

ORDE WINGATE AND THE BRITISH ARMY,  
1922-1944:  
Military Thought and Practice Compared and Contrasted

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by

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*Abstract:*

*Major General Orde Charles Wingate (1903-1944) is one of the most controversial British military commanders of the last hundred years. This controversy stems from two broad sources: the first of these was his idiosyncratic and occasionally tempestuous personality; the second is the alleged 'radicalism' of his military ideas, both of which contributed to a series of feuds and acrimonies with other senior officers in the British Army. Wingate first came to the notice of his seniors when he organised the Special Night Squads, a specialist counterterrorist force comprising British soldiers and Jewish police, in Palestine in 1938; in 1940-41, he planned and commanded covert operations, in cooperation with local guerrillas, inside Italian-occupied Ethiopia; he is best remembered in the UK, however, for his command of Long Range Penetration Groups, or 'Chindits', in Burma in 1943-44. The Chindit operations in particular split opinion in the literature, debates in which centre upon their cost-effectiveness and their actual worth, and many imply that they marked a major departure from British military thought and practice hitherto. Some post-war authors have attempted to present Wingate as 'ahead of his time', a forerunner of various late twentieth and twenty-first century models of warfare. However, a survey of Wingate's own papers – closed to the public until 1995 – and other contemporary documents and testimony, reveals an organically evolving and increasingly coherent body of military ideas consistent with the military thought and practice of the British Army in the theatres where Wingate served, that did not mark a radical departure from them until almost the end of his career. Wingate was firmly 'of his time', and not of any other.*

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

**There was a man of genius, who might well have become also a man of destiny**

- *Winston Churchill*<sup>1</sup>

**Much of what he preached strategically, operationally, and tactically, was flawed, and some of it was downright nonsense.**

- *Major General Julian Thompson*<sup>2</sup>

These two quotations provide but a tiny sample of opinions of Major General Orde Charles Wingate (1903-1944), a well-known and controversial figure in Britain and Israel. His reputation, and popular image, stem from three episodes that occurred late in a military career beginning with his graduation from the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich, in 1923 and ending with his death in 1944. The first of these was the Palestine Arab uprising of 1936-39, when Wingate, then a captain in the Royal Artillery, was authorised by two British General Officers Commanding (GOC) Palestine, General Sir Archibald Wavell and General Sir Robert Haining, to train Jewish policemen, in British-organised irregular units, in his personal brand of counter-insurgency. These included figures such as Moshe Dayan and Yigal Allon. They, and, later, Ariel Sharon identified Wingate as a major influence upon Israeli military thought.<sup>3</sup> However, he roused strong feelings even then, as he deployed Jewish units, in majority Arab-inhabited areas, in pre-emptive and reprisal attacks on Arab villages believed to be hiding insurgents, and used some robust methods to extract intelligence from

suspected insurgents.<sup>4</sup> The second episode began in 1940, when Wingate was summoned by Wavell, now Commander in Chief, Middle East, to take over an operation organised by G(R), an offshoot of the MI(R) covert warfare branch of the British War Office, aimed at escalating and steering guerrilla warfare in the province of Gojjam, in Italian-occupied Ethiopia, in the name of the exiled Emperor of Ethiopia, Haile Selassie. This Wingate attempted, with mixed results, creating and utilising 'Gideon Force', a purpose-organised regular formation, cooperating occasionally with local tribal irregulars.<sup>5</sup> It was after Ethiopia that Wingate began to advocate what he claimed was a new form of warfare, designated Long Range Penetration (sic), which was based upon his interpretation of his operations in Gojjam and which he argued held the key to victory against the Axis.<sup>6</sup> In Britain, Wingate is best remembered for the third episode, his command of brigade-sized Long Range Penetration Groups, light infantry units, ostensibly using 'guerrilla' methods, and supplied and supported by air, in two major operations deep inside Japanese-occupied Burma, Operation *Longcloth* of February-May 1943 and Operation *Thursday* of March-August 1944. *Thursday* opened with two LRP brigades being inserted by air, and also featured a specialist unit of the United States Army Air Force (USAAF), No.1 Air Commando, providing transport, supply by airdrop and battlefield close air support.<sup>7</sup> What links all these episodes is Wingate's raising and commanding specialist units intended to carry the war into areas the enemy considered under their control.

