The Circumstances of the War in Burma

The war in the Far East started in December 1941, simultaneously with the bombing of Pearl Harbour. The Japanese captured Hong Kong on Christmas Day and moved into the Malaysian Peninsula, the Philippines and the Dutch East Indies. Malaya was overrun and Singapore fell on 15 February 1942. The Japanese army advanced into Burma, involving the defending British and Indian troops in a long and demoralising fighting retreat through thick jungle terrain over a distance equivalent to that from Istanbul to London. Rangoon fell on 8 March 1942 and by mid-June the Japanese advance had reached the hills on the North East frontier of India.

In December 1942, British and Indian troops mounted their first offensive in the malaria ridden coastal Arakan region. It was unsuccessful, although much was learned. During 1943, Chindit columns under Brigadier Orde Wingate, supported by the Royal Air Force, penetrated deep behind the Japanese lines in central Burma. In March 1943, a further determined attempt to invade India was repulsed after fierce fighting. In August 1943 the South East Asia Command was formed under Lord Louis Mountbatten and in October that year General William Slim was appointed as Commander of the Fourteenth Army.

In March 1944, the Japanese launched an offensive across the Chindwin River, cutting the Imphal-Kohima Road. There followed the ferocious battles of the ‘Admin Box’, Kohima (with its famous tennis court) and Imphal, at the end of which the defeated Japanese withdrew. Further Chindit columns operated deep behind enemy lines during 1944 and at the beginning of 1945 the Fourteenth Army launched a successful offensive down the Arakan Coast, followed by a major advance deep into central Burma. Mandalay was retaken on 20 March after a twelve day battle, and the Fourteenth Army continued on to Rangoon which was reoccupied in an amphibious operation on 3 May.

The Fourteenth Army, known to many as ‘The Forgotten Army’, numbered over one million men under arms, the largest Commonwealth army ever assembled. Air lines of communication were crucial: some 615,000 tons of supplies and 315,000 reinforcements were airlifted to and from the front line, frequently by parachuted air drops, and 210,000 casualties were evacuated. The Royal Air Force and the Indian Air Force, supported by carrier-borne Fleet Air Arm aircraft, provided constant offensive bombing sorties, together with fighter cover and essential photo-reconnaissance in support of the Army. Towards the end of the War, RAF Liberator aircraft carried out some of the longest operations ever flown to drop mines into the Pacific. At sea, the Royal Navy and the Royal Indian Navy provided the landing craft, the minesweeping operations and the combined operations necessary for the coastal offensive in the Arakan, as well as providing gunfire support from seaward. The Royal Marine Commando, as well as Royal Marines from the units of the Fleet, took part in the Arakan operations. The Japanese surrendered on 15 August 1945, now known as VJ Day.

When you go home
tell them of us and say,
For your tomorrow,
we gave our today
The Burma Campaign took place between December 1941 and September 1945, although the rumbling threat to peaceful existence in Burma was very much apparent in pre-1939 years. This diary of events covers from 1941 to 45 but campaign veterans will know that mopping up operations continued for some time after the official surrender of the Japanese.

Burma is a country of numerous types of terrain; acrid plains, lush vegetation, swamp, dense jungle, bamboo forests, mountainous regions and great rivers. There are large Cities, smaller towns and many villages. In this diary, the men and women of the Burma Campaign will recognise names of places where they fought, sailed, flew or nursed. You will be able to follow the action from start to finish; from 'Defeat Into Victory' (to use 'Uncle Bill's' own words), in the war against the Japanese Imperial might.

The general information of this diary of events, concentrates mainly of forward action and overall battle strategy. It should and must be noted however, that both the retreat, and more so the advance, of the British, American, Burmese, African, Gurkha and Chinese troops and other forces, depended largely upon naval supplies and transport: on American and RAF air forces for ground attacks from the air; the dropping of supplies; defence of the airfields and other installations; on the Service Depots, Transport Stores, and the Nursing and Medical services, especially the C.C.S. (Casualty Clearing Stations), all of whom were subject to being, bombed, shelled or infiltrated by the enemy. They suffered injury and death, the sickness and other adversities, in just the same way as the front line combat troops. Doctors, nurses, stretcher-bearers, ministers and welfare workers and many, many more, are worthy of special mention.

The writer again grateful acknowledges the kind permission of 'Bison Books' of London for allowing reproduction of the Burma content from 'The World Almanac of World War Two'.
1941

7th December 1941 PEARL HARBOUR

At 0755 hours local time, 6 Japanese aircraft carriers and 423 planes attacked the main base of the U.S. Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbour. The toll was 5 American battleships sunk, 3 others damaged, 3 cruisers and 3 destroyers sunk, and 188 American planes were lost from the airfields of Pearl Harbour. The Japanese lost just 29 planes.

