

THE BURMA CAMPAIGN SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

March 2007

Number 10

Handing on the Torch.

Handing down their experiences from generation to generation must be the most important job for surviving war veterans.

At the tea party after the Sunday mass of a Catholic church in Luton, a lady teacher at the Japanese school listened to the above statement, and a few days later she rang to ask me to tell my war experiences to her colleagues. So, on June 3rd I talked to a dozen teachers. They asked me to come back on July 15th for their high school boys and girls, and I did so, seeing about a hundred pupils and their parents. I showed a video before my own lecture and the teacher collected written impressions from every pupil and gave them to me when I left. For most of them my story was unheard of and even unbelievable, and generated a wish for further study of the last war.

I had a similar experience many years ago when I spoke of my war experiences to four hundred boarders and forty teachers at the Rikkyo School of England. We were then able to enjoy a lengthy question and answer period. I also remember that Philip Malins and I were invited several times to the ex-Gyosei International at Milton Keynes. Its teacher, Mr. Hayakawa invited me twice to his new school in Tokyo. I have also given many lectures, mostly at their own places, to other age groups, including business men and embassy staffs.

I therefore want to change the way of organizing the BCS Discussion Meetings, with new administration and advertising.

Masao Hirakubo.

As I Remember **by Fukunaga Utata, Commander, 58th Infantry Regiment.**

The day we took Kohima, the Regiment received the most gracious Imperial Edict.

When I entered the centre of the enemy area, both the magazine and clothing storage caught fire, creating chaos. It was as if I had encountered unseen soldiers, and didn't know what was going to happen. Suddenly, Adjutant Mara Isamu and Second in Command Sato Shiro pulled me into a trench and protected me. After dusk, Captain Watanabe of the Communications Regiment came to collect me and we withdrew. I was still wearing my summer clothing which had, at some point, got burned

When I was inspecting enemy territory for a night attack, His Excellency Miyazaki came on patrol. While I was reporting from high ground, the enemy started attacking from about two or three hundred metres ahead. A bullet hit my mouth and I spat out what felt like pebbles, which turned out to be my teeth. I was shot just when I shouted "Enemy!", so luckily the bullet left my mouth, saving my life.

The Division head, His Excellency Sato, was worried and suggested that I be attended by an army doctor and withdraw. I was grateful for his concern, but refused to withdraw, for I was determined that the time was not right. After that, I poured milk taken from the enemy into the side of my mouth and continued my command.

Today, all my teeth are lost and the nerves are also partially gone. My lips and jaw are conjoined, making it difficult to express words. This inconvenience, however, is nothing compared to my friends and subordinates who lost their lives at the time.

Despite the efforts of my comrades, the Battle of Kohima was finally lost. Then came the defeat of the country. None of the remains have been collected and the lost souls are left behind in Arakan. My heart is torn by grief. All I can do is pay my respects to the souls of the dead and pray for the happiness of their families.

I wish to add in the end that for me, commanding the 58th Regiment has been a great honour. (*Being bedridden, Mr. Fukunaga dictated this piece.*)

Translated by Keiko Itoh.

The Indian Army Association

The Indian Army Association, founded in 1969, was wound up at the Annual General Meeting in November 2006, due to the extreme age of the surviving members.

A Committee was responsible for the erection of a Memorial Plaque to the Indian Army in the north aisle of St. Paul's Cathedral, which was unveiled in 1971 by the Queen in the presence of just over three thousand members of the Indian Army and their relations and friends. It was decided that this Committee should continue as a 'federation' of all the Indian Army Regimental and Corps Dinner Clubs, some of them more than a hundred years old, and become the Indian Army Association.

Field Marshal Viscount Slim and Field Marshal Sir Claude Auchinlech became Patrons of the Association, with General Sir Rob Lockhart as the first President and Colonel F.E.I. Roberts as Chairman. Lt Colonel Patric Emerson became Honorary Secretary, serving throughout the life of the Association, which took over the running of the Annual Indian Army Garden Party at Hurlingham and the Annual Service and Wreath Laying at St. Paul's, together with other events.

