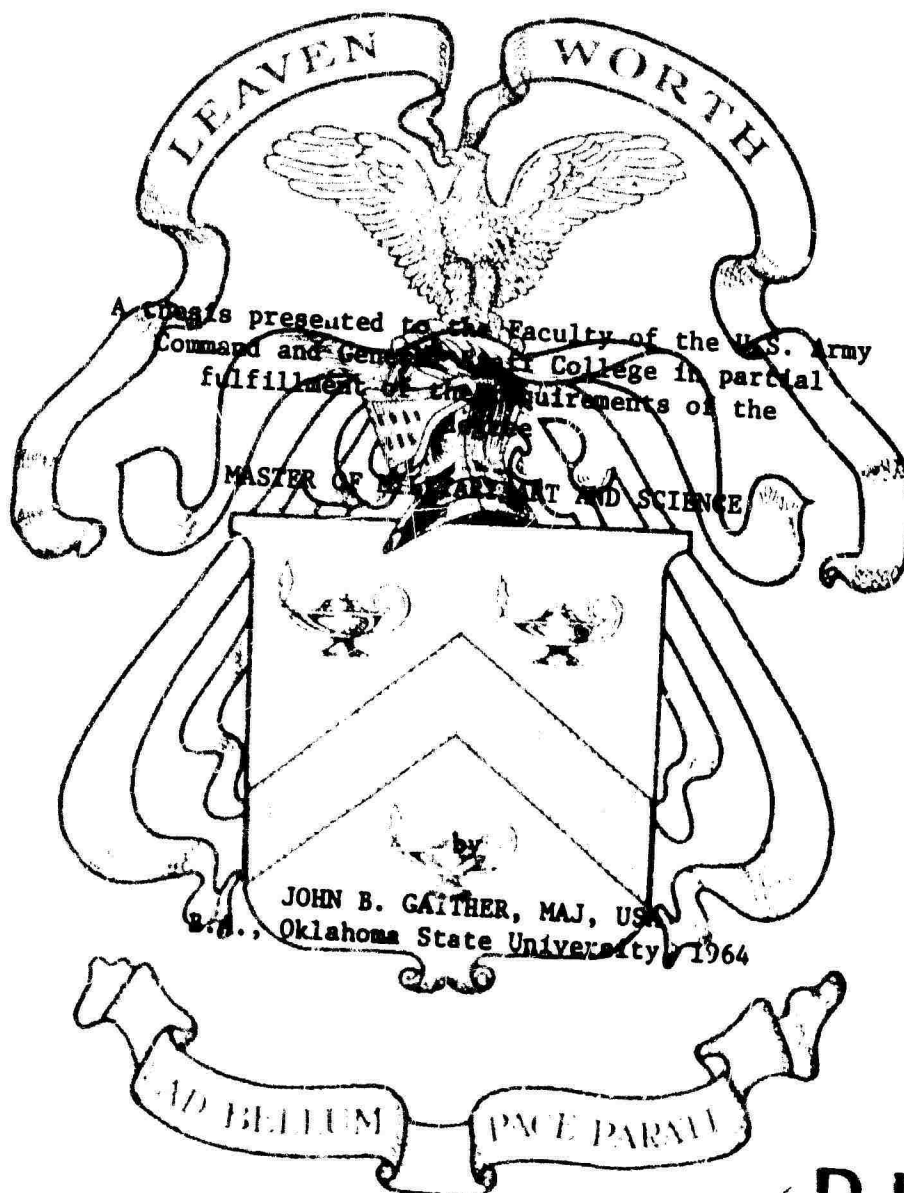
Re-telling the Marauder story one more time hopefully reinforces two aphorisms that are deeply embedded in American military traditions. One is that soldiers' minds are as important as their numbers. The other is that force of character is a commander's greatest strength.

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GALAHAD REDUX
AN ASSESSMENT OF THE DISINTEGRATION
OF MERRILL'S MARAUDERS



Fort Leavenworth, Kansas
1975

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ABSTRACT

The China-Burma-India Theater was the least decisive major arena of World War II. General Joseph Stilwell was tasked to perform concurrent diplomatic and military miracles in pursuit of Allied victory. His mission of keeping a reluctant China in the war depended upon opening a ground line of supply and communication, to augment the "Hump" air routes that linked India and China. To do this, the Japanese had to be driven from North Burma. Training and equipping Chinese troops to accomplish this mission required several months.

On the eve of the Chinese attacks in October 1943, a lone American infantry regiment debarked in Bombay, India. By August 1944, this ill-starred force had won accolade and suffered disbandment. During its brief, frenetic history, this first U.S. ground combat unit to fight on the Asian land mass in World War II, was known variously as Shipment 1688, Force Galahad, the 5307th Composite Unit (Provisional), and Merrill's Marauders. This organization's participation in the North Burma Campaign lasted five and a half months and culminated in the capture of Myitkyina. The seizure of Myitkyina and its airfield permitted Allied transports to fly around the Himalayas instead of over them, and contributed greatly to the success of subsequent offensives to break the blockade of China. Although it was an achievement of high order, Galahad paid a price.

The battles in Burma involved many enemies: the Japanese, the environment, and the morale of the Marauders themselves. Galahad Redux

is an attempt to analyze the disintegration of Merrill's Marauders, by emphasizing the intangible, subjective factors present in the leadership environment. The focus is on the disbandment of the 5307th in August 1944. The causes of the unit's loss of integrity are related through the perceptions of five men who were there. Their recorded testimony makes it clear that poor discipline, the effect of rotating commanders, a feeling that the unit was not good enough, a lack of attention, and broken promises led to a complete breakdown of morale in June 1944. As morale faltered and failed, esprit, discipline, and fighting efficiency withered, until there was but a shell of a unit remaining. In a sense, Galahad was not disbanded, it had already ceased to exist. Having been provided the tools of war, the Marauders lost their heart in the fighting.

The true validity of any examination of the intangible aspects of combat power lie in the eye of the beholder. Subjectivity may lead to varying interpretations of events not clearly explained by the historical record. Broken promises can be viewed as the principal cause of Galahad's collapse. One man, General Merrill, played the leading role in enunciating and abrogating the two promises that struck most directly at the unit's heart. It is possible that he chose expediency over integrity at a critical point in Galahad's history.

Re-telling the Marauder story one more time hopefully reinforces two aphorisms that are deeply embedded in American military traditions. One is that soldiers' minds are as important as their numbers. The other is that force of character is a commander's greatest strength.

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* Maps # 1,2,4,5,8,9,10,11,12, and 13 are from Military Intelligence Division, Armed Forces in Action, Merrill's Marauders, (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1945).

Maps # 3,6,7, and 14 are from Charles F. Romanus and Riley Sunderland, Stilwell's Command Problems, (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1945).

Chapter 1

"GALAHAD IS JUST SHOT."¹

Indeed it was. Galahad, variously known as the 5307th Composite Unit (Provisional) and Merrill's Marauders, was the first American ground combat force to fight on the Asian land mass in World War II. Deployed in late 1943, as a long range penetration group, representing the only force the United States could muster for the China-Burma-India Theater, Galahad earned a Distinguished Unit Citation for combat in five major and thirty minor engagements. This accolade, proof of significant achievement, was bestowed upon the shattered shell of a military organization that was disbanded, even as the pronouncement of its honor echoed along the steep, forested hills overlooking the airstrip at Myitkyina.

Taken at face value, there is little to recommend serious study of this ill-starred infantry unit that was never even assigned a standard or a patch. Viewed against the grand sweep and swell of the European and Pacific campaigns of the Second World War, this miniscule effort, lasting less than a year, pales into insignificance. Armadas "crossing the T" and field armies assailing a flank are the stuff of military history at its grandest. Most argue reliably well that, faced with China's unwillingness to participate to any appreciable extent in this east-central Asia theater, there was never anything decisive to be gained. Why then any concern at all? One possibility is suggested in

Crisis Fleeting, when the editor, summarizing medical support in the China-Burma-India Theater notes:

Post mortem dissections of 5307th usually concentrate upon the heart. The Marauders decry the heartlessness of senior officers, and attribute the demise of the 5307th to harsh and fraudulent autocracy. But observers outside the force blame the Marauders themselves for the misery at Myitkyina. The breakdown of morale, according to their viewpoint, determined the Marauders' fate. The diagnosis: heart failure.⁴

The concern, expressed through this brief quote, is two-fold. One, the perceptions of a given event vary greatly, depending upon how close one happens to be. Two, it is extremely important to analyze and understand an intangible concept of "heart" as a function of military operations. The problem is also, then two-fold. Will analysis of the subjectively derived causes of the breakdown in Marauder morale add to the understanding of Galahad's disbandment? Can examination of the interplay of events and personalities permit a new and more personal interpretation of the facts surrounding the collapse of the 5307th?

In attempting to deal with individual states of mind, which is commonly accepted as the definition of morale, it is apparent that lack of scale may well serve an investigator. It seems axiomatic that a narrower focus, a tighter depth of field will indeed enhance attempts to probe the actions and thoughts of but a handful of principal officers instrumental in the conduct of war in C.-B.-I. Similarly, the noted absence of decisive objectives may be suspected of reinforcing the importance of the intangible forces that came to bear in this backwater arena.

Another aspect of "bringing Galahad back,"³ involves the controversy still detectable whenever General Stilwell's name is mentioned.

It is impossible to ignore the bond rightly or wrongly forged between "Vinegar Joe" and the Marauders. As late as 1971, Barbara Tuchman re-tells Galahad's saga in Stilwell and the American Experience in China, prompting retired General Boatner to write a memoir defending his role in C.-B.-I., which included a brief one-month sojourn as commander of the bogged down Myitkyina Task Force. (Earlier flak had been directed at Boatner from retired Colonel Charles Hunter in Galahad, circa 1963). Other questions remain unanswered concerning the employment of the 5307th. Foremost of these is the recurrence of "promises" reportedly understood by each and every man in the task force, but disclaimed by anyone except Merrill, Galahad's on-again, off-again commander, who suffered at least two heart attacks during the campaign. It appears prudent to study the effect of these promises along with other distinguishable forces and factors enunciated by men who were there, that eventually shattered the unit's spirit. The hard-fought engagement around Nhpum Ga to free 2nd Battalion from encirclement exacted an exorbitant toll on stamina and health. The Marauders were never the same again. The extent to which Galahad's leaders understood this may explain a great deal about subsequent events. Finally, there was never any doubt that the Burmese environment would severely test the men, but few would have forecast that a hostile command environment could develop, further calling unit mettle to task. In 1969, Victor Hicken questioned whether the whole story of Galahad's last hours would be known for decades.⁴ This study is directed toward learning more about the truth of those last hours.

Hopefully, a study of this kind is important because it is revealing and instructive. Military buffs familiar with General

Stilwell's mission, and the ensuing ground campaign designed to keep China in the war, often dwell upon the Marauders and the "Boss" to the exclusion of other people and events. A good military commander, and an honest man, accepts either defeat or victory as an unavoidable extension of his decision-making responsibility. That is to say that by investigating intervening layers of authority, a more deeply textured picture, one that displays more detail and nuance, may come to light and alter, to some small degree, canonized opinions concerning a given event. If one can succeed at revelation, can instruction help but follow? Galahad Redux, is meant to analyze the collapse of a combat unit one more time. By concentrating on other than quantifiable factors that impacted insidiously on the "heart" of the Marauders, it is hoped that interested military officers may learn how to better care for their troops. Appreciation for improving soldiers' welfare may also lead to an understanding that morale, esprit, discipline, and proficiency are more than just words. Instead, they are potent abstractions that can describe a unit's true combat power. Nurtured, these qualities give force beyond physical means. Discounted, or superficially addressed without honor, they portend tragic consequences for all involved. The result may be the utter degradation of a unit's soul.

Galahad arrived in Bombay on 31 October, 1943. Stilwell saw the unit for the first time on 21 February, 1944. He recorded that visit in his diary.

Went to Mingbyen and saw Merrill's gang. Tough-looking lot of babiss. Told Merrill what his job would be. Had to wade river to see 1st Battalion. With Merrill ready and Brown ready, we can go now.

The Marauders crossed the line of departure on 24 February, 1944.

FOOTNOTES

¹Joseph W. Stilwell, The Stilwell Papers, arr. and ed. by Theodore H. White (New York: William Sloane Associates, Inc., 1948), p. 301.

²James H. Stone (ed.), Crisis Fleeting: Original Reports on Military Medicine in India and Burma in the Second World War (Washington: O.S.G., D.A., 1969), p. 386.

³A proper thank you to author, John Updike for half of a title, Galahad Redux.

re'dux (ré'duks), adj. L., fr. reducere to bring back. Lit., led back; specif., Med., indicating return to health after disease.

This definition is found in the front end sheet of Rabbit Redux (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971).

⁴Victor Hicken, The American Fighting Man (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1969), p. 260.

⁵Stilwell, op. cit., p. 280. "Brown" is the American Lieutenant Colonel who commanded the Sino-American tank unit supporting the Chinese.

Chapter 2

"STEPCHILD"¹

I

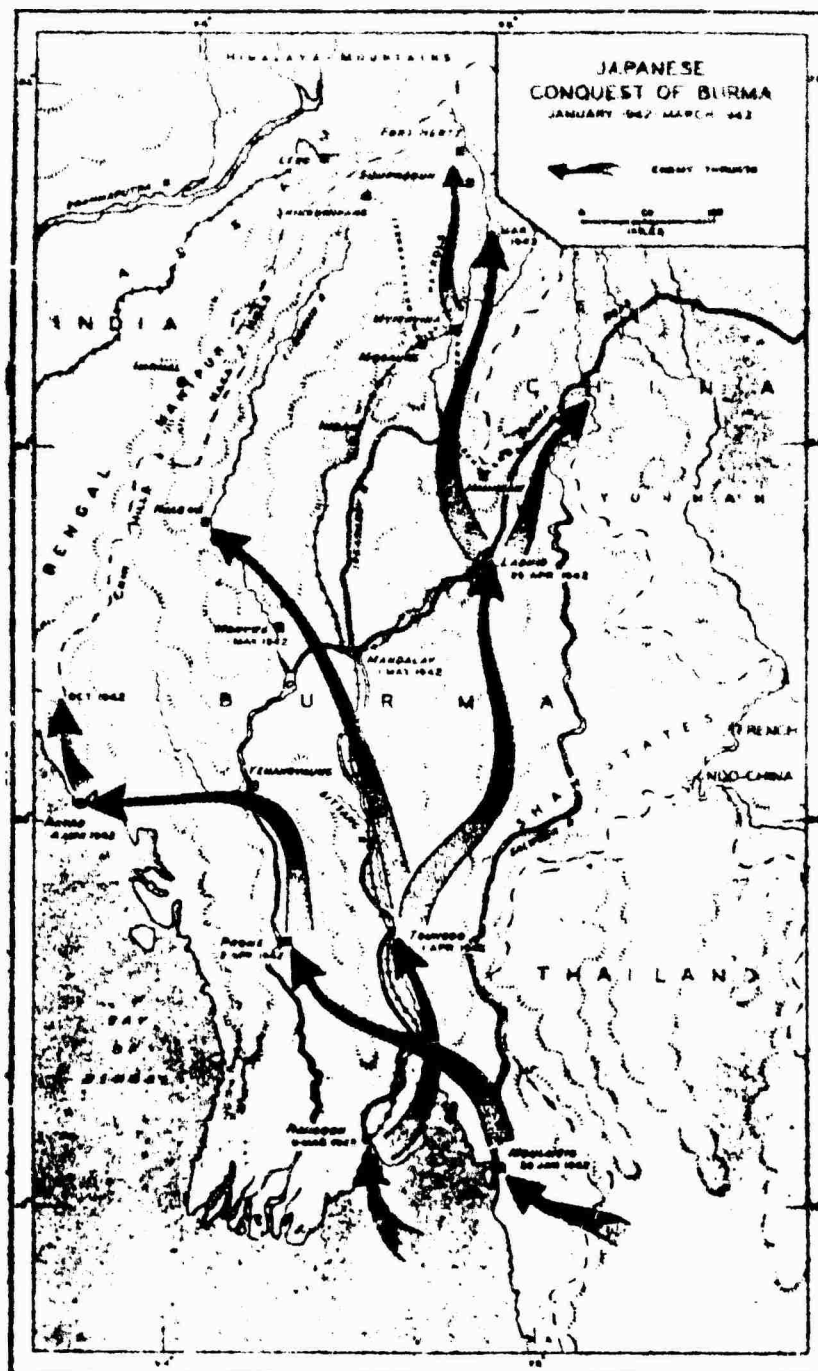
American interest in China provided the backdrop for the deployment of Galahad. General Stilwell was plucked away from planning the operation that later became "TORCH," the invasion of North Africa, and dispatched to Chungking in late February 1942, with the broad mission of keeping China in the war. It is necessary to recall that the manpower of China represented the only force of any size that could be developed and employed within reasonable time limits, and that bases developed on her land mass would be within striking distance of the Japanese home islands, using planes then on the drawing boards. This fact became painfully apparent to Stilwell within days after his arrival in Southeast Asia. Striking rapidly, the Japanese plunged through the Dutch East Indies, humiliated the British by overwhelming Singapore's garrison, and vaulted into Burma.