8th December 1941 WORLD AFFAIRS - DECLARATION OF WAR ON JAPAN

The United States, Britain, Australia, New Zealand, The Netherlands, The Free French, Yugoslavia, several South American countries and China all declare war on Japan.

In Hong Kong, the Japanese 38th Division begins an attack at 0800 hours. General Maltby commanding the garrison, has only six battalions and 28 guns with which to make a defence. The retreat begins

10th December 1941

H.M.S. Repulse and H.M.S. Prince Of Wales sunk during the defence of Singapore.

13th December 1941

The British have to evacuate their airfield at Victoria Point in the extreme south of Burma on the Kra Isthmus. The Japanese follow and move in.

23rd December 1941

The Japanese stage their first air attacks on Rangoon. The Allied air forces in Burma have only two fighter squadrons at this stage; one from the RAF and one from Chennault's American Volunteer Group.

25th December 1941

General Hutton is appointed to command the British Forces in Burma. The British Forces in Hong Kong capitulate in the evening.

1942

25th January 1942

General Wavell visiting Rangoon, gives orders for the defence of Moulmein: the local commander would prefer to make a tactical withdrawal.

30th January 1942

The Japanese 55th Division begin their attacks on Moulmein.

10th February 1942

Japanese troops begin to cross the Salween near to its mouth at Martaban and Pa-an. Reinforcements are ready to follow.
15th February 1942

Because the Japanese are now over the Salween in force, the outpost units of the 17th Indian Division are pulled back west of the Bilin.

16th - 19th February 1942

There is fighting along the Bilin River as the Japanese continue their advance.

21st February 1942

The 17th Indian Division begins to fall back to the Sittang through Kyaikto.

22nd February 1942

The 17th Indian Division come under attack around Mokpalin on the River Sittang. There is heavy fighting near the one bridge over the river.

23rd February 1942

The only accessible bridge over the Sittang is demolished leaving a large part of the 17th, cut off on the east bank. Most of the men manage to escape but all of the heavy equipment is lost.

25th February 1942

The ABDA Command is dissolved. General Wavell again becomes Commander-In-Chief India - the Dutch General, Ter Poqten, takes command in Java.

26th February 1942

The Japanese infiltrate west of the Sittang. They now threaten the Rangoon to Mandalay railroad.

1st March 1942

The Chinese 5th Army is being concentrated around Toungoo on the Sittang, 150 miles from Rangoon. Chennault's Flying Tigers, who have done sterling work in the defence of Rangoon, move to the RAF bomber base at Magwe.

5th March 1942

General Alexander arrives in Rangoon to take command and orders counter attacks.

6th March 1942

The counter attacks fail to relieve Pegu. Alexander confirms the order for the evacuation of Rangoon.

7th March 1942 RANGOON EVACUATED

British troops retreating north from here and Pegu have to fight through road blocks on the way. As Rangoon is the only significant port in Burma, all supplies for the Allies must now come overland from India. Late in the day, units of the Japanese 33rd Division occupy Rangoon.

11th March 1942

General Stillwell is appointed to command the Chinese 5th and 6th armies (the equivalent of European Divisions) presently concentrating around Mandalay and that Shan States.

19th March 1942 GENERAL SLIM ARRIVES IN BURMA

'Uncle Bill' Slim takes operational command of the British Forces now to be organised as the 1st Burma Corps.

24th March 1942

General Alexander and Chiang Kai-Shek meet to discuss plans for the co-operation of the Chinese and British Forces. The Japanese are attacking near Toungoo and are achieving considerable success.
27th March 1942
RAF aircraft and the remainder of the volunteer American squadrons are withdrawn from Burma. The Japanese attacks on the Chinese 200th Division at Toungoo continue.

29th March 1942
At the request of General Stillwell, British forces attack Boungoe to relieve pressure on the Chinese at Toungoo.

1st April 1942
The Chinese troops at Toungoo are forced to continue their retreat. The British are heavily attacked at Prome. The British Burma Corps retreats from Prome to avoid being surrounded.

3rd April 1942
Mandalay is heavily bombed. The British forces continue to withdraw up the Irrawaddy River.

6th April 1942
Chiang Kai-Shek visits the Chinese Divisions and gives orders for the defence of positions around Pyinmana in the Sittang Valley.

7th April 1942
The Japanese 18th Division (Infantry) arrives in Rangoon by sea from Singapore.