In 1982, in the presence of Aileen Viscountess Slim, the Indian Divisions Memorial, for which members of the Association were largely responsible, was dedicated at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst. In 1997, the Association marked the fiftieth anniversary of the end of the pre-Independence Indian Army with a day of events in Portsmouth. In 2004, the Association, jointly with the Burma Campaign Society, commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of the great battles of Kohima and Imphal, in a spirit of reconciliation, in the presence of the Japanese Ambassador, who laid a wreath on the Memorial, together with the Commandant and the Indian Military Adviser. The Association also played a major part in helping the Auchinlech Appeal raise more than £560,000 for still needy, elderly ex-servicemen and widows in India and Pakistan.



Lt Colonel Patric Emerson OBE

Above all, the Association will be remembered for its superb Newsletters, treasure troves of information, history and memories, compiled and edited throughout by Patric Emerson. I expect, like me, a majority of those who went into the Indian Army regard it as one of the most worthwhile decisions they ever made, and it has been the greatest pleasure to relive those early, dramatic years of our lives through the pages of the Newsletters, which will be of enormous help to future historians. Copies are held by the National Army Museum.

We, who were members of the Association, owe an immense debt to Patric, who, for thirty-eight years, so painstakingly answered all our queries and produced those wonderful Newsletters. He was an early witness to reconciliation when, in 1957, he married Chiyo, who has given him such devoted support. After service in the Indian Army, he served with the Australian Army in Korea and Japan. Now, as he approaches his ninetieth birthday, we salute and thank him for the incomparable service he has rendered us and the Indian comrades with whom we served.

Philip Malins.

Field Marshal Viscount Slim.

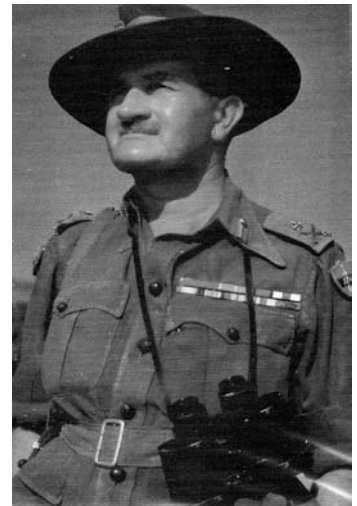
At a **Discussion Meeting** on November 30th, **Robert Lyman**, author of the outstanding biography, *Slim, Master of War*, who was commissioned into the Light Infantry in 1982 and served in the British Army for twenty years, gave a Talk entitled *Bill Slim: The Very Model of a Modern Manoeuvrist General*.

Slim, born in Bristol and brought up in Birmingham, did not come from a military family, but after service as a Subaltern in the Royal Warwickshire Regiment in Gallipoli and Mesopotamia in the First World War, gaining a Military Cross, he transferred to the Indian Army in 1919 and to the Gurkhas in 1920. In 1926 he came top in the entrance examination to the Staff College Quetta.

In World War Two, after severe defeats, including the loss of Rangoon, Wavell, C in C India, in March 1942 appointed Slim to command 1 Burma Corps, comprising 1 Burma Division, 17 Indian Division and 7 Armoured Brigade. He took over at Prome, commanding the long retreat to Northern Burma, and in 1944 and 1945 totally defeated the Japanese.

The speaker claimed that Slim became the first exponent of the 'indirect' approach to war, conducting operations in 1944-45 as 'manoeuvre' warfare. Since 1980, under this doctrine, the concept of strategy has been to undermine an enemy's mental strengths and will to win, achieving surprise by the concentration of force, psychological shock, physical momentum and moral dominance, in contrast to matching force with force.