By the summer of 1942, the Pacific was a large Japanese lake. Allied outposts in Hawaii, Australia, India, and western China rather neatly circumscribed the limits of a new Nippon. More serious, signs for the future were not optimistic. The decision to fight Hitler before Hirohito effectively limited any logistical support for MacArthur to little but bare essentials. Stilwell, having created the China-Burma-India Theater, could expect even less, later. Complicating

this situation in an even deadlier way, was the fact that Burma's conquest by the Japanese would seal all routes into China except air corridors that climbed high over the Himalayan Range.

Two events succinctly describe the isolation and hopelessness that faced the Allies in Southeast Asia. To reach China, Stilwell had to board a clipper flying boat in Miami, dip south to Venezuela, and then hop the Atlantic to Liberia, in West Africa. The next leg of this erratic odyssey charted Stilwell's clipper northeasterly across Africa to Cairo. Hedgehopping the Middle East into India, the senior U.S. military representative paused to peruse the site of but one of his headquarters before embarking on the most hazardous leg of the journey. The only route into the final destination of Chungking lay over the "Hump," the five-mile high Himalayas. It took two weeks to transport General Stilwell from America to India, and another week elapsed before he landed in Chiang Kai-Shek's wartime capitol.

If this short flight record illustrates a lack of friendly air space in 1942, and by implication, the effort necessary to reach this remote area of operation, a second episode reveals the quickness of the Japanese attack in Burma (Map 1), and also sets the scene for later developments in this back-water theater. Stilwell had gone forward to see for himself what might be done to salvage enough of Burmese territory to keep the Burma Road open. At the time, the British, under Field Marshal Slim and two Chinese divisions (allegedly under Stilwell) were struggling to maintain some semblance of stability while giving way steadily. The situation deteriorated during the first week in May of 1942, to the extent that a recently promoted three-star general became the leader of one hundred or so lost and stranded souls, who found



Map 1

themselves faced with either capture or a walk of some one hundred fifty miles. Walk they did at Vinegar Joe's direction, and often to his cadence. Everyone made it out, albeit somewhat battered, and the first major press release conveying news from this corner of the world crackled over the wire from New Delhi:

I claim we got a hell of a beating. We got run out of Burma and it is humiliating as hell. I think we ought to find out what caused it, go back and retake it.²

This statement sanctified a commitment to action that the old man never forgot.

Surveying the bleak panorama before him, and sure that it would be a long time before any substantive number of U.S. personnel would be allocated to C.-B.-I., Stilwell settled upon upgrading the Chinese infantry to become the core of a force capable of retaking North Burma. North Burma was essential to re-opening a land route into China, conceived as the only way to transport the massive amount of supplies necessary to sustain sufficient Chinese forces to keep her in the war. The original concept, grandiose in retrospect, was to train and equip sixty Chinese divisions. Thirty divisions were to be prepared in Central China and thirty more in Yunnan. Certain of these units flown to and outfitted in India would be used to open up North Burma as far south as Lashio, the terminus of the old Burma Road. The new Ledo (or, Stilwell) Road would be connected with the Burma Road at Lashio, and war supplies could be moved post-haste from India directly to Kuming. That was the plan finally determined feasible within resources available. Through all of the dark days spent putting a viable force together to accomplish the mission he had been given, General Stilwell never relinquished the desire for U.S. combat troops. Beginning with a

visualized three-division corps wheeling and slicing at his direction, the old man had to face reality and was elated when Calahad was proffered.

Victory AGAIN. Radio from George Marshall on U.S. [combat] units for Stepchild. Only 3,000 but the entering wedge. Can we use them? And how!³

There was to be a long, bitter domestic squabble over command of Calahad, which had been dispatched to work for Orde Wingate. Stilwell won out in the end, and the 5307th eventually became the most responsive force deployed in the theater.

The need to compress time coherently is a task to test one's sensitivity as well as the intellect. The point, of course, is that decisions concerning C.-B.-I. did not take place in a vacuum. Allied bickering had peaked and subsided over a hundred issues, some vital, many more merely petty. Headquarters had proliferated like sprouts in the spring, and staff technicians gushed in like the seasonal rains. Lord Louis Mountbatten had arrived as Southeast Asia's Supreme Allied Commander. Everywhere the hustle and swirl of war preparations churned India to the four points of the compass rose. By October 1943, a welter of conferences had fashioned a crucible and a channel for the prodigious momentum mounting daily. The Combined Chiefs had decided to break the blockade of China. Accordingly, C.-B.-I. was directed:

1. to carry out operations for the capture of Upper Burma in order to improve the air route and establish overland communications with China. Target Date: mid-February, 1944.

2. to continue to build up and increase the air routes and air supplies of China, and development of air facilities with a view to:

- a. Keeping China in the war.
- b. Intensifying operations against the Japanese.

- c. Maintaining increased U.S. and Chinese Air Forces in China.
- d. Equipping Chinese ground forces.

Having squeezed a skinny supply line and tip-toed a fine diplomatic tightrope to gain and train his Sino-American force, Stilwell was about to attack the Japanese in Burma.

This decision came at a time when a de facto truce existed along the Burma-India border. The Chindits and O.S.S.-led Kachins had forayed into Burma producing some intelligence about Japanese intentions. The British had to be satisfied with this status quo for the time being. The Chinese talked about fighting the Japanese, but continued to act as if the Communists were more of a threat, and that China would "swallow up" the occupying Japanese in the long run. Only one man was in a hurry.

Preliminary probes by the Chinese in the northern end of the Hukawng Valley (Map 2) had convinced Stilwell that the Japanese 18th division was all that stood between him and the objectives of the North Burma campaign. At best, Burma, north and east of Mandalay would be cleared and lines of supply opened to China. As a minimum, Stilwell's Chinese-U.S. effort could be directed east to Myitkyina. The taking of Myitkyina would by itself assure shorter air routes to China, avoiding the worst of the "Hump" and providing a refueling stop halfway along a hazardous flight path. Myitkyina would also serve nicely as a major way-station on the Stilwell Road that was to be laid out behind the fighting forces. The alternatives were to drive almost to Mandalay east of the Irrawaddy, or to conduct a limited push to seize Myitkyina. On 1 February 1944, Brigadier Bowerman flew in to see Stilwell. He came from Fort Hertz where he commanded the Kachin Levies. Bowerman told



Map 2

Stilwell:

The Kumon Range could be crossed, he said, by one little-known pass south-west of Sumprabum, and not too far north of Myitkyina. Galahad would be operating east of the Chinese in the Hukawng, hard up against the Kumon Range: might it not be a good idea for a part of the unit to make its way in secret over this pass and attack Myitkyina from that direction, surprising the Japanese?⁵

Stilwell took note of this bit of intelligence. Fifteen days later, Galahad jumped off from Ningbyen, looping to flank the Japanese on the east and cut the Kamaing Road at Walawbum. The battle had begun.

II

The "tough-looking lot of babies" that fought in Burma in World War II were organized for only seven months of a four-year war. Viewed across the spectrum of world-wide conflict, alive with the flash and dash of great formations, decisive objectives, and grand alliances, Galahad would probably appear as a distant, momentary flash of brilliance against a hazy, monochrome horizon. To the extent that military units exist as subjective entities outside the bounds of charts and graphs, it is essential to note that the 5307th Composite Unit (Provisional) is obscure beyond belief. Recognition is somewhat more forthcoming when reference is made to "Merrill's Marauders," a moniker pinned to the unit by James Shepley, of Time-Life, on the eve of its departure for Burma.⁶ Even today few professional soldiers are aware that this ill-starred infantry outfit, disbanded in August 1945, lives on as the 75th Regiment, the Combat Arms Regimental System parent of the U.S. Army's revived Ranger battalions.

31 October--19 February 1944

They walked down a gang-plank extending from the S.S. Lurline to

a quay in Bombay, India. As Shipment 1688, they were the American contribution to the Allied effort in the far-flung C.-B.-I. Theater. Volunteers all, they had been dispatched to operate under British General Wingate as a long-range penetration group, and would train according to Chindit policies and doctrine. The bulk of this training was to take place at Deogarh, in central India. Col. Francis Brink was assigned as the resident jungle warfare expert, while Col. Charles Hunter, the troop commander aboard ship, continued to serve as the commanding officer.

During November and December 1943, the unit (still known only as shipment 1688) concentrated on developing skills that would be needed soon. Marksmanship, patrolling, physical conditioning, demolitions, and myriad other combat subjects filled days and nights marked only by the rapidity with which time evaporated. The organization prescribed by Wingate required the formation of a typical headquarters echelon and three battalions, each battalion consisting of two combat teams. The combat teams were color-coded such that 1st Battalion consisted of Red and White combat teams; 2nd Battalion, Blue and Green; and 3rd Battalion, Orange and Khaki. Each of these teams was generally composed of a headquarters platoon, an intelligence and reconnaissance platoon, a pioneer and demolition platoon, a medical detachment, a heavy weapons platoon, and six rifle platoons. The strength of a team was approximately 16 officers and 150 men.⁷

The only other sizable contingents organic to shipment 1688 were logistical and consisted of the rear base at Dinjan and two Quartermaster Pack Troops. The Dinjan base was designed to handle all the air supply requests, while the two pack troops (some 700 mules and horses) were

to accompany the combat elements to carry the heavy equipment.

By all accounts, the training was progressing satisfactorily, and, as is the custom with troops preparing to fight, people began to get anxious to get on with things. This was fortunate because in early January, Brigadier General Merrill arrived to take command, reported the unit ready for deployment, and received orders to move a thousand miles by 7 February. The events leading to commitment of the newly christened 5307th Composite Unit (Provisional) stemmed from Stilwell's insistence that control of Galahad shift from Wingate to his headquarters, Chih Hui Pu-Chinese Army in India. Col. Hunter was not sure that the unit was ready.⁸ As commander in the presence of the aforementioned Col. Brink and, for a short while, under Brigadier General Cranston, Hunter had trained the Marauders, finally wrangled the 5307th designation (although denied a patch or standard), and now became the executive officer.

The actual reassignment to Chih Hui Pu occurred on 8 January 1944. While under the tutelage of the Chindits, four things happened that would be viewed with great chagrin later. First, the battalion of Galahad recruited in the Southwest Pacific Theater was broken up to allocate its combat experience throughout its sister units from the mainland U.S. and the group that volunteered from the 33rd Infantry on Trinidad.⁹ This order was but the first of several examples whereby logical military decisions caused extreme dissatisfaction on behalf of the men in the ranks. Another omen that materialized during the training phase concerned the malaria rate in the newly arrived unit. While generally bad, the situation in the 3rd Battalion (the Pacific volunteers) was abysmal. Medical estimates projected a 12.8% evacuation rate in the battalion, if three relapses were established as the criteria for

hospitalization.¹⁰

Two last problems-in-the-making must be noted before addressing the Walawbum attack. Associating and training with Wingate's Special Force led the Marauders to settle upon, and embellish as is usual with soldiers, two inaccurate perceptions. One was the British proffered contention that Galahad would act as a spearhead for the Chinese--a charge hotly denied by Merrill.¹¹ Hand in glove with this set of conflicting statements, was the assumption by the Marauders that they would not be in combat more than ninety days, a conviction that was not met with any recorded denial. The danger here, to use a modern term is the creation of a credibility gap; a failure to communicate that, as the campaign lengthened, came to be seen by the Galahad troops as a blatant breach of faith.

November and December 1943, were used up and the bulk of January would go to moving from Deogarh to Ledo. From Ledo, the unit marched ten days along the road being laid out behind the forward units. The march to Ningbyen spurred controversy, but it did turn out to ". . . be a means of separating the men from the boys."¹² By the time Galahad reached Ningbyen, the line of departure for the first mission lay five days away.

24 February--24 March 1944

The hot stillness of noon hung upon the village of Lanem Ga when a patrol . . . headed in across the open ground. The village had been deserted by its inhabitants. But it was not empty. The second burst of machine-gun fire . . . caught the lead scout . . . and killed him instantly . . . It was not until the next day that, returning and finding the way clear, the platoon was able to recover the body of the first Marauder lost in action.¹³

Momentum that had slowly built, stirred to movement in C.-B.-I.

After receiving the go-ahead, finally, for a coordinated effort on the ground to seize Myitkyina, General Stilwell beelined back to North Burma, breathed a sigh of satisfaction, and set out after General Tanaka's 18th Division. Having alternately coaxed and coerced the Chinese 38th and 22nd Divisions across the frontier in October 1943, Stilwell had by February 1944, chopped off fifty of the one hundred fifty miles between his forces and Mogaung. The general scheme of maneuver had been determined and set forth in plans knocked together in August 1943, and referred to as Albacore 1, 2, and 3 (Map 3). These plans detailed Stilwell's broad visualization noted earlier. The seizure of the area around the confluence of the Chindwin, Tarung, and Tanai Rivers signalled the accomplishment of the first two phases of the plan. The next series of operations was designed to clear the rest of the Hukawng Valley, cross the Jambu Bum, and begin to clear the Japanese from the Mogaung Valley. Once Mogaung was secured, Myitkyina could be cut off and attacked from the west. The center of mass for the effort would trace along the Lado-Maingkwan-Shaduzup-Mogaung track. Following the assaulting troops would come the engineers, battling intensely against time and the Burmese environment, to stitch together the all-weather road that would support the campaign and eventually link India and China.¹⁴

Northern Combat Area Command (NCAC) was created on 1 February 1944, to control the attack. The Chinese 22nd and 38th Divisions, the 30th, along with the Kachin Levies at Fort Hertz comprised the deployable combat units. Other forces which would influence the action over the next few months were Detachment 101 of the Office of Strategic Services and the 3rd Indian Division (a coded designation for the British long-range penetration groups commanded by Wingate). The orchestration

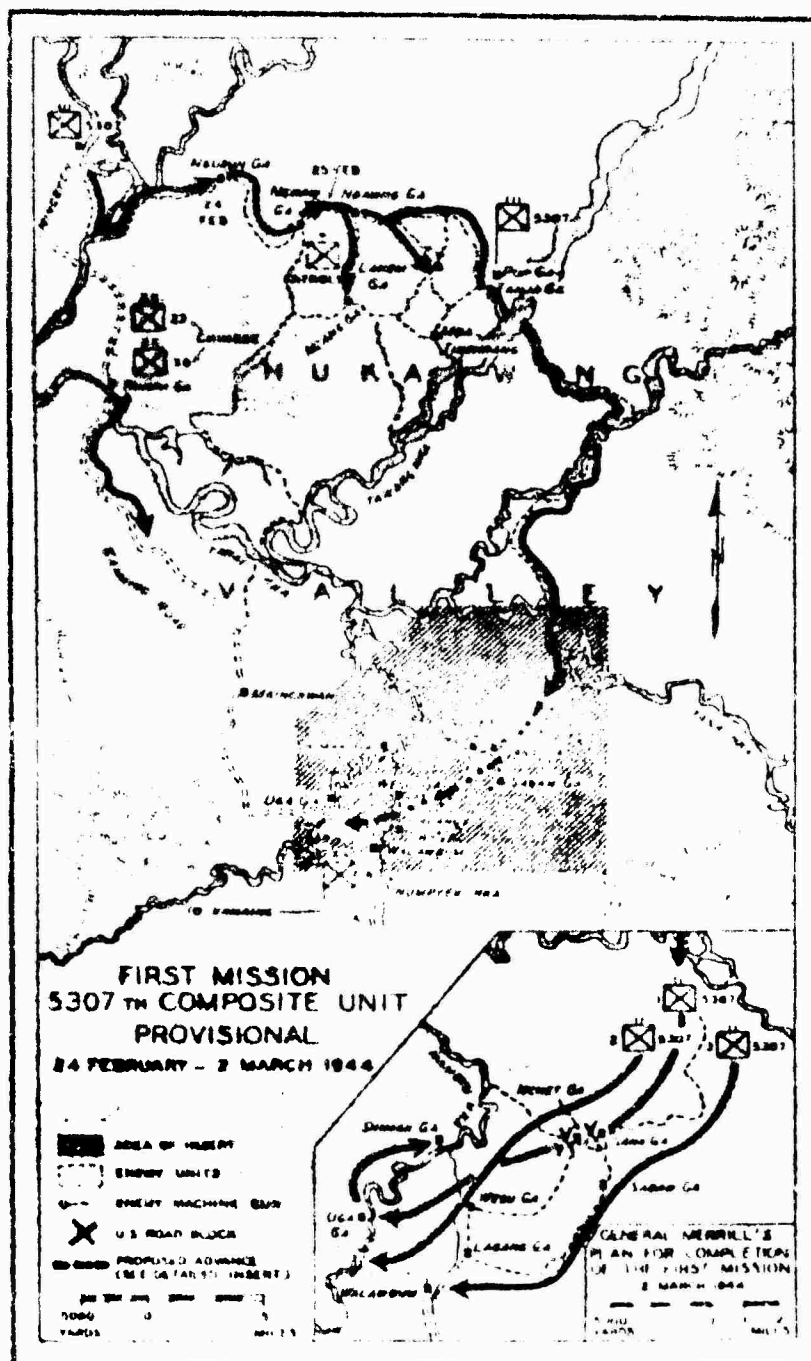


Map 3

of these forces, in general consonance with Albacore 3, resulted in assigning the main thrust, along the Ledo-Mogaung track, to the Chinese. The Marauders, swinging wide to the Allied left were to envelop the Japanese flank at Walawbum trapping, if possible, the enemy units engaging the Chinese. The Kachin Levies were to sally forth from Fort Hertz, pressure the garrison at Myitkyina, and avoid decisive engagement until the main effort could be shifted in their direction from Mogaung. Detachment 101 was tasked to expand to about 3000 guerrillas, and to continue to assist the ground units in every way possible.¹⁵ The Chindit force although not assigned to NCAC until later, was to be inserted, in early March, some seventy miles southwest of Mogaung to disrupt Japanese routes of supply and reinforcement.