9th April 1942
The British take positions between Taungdwingyi and Minhla on the Irrawaddy. Both the Allied and the Japanese are preparing offensives, but the Japanese are ready first because they have been more quickly reinforced.

11th April 1942
The new Japanese offensive begins with attacks on the British positions.

12th April 1942
Despite receiving help from the 38th Chinese Division, the British positions on the Irrawaddy are threatened by the Japanese capture of Migyaungye.

13th April 1942
British Command: Rear Admiral Lord Mountbatten, despite his junior rank, has been appointed Chief of Combined Operations with a seat on the British Chiefs of Staff Committee. This appointment, only now announced, has been effective since the 18th March.

BURMA: The Japanese achieve a breakthrough in the British defences. Allied forces take new positions at Magwe. The Chinese 6th Army previously positioned in the Shan States, is ordered back to Mandalay. The demolition of oil installations around Yenangyaung is begun in order to deny them to the Japanese.

15th April 1942
Following their breakthrough on the 13th April, the Japanese continue to drive northward isolating one of Slim's divisions.

17th April 1942
Unsuccessful attempts are made to relieve the 1st Burma Division trapped around the Magwe. Further north, the Japanese hold the main road in the Irrawaddy Valley at Yenangyaung. The Chinese forces in the Sittang Valley and at Mauchi come under heavy pressure.

18th April 1942
The Chinese 55th Division retreating from Mauchi is effectively destroyed by the Japanese 56th Division. This leaves to road to Lashio undefended at the moment. In the Sittang Valley, the Chinese are forced to withdraw.
20th April 1942
The British and Chinese forces retreat in both the Irrawaddy and the Sittang Valleys.

21st April 1942
There is heavy fighting near Taunggyi in which the Chinese 6th Army is engaged.

22nd April 1942
British forces including the 7th Armoured Brigade, take up positions around Meiktila. Chinese troops of 200 Division are sent from there to bolster the position at Taunggyi, but inattention to General Stillwell’s orders makes this position dangerous.

23rd April 1942
The remains of the Chinese 6th Army begins to retreat from Taunggyi towards Yunnan Province. The Allied forces in the Sittang and Irrawaddy Valleys are forced to retreat because the Japanese 56th Division has forged on from Taunggyi towards Lashio, threatening the left flank of the Allied Armies.

25th April 1942
Although the Japanese fail to hold Taunggyi, which is now defended by the Chinese 6th Army, they continue to move towards Lashio. To the west, General Alexander orders that the forces around Meiktila should withdraw north of the Irrawaddy.

28th April 1942
The Chinese 28th Division now moving from Mandalay, is ordered to defend Lashio.

29th April 1942
The Japanese enter Lashio. China is now cut off by land and all supplies from the allies must go by air. General Alexander decides to withdraw to new positions in the Chindwin and Irrawaddy Valleys.

30th April 1942
After withdrawing north of the Irrawaddy, British forces destroy the bridge at Ava.

1st May 1942
Mandalay falls to the Japanese.

4th May 1942
Akyab is evacuated by the British. Chinese forces are defeated at Wanting on the Burma Road and at Bhamo on the Irrawaddy.

5th May 1942
General Stilwell in Burma with his Chinese troops, learns of the true extent of the Japanese advance further north of the Irrawaddy and decides that his forces should retire towards India and not China. The Japanese have in fact entered China via the Burma Road.

11th May 1942
Part of the retreating British forces fight a sharp action at Kalewa before continuing on to the Imphal area.

13th May 1942
Japanese troops pursuing the Chinese 6th Army, cross the Salween on the way to Kentung.

15th May 1942
The first British troops reach India in the retreat from Burma. British casualties from the campaign have been about 30,000 from a force of 45,000. Many of these casualties have been Burmese deserters. The Chinese losses cannot be computed but must have been enormous. There were about 95,000 Chinese engaged but only one formation, the 38th, remained a viable fighting unit. The Japanese losses of less than 8,000 reflect their superior training, tactics, equipment and air power. With the monsoon season beginning, the Japanese can be well satisfied with having so
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rapidly overrun Burma, and with the cutting off of China from surface communications.

25th May 1942
Part of the Chinese 38th Division manages to reach India.

15th July 1942
INDIA AND CHINA: The first supplies flown ‘over the hump’ reach Chiang Kai-Shek’s forces.

17th October 1942
BURMA: Orders are given to the 14th Indian Division, advancing slowly into the Arakan, to reach a line between Rathedaung and Buthidaung, by the start of December in preparation for further operations towards Akyab.