Slim believed a commander must be able to operate with incomplete information, think quickly and act accordingly and must study the minds of opponents; and he learned from the Japanese the importance of bypassing obstacles. He took brave, calculated risks, as when he pulled back troops to defend the Imphal Plain. He had experience of air supply on the North West Frontier of India in 1928, and in Iraq in 1941. When enough aircraft became available in 1945, he made the fullest use of air supply in Burma for transporting troops and supplies, including the flying in of a complete Division. All who served in Burma came to accept air supply as no different from that by rail or road, and that when troops were surrounded, supply from the air would enable them to continue fighting.



Field Marshall Viscount Slim

Reference was made to Mountbatten and it was felt that with him to handle relations with higher command and public relations, and to ensure that Slim's requirements of men and equipment were met, this had been a winning combination.

Slim was later promoted to Field Marshal, became Chief of the Imperial General Staff, and later a very popular Governor General of Australia. He was universally loved as 'Uncle Bill' by all who served under him in Burma. Now, more than sixty years after those great events, he remains to many, the finest British field commander of World War Two.

Philip Malins.

Review Article.

Who Was Responsible For Starting The Sino-Japanese And Pacific Wars ?

Tsuneo Watanabe, editor-in chief of Yomiuri Shimbun, the largest newspaper in Japan, with a circulation of over ten million, set up in 2005 a committee of Japanese journalists. It was to produce a careful historical analysis to tell the Japanese, most of whom were born after the war, who was responsible for starting these two conflicts, why they did so and why the nation kept fighting until many of its cities had been almost completely reduced to ashes. After fourteen months studying a wide range of documents and

sources, a book in English and two volumes in Japanese gave their findings.

While the books inevitably cannot tell the whole story, they are a devastating critique of Japan's leadership in the Showa War, between 1931-45. It states boldly that "Japan misread the prevailing international situation in 1941 when it went to war against the United States". Japan failed to formulate realistically its war aims or an exit strategy. "For Tojo and others the establishment of the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere through war with the US and Britain was Japan's last resort to make China surrender." The Japanese army's refusal to withdraw from China scuppered any hope in 1941 that war could be avoided. A comparison in 1940 between the national strengths of Japan and the USA reveals the extent of Japan's gamble in attacking America. The misreading of intelligence and assessments based on wishful thinking, combined with the cover-up of failures, made defeat inevitable. Prime Minister General Hideki Tojo was, for instance, only informed of defeat at the Battle of Midway "more than a month later".

The report makes it clear that the army and the navy were frequently in discord. The cliques in both services exacerbated the situation. After the war ended, Tojo told former Foreign Minister, Mamoru Shigemitsu: "The fundamental reason for Japan's defeat was the lack of control. The Prime Minister ... did not have the authority to control the reins of its military forces". Intrigues and deliberate disobedience by relatively junior officers of orders from Tokyo led to the escalation of the war in China and to appalling mistakes in other theatres, which resulted in vast numbers of military and civilian casualties. The Guadalcanal campaign in 1942 in which 20 000 Japanese troops died (15 000 as a result of starvation) was "a tragedy born in a war without strategy".

Japan's military leaders are shown to have been criminally culpable. Hideki Tojo is held by Yomiuri as "most responsible". The second most guilty was Prime Minister Fumimaro Konoe, who allowed "the Japanese military to act on its own." Others, including middle-ranking officers, some of whom did not face trial before the Tokyo International Tribunal, are also condemned by Yomiuri, as are other politicians and military and naval figures. Prime Ministers Hiroto and Koiso, as well as Kido, the Lord Privy Seal, are sharply criticized. Foreign Minister Matsuoka and Lt General Oshima, Japanese Ambassador to Nazi Germany, who consistently overestimated its chances of victory, are condemned, not least for pushing the disastrous tripartite pact with Germany and Italy. The leaders of the Diet are rightly censured for not doing anything effective to hold the government responsible for its failures.