The Marauder battalions moved out on 24 February 1944 (Map 4). Using the Intelligence and Reconnaissance platoons to scout ahead of the combat teams, following in column, each battalion peeled off along usable trails leading to the south. Enemy resistance was encountered on the first two trails, so Merrill ordered the unit onto the third track. This was to be typical of subsequent moves, taking the form of oozing along the path of least resistance. The fighting in the jungle was in reality a trail-bound war. Neither adversary hacked through dense undergrowth unless there was no other option. Clashes along these trails were sharp, instantaneous exchanges of bullets and grenades.

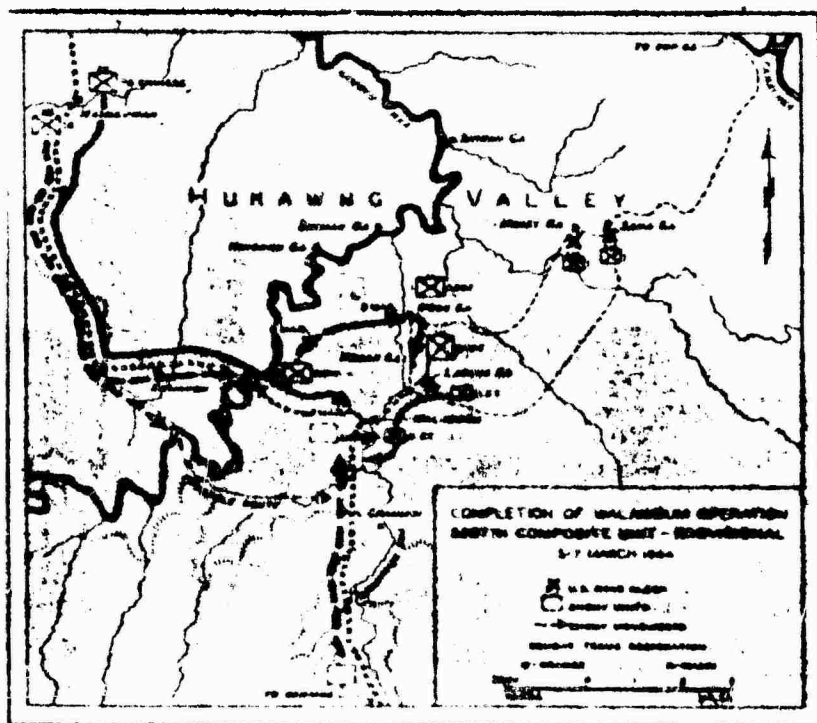
By 2 March, the Tanai had been forded and Walawbum was a day's march ahead. Merrill called a conference and disclosed a plan that would cut the road in battalion strength, to the west and to the south of the village. The 3rd Battalion would patrol a stream coming out of Walawbum to the north and provide one combat team as a reserve. Command of the



Map 4

road was not to be relinquished until relieved by the Chinese, coming either from the north along the road, or from a regiment that had followed the 5307th from Ningbyen. 3 March was spent getting into position, and securing a drop zone for supplies at Langang Ga. The Japanese, confused and unsure of exactly what was happening, began on 4 March, to react against the Marauders. This reaction took shape as an order from Tanaka to delay the Chinese more aggressively along the road to the north, while mustering his 56th Regiment into an attack to destroy the Americans. Tanaka's move depended upon slowing the Chinese into an even more cautious and plodding approach march. This reaction would be repeated in later contacts as his irritation with Galahad's threats to his rear increased.

Heavy fighting on 5 March signalled the push against Galahad, now firmly controlling the village and the road, and unaware that Tanaka was intent upon turning the tables on them. As luck would have it, the 1st Provisional Tank Group (-), in searching out a negotiable route into Walawbum, stumbled into the 18th Division's command post located along a trail that was to be used for the attack against the Marauders. This was fortunate because the Chinese had been slowed, and pressure had forced Merrill's western block away from the road. The situation had the potential of great peril for the Marauders. The fighting continued to be intense on 6 March, but Tanaka's withdrawal was being conducted in good order along a secret trail that bypassed the village (Map 5). Late in the day, the Chinese regiment that had followed Galahad arrived. These troops relieved Galahad on 7 March, and Merrill headed the Marauders east into the jungle, searching for trails leading south to Shaduzup. Success at Walawbum was nectar. The ability to throw the



Map 5

comforter of jubilation aside might have revealed disquieting aspects of this first mission.

In five days, from the jump-off on 2 March to the fall of Walabum on 7 March, the Americans had killed 800 of the enemy, had cooperated with the Chinese to force a major Japanese withdrawal, and had paved the way for future Allied progress. This was accomplished at a cost to the Marauders of 8 men killed and 37 wounded. Up to this point 19 patients had been evacuated with malaria, 8 with other fevers (mostly dengue), 10 with psychoneurosis, and 33 with injuries. Miscellaneous sicknesses totaled 109. Of the 2750 men who started toward Walabum, about 2500 remained to carry on.¹⁶

Such were the official results. Communications problems and misunderstood missions, combined with general Chinese lassitude, allowed Tanaka to escape. On 8 March, the Marauder column was halted. Somehow, NCAC did not know enough about what had transpired to prevent ordering an attack for 9 March, and attack that was meant to include the absent 5307th. This lapse, standing alone, was serious enough. Equally ominous was the notion that Galahad's force of arms had brought about the enemy abandonment of Walabum.

Their illustrious division (18th) had never before come up against another first-class outfit on even terms, and the experience must have left them sore and puzzled.¹⁷

To continue to advance south, the Chinese would have to force their way over the Jambu Bum. This ridgeline marked the lower topographical boundary of the Hukawng Valley. Beyond lay Sahduzup, Kamaing, and Mogaung. To aid this effort, the Marauders, blooded and confident, struck out south in two columns. One battalion with a trailing Chinese regiment hooked short in a shallow envelopment to block the road in the vicinity of Shaduzup. The two remaining Galahad battalions, accompanied also by a Chinese regiment, slipped further east and lined up for a deeper penetration into Japanese 18th Division territory. Their target

was Inkangahtawng, a village some twelve miles south of Shaduzup. The mission--cut off and trap enemy units--and the technique--swing wide to appear mysteriously in the Japanese rear--were both familiar (Map 6). However, Tanaka had learned a lesson also.

Two other factors would come to bear during this second mission. One, the Japanese had attacked India on 14 March, two days after Galahad hit the trails again. This attack was aimed at destroying British military units as well as seizing logistics centers at Kohima and Imphal. This thrust made it imperative that Tanaka hold every inch of ground. The second factor concerned terrain. To accomplish the missions assigned this time, Galahad was forced to tackle mountains that formed the western slopes of the Kumon Range and poked upwards of 5000 feet. Each day in this terrain became an ordeal devoted to scrambling higher up a slope or braking a precipitous career down a steep incline. A renewed Japanese determination to hold fast, and the requirement to cross tortuous terrain, combined with enemy cognizance of Galahad's tactics, foretold great difficulties.

The 1st Battalion, dispatched to Shaduzup with a Chinese regiment, met increasingly stiff resistance. The fortuitous assistance from Detachment 101 guerrillas (whose presence was unknown to the 5307th troops, illuminating again, a command and control problem) and the successful breaching of the Jambu Bum allowed 1st Battalion to turn over their mission to the Chinese by 29 March. Their early morning surprise attack on a large enemy camp that was stirring to life, convinced the Japanese that withdrawal was again a better alternative. This action, conducted with increasing elan and typical Galahad tactics, proceeded without complication, and successfully opened the Mogaung Road to Laban.

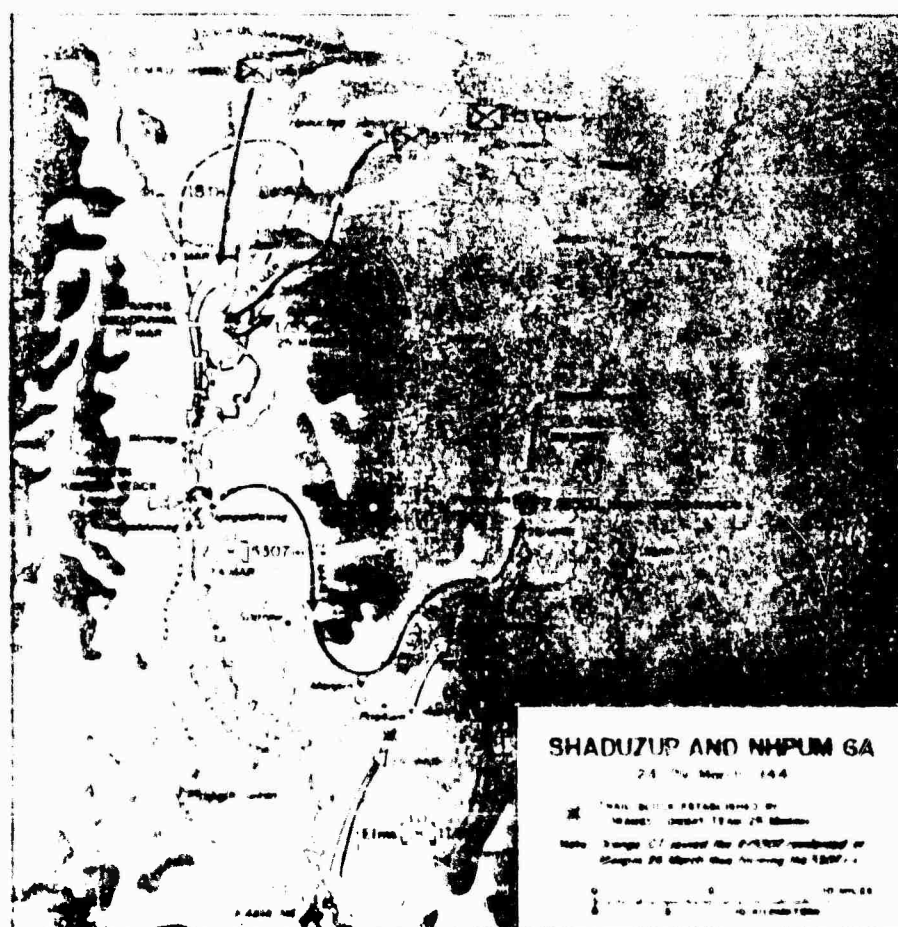


Map 6

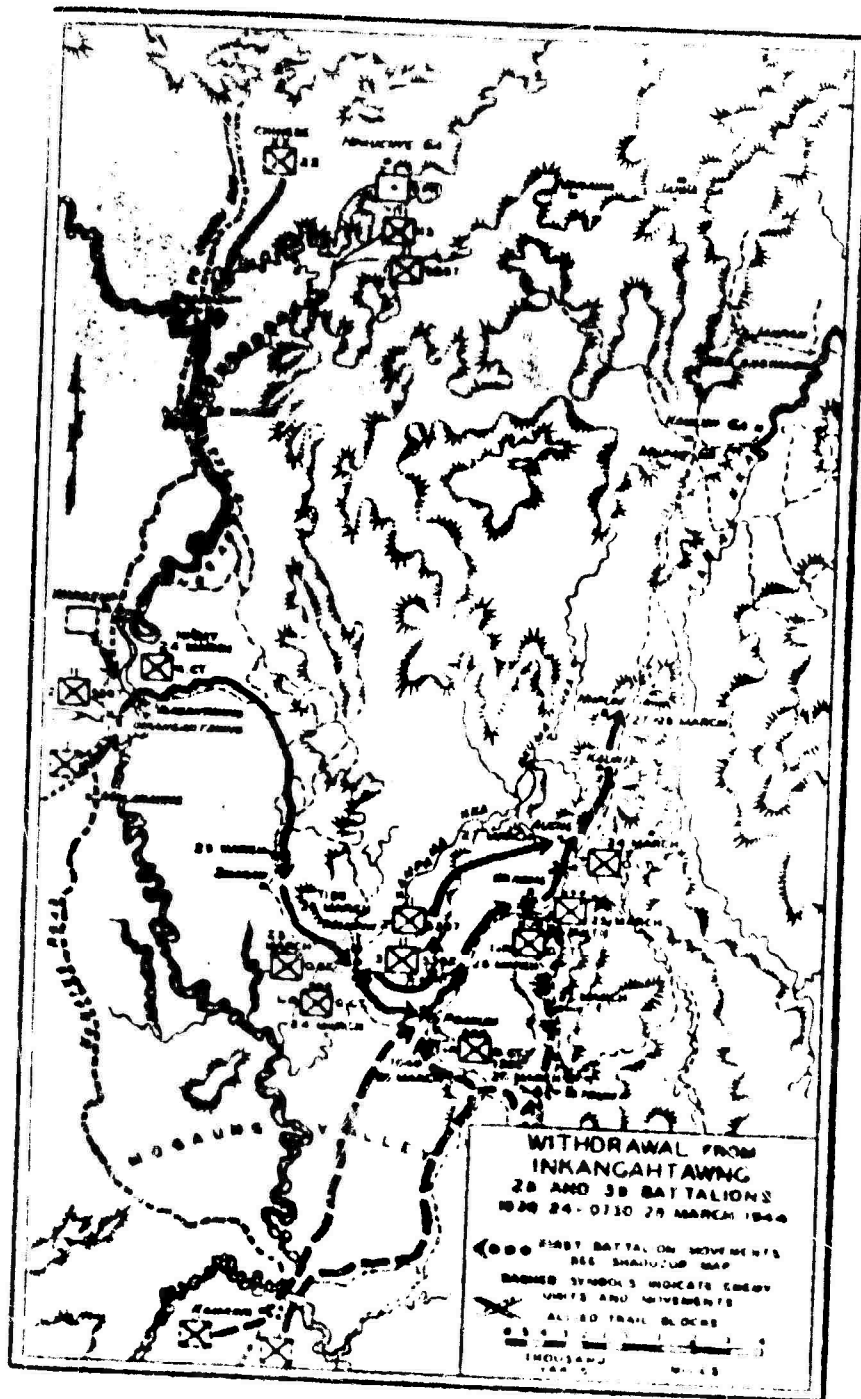
1st Battalion, having been relieved on 29 March, turned and started to rejoin Merrill at Jan Pan (Map 7).

The 2nd and 3rd Battalions of Galahad also left on 12 March (Map 6). Their route south lay along the Tanai River Valley. A two day halt at Weilangyang allowed rest, resupply, and even attention to dental problems by the unit's dentist. On 19 March, word came of Japanese incursions apparently pointed toward investment of the Tanai Valley, and subsequent attacks on the Chinese flank at Shaduzup. Merrill organized and deployed three combat teams, under Hunter, to strike for Manpin then northwest to Inkangahtawng to establish the main block. One team was held at Auché and Marauder and Detachment 101 patrols began a through check of all trails in the vicinity. Hunter's force encountered heavy pressure in the Inkangahtawng settlement and began to pull out on 25 March after several sharp firefights. Additional indications of heavy Japanese reinforcements caused Merrill to begin re-concentrating his scattered units. By 26 March, and despite several communications mix-ups, Hunter and his force were headed for Nhpum Ga, a small hilltop village that Merrill had been directed by NCAC to hold as a combination blocking position and patrol base. Enemy pressure mounted on 27 and 28 March, as the 2nd and 3rd Battalions force-marched to keep ahead of increasingly accurate artillery and rapidly closing infantry. A skillfully fought rear-guard action by two platoons protected the withdrawal, allowing it to be conducted in an orderly fashion (Map 8). The rest of 28 March was spent in preparations to defend Nhpum Ga, moving the 3rd Battalion three and a half miles to the north, and trying to contact 1st Battalion.

The second mission had been partially successful. With



Map 7



Map 8

Galahad's help, the Chinese had breached the Jambu Bum and siezed Shaduzup. On the dark side of things, two factors registered painfully: One, command and control was continuing to be a major problem, and two, Tanaka was intent upon fixing and fighting the Marsuders north of Kamaing. Galahad had hurt the 18th Japanese Division again, to the tune of some 500 casualties. The 5307th, in exacting that toll, reported battle losses of 8 killed and 50 wounded. Talking about the hazardous marches of these days, Ogburn pointed out a far more sinister threat to the unit often referred to as "Vinegar Joe's Foot Cavalry."