23rd October 1942
The bulk of the British forces have advanced to Cox’s Bazaar, but forward units have reached Buthidaung. They come into contact with a Japanese formation which has pushed up from Akyab. After a brief fight, the Japanese hold the position.

17th November 1942
General Wavell decided to cancel the proposed major amphibious operation against Akyab, and instead, on the 19th November, issues orders for a more limited advance by the 14th Indian Division down the Mayu Peninsular, perhaps to be followed by a shorter seaborne operation against Akyab.

30th November 1942
The advance of the British 123rd Brigade in the Arakan has now reached Bawli Bazaar. Terrible weather which would normally be expected to clear during November, has been impeding the advance and making road conditions difficult.

16th December 1942
In the Arakan, British forces have assembled two brigades to attack the Japanese lines between Maungdaw and Buthidaung, but the Japanese forces pull out before the blow can fall. They move south to a more defensible line between Gwedauk and Kondon.

21st December 1942
The British forces advance towards Akyab.

22nd December 1942
General Lloyd orders his 47th Brigade, to advance down both sides of the Mayu Peninsular whilst the 123rd Brigade is to send the bulk of its force towards Rathedaung. A small detachment is to move farther inland in the direction of Kyauktaw. These dispositions are less than ideal because of the dispersions they bring about.

24th December 1942
The Japanese advances in two areas of the Chin Hills are repelled by Allied troops.

25th December 1942
Patrols from the 123rd Brigade reach Rathedaung and report that the Japanese have moved out: in fact this is not the case and Japanese reinforcements are on their way.

27th/28th December 1942
Part of the 123rd Indian Brigade tries to occupy Rathedaung but is thrown back by the recently reinforced Japanese there.

1943

15th January 1942
Units of the Japanese 55th Division move into Burma north of Mergui.
18th January 1943
Troops from the 14th Indian Division attack the Japanese positions at Donbaik in the Arakan, but without success.

1st February 1943
In the Arakan, the British forces renew their attack on Donbaik but can make no progress.

8th February 1943 the first Chindit raid begins
This force, more properly called the 77th Indian Brigade, is led by General Wingate, and its task is to penetrate behind enemy lines causing damage and destruction. Above all, the expedition is designed to demonstrate that the British and Indians can take on the Japanese in the jungle. The expedition begins at Imphal and sets out towards Tamu.

14th February 1943
The Chindits cross the Chindwin in two groups at Auktaung and Tonbe. Wingate is leading the larger northern group.

1st March 1943
The Chindit force is making slower progress than had been hoped, partially because it has been concerned to find clearings for supply drops when in fact, it is discovered later that it is possible to recover supplies dropped in jungle areas.

3rd March 1943
After a setback on March 2nd, the southern Chindit group succeeds in cutting the Mandalay to Myitkyina railroad just north of Kyaikthin.

6th March 1943
The Chindits make a series of demolitions on the railroad between Nankan and Bongyaung.

10th March 1943
The Chindits are now operating in several columns and cross the Irrawaddy in two places; at Tagaung and Tigyaing, further north.

17th March 1943
The 123rd Indian Brigade is attacked by the Japanese just north of Rathedaung in the Arakan, and is forced to fall back. General Kota leads the Japanese attack with units of the 55th and 33rd Divisions being involved. (here for wartime maps of Burma).

18th March 1943
Wingate's column crosses the Irrawaddy south of Inywa; this is the last group to do so. The Japanese have now assembled considerable forces to hunt the Chindits and their operations are being increasingly circumscribed. In the Arakan, the more regular British operations are not going well either. Hitzwe falls to a pincer attack, and on the Mayu Peninsular, a British attack on Donbaik falls.

24th March 1943
The various Chindit columns join up between Baw and Pago, but Wingate is ordered to break off the operation and return to India. Wingate's forces split up into small groups and most succeed in reaching base by early April. One returns later via China. Losses have been heavy - about one third of the force - but many lessons have been learned and the value to moral and propaganda has been high.

5th April 1943
The Japanese on the Mayu Peninsular continue to advance Northwest in the direction of India.

8th April 1943
General Kawabe replaces Iida in command of the Japanese forces and they are now to be organised as the 'Burma Area Army'. The Japanese are planning to extend their hold on Northern Burma and
among the logistics that accompany this, is the construction of new rail-lines. About 60,000 allied POWs are employed on this work - about 15,000 of them die through ill-treatment.

4th May 1943
The Japanese have now infiltrated between Buthidaung and Maungdaw, disrupting British communications.

7th May 1943
The British are forced to retire from Buthidaung which is taken by the Japanese.