Tojo's cabinet was described by Prince Takamatsu, the Emperor's younger brother, as a "a regime of terror which will stop at nothing". He is said to have asked Morisada Hosokawa: "Is there no one who will assassinate him?" The plots which were made to oust Tojo from office are an appalling indictment of the machinery of government in wartime Japan.

The Yomiuri emphasises that more than 3.1 million Japanese, 800.000 of them civilians, died in the Showa War. Although Japan initially won some astounding victories, there was never any chance it could be victorious in a full-scale war with the USA. By 1944 at the latest it should have been clear to Japanese leaders that Japan had lost and should sue for peace, but the military were fanatical, blind and obstinate. They would not admit defeat. Even after the devastating fire-bomb raids on Tokyo in March 1945 and the occupation of Okinawa, following a struggle involving huge casualties on both sides, they preferred to fight to the death on the mainland. Prime Minister Admiral Kantaro Suzuki, who was old and deaf, wanted to find a way out, but Foreign Minister Tojo thought the Soviet Union could be used as an intermediary. He unwisely responded to the Potsdam Declaration that Japan's position was one of *mokusatsu*, which was interpreted as meaning that Japan would ignore it. The atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki on 6th and 9th August 1945 were the American response and delivered the coup de grace. Admiral Mitsumasa Yonai, one-time Japanese Prime Minister, is recorded as having said that "the atomic bombings and Soviet entry into the war are, in a sense, a godsend because we don't have to say that we'll stop the war due to the domestic situation".

The Yomiuri, however, for understandable reasons, criticizes the Americans for the use of the atomic weapons and for the indiscriminate bombing of civilian targets. It also condemns Soviet behaviour in violating the non-

aggression pact and for the mistreatment of Japanese prisoners after the war.

The role of the Showa Emperor has not been ignored. The Yomiuri concludes that his behaviour was within the framework for a constitutional head of state. He did from time to time express misgivings, often in elliptical language, such as quoting a poem by his grandfather, the Emperor Meiji, and it is clear that he was not always properly and fully informed of what was happening in the field. He did finally intervene when the cabinet asked for his decision, and confirmed that the Potsdam declaration should be accepted. Could he and should he have been more explicit in his criticisms? Would attempts have been made to replace him by his brother, Prince Chichibu, if he had done so? These are some of the questions which remain unanswered.

The book deserves to be widely read and the Yomiuri are to be congratulated on producing this study in the face of the attempts by Japanese revisionist historians to declare that the war was a defensive one. It does not, however tell the whole story. While a brief account of General Mutaguchi's campaign at Imphal is given, the war against British possessions in East Asia is hardly covered at all. The appalling treatment of the population of Singapore by General Yamashita is not mentioned. Nor is there mention of the building of the Burma-Siam railway and the mistreatment of allied prisoners of war there and elsewhere in South East Asia. Even the horrific Bataan death march is ignored. While these events may not be considered to justify the atom bombs, they do explain why Japan was so widely hated in allied countries in 1945.

The book does not exempt Japanese leaders for their wanton sacrifice of Japanese youth in the kamikaze attacks, but these, together with the fanatical behaviour of some Japanese soldiers in the field, and the absurd rhetoric of the military leaders, were important factors in persuading allied leaders that extreme measures had to be taken if mass casualties were to be avoided in an attack on the Japanese mainland.

The debate about whether the atomic bombs should or should not have been used will continue for generations. More attention should perhaps be paid to whether the allied adherence to 'unconditional surrender' by Germany and Japan was wise. Had the allies indicated willingness to negotiate, could the war have been ended earlier?