The day that followed was in some ways the worst in the 5307th's history. What made it so particularly was that the 5307th--all three battalions, just about to a man--was beginning to wear out.¹⁸

Spread precariously between a hilltop and a valley connected only by a narrow ridge, trying desperately to reach a badly needed major maneuver unit, Merrill pondered the situation and prepared to meet the Japanese 114th Regiment. It was to be a short wait. The shelling began the night of the 28th, and during the day, 29 March, Merrill suffered a heart attack, passing command to Hunter. The siege of Nhpum Ga had begun, and as has been noted previously, ". . . use of the 5307th in a static defensive role was a radical change in the concept of its employment."¹⁹

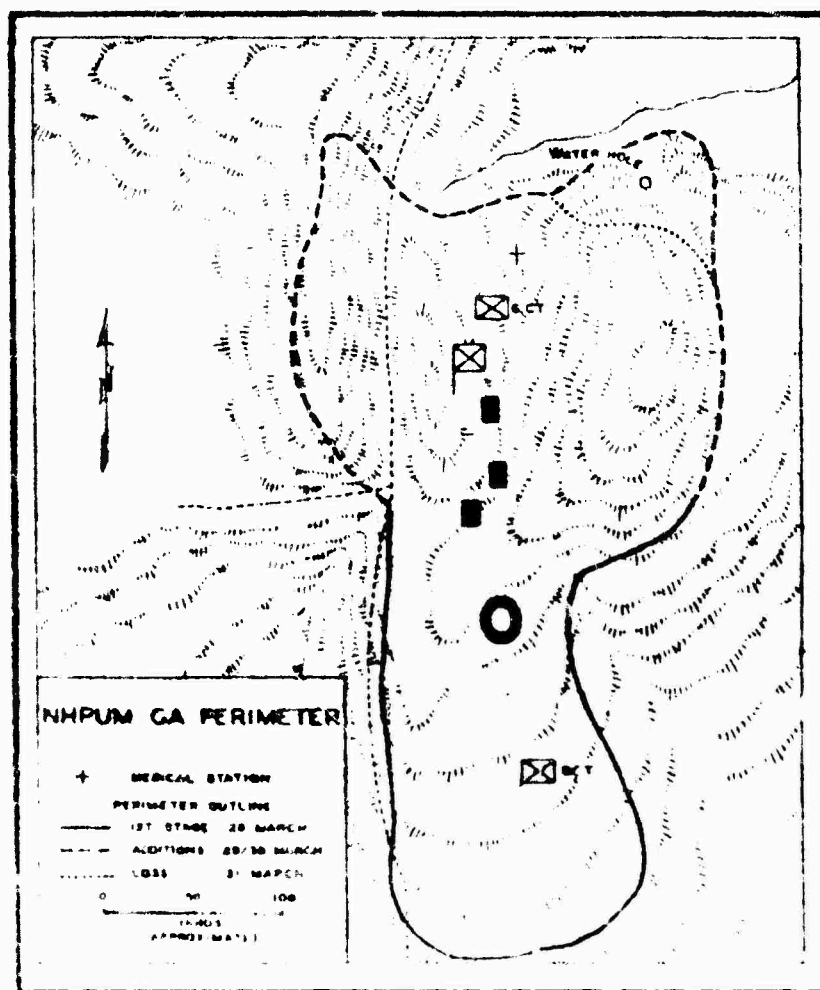
29 March--9 April 1944

Inexorably war was covering more of Burma. To the west along the boarder, General Slim was laying a carefully contrived trap for the Japanese invading India. One hundred miles east of the fighting at Kohima and Imphal, and some eighty miles south of NCAC's North Burma push, five combat bases dropped up around the important communications

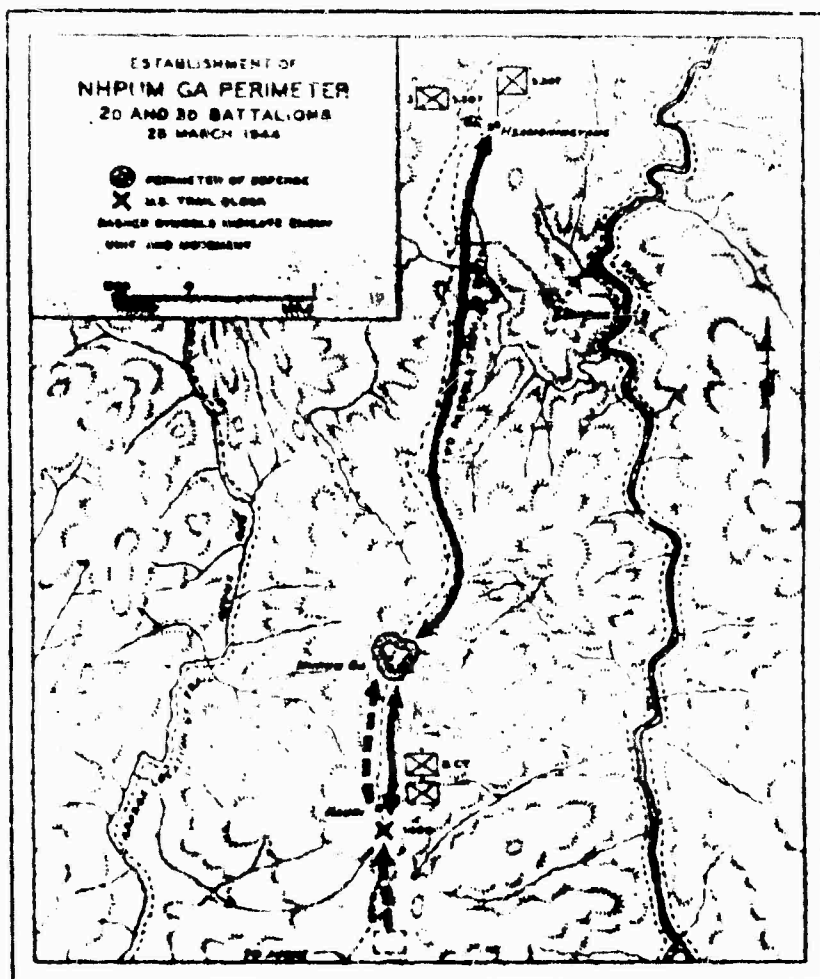
center at Indaw. Between early March and mid-April, five brigades of the 3rd Indian Division were inserted in the "guts" of the Japanese support structure that sustained the 15th Japanese Army and Tanaka's 18th Division.²⁰ Detachment 101 Kachins roamed throughout central and eastern Burma, conducting some operations as far south as Mandalay. Whether justified or not, there was a perceptible whiff of confidence in the air. After all, Kohima was relieved on 20 March, and Slim counter-attacked the over-extended Japanese. The Chinese (with Marauder assistance, to be sure) were across the Jambu Bum.

Colonel Hunter took charge of the 5307th unaware that a crisis of deadly import was at hand. Two-thirds of Galahad were strung out along a ridge astride the trails the Japanese could conceivably use to attack the Chinese along the valley road to the west. The shelling of 2nd Battalion, busily digging in around Nhpum Ga, had continued since 28 March, and the first ground attack developed at 0600 on the 29th. It was the first of three assaults the Japanese jammed at the 400 by 250 yard perimeter that day (Map 9). The 3rd Battalion of the Marsuders was ensconced in a valley three miles north of Nhpum Ga, near a settlement called Hsamshingyang (Map 10). An airstrip had been hacked out, the wounded were being flown to the rear, and patrols ordered to 2nd Battalion and down the shoulders of the ridge to streams on both sides. 1st Battalion had just turned over the Shaduzup block to the Chinese and was beginning to form up to rejoin the main body.

Two days passed along the Tanai, marked by increased shelling, stronger attacks at Nhpum Ga, and the appearance of sizable Japanese patrols near the air strip. The visiting patrols from Hsamshingyang found the trail blocked into 2nd Battalion's perimeter on 31 March.



Map 9



Map 10

The water hole on the northeast corner of the position was lost that same day. Any doubts about the seriousness of the Japanese 114th Regiment vanished. The situation was made more tenuous on 1 April, when 1st Battalion's radio was damaged, putting them completely out of touch, and unaware of the growing danger faced by sister units. Hunter was still tasked to prevent the use of the Tanai Valley by the Japanese. Unable to summon 1st Battalion he began trying to locate, to no avail, the Chinese regiment supposedly trailing the 5307th. Attempts to break in to 2nd Battalion, or to assist its breaking out, proved that there just was not enough combat power available. Hard fighting had barely made it halfway up the rise to 2nd Battalion's perimeter.

Holding on and sustained by air delivered supplies, that included water dropped in plastic bags, 2nd Battalion now fought on ground shrouded by a miasma of death. Continuing his effort to hammer in to Nhpum Ga, Hunter received blessed assistance from Merrill, who had been evacuated on the 31st. From the rear, Merrill ordered two pack howitzers dropped in to Hsamshingyang. This increased firepower was a boon to morale, and a welcome adjunct to the mortar fire and close air support being used to break up the attacks on the encircled 2nd Battalion.

Unbeknownst to the units struggling around the now hated, dismal ridge between 2nd and 3rd Battalion, 1st Battalion had left on 3 April, at a man-braking pace, to lend a hand. Hunter, on 4 April, having discarded thoughts of infiltrating the able-bodied off the hill at Nhpum Ga, ordered daily attacks with an air of finality. 3rd Battalion mustered every available man, tried ruses--including faked drops of

parachutists--to fool the Japanese, leveled the howitzers in point-blank assault fire, and by 6 April, had fought to within a mile of the festering perimeter.

Late on 7 April, 1st Battalion arrived. Only 250 men could be found fit for an assault planned for the next day. Buoyed now with a ray of hope, and cheered by the thought of being altogether again, Galahad went to work to relieve 2nd Battalion. Pressure up the main trail and hooks around both flanks--one passing completely around to cut the trail from Aucha--moved the attackers to within a half mile of the perimeter. On the morning of 9 April, the enemy was nowhere to be found. The Japanese had pulled out of the fight (Map 11). Six weeks later, these two adversaries would meet again, for Tanaka ordered the 114th Regiment to reinforce the Myitkyina garrison.

Galahad was ordered to stand down, to the extent security would allow, for a well-deserved respite. Before leaving the hill top at Nhpum Ga, flamethrowers, shovels, and lime were used to burn, bury, and decontaminate the foulness of the dead enemy and animals that attracted swarms of flies. This cleansing was certainly prompted by a concern for sanitation. There was also another more pressing need. It was not right to walk away from Nhpum Ga without cleansing the ground around thirty bamboo crosses that would be left behind.

The ten days preceding 9 April, cost Galahad 59 KIA and 314 WIA. Another 65 men had to be evacuated for illness. The Japanese left 400 dead behind them. The Chinese were moving, but it would take them twenty-three days to clear the miles of the road south of Shadunup.

The most serious result of Nhpum Ga was the exhaustion of troops. The fighting edge of the most mobile and most obedient force that Stilwell had was worn dull.²¹

While the 5307th recuperated, events began shaping decisions that would soon be made. It is unlikely that anyone except Stilwell cared to recall the exact words spoken by a Brigadier from Fort Hertz Back in February.

10 April--10 August 1944

Galahad pulled itself together in relative peace and quiet that was notable for the sudden surfeit provided by the supply system:

New clothing was issued; plenty of 10 in 1 rations were dropped in. Saddle repair kits were unboxed. The animals were fed plenty of grain. . .²²

There is an almost imaginary quality apparent in the descriptions of the post-Nhpum Ga period of relaxation. Mule races on the airstrip, Hunter-~~directed~~ close order drill (yes, close order drill!), baths, mail, and medical attention all abounded. Most importantly, there was an opportunity to do absolutely nothing. The 5307th even received attention from "higher," when several visitors from NCAC dropped in. These visitors were treated to staged firefights of the sort that would today, be called "eyewash." A less welcome, if more permanent, traveler arrived to make the rounds, receiving infinitely more attention.

But incredible as the rumor was it persisted, like a mosquito whining about your head. You wanted to bat it away from your ears.

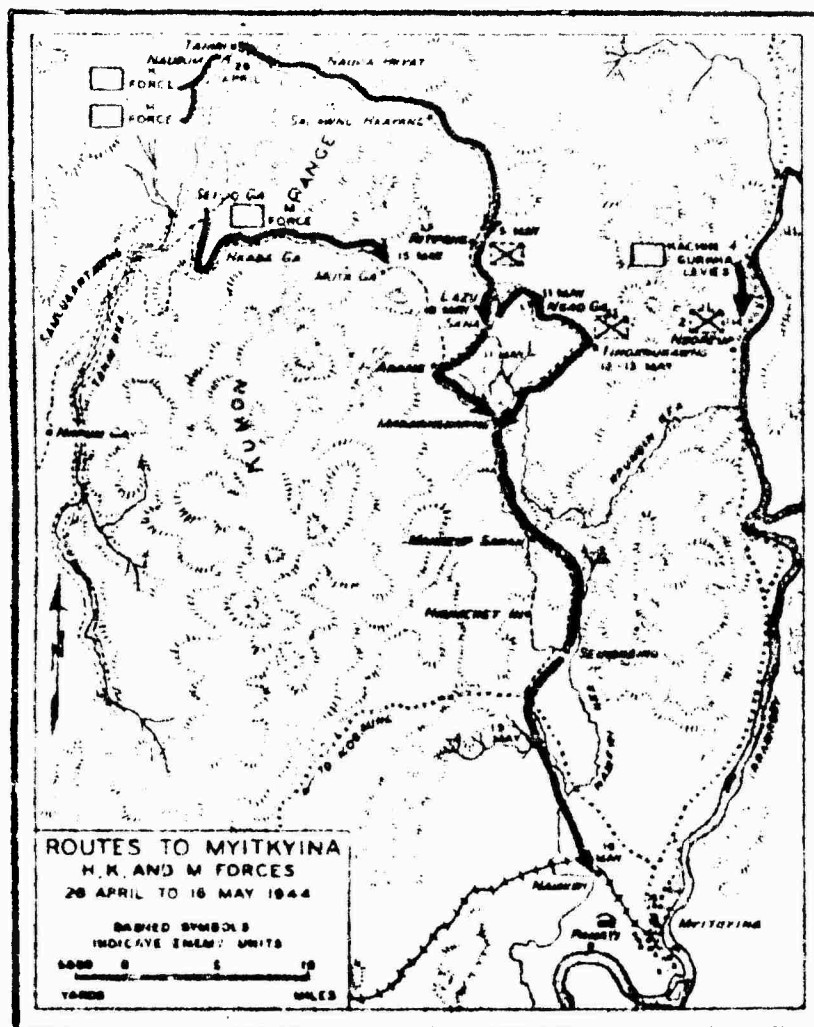
'For Christ's sake, will you lay off that story!' someone would explode. 'Are you asking for it?'²³

Rumor had it, Galahad was going to Myitkyina. Planning for the operation had already begun. Mountbatten and Stilwell had conferred at Jorhat on 3 April, and blessed the plan. Merrill, from his sickbed, solicited Hunter's thoughts and drafted a scheme of maneuver that took the Marauders north twenty miles, then east over a duly noted 6000 foot pass in the Kumen Range, and finally south into Myitkyina. The 5303th

would be organized into three columns for the march. H Force, under Hunter consisted of the 1st Battalion, Galahad, and the 150th Chinese Regiment. The 2nd Battalion, now at half strength, was reorganized, augmented by 300 Kachin irregulars and designated M (as in Col. McGee) Force. Col. Kennison would lead K Force, made up of 3rd Battalion, Galahad, and the Chinese 88th Regiment. Two batteries of pack howitzers would accompany H and K Force. General Merrill was to resume command of the task force; his new executive officer was Col. McCannon. An advance party of Kachin guards and laborers preceded the main body to improve the little-used trail as much as possible. Departure of the main body was scheduled for 28 April (Map 12).

In reaching out for Myitkyina, Stilwell was braving several hazards. The Chinese were still stuck fifty miles from Mogaung and showing unusual reluctance for the task at hand.²⁴ The two Chindit brigades were nearing their physical endurance limits, and the presumed ninety day mission limit. Tanaka still clung tenaciously to the Kamaing-Mogaung-Myitkyina triangle. The capture of Sumprabum by the Kachin Levies ameliorated this discouraging situation, as did the release of the 50th and 30th Chinese Divisions for the attack on Myitkyina. Prospects were brightening, too, for a Chinese assault, sometime in May, across the Salween in the direction of Lashio. A commander does what he can to insure success. Stilwell knew the odds and dedicated his resources. The only thing that he could not effectively influence was the weather. The Burma monsoon was at hand.