11th May 1943
The British pull back the 26th Division from Maungdaw which the Japanese occupy on the 14th May. The 1943 Arakan campaign is over. The British have lost 3,000 killed and seriously wounded - more than twice as many as the Japanese. Above all, the moral of the British forces could hardly be poorer and their health is also weak. Generals Irwin and Lloyd are relieved and 'Slim' is appointed to command the 14th Army with effect from the 15th May 1943.

1944

7th March 1944
The Japanese offensive 'U-GO' begins. The aim is to destroy all British forces around Imphal and Kohima, and then to push on through the passes to Dimapur, cutting off the Chinese and Americans in the north, and with the road to India ahead. Three divisions of General Mutaguchi's 15th Army are to be employed in the initial operations. The offensive begins with General Yamagida's 33rd Division against the positions of General Cowan's 17th Indian Division around Tiddim. These attacks are meant to commit the British reserves so that when the main attack goes in, its task will be easier. The British are well aware that the Japanese plan to attack, but they underestimate the strength of the force to be used. The plan is for the 17th and 20th Indian Divisions, both in fairly advanced positions, to fall back around Imphal and protect and live off, the large base organisations there. The British forces at this stage are all from General Scoones' IV Corps. It is an essential part of the Japanese plan to capture large quantities of British supplies because most of their advances are to be made over jungle tracks which are impassable to supply vehicles. Food is the crucial element of the problem. It is precisely because of these difficulties that the British expect a smaller attack.

9th March 1944
News of the advance of the 33rd Division reaches General Cowan's headquarters but it is not at first believed.

10th March 1944
The Japanese 33rd Division as well as attacking the 17th Division, is infiltrating behind 20th Division, but their advances in this sector are held near Witok. More Chindit forces are flying to central Burma and are already disrupting Japanese communications with the forces facing Stilwell's Chinese and the American troops. In the Arakan, Buthidaung falls to the British.

13th March 1944
General Scoones authorises the 17th and 20th Divisions to withdraw from their advanced positions to Imphal. General Gracey with 20th Division has made better preparations for this move to Imphal, than Cowan with the 17th. Scoones and his superiors, Slim and Gifford, agree that reinforcements are needed and Mountbatten therefore sends requests to the highest level, for the use of American aircraft (those normally used for ferrying supplies to the Chinese) to move the 5th Division from the Arakan. The Japanese begin air attacks against the Chindit's 'Broadway' airfield.

15th March 1944
The main effort of the Japanese offensive begins with crossings over the Chindwin by the 15th and 31st Divisions, in several places north of Homalin.
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17th March 1944
There are heavy Japanese air attacks on the Chindit's landing ground at 'Broadway'. Several of the supporting spitfires are destroyed on the ground.

20th March 1944
The 1st Brigade of the 5th Division arrives at Imphal by air. A battalion is sent to Kohima.

24th March 1944
General Wingate is killed in an air crash. The senior Chindit, Brigadier Commander Lentaigne replaces him.

27th March 1944
General Stopford's 33 Corps is put under Slim's control and ordered to concentrate at Dimapur before advancing to Kohima. A second Brigade of the 5th Division arrives at Imphal by air and the third brigade is being sent to Dimapur also for Kohima.

29th March 1944
The roads between Imphal and Kohima are cut by Sato's 31st Division at Maram. Slim sticks to his plan to supply the garrison at Imphal by air.

2nd April 1944
Mutaguchi's troops continue their advance. They now cut the road between Kohima and Imphal. South of Imphal, the 17th Indian Division has nearly completed its retirement to the main position.

4th April 1944
The Japanese 31st Division begins to put real pressure on the British positions at Kohima, cutting both routes out of the town at the rear. It is vital for the Japanese to capture this British supply centre as they are relying on its resources for their own replenishment.

7th April 1944
Near Kohima, the Japanese encircle the 161st Brigade from Stopford's 33 Corps at Jutsoma, and block the main road to the west near Zubza.

10th April 1944
Slim now feels that he has the complete picture of the situation and that an offensive is practical and necessary. The troops surrounded at Imphal and Kohima are to continue to be supplied by air and particularly in the case of the Imphal garrison, are to break through and relieve Kohima.

14th April 1944
The Japanese road block at Zubza is broken and the 161st Brigade at Jotsoma is relieved by the attacks of other units of the 2nd Indian Division.

30th April 1944
In the continuing battle for Imphal, the Japanese attacks are being gradually worn down, especially as their food shortage becomes serious. The defence of the 20th Division on the Shenam Ridge is particularly stout. The battle goes on.

17th May 1944
Merrill's Marauders help the Chinese forces to capture Myitkyina airfield.