Wingate's Long Range Penetration Groups are better remembered as the *Chindits*, a propaganda name derived from Wingate's mispronunciation of *Chinthey*, the stone griffin-figures which guard Buddhist temples in Southeast Asia.<sup>8</sup> Wingate died in an air crash during *Thursday*, and much of the literature centres upon a posthumous controversy concerning whether his Chindit operations were cost-effective in terms of lives lost versus objectives attained. To Wingate's detractors, they were unsound, wasteful of lives and resources and an unnecessary diversion from the 'real war' and the destruction of Japanese main force units at the front: Wingate himself was a charismatic charlatan

who owed his successes to his ability to cultivate friends in high places. However, among his friends and supporters, Wingate is remembered as a military genius of the highest order whose ideas played a decisive part not only in the defeat of Japan in Southeast Asia but in earlier operations in Palestine and Ethiopia also. The debate has continued since the 1950s, a particular issue being the impact of *Thursday* on the Japanese offensive against Imphal and Kohima in March-July 1944, but the cost effectiveness of the earlier Chindit operation, *Longcloth* is also debated frequently. The literature in English, therefore, is dominated by differing opinions of Wingate's Burma operations and the worth of his contributions to military thought.

The debate was codified in the 1950s, with two works, Volume III of the British Government's *Official History of the War against Japan*, authored largely by the former Director of Staff Duties, India, Major General S Woodburn Kirby, and *Defeat into Victory*, the memoirs of the British theatre commander in Burma, Field Marshal Lord Slim.<sup>9</sup> Both clashed bitterly with Wingate when he was alive, and both books question not only his professional abilities, but, significantly, his mental stability also.<sup>10</sup> Wingate was, putting it mildly, 'unusual': he regarded the Old Testament as literal history, political tract and tactical manual, became a fanatical Zionist and Islamophobe - the vehemence of this beliefs sometimes disturbing even his Jewish friends - and laced his speeches with portentous, Biblical rhetoric; in an army fixated on appearance, he was often scruffy and fully bearded, and on operations, wore an old-fashioned solar helmet<sup>11</sup>; he ate six raw onions a day, and ordered all his officers to eat at least one<sup>12</sup>; he often carried out business in the nude, brushing himself with a wire brush instead of washing, sometimes during official briefings and press conferences<sup>13</sup>, and carried an alarm clock to time his meetings and show those around him that 'time was passing'.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, published sources, even by admirers, agree that Wingate was a bloody-minded and disputatious individual of strong and frequently unorthodox opinions on many matters, who apparently sought out feuds and arguments, and was unafraid to 'name and shame' those he saw as thwarting him, including senior officers, using

highly inflammatory language, in official documents.<sup>15</sup> Yet, he could also be brittle: he attempted suicide in 1941, after the Ethiopian operation, due to a combination of depression, exhaustion and dementia arising from cerebral malaria, and the literature is full of anecdotes of tantrums, sulks and occasional physical assaults on soldiers and even subordinate officers.<sup>16</sup> More recently, an Israeli journalist, Tom Segev, has suggested that Wingate committed atrocities during the Palestine revolt of 1936-39, a claim taken up with some enthusiasm by Israeli revisionist historians and anti-Zionist websites.<sup>17</sup> Wingate's unusual and occasionally obtrusive personality traits cannot be dismissed as an influence upon the literature.

Wingate's many idiosyncrasies are taken as signs of madness by his detractors, the most vituperative among the historians being Duncan Anderson and Julian Thompson.<sup>18</sup> In reaction, several of Wingate's friends and former subordinates, including Sir Robert Thompson, Major General Derek Tulloch and Brigadiers Michael Calvert and Peter Mead produced books in rebuttal, a process continued into the 1990s by the prolific and vociferous David Rooney.<sup>19</sup> Consequently, the literature centres largely upon the theme of Wingate as 'maverick': indeed, the five biographies - Leonard Mosley's *Gideon Goes to War* of 1955, Christopher Sykes' *Orde Wingate* of 1959, Trevor Royle's *Orde Wingate: Irregular Soldier* and David Rooney's *Wingate and the Chindits: Redressing the Balance*, both from 1995 and John Bierman and Colin Smith's *Fire in the Night*, from 2000 - all centre upon this theme, focusing upon Wingate's idiosyncrasies and his battles with his superiors and colleagues more than discussing his military ideas or assessing his true historical significance.