Merrill commanded a force swollen now to equal half a division. It is almost possible to visualize their departure. A long, staccato



Map 12

file of men and animals climbed jerkily, canopied by black, bruised monsoon clouds obscuring the jungled peaks of the Kumon Range. The uncertain menace symbolized by those scudding clouds is an apt metaphor. Menace of an equally intangible sort was already part of the human microcosm that was Galahad. The damage had been done when Stilwell reportedly told Merrill:

. . . he was calling on GALAHAD for more effort than could be fairly expected, but that he had no other option. In light of that, and the exhaustion of the unit, he authorized Merrill to begin evacuating GALAHAD 'without further order if everything worked out as expected.'²⁵

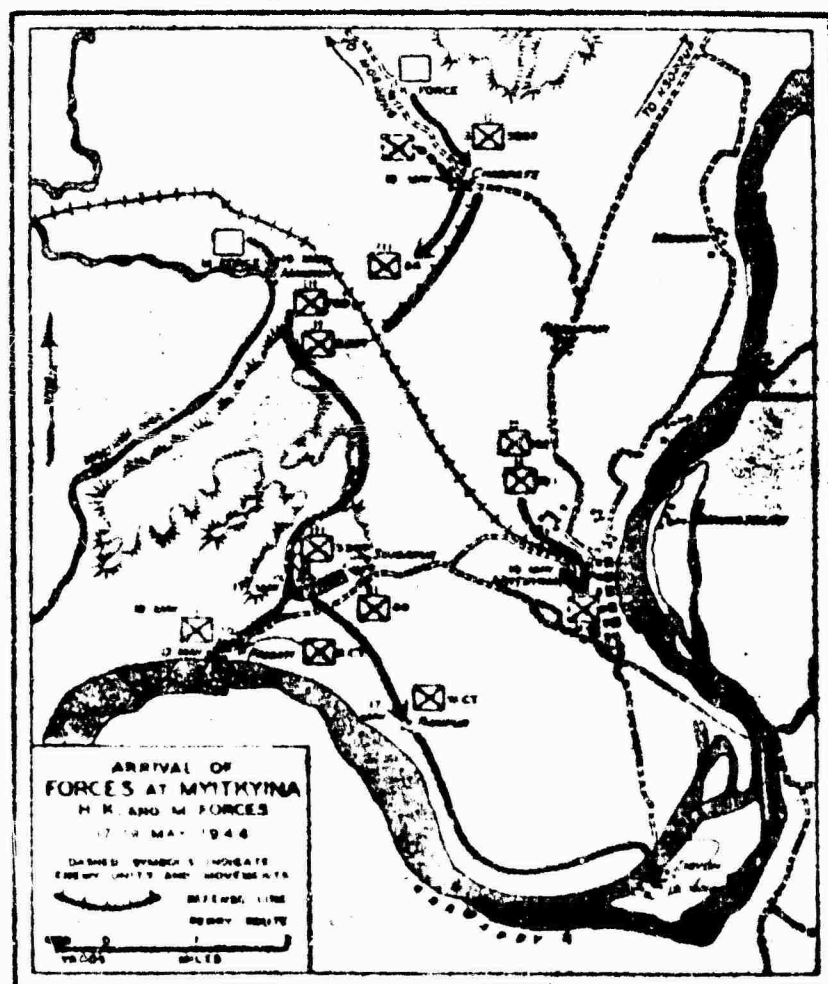
As inevitably happens, a version of what had been said became the personal property of each man. Sadly, the motivation and determination of the Marauders to reach Myitkyina became anchored in the future that this conversation connoted.

The rain-soaked crossing of the Kumon Range became an agonizing ordeal of the first magnitude. Men often found that a simian stoop, placing hands as well as feet on the ground, provided the most efficient means of locomotion. Handling the pack animals proved even more strenuous, for unloading was necessary before a foundered mule could be righted. Many of the loaded animals disappeared over the steep edges of the trail, necessitating a clamber down to retrieve the equipment and a hand over hand return to the track. Struggling somehow to keep going, the three beleaguered columns, in climbing so high that the climate chilled instead of roasted, suddenly were stalked by a deadly new enemy. Mite-borne scrub typhus struck without warning and killed swiftly. "Fevers of unknown origin" began felling Marauders in frightening numbers. Because there were few suitable areas for cutting out a hasty evacuation airstrip, afflicted men had to be carried, a process that did

little for them and imposed further hardship on their fellow troops. Over 120 sick had to be left at Arang.

A sharp engagement, fought at Ritpong by K Force, decimated the surprisingly strong Japanese outpost. A similar fight at Tingkruktawng forced a stalemate, and K Force withdrew to pull in behind Hunter's column. Hunter paused at Seingneing to receive supplies and abandon several seriously ill to await evacuation planes. At 1000 on 17 May, Force H, encountering no resistance, attacked and seized the airfield at Myitkyina (Map 13). Light planes, gliders, and C-47's began to swarm onto the field. Security columns moved rapidly to Pamatí, Rampur, and Zigyun. Unsure of the size or capabilities of the city's garrison, Hunter dispatched radio calls to M and K Forces to hustle into Myitkyina from Arang and Hkumchet In, respectively. By 21 May, all southern and western routes into the town were blocked. A race to reinforce was unfortunately won by the Japanese. Units from the north and east (across the Irrawaddy) rushed into the town and immediately set to building fortifications enclosing the built-up section. The inability to isolate or storm the town immediately would prove costly. The Japanese had orders to hold until mid-August. The situation was described as ". . . Cassino on a shoestring."²⁶

Nothing was going right on the ground. Prior arrangements concerning resupply and reinforcement went awry, either through oversight or by a design not made clear to the men holding the airfield. The Chinese became ludicrous, attacking each other on several occasions, or moving so slowly that an advance of fifty yards consumed an entire day of fighting. Galahad was coming apart. Daily evacuation for wounds



Map 13

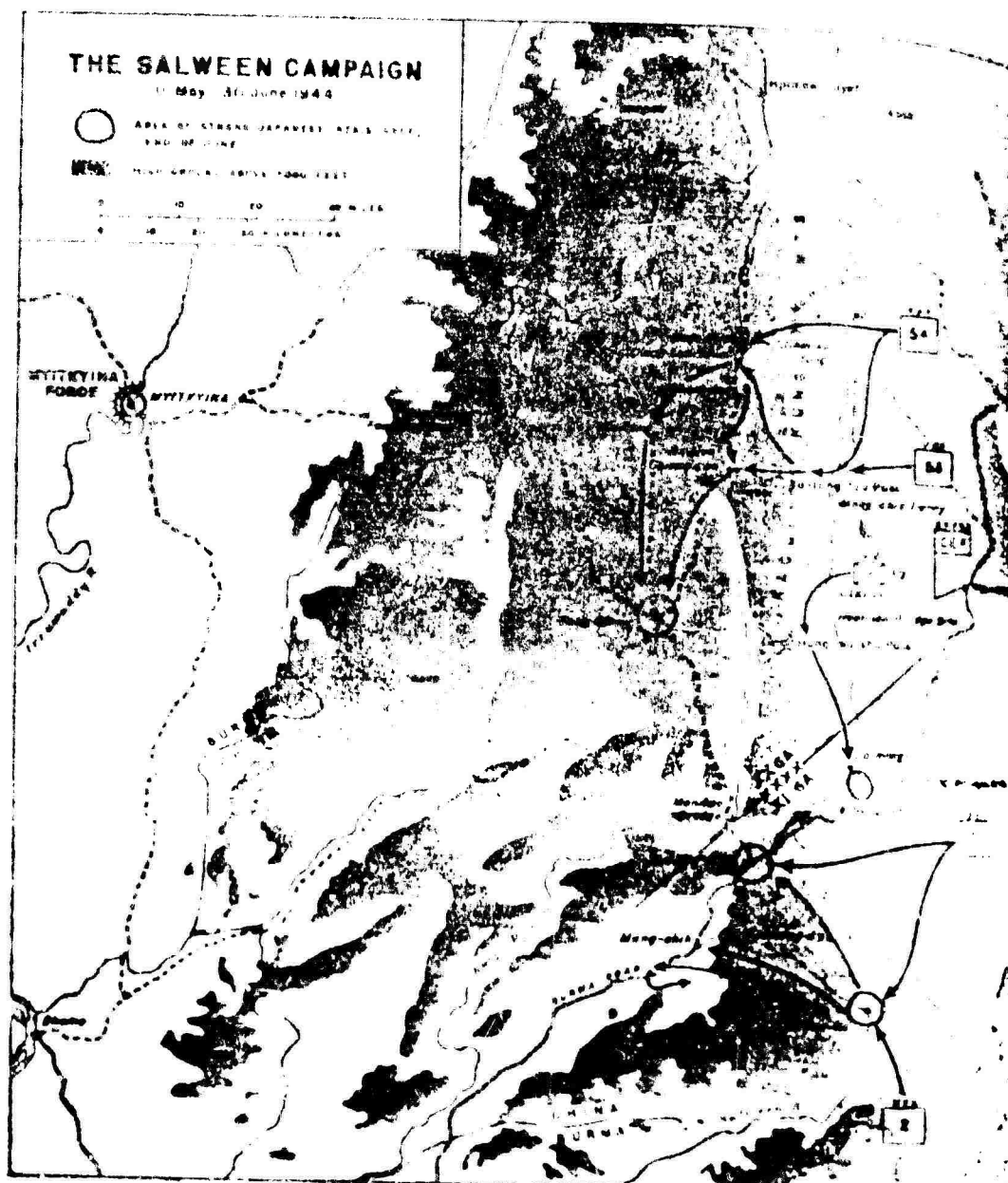
and sickness (based upon 102° fever for three day's running) peaked at 134. Men fell asleep even during firefights. The carousel of commanders began again. Merrill, who had controlled the approach march from an aerial CP and promised to be the first man to land after the airstrip was secure, did not arrive until 19 May, made a brief inspection, and left. He suffered another heart attack while at Shaduzup and Col. McCannon assumed command, fidgeting under a brevet promotion to brigadier general. Within ten days McCannon was evacuated and General Boatner flew in to take charge. Throughout this period, the Japanese were aggressively patrolling and attacking out of their city bastion.

The most significant event in Galahad's short existence occurred on 25 May, just five days prior to Boatner's assumption of command of Myitkyina Task Force. Col. Hunter presented Stilwell with a letter that traced the history of Galahad's tenure in C.-B.-I., dwelling principally upon the factors that impacted most severely upon morale and combat effectiveness. This letter pointed a finger directly at Northern Combat Area Command's conduct of the campaign and its "treatment" of Galahad.²⁷ An investigation by the Theater Inspector General was ordered, and Boatner, smarting somewhat at what he perceived as unfair criticism of him as CG of NCAC, chose not to associate with Hunter directly, but used his chief of staff to convey necessary information.²⁸ A side of Galahad's story was now on the record. Two more months of bitter fighting lay ahead. The decision had been made. The 5307th was ordered to stay and were now wedded to Myitkyina, for better or worse.

May frittered away into June at Myitkyina, both sides gaining little. Boatner was given two engineer construction battalions to beef

up his forces. Replacements from the States, dispatched to take part in operations later in 1944, also arrived piecemeal. Using Marauder veterans to lead these new forces, Boatner decided to form one "Old Galahad" battalion of 300 men, and two "New Galahad" battalions numbering upward of 900 men each. Time was required to season and train these men, especially the engineers, and their initial combat record was spotty. More controversy arose from attempts to scour the rear for recovered Galahad evacuees to return to Myitkyina. Reports of able-bodied troops raising havoc in the rear conflicted with medical officers' evaluations of the situation. No one seemed to be able to properly manage any system designed to return fit men to duty. The arrival of several Marauders who were immediately tagged and returned to Assam, exacerbated an already tense problem. By mid-June Myitkyina was finally sealed off.

Developments elsewhere promised to ease the deadlock eventually. After intensive diplomatic bartering, Chiang Kai Shek had finally released the Yunnan Divisions for an offensive across the Salween River to clear the Burma Road to Lashio (Map 14). Between early May and mid-June, the Chinese Expeditionary Force had opened some twenty miles of the road. This campaign was being fought some one hundred miles east of Myitkyina. The attack on Mogaung by the Chinese 22nd and 38th Divisions had also begun again. Emulating Marauder tactics, the 112th Regiment moved around the Japanese right flank and blocked the Mogaung Road at Seton. Moving with unwonted aggressiveness, the Chinese pushed relentlessly down the track. Despite determined Japanese efforts to dislodge them, the Seton block held, and Tanaka found himself watching his division being cut up into smaller and smaller pieces. Another



Map 14

envelopment, this time by the 114th Chinese Regiment, succeeded in threatening Mogaung as the British 77th Brigade struck the town from the south. By 26 June, Tanaka was forced back to Sahmaw, taking with him remnants of the once proud division that had captured Singapore two years earlier. North of these two ground-gaining drives, another month of combat loomed. Myitkyina still held.

Boatner spent June "steadyng" the engineers, seasoning New Galahad, and trying to gain fire superiority over the solidly entrenched enemy. At one point, the Chinese were tunnelling, trying to get close enough to breach the Japanese earthworks. Daily success could be counted in the hundreds of yards. On 25 June, Boatner suffered a relapse of malaria and General Theodore F. Wessels succeeded him as commander of Myitkyina Task Force. The fall of Mogaung guaranteed him an overland supply route and dismissed the threat of attack from his rear. Additionally, and in contrast to at least one of his predecessors, "Wessels made a point of visiting each unit, talking with the men and trying to instill confidence and raise morale."²⁹ His first attack, scheduled for 12 July, failed when the supporting aircraft bombed friendly units staged to go in behind thirty-nine B-25 bombers. Fortunately, the pressure of two month's siege by Chinese and U.S. forces had taken its toll. Small parties of the Japanese garrison were ambushed as they tried to raft down the Irrawaddy, and increasingly, the Japanese dead were wounded men who had been returned to the lines. Attacks in late July began to meet less resistance and gain ground steadily. On 1 August, the Japanese commander committed hara-kiri after granting permission for the remaining defenders to exfiltrate. Sensing,

a chance for decisive success, Wessels and a Chinese division commander ordered a night raiding party to infiltrate into Mv. Rkyina. At dawn the 50th Division stormed into the town, meeting only a half hearted defense from Japanese being attacked from two directions while trying desperately to withdraw from the city. The town was declared officially secure at 1545 on 3 August.

It is difficult to visualize gaunt, hollow-eyed men sitting up and taking notice of this event they had fought so long for. It is doubtful that any normal emotion would register. Hunter was relieved the same day. As soon as a little reorganizing could take place, Col. Osborne would muster the 300 or so remaining Old Galahad troops and lead them upstream along the Irrawaddy to report them in to HQ Task Force Mars. With the same ease that Galahad--the 5307th Composite Unit (Provisional)--Merrill's Marauders had been given life as Shipment 1688, it was now ordered to extinction. On 10 August 1944, the unit was officially disbanded.

FOOTNOTES

¹STEPCHILD: Code name for U.S. forces to be deployed to C.-B.-I. as long-range penetration groups.

²Stilwell, op. cit., p. 106.

³Ibid., p. 219.

⁴Charles F. Romanus and Riley Sunderland, Stilwell's Command Problems, (Washington: Department of the Army, 1956), p. 9.

⁵Ian Fellowes-Gordon, The Magic War, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), p. 47.

⁶Charlton Ogburn, Jr., The Marauders, (New York: Ballantine Books, 1959), pp. 62-63.

⁷U.S. War Department, General Staff, Merrill's Marauders, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1945), pp. ii-14.

⁸Charles N. Hunter, Galahad, (San Antonio: The Naylor Company, 1963), pp. 12-13.

⁹Ogburn, op. cit., pp. 43-44.

¹⁰Stone, op. cit., p. 296.

¹¹Hunter, op. cit., p. 5 and p. 15. The British claim was put forth by none other than Wingate and Mountbatten during visits to the unit. Merrill's disclaimer is problematical. As one of Stilwell's fair-haired boys, it is unlikely he did not know what was to come. The most tactful response involves semantics. An envelopment might not be construed as a "spearhead." There is however little doubt that Stilwell wanted the Americans to get the Hukawng attack started again.

¹²Ibid., p. 20. Hunter says the trek was the most important thing accomplished during the training phase. For dissenting views, see: (1) William R. Peers and Dean Brelis, Behind the Burma Road, (Boston: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1963), pp. 141-142. Peers states the exertion of this march abetted the later exhaustion of the unit. (2) Stone, op. cit., p. 297. Stone cites Stilwell's notice of the large numbers of men that fell out on the march as a sign that the unit was in less than sterling shape. He also notes Stilwell's admonition about over-zealous evacuation of personnel by the medics and "... the hint that fortitude is the sovereign remedy for tropical diseases."

¹³Ogburn, op. cit., p. 85. He was Pvt. Robert Landis, of Youngstown, Ohio.

¹⁴Romanus and Sunderland, op. cit., pp. 39-41.

¹⁵Peers and Brelis, op. cit., p. 19.

¹⁶U.S. War Department, General Staff, op. cit., p. 45.

¹⁷Ogburn, op. cit., p. 112.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 174.

¹⁹Romanus and Sunderland, op. cit., p. 182.

²⁰This is Wingate's phrasing. The Chindits were commanded by Brigadier Lentaigne after Wingate's death in a plane crash on 24 March 1944.

²¹Romanus and Sunderland, op. cit., p. 191.

²²Hunter, op. cit., p. 83.

²³Ogburn, op. cit., p. 194.

²⁴Romanus and Sunderland, op. cit., p. 208. The Chinese division commanders habitually "back-channeled" to Chiang Kai Shek for permission to "go or no go" on a given proposition. Chiang invariably used this power to frustrate Stilwell, to whom he had given the "chop"--i. e. the validating seal needed to verify orders. In this instance, Chiang seems to have been worried about the battles between the British and Japanese in India.