24th May 1944
There are strong counter attacks by units of the Japanese 18th Army, south of Myitkyina.

2nd June 1944
The final siege of Myitkyina begins.
5th June 1944
At Kohima, an outflanking attack at last forces the Japanese off the Aradura Spur and into retreat. It still remains to clear the road to Imphal.

6th June 1944
'D' Day in Europe

22nd June 1944
The siege of Imphal is raised when advance units of the 2nd British Division link with the 5th Indian Division at Milestone 107 on the Imphal to Kohima road. The Japanese are taking ever heavier losses both in combat and, more seriously, because of food shortages and illness, as their supply system collapses.

3rd August 1944
Myitkyina is finally taken by the Chinese and American attack after the bulk of the Japanese garrison have managed to slip away.

4th August 1944
The British 2nd Division from 33 Corps takes Tamu.

4th November 1944
In the 14th Army's advance, the 5th Indian Division takes 'Kennedy Peak' south of Tiddim.

5th November 1944
Fort White, just south of Tiddim, is taken by the British advance.

12th December 1944
A British offensive begins in the Arakan; the attacking unit is 15 Corps and the objective is Akyab. Three divisions are in on the attack.

1945

3rd January 1945
There are British landings at the Northwest top of Akyab Island in the Arakan area. 'A' Commando and the Indian Brigade are involved but there is little resistance from the Japanese. Inland troops of 33 Corps take Yeo in their advance to the Irrawaddy.

10th January 1945.
Whilst the advance of 33 Corps to the Irrawaddy is attracting the Japanese attention, 4 Corps is moving southward to the west of the Chindwin with the intention of crossing the Irrawaddy near Meiktila. Gangaw is taken in this advance.
The 19th Indian Division takes bridgeheads over the Irrawaddy north of Mandalay, at Kyaukmyang and Thabeikkyin. Fierce Japanese attacks in these areas begin immediately. In the Arakan, there are landings of British Commando troops near Myebon on the mainland between Akyab and Ramree.

20th January 1945
On the Ledo road, the Chinese forces have only a few more miles to clear. The advance from Yunnan has reached Wanting on the border, and from the other direction, Mu-Se is taken only 10 miles away.

21st January 1945
There are British landings at the northern tip of Ramree Island. The 4th British and 71st Indian Brigades are put ashore. The battleship 'Queen Elizabeth' and an escort carrier are in support but there is little resistance. In the 33 Corps sector on the mainland, Monywa on the Chindwin, is taken by the 20th Indian Division.
22nd January 1945
The British 4 Corps takes Tilin in its continuing advance towards the Irrawaddy to the south.

23rd January 1945
Myinmu is taken by the 20th Indian Division. This Division, and other 33 Corps units, which have crossed the Irrawaddy north of Mandalay, are attracting important Japanese counter attacks. This is exactly what General Slim has hoped for. 4 Corps prepares the real advance further south.

26th January 1945
There are British landings on Chedube Island, south of Ramree. A small force of Royal Marines go ashore on the first day and they are later reinforced by the 36th Indian Brigade. On the mainland, the 81st African Division takes Myohaung. Inland, in the advance of 4 Corps to the Irrawaddy, Pauk is taken by the 7th Indian Division.

27th January 1945
the Ledo Road into china is finally cleared when Chinese troops from Burma and Yunnan, link up near Mongyu. General Sultan who leads the British, American and Chinese is this area, has in fact announced the road opens from the 22nd January. Sultan's forces are now moving south towards Mandalay and Lashio by several routes.

9th February 1945
In the Arakan area, the 26th Indian Division completes the capture of Ramree Island.

12th February 1945
West of Mandalay, 33 Corps units begin to take their second series of bridgeheads over the Irrawaddy. The advance here is by 20th Indian Division opposite Myinmu. To the south, 4 Corps has reached the Irrawaddy at Myitche and Seikpyu and is preparing to cross. British and U.S. units of Sultan's Northern Area Combat Command are advancing south towards Lashio and Kyaukme, but are being held for the moment in heavy fighting near the River Shweli.

13th February 1945
The 20th Indian Division has now established a solid bridgehead over the Irrawaddy despite fierce Japanese attacks.

14th February 1945
The 7th Indian Division from 4 Corps begins to cross the Irrawaddy near Myaungu. There is only slight Japanese opposition because most of the Japanese forces having been withdrawn to defend Mandalay. North of Mandalay, the 19th Indian Division takes Singu despite the efforts of the defenders.

17th February 1945
The British operations in the Arakan continue with successful landings at Ru-Ya, 40 miles south east of Myebon. Heavy fighting continues in the area of 33 Corps bridgeheads over the Irrawaddy and along the Shweli River farther north, especially near Myitson.