The main lacuna in the book is that it fails to analyse how it came about that the Japanese military took independent action and were allowed to get away with insubordination, if not treason. Reference is made to the ordinance first instituted in 1900 whereby Ministers of the army and navy had to be senior serving officers, thus giving the two services a veto on the formation of the cabinet. But this is a symptom, not the cause, of the problem, which lies in the growth of Japanese nationalism and imperialism. The Meiji government decided that to unify the country the position of the Emperor should be strengthened. Unfortunately, this led to the development of the cult of the Emperor and of state Shinto. Concepts of 'national polity' were elaborated and extreme nationalist and right wing organizations were allowed to develop. If these facets had been covered in any depth, it would have meant discussing the whole of modern Japanese history, but a chapter could surely have been given to the philosophical and psychological background to Japanese actions and behaviour in the Showa War.

The book points out some of the lessons to be learnt, and some are relevant to the current conflict in Iraq. These are the importance of accurate intelligence and unbiased reporting; objective interpretation and analysis of intelligence; a willingness to recognize the facts of what is happening on the ground, and a readiness to acknowledge failure. War aims need to be fully thought through and an exit strategy worked out in advance.

Although this is a minor point, the bibliography states that "There are only a small number of English language academic books on Japan's war history covering the first half of the 20th century up until World War II". I am not an expert in the field, but there are many books in English known to me which should have been listed.

Sir Hugh Cortazzi.

Who was Responsible? From Marco Polo Bridge to Pearl Harbour, ed. James E. Auer, The Yomiuri Shimbun, 2006, pp.410 including index, 4,000 Yen, (ISBN4-643-06012-3 C0021) available in London through JP Books (UK) Ltd (e-mail: jp-books@lineone.net.)

Japanese-British Reconciliation, St. Ethelberga's Church, 14th October, 2006.

The idea of having an annual tea-party to celebrate the dedication on October 14th 2003 of the Plaque erected in St. Ethelberga's Church by the Burma Campaign Fellowship Group and The All Burma Veterans' Association of Japan was entirely that of Masao Hirakubo, Chairman of BCS. It was also he, with the aid of his Co-Organiser, Mrs Akiko Macdonald, together with Mrs. Akemi Solloway and three Japanese Residents' Association members, who was primarily responsible for bringing his idea to successful fruition.



From left: Philip Malins, Maj. Gen. Lyall Grant, Consul General Kenji Hiramatsu, Masao Hirakubo

In the end, some eighty-five people joined up and fifty-six actually attended, although it has to be said that on this, the first occasion, the number of young people, at which the event was primarily aimed, was relatively small. After the Opening Ceremony with a Greeting by Mrs. Akiko Macdonald and an Introduction to BCS by its Honorary Secretary, Phillida Purvis, the Video, *Dear Grandfather, I'm in England* by Yuki Sunada was screened. There followed messages from the Chairman of BCS and the Japanese Consul General. Following recitals of Lawrence Binyon's Poem *For the Fallen* and the *Kohima Epitaph* in front of a line-up of veterans, a One Minute Silence and a bugle recording of *The Last Post* and *The Reveille*, the formal Ceremony concluded with the traditional shaking of hands.

The Classical Singer, Miss Akiko Enamoto, who recently sung at the Albert Hall, and was accompanied by Ms. Yoko Hirao on the piano, then sang songs by Gounod, Yamada and Burton. The Flautist, Mr. Masahiro Ogura, accompanied on the piano by Ms. Rie Aoki followed with six tunes by Gossec, Debussy and Handel, and a splendid and accomplished hour of musical entertainment was brought to a stirring close by Mssrs. Teruo Kato, Hiroki Kurihara, Hideo Yanagihara, Ryosuke Maekawa and Masayuki Mori, comprising The Vine Street Boys Chorus, together with the Soprano Miss Jasmin Wharmby and the pianist Miss Mariko Yamamoto.

All in all, this first anniversary occasion, including the plentiful tea, was a notable success.

John White.

International Symposium on The Contribution of Civil Society to Historical Reconciliation in Europe.