²⁵Ibid., p. 225. This is noted as a quotation from Merrill. Ogburn, op. cit., p. 200, and Hunter, op. cit., pp. 88-89, discuss this matter in some detail based upon what Merrill then said to the Galahad staff. This paper will deal with this in great detail. The point is that "promises" (real or perceived) again became an issue at a critical phase in this unit's history.

²⁶Ibid., p. 236.

²⁷Hunter, op. cit., pp. 192-194.

²⁸Copies of the investigation, the so-called "Criswold Report," are extremely scarce. Only Romanus and Sunderland seem to have had a copy to work from.

²⁹Romanus and Sunderland, op. cit., p. 249.

Chapter 3

"THIS HAS BEEN A KNOCKDOWN AND DRAG-OUT AFFAIR"¹

It was over. The campaign to chase the Japanese out of the Hukawng Valley was successful. Seizing Myitkyina assured dramatic rises in ~~Bump~~ supplies for China and major progress on the Ledo-Lashio Road. China would stay in the war. U.S., British, and Chinese troops had won the day. The follow-on attack would push the Japanese out of Burma within weeks of the Enola Gay's fateful mission over Hiroshima.

Success in combat is never without cost. In 1944, hundreds of thousands of Allied troops were in the field in C.-B.-I. Nonetheless, the story of the Marauder's disbandment remains an unsettling and baffling conundrum inviting attention. Study of the 5307th Composite Unit (Provisional) is an evocative process. It is not unlike a person watching dust devils blow up, cavort, and then dissipate during a hot, windy Oklahoma summer day. The existence of the dust devil cannot be denied. It is composed of so much dust, so many leaves and blades of grass, whipped into a vortex by petulant, eddying winds. This airborne maelstrom rises to entrance the viewer, for in it, he sees such wondrous shapes and forms that the real and the illusory may for the brief life of the dust devil exist side by side.

This proposed juxtaposing of the real and the illusory can be seen as one approach toward further study of Galahad. The genesis

of this approach is found in an Army definition of combat power:

Combat power is a combination of the physical means available to a commander and the moral strength of his command.²

Plainly, the "physical means" available to a commander can be viewed as "real," even as quantifiable. Habitually, the "numbers" of men, equipments, and supplies provide the most apparent measure of a command's potency, and it may be said, the most easily grasped index to predicting success in the field, especially when arrayed against a similar tote of enemy resources. However, even a fledgling knows that numbers fail to explain fully the experience, much less the outcome, of combat operations.

Less precise and, accordingly, more difficult to deal with, is the moral strength of a command. The moral strength of a command can be viewed as the combat effectiveness of personnel, itself a function of the leader, the leadership environment, and the led.³ Quantification fails to elucidate the interaction of these three elements, for they are illusory, subject to interpretation, and highly subjective. They exist to a great degree as states of mind, perceptions if you will, that are unique to the eye of the beholder.

The "real" in Galahad's tale was five and a half months of fighting, behind enemy lines for the most part. 424 Marauders were killed, wounded, or missing as a result of combat action. Almost 2000 men were felled by sickness. The unit accomplished every assigned mission, killing 2800 Japanese in so doing.⁴ In the end the 5307th Composite Unit (Provisional) was stricken from the record. The "illusory" of the Galahad story is why. Why was the equivalent of an infantry regiment combat ineffective after suffering 14% casualties from

engaging the Japanese? Why did 66% of the formation become disease casualties over such a short period of time? The answers to these questions are deceptive and rife with pitfalls for the unwary student.

As a first step toward learning more about the collapse of the 5307th, it may be useful to examine what has been written by men who were there. Three officers observed the affair from outside the unit and addressed directly the reasons behind the Marauder debacle. Two other officers have provided the view from the foxhole. They too, have left a record of exactly what dragged Galahad down.

It is appropriate to begin with the outside observers. James H. Stone, a first lieutenant and C.-B.-I.'s medical historian in 1944, set forth his perception of the matter in 1969. Writing as the editor of a volume about military medicine in the theater, Stone summarized Galahad's downfall thusly:

Of the three chief causes of the regiment's collapse, the environment was the underlying cause; the tactical disposition was the sustaining and, in the static engagement of Nhpum Ga, the precipitating cause; and the invasion of the troops by disease was the final and decisive cause. To an unknown extent, the Marauders helped their enemies by their loose sanitary practices, by command ineptness in supporting the medical establishment, and by defiance of Atabrine suppressive discipline. They were no more guilty of these defects than most troops. But had they been better trained and better disciplined they might have held on long enough at Myitkyina to end their campaign in the sunshine of victory rather than in the twilight of recrimination.⁵

General Haydon Boatner served variously as Stilwell's Chief of Staff for the Chinese Army in India, Commanding General of Northern Combat Area Command, and as Myitkyina Task Force Commander. He and Stilwell were the only officers sanctified with the "chop" from Chiang Kai Shek. In a written rebuttal of what he considered unfair

criticism of himself in Barbara Tuchman's biography of Stilwell, Boatner opens a section of remarks on Galahad by noting:

It is difficult and dangerous to try to analyze the reasons for the disintegration of the Galahad force because of the great emotionalism involved. As I see it the paramount reasons follow.⁶

Boatner proceeds to note the bickering over control of the unit between Mountbatten and Stilwell and the War Department's failure to deploy an existing unit versus "a hodge-podge organization."⁷ Much discussion follows to highlight problems accompanying the switch from British to American command, since, ". . . suddenly it became the first and only U.S. ground combat unit in the CBI."⁸ With a tone that smacks of intra-headquarters intrigue, Boatner discusses the manner in which commanders for the Marauders happened to have been chosen, logistic shortcomings caused by assigning the 5307th to NCAC, and the personality conflicts that grew out of the unit's unique status. Finally, Boatner cites "broken promises" as a major cause of the unit's disintegration. One promise concerned furloughs prior to shipment overseas, and the other the rapid evacuation from Myitkyina, once the airfield was taken. Reflecting on the second commitment, Boatner admits, "I never heard of that promise by JWS until after WWII."⁹

The final commentator on the leadership environment of C.-B.-I., as seen from outside the 5307th, was Colonel Griswold. As the Theater Inspector General, he conducted, at Stilwell's behest, an investigation of Galahad's collapse. As noted in Stilwell's Command Problems, the "Griswold Report" stated:

. . . the inspector general wrote that the plans and assumptions of the War Department plus unauthorized statements reached the enlisted men and junior officers of GALAHAD as

promises of what was in store. These never materialized and, coupled with 'the physical deterioration of the unit, after months of arduous jungle combat and culminating in a rapidly growing feeling that hospitalization procedures were not being carried out, resulted about June 1st 1944 in almost complete breakdown of morale in the major portion of the unit.'¹⁰

If the foregoing ~~concepts~~ communicate facts as seen from outside the unit in a relatively objective fashion, Col. Charles Hunter and Charlton Ogburn communicate a strident mix of fact and passion. They were, after all, viewing events from inside a military organization that, over a five and a half month campaign, changed from a rangy band of raiders into a staggering group of dazed, walking sick and wounded. With sardonic succinctness, Ogburn wrote about the destruction of the unit he served as 1st Battalion's signal platoon leader:

But even more than unfulfilled promises, what destroyed the 5307th was the imputation of inadequacy. The Marauders were made to feel that it was lack of courage and stamina on their part that necessitated sending unprepared troops into combat. What made the imputation all the more galling was the knowledge that it was their own hard-won successes, as much as anything, that had led Stilwell to attempt far more than he had originally planned and that they could have warned, had they been asked, that he was biting off more than he could well chew in launching the drive on Mairkyina.¹¹

Colonel Hunter bills himself as " . . . the original Galahad and almost the last."¹² He commanded the unit longer than General Frank Merrill and stood up for its men on 25 May 1944, by handing General Stilwell a letter that chronicled Hunter's view of Galahad's treatment in C.-B.-I. since October 43. Despite its length, the memorandum is presented in its entirety.

1. It is desired to bring to the attention of the Commanding General certain facts which, in the opinion of the undersigned, either have not been brought to his attention before, or which are not being given sufficient weight in future planning.

a. Morale: The morale of Galahad has been sustained only because of promises that:

(1) Galahad would not be used as a spearhead for the Chinese troops.

(2) Immediately upon arrival at Myitkyina and the capture of the airfield, its personnel would be flown out for rest and reorganization.

2. Upon arrival in India, Galahad was treated by USAF-CBI HQ, as a visiting unit for which the theater felt no responsibility. It was, and still is the opinion that, so far as Combat Hq. is concerned, this attitude has not changed. The following facts bear out the above conclusions:

- a. No theater officer met Galahad on its arrival.
- b. No adequate preparations were made for its reception.

3. Galahad was debarked at Bombay and moved to the transit camp at Deolali, where the accommodations and food furnished were a disgrace to the British Military authorities. The period of training at Deolali was not entirely wasted, but health and food conditions were such that, in the opinion of the writer, they contributed to the later breakdown in health and morale experienced by personnel from the South and Southwest Pacific Commands.

4. Since Colonel Brink was assigned to the G.S.C. and as such unable to assume command, but by your direction was charged with responsibility for training, organization and administration, many conflicts arose in jurisdiction between the undersigned and Colonel Brink as to the amount of time to be devoted to organization, training, administration, sanitation, and basic subjects. Since the unit was to fight shortly Colonel Brink insisted on, and the bulk of available time was spent on combat training and organization, with a minimum of time being devoted to discipline and other essential subjects of a balanced training program for a newly organized unit, as such simple things as the 'issue, marking, care and cleaning of equipment.'

5. Galahad was organized as a composite unit which prevented its use of colors, insignia, or other morale building paraphernalia (sic) normal to other units. This matter was taken up with Rear Ech. USAF-CBI several times with no apparent results.

6. Very few American officers visited this unit while in training as long as its status was indefinite, and it was difficult to get the normal support with reference to supply, morale, medical service, and other requirements normal to a

unit assigned to the theater. Suddenly General Merrill was assigned to command the unit. Colonel Brink left, and the unit received treatment only comparable to that afforded the prodigal son. American soldiers being of a discerning nature and intelligent, naturally are sensitive to the treatment they receive from higher headquarters. Galahad personnel are all familiar with the conditions and facts outlined above and are gradually growing bitter. This is especially true of the officers whose morale has been adversely affected by the following additional factors:

a. General Merrill's statement that no officers would be promoted until the termination of the operation.

b. Colonel Cannon's reported report that at Nhpum the undersigned was only worried about promotion for officers.

c. The report freely circulated that General Boatner called Major Petito, Captain Bogardus, and Lt. Sievers 'yellow.'

d. The unpleasant relationship existing between all Galahad officers and the officers of Combat Hq.

e. The per diem situation now existant (sic) in the theater.

7. Repeated reports have been made reference to the health of the command. Apparently these reports are not believed, since no apparent effort has been made to verify this. It can be reiterated again that Galahad is practically ineffective as a combat unit at the present time, and its presence here as a unit is rapidly leading to a false sense of security, which is dangerous.

8. Although this unit has been in continuous contact with the Japanese and has performed capably in the field to date, no awards or decorations, no indication of appreciation, and no citations have been received by any personnel of this unit as far as can be determined by the writer, with the exception of the award of the Purple Heart which is routine. This condition can only indicate a lack of interest by higher headquarters or worse a 'don't care attitude' which creates hard feeling.

9. Conclusion: In view of the above the following recommendations are submitted:

a. That on the termination of the present operations, Galahad as an organization be disbanded, and its personnel be reassigned to other units in the theater through the Army Classification Service.

b. That in the future American Infantry Combat Units assigned to this theater be treated in such a manner as to instill in the unit a pride of organization, a desire

to fight, and a feeling of being a part of a united effort, and further that every effort be made to overcome the feeling that such units are no better than Chinese Troops, and deserving of no better treatment.

c. That deserved promotions be awarded to officers of this command.

d. That no other theater personnel be promoted as long as officers of this unit are not promoted.¹³

This document is unique. It is doubtful that any other unit's intangible history is so recorded. If indeed the 5307th died of heart failure, here is its medical chart, a tracing of deadly affliction.

II

The written recapitulations of the Galahad experience confirm one essential fact immediately. The collapse of the Marauders cannot be attributed with any certainty to the non-availability of physical means. In fact there are only six references to logistic shortfalls. Stone notes poor command support of the existing medical system, while Griswold alludes to the circumvention of proper medical procedures. Boatner's reference to logistical shortcomings concern what he says was the inability of Galahad's rear echelon to do its job, and that no supplies were earmarked for the 5307th. Instead, they had to be provisioned from resources planned for the Chinese at a time when two more of their divisions arrived, placing even more demand on the existing supply stocks. Hunter mentions this kind of problem only twice. The unsatisfactory Deolali Camp and mess provided by the British was the first, and inadequate support during the time Stilwell and Mountbattenickered over Galahad's future missions was the second.

Research confirms that a severe shortage of rear-echelon hospitals and convalescent facilities did exist. The problem

stemmed from excluding the medical staff from secret information about pending troop deployments (a problem that unfortunately still exists), and was complicated by the theater's low priority. This latter factor dictated that, once the deficient situation was recognized, rectification would be a slow process.¹⁴ Improvisations ordered did not always work and sometimes merely created more confusion. Finally, the 5307th was never able to successfully close the medical evacuation, care, return to duty loop under the existing conditions. It was inevitable that some sick would be returned to duty before they should have been, and other Marauders would wreak havoc in the rear because there was no convalescent control. That this severe problem existed does not fully explain its impact. The damage was done by what the troops thought was happening. The state of mind Griswold described, needed but to be confirmed by having supposedly fit Marauders re-evacuated on the same plane that had returned them to duty, to become fact in the men's minds. This of course, is exactly what happened.¹⁵

Only one other critical logistic shortfall affecting the Marauders can be impartially documented. Weather and Chinese extravagance prevented the Myitkyina Task Force from amassing more than two days of reserve stocks early in the siege of that city.¹⁶ The forces were dependent upon air-delivered service support, and monsoon conditions continually interrupted the flow of transports until Mogaung was captured on 26 June 44, assuring a land route to Myitkyina. The Chinese extravagance refers to wild, sporadic, unannounced shooting sprees. In addition to consuming inordinate amounts of ammunition, these improvised firepower demonstrations unnerved units positioned on the Chinese left and right.

The other indictments of the supply system that nurtured the Marauders are difficult to access. Hunter's allegations cannot be refuted, except to say that the unit remained at Deolali only three weeks before moving to Deogarh. Boatner's comments on the job done by Galahad's rear echelon appear unwarranted. There is no recorded instance where, if the request was received in the rear, the weather permitted flying, and the unit could be located on the ground, that requested supplies failed to be delivered. One source reports a mission successfully completed within two hours and twenty-two minutes of its being received at Dinjan.¹⁷ Boatner's further assertion that, "All logistical and air combat and supply support given to Galahad had to be taken from that intended for and planned for the Chinese troops," appears to be an admission of failure on the part of his headquarters to adequately plan for projected operations.

To say that there was no major logistical failure does not establish that more physical means would not have been welcome. A bona fide replacement system was not provided because of the nature of Galahad's mission. Troops that were available had to be piecemealed into Myitkyina to bolster the sagging Marauders without proper training or preparation. More firepower akin to that provided by the pack howitzers dropped into Hsamshingyang was not available until the march on Myitkyina. Impregnated fatigues could have blunted the outbreak of scrub typhus. A decent rest camp in the rear would have been a God-send. Follow-on units benefited from the lessons learned during the North Burma campaign, as well as from a much more bountiful supply pipeline. None of these considerations, however, change the basic conclusion that

adequate physical means were available to Galahad's commanders to accomplish their missions without destroying the unit's integrity. The answer to Galahad's downfall lies elsewhere.

Any discussion of Galahad's moral strength--the combat effectiveness of its personnel--must begin by recalling that the vast majority of Marauder casualties were caused by disease and sickness. Interestingly enough, only three of the C.-B.-I. commentators have written about the effects of disease on the Marauders. Griswold and Hunter merely incorporate the matter of sickness into what they perceive as larger concerns, namely, the breakdown of morale and command inattention. Stone emphatically declares that disease was the decisive factor causing Galahad's demise. His point that hit and run operations, interrupted by the static defense at Nhpum Ga, conducted amidst the cruel environment of Burma's jungled mountains, must lead inevitably to exhaustion and sickness is well taken. The War Department deployed Galahad expecting a 50% medical casualty rate.¹⁹ Stone then points out that the unit abetted its disintegration by poor training and a lack of discipline. This becomes a key point in the continuing study of Galahad. The point is that the men of the 5307th could have neutralized some of the effects of the environment and slowed the onset of disease by taking the malaria tablets and maintaining proper field sanitation. They did not.