21st February 1945
The 17th Indian and supporting tank units begin to break out of 4 Corps bridgehead at Myaungu and advance towards Meiktila. The Japanese know of the presence of British units in this area but do not realise such strong forces are involved, because the advance of 4 Corps has been well disguised. Farther north, troops of the British 33 Corps, step up their efforts to attract the main Japanese forces, when the British 2nd Division crosses the Irrawaddy near Ngazun, to line up with the 20th Indian Division who already have a bridgehead near there. Further north still, the British 36th Division takes Myitson.

24th February 1945
In their advance on Meiktila, the 17th Indian Division takes Taunetha.
26th February 1945
The advance of the 17th Indian Division towards Meiktila continues to go well. Mablaing and the Thabutkon airfield are taken - reinforcements for 4 Corps will be flown into this airfield.

28th February 1945
The British 4 Corps begins to attack Meiktila in strength. The Japanese command has known of the presence of this force, but has believed it to be only lightly armed in the Chindit pattern. They have therefore, left it to the local troops at Meiktila to defend their own base. This is a serious error because Meiktila is a vital communications centre, serving all the Japanese forces around Mandalay and to the north.

3rd March 1945
Meiktila is completely occupied by 4 Corps units. They immediately dig in. The main route for supplies to the bulk of the Japanese forces in Burma is therefore cut, and they will be compelled to turn away from the fighting further north, and to try to clear their lines of communication. At the same time they must do something to hold off 33 Corps to the north.

5th March 1945
Japanese counter-attacks against 4 Corps begin. The small town of Taungtha is retaken by the Japanese and the 17th Indian Division is almost cut off in Meiktila.

6th March 1945
In their slow advance down the Burma road, units of the Chinese 1st Army reach and capture Lashio.

8th March 1945
The 2nd British and 20th Indian Divisions begin to break out of the bridgeheads over the Irrawaddy to the west of Mandalay.

9th March 1945
The southward advance of the 19th Indian Division reaches the outskirts of Mandalay. Other 33 Corps units are advancing towards the city from the west. The fighting around Meiktila is still very fierce as the Japanese continue to bring troops from the Mandalay area in a desperate attempt to free their communications.

11th March 1945
Mongmit is captured by a converging attack by the two brigades of the British 36th Division which moved in from the west.

12th March 1945
Myotha, southwest of Mandalay, falls to the 20th Indian Division.

14th March 1945
Maymo, to the east of Mandalay is taken by the 62nd Indian Brigade. The last rail line to Mandalay is therefore cut. Other units of the 19th Indian Division are still fighting in Mandalay but have captured much of the city in a bitter house to house engagement.

15th March 1945
The Japanese step up their efforts against Meiktila, but can make no important progress against the 17th Indian Division which is receiving supplies, reinforcements and ground attack support, from the air.

17th March 1945
Units of the Chinese 6th Army take Hswipaw on the Burma road, 50 miles southwest of Lashio. The Chinese 1st Army is still trying to advance along the road from Lashio to clear it of Japanese road blocks. The British 2nd Division takes Ava on the bend of the Irrawaddy only a few miles south of Mandalay. The heavy fighting in Mandalay and around Meiktila continues.
**THE DIARY OF THE BURMA CAMPAIGN**

**19th March 1945**
Mogok is taken by the British 36th Division. The 19th Indian Division completes the capture of Mandalay. The Fort Dufferin position has been among the most stubbornly defended by the Japanese. ‘On the Road To Mandalay’, the theme song of the British forces in Burma, becomes a reality achieved and has remained so for all time, from the 19th March 1945.

**23rd March 1945**
As well as capturing Mandalay, 33 Corps units have been striking south. Wundwin is taken by the 20th Indian Division on one flank of this advance.

**28th March 1945**
The Japanese have failed in their efforts to retake Meiktila, and while they have been involved in this area, 33 Corps has been making important gains to the north. General Kimura commanding Japanese forces in Burma, decides that with his main communications cut, he must try to retreat as best he can. Many of the Japanese will manage to escape via Thazi to the east of Meiktila.

**30th March 1945**
Kyaukse is taken by the 20th Indian Division. The British forces now hold most of the important positions on the road between Mandalay and Meiktila. The Japanese forces in central Burma have been brought to battle and defeated, exactly as General Slim had hoped. The Japanese have not been able to slip away largely intact as they intended, and instead have been compelled to fight the main action with improvised forces, against the carefully organised British defence around Meiktila.