Held at the Goethe Institut in Tokyo, the Symposium considered how, sixty years after World War Two, major progress has been made towards forging a shared perception of the past in Europe. In the meantime, in East Asia, accusations and denials about incidents dating back more than half a century are traded at the highest levels. At this time of strained feelings about the past, research on the key role of civil society organizations in achieving historical reconciliation in post-war Europe offers opportunities to take a fresh look at the problem in East Asia.

While visionary leaders, such as Willy Brandt, Konrad Adenauer, Jean Monnet and Robert Schumann, pointed the way ahead, the building of bridges to former enemies and victims was done by Churches, Labour Unions, Local Governments, Sports Clubs, Student Organizations, Journalists and various types of Foundations which worked together with counterparts in neighbouring countries.

Does the role of European civil society groups as transnational, non-state actors offer positive examples for Northeast Asian counterpart organizations? Scholars and practitioners from the United States, Europe and Japan tackled this question in the hope of finding policies and practices appropriate to East Asian needs and circumstances.

Participants from the USA, Japan (both, Japanese and European), and Germany contributed to the Symposium.

Phillida Purvis.

Inaugural Meeting of BCS in Japan.

On Tuesday, 14th November 2006, a Discussion Meeting was held in Japan under the joint auspices of The Burma Campaign Society and Tokyo Woman's Christian University, at the latter's campus. This came about thanks to the invitation and organisation of BCS members, Professor Fumitaka Kurosawa of the Department of Cross Cultural Studies at the College of Culture and Communication of Tokyo Woman's University and Professor Nobuko Kosuge, from the Department of Politics and Public Administration in the Faculty of Law at Yamanashi Gakuin University. The speaker was Mr. Akira Sugino, the author of a recently published book



Bottom from left: Akira Sugino, Kazuo Tamayama and BCS members: Sadao Oba, Shuichiro Yoshino
Top from right to left: Prof. Nobuko Kosuge, Phillida Purvis, Taeko Sasamoto, Yoshiko Tamura and Nori Nagasawa of the POW Research Network Japan

on the Allied Soldiers' POW Camps in Singapore during World War Two, and former Minister at the Japanese Embassy in London. His title was *Man can Forgive, but not Forget*. His research on the experiences of Prisoners of War, about which he spoke, was based on a comprehensive study of primary sources, mainly diaries of POWs held at the Imperial War Museum.

Mr. Sugino kept the audience, most of whom were Tokyo Woman's University students, filling a large lecture hall, riveted by his factual and thorough account. Also present were a number of BCS Tokyo-based members, and other members in Japan are asked to think of opportunities for further BCS Discussion Meetings in Japan which might be organised through partnership.

Phillida Purvis.

Publication News.

Papers given by some of the academics at the BCS 60th Anniversary Symposium are the core of two publications by Routledge and Hosei University Press, in English and Japanese, planned for this year. They are co-edited by Dr. Hugo Dobson of Sheffield University and Professor Nobuko Kosuge of Yamanashi Gakuin University. Further details will be given in the next Edition of the Newsletter.

Coming Events.

Thursday 22nd March: 6 – 8pm: Discussion Meeting at the Oriental Club, Stratford Place (Bond St. Underground Station) at which **George Housego MBE** will give a talk entitled *Prisoner of the Japanese*.

Thursday, 10th May: 11.00 am - 2.00 pm: Fifth Annual General Meeting of BCS at the Mitsukoshi Restaurant, Lower Regent Street, followed by lunch.

Tuesday, 3rd July: Discussion Meeting entitled *Memories of Burma*. A panel of veterans will talk of their wartime experiences.

Saturday, 18th August: Annual Reconciliation Ceremony at Three Wheels.

Sunday, 19th August: Annual Service of Reconciliation at Canterbury Cathedral (to be confirmed) .

Editor's Note.

For comments, criticisms, and questions concerning the Newsletter, please contact John White, 25 Cadogan Place, London, SW1X 9SA, Tel/Fax: 020 7235 4034. Material for inclusion in the September 2007 issue should reach me at the above address by 31st August at the latest.

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