Colonel Griswold states that morale had been shattered in most of Galahad by the time they had been at Myitkvina two weeks. Citing broken promises, exhaustion, and the previously mentioned feeling that the men were not being properly cared for, Griswold highlights another key element leading to the Marauders' disbandment. Morale is intangible

is how men think and feel they are being treated.²⁰ It is a state of mind. High morale is evidence of, and conducive to, positive motivation. Morale is also the basis for intuitive estimates of the other intangibles associated with military units. Esprit de corps is nothing more than unit morale. Discipline habitually refers to prompt obedience of orders, or the use of initiative to take action in the absence of instructions. Finally, proficiency is a measure of the way a unit does its job or accomplishes assigned missions.²¹ All of these measures of unit effectiveness are highly subjective judgements. Logically, as morale deteriorates, for one reason or another, it can be anticipated that pride, discipline, and proficiency will begin to erode at a comparable rate. Eventually, a unit will no longer be combat effective because its personnel have lost the will to fight. Their spirit will have been shredded. Colonel Griswold describes Galahad in such terms.²²

Boatner concurs with Griswold in blaming broken promises as part of the reason for Galahad's disbandment. He also raises the question of how people and personalities might have conceivably affected unit esprit. For instance, Boatner asserts that Hunter "... could have normally expected to remain its (Galahad's) commander."²³ This point is often overlooked. Hunter commanded the unit from embarkation through its training in India. During the training phase, two officers senior to him were posted to the unit without being given command. Colonel Brink and Brigadier General Cranston supervised training and observed the preparations before disappearing. In their wake, Brigadier General Frank Merrill appeared as the unit was preparing to leave India for North Burma. Boatner questions Merrill's Cavalry/language officer background

as opposed to Hunter's history of Infantry assignments. Another query might have been aimed at asking why a man who had already suffered one heart attack during Vinegar Joe's "walkout" in 1942, was chosen to command Galahad. Hunter would take up the reins twice more, each time following Merrill heart attacks. There is no concrete way to gauge the effect that this changing leadership might have had upon the unit. Common sense would dictate that a healthy man could have withstood the rigors of the campaign better.

The outside observers have described Galahad somewhat like this. Galahad was a hodge-podge organization that abused health and sanitation discipline, was led off and on by the wrong man, was allegedly promised certain things that were never acted upon and suffered a complete breakdown of morale at Myitkyina. All of the forces at work in and around Galahad were intensified by the hostility of the Burmese environment, the theater's low supply priority, and by dogged Japanese resistance.

The Marauder view, as might be expected, does not ignore what others saw taking place, but does establish new loci of reference for assessing events. Ogburn cites unfulfilled promises and the "imputation of inadequacy" as direct causes of the destruction of his unit. The question of broken promises is not new. Articulation of Ogburn's second charge is illustrative not only of Marauder frustration, but that of all the troops involved in reducing the city bastion of Myitkyina. The scorn that Galahad sensed resulted from several factors. NCAC continually underestimated Japanese strength in the city, as even Stilwell admitted in August 44.²⁴ The two new Chinese divisions did not perform well initially, and took exceptionally high casualties. These

two conditions, complicated by enemy commander Mizukami's aggressiveness and previously noted supply shortages, occasioned the local commanders to fear a Japanese breakout that would fragment friendly troops and lead to defeat in detail. Rumors of relief from outside (a regiment of the Japanese 53rd Division was at one time given such a mission) circulated freely, worsening an already tenuous situation.²⁵

To meet this threat, Galahad was ordered to remain in place, and to assist two engineer battalions (pulled off construction of the Ledo Road), and what other U.S. replacements that were flown in from India, through their initial baptism of fire. These patchwork units were of little value until several weeks of seasoning had settled them. Concurrent with these developments it was decided to scour the rear area for able Galahad troops for return to Myitkyina. Throughout this crisis period Boatner, as Myitkyina Task Force Commander, was refusing to deal with the Marauders face-to-face.²⁶ Messages from the beleaguered town crackled with recrimination--"Reports continue to indicate the complete disorganization and fear in U.S. units."²⁷ Inevitable comparisons between U.S. and Chinese stamina and resistance to sickness further charged an already emotional command relationship.²⁸

The upshot of this entire repugnant episode in the history of the 5307th is reflected in Ogburn's plaint. Galahad was not good enough in the clutch. Their falling apart had caused green troops to be thrown into the fray before they were ready. The contrast must have been vivid. Repeated requests for more aggressive assaults echoed down the ranks to men who thought they should not have been there. It was these same men, convinced that nobody would be at Myitkyina if they had

not been so successful west of the Kumon Range, who saw battalion commanders faint at their radios, prosecuting attacks that gained little.²⁹ The denouement approached as spirit corroded. Men, who saw themselves belittled for too little effort, lamented that they had given more than enough in pursuit of goals that were in excess of what any intelligent leader would have asked.

Hunter's letter elaborates on this lament, unfolding the story of a combat unit unsure of either its backing or its belonging. Summed up, the missile passionately asks if "anyone cares?" It is difficult not to sympathize. Any person who has commanded a military organization can understand the sense of frustration and anger explicit in these words. Untold hurt was caused by the "prodigal son" treatment afforded the unit. The initial attitude that Galahad was a "throwaway" and was to work for Wingate, undoubtedly contributed to the withholding of a patch or meaningful insignia. This denial, plus the reported dearth of medals pinned on until late in the campaign, would meet with Stilwell's approval. His taciturn approach to soldiering eschewed such remonstrances as unnecessary. The continued bickering over control of Galahad no doubt led to the late choice of a commander. The period of training prior to Merrill's appointment must have been uncomfortable for all concerned. Hunter's point that the Marauders felt treated the same as the Chinese troops says much about the prevailing attitudes at different echelons of command. What was preferable to one level was anathema to the other. It is ironic that this letter should have been handed to Stilwell (although addressed initially to Boatner) at a moment of triumph. It is almost as if this note would signal the onset of spoilage that would sour the milk of success. It would take two more

months to reduce Myitkyina and seal the Marauders' fate.

Hunter and Ogburn do not deny that morale was shattered or that the men of Galahad were physically spent. They do decry the lack of importance that senior commanders attached to their very presence in the theater, and the quibbling attention devoted to the unit's several accomplishments. Both Marauders reflect the emotionalism that Boatner noted earlier, and both display, through the immediacy of their words, scars that barely cover injured pride.

Hunter's first paragraph addresses the now haunting subject of promises. Surely there is no one aspect of Galahad's history that is so pervasive. Promises to the Marauders thread through the record of their brief existence like the blood trail left by a wounded animal running through snow.

The best count available indicates that five promises were made to the unit at one time or another. Two of the commitments under scrutiny were evidently used as recruiting incentives. Many men were likely led to believe that volunteering for the Galahad mission would, first, earn them a furlough in the U.S. prior to shipment to India, and second, place them in a special category such that they would rotate home as soon as the mission was completed.³⁰ The truth of the matter, quite simply, cannot be determined. A handful of men suffering under the delusion that they had been cheated of leave or that they would get home, and out of the war, early, can undermine morale. Any experienced combat officer knows that soldiers never forget anything which they consider their due.

Two promises were allegedly made during the training phase in India. One was that the Marauders would not be used as a spearhead for

Chinese troops.³¹ The second dangled the notion that the 5307th would not be committed over ninety days at a stretch.³² These two pledges were supposedly of British origin. Both Mountbatten and Wingate reportedly voiced concern that the U.S. troops would be badly served if reassigned from British to American control. The ninety day limit was a Wingate-imposed restriction for his Chindits, based upon his initial foray into Burma. Confusion creeps into this subject because the U.S. War Department anticipated, based on the British experience, that the Marauders would only last ninety days before requiring relief and hospitalization. It is this War Department planning assumption that Griswold notes in his report. Whatever the source, there is no record that Galahad's leaders ever challenged its validity. It was a reprehensible oversight. The British concern that the 5307th would spearhead for Chinese troops was noted earlier in this study as being refuted by Merrill. Having come to command Galahad from Brig Stilwell's G-3, Merrill's honesty is called to question in this affair. Whether Merrill did not know what the Marauders were to do (unlikely), or was playing word games with his troops (feasible, but dishonest), or misled them purposely (unsavory and unethical), the record begs clarification.³³ As things stand, this episode would appear to constitute a breach of trust between a commander and his men.

The final promise to be discussed occurred just prior to the march on Myitkyina. This vow, that Galahad would be relieved and flown out upon seizure of the city's airfield, is the most crucial of all the many bonds purportedly breached.³⁴ Two recollections of this critical event will elucidate matters for the record. Late in April, as the

5307th shook itself out and relaxed after the hard fighting at Nhpum Ga. Merrill had returned to assume command.

Merrill held a meeting of the Galahad staff and the battalion commanders to brief them on the future. At this meeting it was explained that should we succeed in capturing the airstrip Galahad personnel would be relieved and flown to an already selected site where a rest and recreational area would be constructed. Merrill at some time even stated the amount of money budgeted or set aside for this purpose. There was some restriction put on this information.³⁵

Sometime before 28 April 1944, the departure date for the trek to Myitkyina, this "restricted" information--which confirmed uncountable rumors--was in the hands of the troops.

There was one compensation. We probably would not reach Myitkyina, but if we did we would wind up with glory and and honor and a fling that would make history. This was positively to be the last effort asked of us. We had it from General Merrill himself that when we gained our objective we would be returned at once to India, given a party to cause taxpayers a shudder, installed in a well-appointed rest camp, and given furloughs. It was this prospect more than anything else that gave the 5307th the resolution to surmount the obstacles that lay before it on the trail to Myitkyina.³⁶

It is again necessary to call Merrill to task. The biggest carrot of all had been tied to the stick, and the stick pointed toward Myitkyina.

Merrill did not march with his men. He and Hunter conferred one time along the trail and Merrill was airborne over the town on the 17th of May when the airstrip was secured. His newly appointed deputy, Colonel McCammon, arrived on 18 May to try and organize attacks to seize the city before the Japanese could recover from the surprise and reinforce the garrison. Merrill appeared briefly on 19 May, flew back to Stilwell's command post at Shaduzup, and was evacuated the same day after suffering a third heart attack. He would not be back again. Whatever efforts he made to carry out the promised evacuation of Galahad

remain unknown.

On balance, it is clear that the inept handling of the question of promises was significant. It is inevitable that soldiers will fantasize about how much better things are going to be. Indeed, it is an often beneficial adjunct to motivation and morale. The problem, of course, arises when fantasy, based upon some factual corroboration, remains unchallenged and ignores the truth of existing situations. The history of the Marauders and promises is highly suspect in this regard. The record suggests, through the timing and substance of the various pledges, that serious liberties may have been taken with Galahad's welfare. It is not a commander's prerogative to encourage false hopes or even by implication, to make promises that cannot be fulfilled. To do so is to flaunt men's sensibilities and insure a painful accounting at some point in the future.

There is more to the feeling that the Marauder promises were a significant cause of the unit's ultimate collapse and disbandment. During Galahad's brief history, reported promises always surface at particularly crucial points. It is likely that questionable statements enhanced recruiting the unit. During training and on the eve of the first Marauder mission to Walawbum, other promises were allegedly made. Finally, a critical pledge is given days before the climb over the Kumon Range. Such timing would suggest that doubts about the 5307th were increasingly buttressed with promises to insure a positive unit reaction. The vows dispensed in India and Burma unmistakably smack of an attempt to bolster the unit's spirit artificially. There may have been good reason for this. On 29 March 1944, just after Galahad's

initial success along the Kamaing Road and before the encirclement at Nhpum Ga,

. . . a reliable report warned 5307th headquarters that 'should the men be told they will stay here on completion of the campaign, they will be practically impossible to control. The men feel they have earned a furlough home, and say it has been promised them too.'³⁷

It is difficult to avoid the thought that the promises had become a necessity.

Interesting too, is the kind of prize implicit in the reported promises. Beginning as individual rewards in return for volunteering, the commitments change, over time, to reflect a special mission status that falls outside the normal spectrum of Infantry humdrum. The final assurance exudes implications of the unit's specialness. Herein, perhaps, lies the key to the one promise that can be fully proven to have been broken. Simply put, Galahad as a unit perceived itself as having been promised, and having earned, elite status. Theater authorities either did not agree with, or did not understand, this Marauder estimate of self-esteem, and consequently failed to meet the needs of the 5307th in this regard.

Roger Beaumont writing on the subject of eliteness provides insight. He points out ". . . the most common traits have been voluntarism, special selection criteria and training, and distinctive clothing or insignia."³⁸ This author also notes that elite units were habitually freed from the normal administration and discipline endured by less illustrious brethren. Beaumont continues sketching these special units, remarking that they ". . . have been children of the storm, products of crisis and instability . . . they trade youthful daring for time, trying to make up for deficiencies in military

hardware revealed in the early phases of hostilities."³⁹ At another point, the author explains:

. . . the creation of corps d'elite often failed to solve problems and sometimes created new ones. Their special access to status and resources produced intraorganizational tensions, a kind of military class war. . . . Among ground forces, corps d'elite were almost always lightly equipped. Their role was usually that of hit-and-run raiders. Nevertheless, their zeal and the high quality of the personnel, as well as a shortage of manpower in the parent forces, led to their being employed in prolonged fighting alongside and against standard units who had heavy weapons and better support facilities.⁴⁰

As a final note, Beaumont writes that many elite units attracted considerable media coverage. This among other factors, ". . . produced in many cases a disdain among members of elite units for outsiders, which meant that headquarters personnel, civilians, and adjacent allied units were often more detested than the enemy."⁴¹

This external view of elitism jibes perfectly with what is known of Galahad's recruitment, deployment, and eventual misuse. Confirmation that the unit felt this way is found in several of Ogburn's descriptions of the Marauders. At one point, he alludes to ". . . a collection of individualists, holdouts against assimilation."⁴² At a later date, Ogburn notes: "That is not to suggest that the 5307th had become the model of a disciplined unit."⁴³ Heading into Burma, the feeling came over the men, ". . . and we, breathing the strange, new air that few like us had ever breathed before, were the farthest-flung column of our country's army."⁴⁴ During the darkest days at Myitkyina there was widespread belief that things were not so bad that Galahad could not rebound after a parade and a little time to itself. When the campaign was over, the 5307th disbanded, and Ogburn was waiting to leave the theater, he and another lieutenant consoled themselves with thoughts

that the Marauders were of equal historical footing with the Green Mountain Boys, Mad Anthony Wayne's Indian fighters, and Morgan's Raiders. It is even possible to say that the animosity generated toward General Stilwell exemplified the Marauders' views of themselves as undeniably special. In the final analysis, this spirit, unrequited though it was in their eyes, probably kept Galahad on the trail to Mythia beyond what would have been normally expected limits.

The failure to respond to the Marauders' perceptions is not easily understood. The refusal to grant recognition in the form of a more military designation and a patch (even one of the units' design), would appear unjustified. The continued failure to respond to the question of decorations and promotions seems in retrospect, an obtuse and unflattering dereliction. This lack of sensitivity mars the record and memory of the C.-B.-I.'s senior commanders. Their lack of insight and feeling for eliteness, however, was typical of World War II. Conventional wisdom did not allow for differentness. These authorities could not respond to that which their temperament could not comprehend. Theater officers in denying notice to Marauder expectations could not have understood, either, the crushing effect such inattention produced. By their inability to respond to the 5307th's subliminal image, C.-B.-I.'s senior officers struck directly at Galahad's heart.

The emotion surrounding this ill-starred infantry outfit reaches a zenith when promises are mentioned. Most seem no more than misunderstandings that should have been answered honestly by either Merrill or Hunter in their changing capacity as Galahad's commanding officer. Merrill's promise that the 5307th would not spearhead for the Chinese

is suspect. Similarly, the manner in which the last two commitments, concerning the end of the mission and perceived eliteness, were handled requires more detailed analysis.

FOOTNOTES

¹Stilwell, op. cit., p. 308.

²Headquarters, Department of the Army, Field Manual No. 100-5: Operations of Armed Forces in the Field, (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1968), p. 5-2.

³The source for this assertion is a lesson plan used at CGSC, dated March 1973. The lesson plan was prepared as an outline for M/R 3000-Principles of Combat, taught by the Department of Tactics.

⁴U.S. War Department, General Staff, op. cit., p. 114. American casualty figures were taken directly from the chart on this page. The Japanese casualty figures were derived by sifting through the reports of the major engagements in this volume and then interpolating realistically. My estimate of a 7 to 1 ratio is less than Stone's 10 to 1 report (Stone, op. cit., p. 396). The reader should also note that these figures cut off in June 44. A month more of fighting lay ahead. Best accounts say that only 300 or so Galahad troops went on to join Task Force Mars. The 5307th undoubtedly suffered more casualties during July and early August.

⁵Stone, op. cit., p. 396.

⁶Haydon L. Boatner, "Barbara Tuchman's Stilwell and the American Experience in China: A statement thereon for the record," (paper submitted to Harvard University, 1971), p. 42.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid., p. 43.

⁹Ibid., p. 45.

¹⁰Romanus and Sunderland, op. cit., p. 240.

¹¹Ogburn, op. cit., p. 240.

¹²Hunter, op. cit., p. 1.

¹³Ibid., pp. 192-194.

¹⁴Romanus and Sunderland, op. cit., pp. 285-286.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 240.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 235. Later commanders also reported supply shortages, Ibid., p. 244.

¹⁷U.S. War Department, General Staff, op. cit., pp. 23-27.

¹⁸Boatner, op. cit., p. 44.

¹⁹U.S. War Department, General Staff, op. cit., p. 114.