**31st March 1945**
Northeast of Mandalay, the British 36th Division and units of the Chinese 6th Army, take Kyaukme. The Burma road from Mandalay to Lashio is now clear.

**8th April 1945**
The British forces have regrouped following their successes at Mandalay and Meiktila and are ready for a rapid armoured and motorised advance to finish the campaign in Burma. The British 4 Corps is to advance down the Sittang Valley and 33 Corps by the Irrawaddy Valley. All units have been specially organised to make them more mobile.

**10th April 1945**
Thazi, east of Meiktila, is captured by British 4 Corps.

**12th April 1945**
The 4 Corps advance is beginning to make progress in the Sittang Valley. There is fighting at Pyawbwe and Yamethin. To the west of Meiktila, 7th Indian Division from 33 Corps take Kyaukpadaung.

**15th April 1945**
In 33 Corps' advance, Taungdwingyi falls to the 20th Indian Division. Other units of 33 Corps are still fighting farther up the Irrawaddy - then the next objectives for the 20th Indian Division which now moves forward to Magwe and Thayetmyo.

**16th April 1945**
In the Arakan, Taungup falls to the British forces.

**19th April 1945**
In the Sittang Valley, Pyinmana falls to the 5th Indian Division which now leads 4 Corps advance. Further north, between Meiktila and the Irrawaddy, 33 Corps completes the clearance of the Mount Popo area and takes Chauk also. To the south along the Irrawaddy, Magwe is taken by the 20th Indian Division which has advanced southwest from Meiktila.
21st April 1945
The 4 Corps’ advance in the Sittang Valley is beginning to pull ahead of the parallel efforts in the Irrawaddy Valley. Yedash is taken by the 5th Indian Division which in the rear, the airfields around Pyinmana, are being cleared to be put into Allied service. In the Irrawaddy Valley, Yenangyaung falls to the 33 Corps units, mopping up in the rear of the main advance.

22nd April 1945
In the Sittang Valley, Toungoo falls to the 5th Indian Division.

25th April 1945
In the Irrawaddy Valley, mopping up operations continue. Salin is captured by the British forces. The main 33 Corps’ advance is closing in on Allanmyo. The spectacular progress of the 5th Indian Division in the Sittang Valley continues with the capture of Penwegen. The Japanese forces around Rangoon are beginning to withdraw through Pegu to the east, so as to be able to retreat into Thailand.

29th April 1945
In the Irrawaddy Valley, Allanmyo falls to the advances of 33 Corps. The remaining Japanese forces in this area are becoming very disorganised by the British attacks. In the Sittang Valley, the 17th Indian Division has now taken over the lead and after capturing Nyaunglebin, is attacking near Payagyi.

1st May 1945
The British attacks in the Sittang Valley have now reached nearly to Pegu. The monsoon begins in southern Burma. As an alternative in case the land attacks have not made sufficient progress before this break in the weather, an amphibious operation to take Rangoon has been prepared and now goes into action with parachute landings at the mouth of the Irrawaddy on the east bank.

2nd May 1945
Hamburg radio announces the deaths of Hitler and Goebbels. The British carry out ‘Operation Dracula’, the amphibious attack on Rangoon. Admiral Martin leads the four escort carriers and other naval units. The 26th Indian Division provides the landing force. There is no Japanese resistance. Admiral Walker leads TF63 with the battleships ‘Queen Elizabeth’ and ‘Richelieu’, and two escort carriers as well as cruisers and destroyers, in covering operations in which Port Blair (Andaman Islands) and Car Nicobar (Nicobar Islands) are bombed and shelled.

3rd May 1945
Rangoon is taken by the 26th Indian Division without any resistance from the Japanese. Further north on the Irrawaddy, Prome is taken by 33 Corps.

6th May 1945
Troops from the 26th Indian Division advancing north from Rangoon, link with units of 4 Corps at Hlegu. although many scattered forces remain in Burma, west of the Sittang towards Thailand and in the south west of the country, the campaign is virtually over. Mopping up operations will continue as far as the monsoon weather permits, but British attention will be directed more to preparations for the campaign in Malaya; this because of the next major move. This of course never takes place as the Japanese surrender.

14th June 1945 VICTORY PARADE IN RANGOON
A grand parade is held in Rangoon to celebrate the recapture of the city.

15th June 1945
The mopping up in the Shan mountains area ends.
15TH AUGUST 1945
IT'S ALL OVER. THIS IS VJ DAY.
Emperor Hirohito's broadcast is made to the Japanese people, many of whom cannot accept at first what has happened because the tight control of the government has prevented civilians knowing the full extent of the Japanese weakness.