²⁰The intangible aspects of leadership are delineated in Field Manual No. 100-5, op. cit., p. 3-4, and in Field Manual No. 22-100: (Headquarters, Department of the Army, Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1973), pp. 13-5 to 13-7.

²¹Ibid.

²²Unfortunately, nothing more than one lone paragraph from the Griswold Report is available to the writer. A request for a copy of the report directed to OCMH was returned, saying that the document was available, but could not be located.

²³Boatner, op. cit., p. 43.

²⁴Romanus and Sunderland, op. cit., p. 255.

²⁵Ibid., p. 244.

²⁶Ibid., p. 239.

²⁷Ibid., p. 242.

²⁸Ibid., p. 239.

²⁹Ibid., p. 240.

³⁰Regarding furloughs, see Stone, op. cit., p. 313 and Boatner, op. cit., p. 45. Preferential rotation is surfaced in Stone, p. 314 and p. 366, and see Hunter, op. cit., p. 88.

³¹Hunter, op. cit., pp. 5, 15, and 192.

³²See Hunter, op. cit., p. 5, and Romanus and Sunderland, op. cit., p. 34.

³³A request to OCMH for two interviews conducted with Merrill after the war was unfruitful. Like the Griswold Report, these interviews were reportedly unlocatable.

³⁴There is no doubt that some kind of promise was made. Romanus and Sunderland note Stilwell authorizing the unit's release (p. 225). Their only documentation is the Merrill interviews mentioned above.

³⁵Hunter, op. cit., p. 88.

³⁶Ogburn, op. cit., p. 200.

³⁷Stone, op. cit., p. 327.

³⁸Roger A. Beaumont, Military Elites, (Indianapolis/New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1974), p. 3.

³⁹Ibid., p. 4.

⁴⁰Ibid., pp. 4-5.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 3.

⁴²Ogburn, op. cit., p. 39.

⁴³Ibid., p. 56.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 73.

Chapter 4

"A GOOD COMMANDER IS A MAN OF HIGH CHARACTER"¹

I

Of all the subtle, intangible forces associated with events in North Burma--lack of discipline, command inattention, implied inadequacy, promises--the trickiest to probe is command relationships. Vinegar Joe is commonly faulted for doing too little for the 5307th, and then holding them at Myitkyina until they were wasted. As commonly as Stilwell is blamed, Merrill and Hunter are either praised or ignored. Such evaluations appear incorrect on at least two levels. One is that soldiering is a fated profession. Everything done in peacetime is pointed toward preparedness for war. In war, everything done is subordinated to the accomplishment of missions assigned in furtherance of victory. The very nature of fighting involves losing men. The second level of contention, given that a soldier's milieu is unique, concerns the role of the leader in preserving the integrity of his command, while securing the enemy's defeat. All men should understand the first of these two principles of soldiering to a certain extent. It becomes a professional soldier's special agony to mate the two over and over again.

The point is that the 5307th Composite Unit (Provisional) lost its integrity while engaged in defeating the Japanese as ordered. Analysis of the testimony of participants in and observers of Galahad's

short campaign, identified the following causes of the unit's collapse:

1) disease, abetted by lack of discipline and training; 2) unstable leadership situations; 3) logistic problems; 4) imputations of inadequacy; 5) command inattention; 6) promises not kept; and 7) complete breakdown of morale. It has been established that logistic shortfalls during the siege of Myitkyina, while complicating an already serious situation did not prevent eventual success. All of the other factors contributing to the disintegration of the Marauders are, taken alone or in combination, intangible. Their meaning and impact are a matter of subjective judgement. All, nonetheless, contributed in some way to the breakdown of Galahad morale.

Who is responsible for a unit's morale? Every leader at every echelon, operating to foster a sense of well-being in every soldier's mind. Who is the best judge of what the soldier is thinking? The leader who is face-to-face with him on a daily basis. Who is best able to affect change in attitude that will enhance the soldiers' sense of well-being? It is the answer to this question which obscures Galahad's story.

The readily available evidence establishes General Stilwell's insistence that the mission be accomplished. Less clear are the efforts of everyone between him and the man in the foxhole to do something to protect Galahad's integrity. In some cases, there is no information at all. For instance, during the siege of Myitkyina, there were six layers of leaders--Brigadier General through Lieutenant--between "The Boss" and an individual Marauder. Only a handful of those men have gone on record with a version of what transpired. Because of the subjective nature of the influences under study, much of the information that is

available is subject to interpretation.

One view of what is on hand would retrieve an earlier definition of combat power and declare that the providing of the physical means to fight rests with senior logistics headquarters, while the shaping and bolstering of the moral strength of a command must of necessity be the duty of leaders located closer to the troops. In this case, considering the paucity of first hand information available reflecting leadership below regimental level, the focus must remain on Merrill and Hunter. Galahad's history is replete with examples of what was asked of the unit, and the difficulties encountered. There is little to illustrate what Hunter and Merrill did to counter the effects of the Marauders' flagging esprit, worsening discipline, and floundering efficiency. Harkening to Stone's contention that the siege at Nhpum Ga was the precipitating cause of the Marauders' collapse because it exhausted the men, it is necessary to view that period between relief of the encircled 2nd Battalion and the rain-soaked crossing of the Kumon Mountains as being vitally relevant to subsequent events. Were the men fit to go on? Hunter and Merrill apparently thought so. Both men, by their words and actions, verify that they judged the 5307th capable of making the march on Myitkyina, or at least acquiesced to the order. Further, Merrill gave his backing to the use of 250 men, badly needed in Galahad ranks, for a mission in a far-removed Chinese sector of the front.

It is possible to tack together several events that occurred after the contact at Nhpum Ga, that are crucial to understanding what information was available to NCAC. This headquarters was concentrating on assembling forces and developing a scheme of maneuver for the attack on Myitkyina. Merrill at this time, while back on his feet after being

evacuated from Nhpum Ga, remained in the rear at Naubum. Hunter meanwhile, had withdrawn Galahad to Hsamshingyang to rest and recuperate. Three visitors dropped into Hsamshingyang to see the unit during the standdown. Major Hancock, from Galahad's rear echelon, came to work out some kinks in the supply system. He was also responsible for keeping track of Galahad casualties. A roster had been established with each man assigned a number. As Marauders were evacuated for illness or wounds, or were killed outright, it was a simple matter to transmit the correct numbers to Hancock, who was then to pass the information--by name and number--to the appropriate authorities. Hunter does not clearly state that NCAC received these reports, which would have reflected the unit's declining strength, with any regularity.²

The other visitors were more influential, and obviously there to gain first hand knowledge of the unit's condition. The NCAC G-3, Colonel Kennison, and Hunter discussed the 5307th and its participation in a march on Myitkyina, concluding that it could go after a week's rest and replacement of some of the personnel losses.³ Based upon this consultation with Kennison, Hunter immediately put his skeleton staff to work writing a plan for the attack on Myitkyina. The second NCAC drop-in, Colonel Cannon came in Stilwell's stead. Hunter had reported that the General's safety could not be guaranteed. Another discussion of the unit's problems ensued. Hunter surmised that Cannon returned to also report the Marauders fit for the Myitkyina trek.⁴ During these visits, the 5307th treated the visitors to mock firefights of uncertain ferocity, delighting in the spooked reactions of these "rear-echelon types." Hunter's record of these visits is revealing. He as much as

certified the Marauders capable after one week's rest and after suitable reinforcement. The plan his staff had worked out was carried to Merrill.

Merrill's activities during this period are less easily determined. The Myitkyina Task Force, swollen to near division strength, consisted of the Marauders, two Chinese regiments, and the equivalent of a Kachin battalion. This organization began to form near Naubum on or about 21 April 1944. It is difficult to specifically date Merrill's arrival to assume command of this allied unit. It is known that Merrill had a hand in drawing up the plan approved by Stilwell. The scheme of maneuver was based largely on the work Hunter and his staff had done.⁵ Three columns were organized around the Galahad battalions, which were reinforced by Chinese (elements of the two divisions Boatner referenced). At Naubum, during the final preparations for the dash to Myitkyina, two separate actions by Merrill again call his honesty and judgement to question.

The first is of course the promise that the 5307th would be evacuated from the airfield directly to a rest camp in India. This is the promise that Boatner disclaimed knowing about. It has proven impossible to verify Stilwell's giving Merrill this authority, although Boatner admits that the "Old Man" might have done so and then forgotten.⁶ Post war interviews with Merrill are the only other cited evidence that this permission had been granted.

A second incident deepens the suspicion that Merrill's judgement was faulty. Four or five days before Hunter seized the airfield at Myitkyina, an allied unit called Purple Force was organized

and dispatched around the west flank of the Japanese defending the Kamaing Road. Purple Force, commanded (despite Chinese protest) by an American, consisted of a Chinese regiment and 250 or so Galahad troops who had been returned to duty from India.⁷ The mission failed when the column became lost and encountered terrain too rough to traverse. The important thing is that Merrill had agreed to this use of men from the 5307th. The manner in which this concurrence was reached, provides insight:

Because of the tasks known to lie ahead of GALAHAD, Stilwell discussed the attachment with Merrill before ordering it. Years later, Merrill remembered telling Stilwell that GALAHAD sorely needed the 250 men and that it was really not in shape for the job ahead. But he was aware of the pressures and obstacles that Stilwell daily faced, and resolved not to add to them.⁸

It is likely that the conversation committing returning Marauders to Purple Force took place before the Myitkyina Task Force jumped off on 28 April 1944, although a specific date cannot be established.

It is possible, chilling though the thought may be, that Merrill chose expediency a second time by making the promise at Naubum of early evacuation from Myitkyina. Merrill's earlier promise that the 5307th would not spearhead Chinese advances was questionable. He deferred to the "Boss" on this second occasion despite reservations about the health of his command. His authority to pull the Marauders out early, then, had a dubious origin. Even Merrill's hasty departure from command of the 5307th is disquieting. He reportedly suffered his third heart attack on 19 May 44, two days after the airstrip had been captured. However, in a note delivered to Hunter within days of this third seizure, Merrill wrote, "Am on my way south to Dehli and then south to join the glamour boy (Mountbatten)."⁹ It would not have been the first

(or certainly the last) time that a commander refused to countenance tough choices.

Knowledge that Galahad could not last much longer would have been a terrible burden if Merrill could not bring himself to report them unfit, whatever the cost to him. It is an easy step to then trifle with trust a bit more and create an expectation that will re-kindle spirit for at least one more mission. It follows, that any commander caught in this predicament must be removed either for cause, or to shield him from returning to face men trapped in a situation not of their own making. The job of dealing with still-born anticipation can be left to others. It must be noted that on 20 May 44, the day after Merrill fell ill for the third time, Stilwell ordered the Marauders to stay and finish the job at Myitkyina.¹⁰

Doubters can rightfully question such speculation about Merrill's conduct. The charge that he acted without authority in making the promise of evacuation from Myitkyina is but an interpretation of events that took place long ago. A better picture of the man would perhaps allow a clearer judgement to be made. As it is, using what others said about him, Merrill can be seen as an undeserving toady (Hunter), or as a capable officer with dash (Tuchman). In any event the exculpation of Merrill's integrity must leave his judgement subject to question. He should not have made the promise, embellished with visions of a rest camp and furloughs, until the first aircraft to ferry his men out had landed. Such timing would have served loyalty better, protecting his position as well as that of General Stilwell. As it turned out,

. . . some tension became dissipated when the troops attached their animosity to Stilwell and other invisible

authorities; their confidence in Merrill and Hunter revived; and their morale lifted enough for most of them to start for Myitkyina, reluctantly but in good faith.¹¹

There can be little doubt that the 5307th was ordered to Myitkyina by Stilwell in good faith, and with the blessing of both Hunter and Merrill. There is evidence that Merrill, perhaps sensing Galahad's hunger for elite treatment, motivated them to this last effort by forecasting a future that overflowed with the special treatment long denied the unit. Hunter, to all appearances, also believed in Marauder specialness. A week's rest and some replacements were all that was needed to re-hone the unit's fighting edge. All of this good faith was short-lived. The torturous Kumon heights, the outbreak of scrub typhus, and torrential monsoon rains steadily sapped already weary men each foot of the way to Myitkyina. Marauder good faith was chastened into acrimony upon reaching the airfield to find, instead of the promised relief, only more months of bitter combat. There was no other choice, militarily. Even Hunter, while harboring doubts about the planning done before the attack on the city, professed, ". . . no quarrell (sic) with General Stilwell's decision to hold Galahad at Myitkyina to finish the job. This decision was forced upon him by circumstances and was well taken, . . ."¹²

II

In the process of bringing Galahad back one more time, emphasis has been placed upon the intangible factors that contributed to the unit's complete breakdown and disbandment. Key to the study of the 5307th Composite Unit (Provisional), were the comments of men who were there. Their assessments of the leaders, the led, and the leadership

environment, made from both inside and outside the unit, provide a basis for communicating facts and interpretation. The facts dispassionately relate a complete disintegration of morale. The condition came about through deficient Marauder sanitation discipline in the Burmese jungle, questionable leadership, and two promises that were made and abrogated during the North Burma Campaign. Exacerbating these influences was Galahad's perception of itself as an elite force that senior officers refused to fully appreciate by word or deed. Interpretation passionately relates the possibility that one of Galahad's own, a commander, might have acted without proper authority at a critical point in the unit's history. After the 5307th arrived on the airstrip at Myitkyina, events overtook them and sealed their fate.

Romantic notions aside, this re-telling of combat in World War II's most isolated and least decisive theater, does not ease the mind's pain. Two insights seem worth reflection, in an attempt to assuage the feeling that more questions than answers have evolved from concentrated effort. First, quantification of the factors incident to conducting combat operations does not, by itself, lead to decisions that guarantee success. Despite the difficulty of dealing with intangibles, like discipline, esprit, proficiency, and morale, these factors must be addressed for what they are--subjective qualities detailing a unit's moral strength. Providing adequate "numbers" of resources will be meaningless if men are not motivated to fight. Further, high discipline and esprit will often offset logistic shortcomings and propel an organization to success in battle, when all logic argues against the

possibility of victory. The prudent commander must strive to guarantee sufficient physical means, and to command in a way that will promote high morale and esprit. Achieving this mix of the tangible and the intangible offers the best possible assurance that missions will be accomplished and unit integrity will remain intact. Combat is, at best, a chancy affair that challenges the heart as well as the mind.

The second insight capsulated in the Marauder experience concerns the strength and the weakness of the chain of command inherent in any military organization. The chain of command can be seen as an hierarchical system for processing information. It is as dependent upon judgement, experience, and wisdom, as it is upon intelligence and logic. Otherwise, there would be no need to station men at differing levels of authority and responsibility. To this regard, the chain of command is a thing of foible and frailty, shored up only by the character of the men it links together.

In the end, Galahad Redux pleads the case for humanizing the Marauders' war. Narrowing the focus of history adds tone and texture to their story. Concentrating upon the intangible aspects of Galahad's combat power perforce paints a more vivid picture of what the unit accomplished before it fell apart. There has been a studied attempt to avoid the mauzlin and the rancorous, perhaps at the expense of drama and lustre. But then, very little of the G.I.'s wartime existence was spent pondering such abstractions, and the 5307th in the final analysis, was no more than a happenstance grouping of individual soldiers. It is their collective humanity that carried Galahad as far as it could go.

During the siege of Myitkyina, Stilwell took time to pen a short tribute to his infantrymen. In it, the Old Man fondly epitomized the way it was in Burma in 1944, and the way it continues to be today.

Here is the backbone of your armed forces, the boiled-down essence of combat, the guy who slugs it out personally with rifle and bayonet. Here is the man who is always too hot, too cold, too wet, too dry, too exhausted, too hungry, too scared, but who still plugs ahead toward his unknown destination. Where this unassuming individual stops, there is the front line of battle. If he gets ahead, we win; if they run over him, we lose.¹³

FOOTNOTES

¹Stilwell, op. cit., p. 291. Stilwell continues (p. 293), in an eloquent portrayal of the stress of high command, and the qualities needed by the man so entrusted. His final analysis:

Character	80%
Power of decision	10%
Technical knowledge	5%
Everything else	5%

²Hunter, op. cit., p. 84.

³Ibid., pp. 84-85. It is essential to note that Hunter's book is devoid of dates throughout this whole period. The troops besieged on Nhpum Ga were relieved on 9 April 44, and the crossing of the Kumon Range commenced on 28 April 44. Interim dates for the visits to the 5307th, and its subsequent move to Naubum are not given.

⁴Ibid., pp. 85-86.

⁵Romanus and Sunderland, op. cit., p. 223.

⁶Boatner, op. cit., p. 45.

⁷Romanus and Sunderland, op. cit., pp. 210-211. Note also Hunter, op. cit., pp. 132-135.

⁸Romanus and Sunderland, Ibid.

⁹Hunter, op. cit., p. 128.

¹⁰Stilwell, op. cit., p. 297. Merrill was gone but not forgotten. He continued to serve Stilwell up to the moment of recall. It was Merrill who pinned on Stilwell's fourth star later in 1944.

¹¹Stone, op. cit., p. 390.

¹²Hunter, op. cit., p. 172.

¹³Fred Eldridge, Wrath in Burma, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1946), p. 274.

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