Other authors have attempted to examine these, but have been hampered by two factors. The first is that Wingate's personal papers and correspondence were guarded jealously by his sisters and his widow, Lorna, who refused all access to them until her death in 1995 following a dispute with Christopher Sykes.<sup>20</sup> Secondly, there is the additional problem of many relevant official papers not becoming available until the 1970s or after, under the Thirty-Year Rule for British Governmental

papers. Consequently, those trying to analyse Wingate's ideas before this time, such as Luigi Rossetto and Prithvi Nath, have been forced to rely upon quotations and paraphrases of these papers in Sykes, the *Official History*, Michael Calvert's *Prisoners of Hope* and Mosley's *Gideon Goes to War*, as well as anecdotal material in other memoirs.<sup>21</sup> The papers, which consist of official documents authored by Wingate or pertinent to his operations from 1926 to 1944, a mixture of his official and private correspondence from the early 1920s to his death, and other material assembled by Lorna Wingate and Wingate's friend and chief of staff, Major General Derek Tulloch, after Wingate's death, were sold by Wingate's son, the late Colonel Orde Jonathan Wingate, in 1995. Those relating to Wingate's time in Palestine went to the collection of the American publisher and politician, Steve Forbes - with microfilm copies being taken by the British Library - and the remainder to the Imperial War Museum. While the Burma papers in the Imperial War Museum have been sifted and catalogued by Julian Thompson, those concerning Wingate's early life and his operations in Ethiopia - several hundred documents and letters - remained unexamined when work on this thesis began in 2000. The Palestine Papers are readily available on microfilm at the British Library, but are also un-sifted. The Burma papers have been consulted by David Rooney and Trevor Royle, but, apparently, in only a cursory way, likewise Royle's overview of some key files in the Public Record Office.<sup>22</sup>

Another problem arises from Wingate's own literary style. Wingate was a good writer with a sometimes entertainingly pungent style, and was always at pains to explain his process of reasoning in any situation. However, apart from a single, brief allusion to the British Army's *Field Service Regulations*, in his Ethiopia papers, Wingate never, at any point, credited any source other than himself for his military ideas.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, where his papers have been consulted, by Sykes for instance, the aim has been to illustrate aspects of Wingate's personality and opinions, rather than to 'place' his ideas in their historical context or a wider conceptual framework. The Wingate literature, therefore,



leans heavily upon limited interpretation of a limited range of sources.

An important gap in the existing research therefore suggests itself. This arises from a failure to utilise Wingate's own writings in order to assess his military ideas on his own terms and in their historical and strategic context. Were this rectified, it might give further, and perhaps more accurate insight into why Wingate was such a controversial figure then and now. In order to explore this possibility, some deeper exploration of the literature is necessary, beginning with the principal works on either side of the 'Wingate controversy', followed by those attempting to 'place' Wingate in a niche within military thought and history. This examination of the literature will be followed by a discussion of the implications of following new avenues of research.

*Wingate's reputation as an issue*

**Just as timing played so great a part in his rise to prominence, so the moment of his death may have been propitious for him. He was killed at the height of his career and was not called upon to face the inevitable fact that his dreams and ambitions could never have been realised.**

**- Major General S Woodburn Kirby<sup>24</sup>**

**The whole assessment was no more than a hatchet job by little men who could not have competed with Wingate either in military argument or in battle. Not only has it failed but it has made him such a controversial figure that his reputation will live on forever.**

**- Sir Robert Thompson<sup>25</sup>**

The theme of the British 'military establishment' objecting to Wingate's military ideas ran through the literature from the beginning. Charles Rolo, an American journalist and literary critic, produced *Wingate's Phantom Army*, an anecdotal narrative of *Longcloth*, in 1944, shortly after Wingate's death. This work is characterized by hyperbole of the 'they said it couldn't be done' variety: on *Longcloth*, for instance, 'The more conventional military leaders were aghast...Wingate was an upstart, a madman. Certainly it was not "pukka war" as they or anyone else knew it' and he later commented that: 'Wingate's fixity of purpose led to countless clashes with brass-hats and complacent

officials, outraged by his forthright methods and assaults on red tape.<sup>26</sup> This theme was taken up by Major General Bernard Fergusson, who commanded a Chindit column on *Longcloth* and a brigade on *Thursday*, and author of the best-known of all the Chindit memoirs, *Beyond the Chindwin*, his account of *Longcloth*, published in 1945.<sup>27</sup> Fergusson also published a memoir of *Thursday*, *The Wild Green Earth*, in 1946, which took up themes first presented at a lecture to the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) in March 1946, implying that Wingate's ideas were a source of friction with certain others: 'On the whole [Wingate] failed to convert current military thought to his belief in deep penetration. He certainly convinced his lieutenants; but deprived of his fiery leadership and teaching, I cannot hope to succeed where he failed.'<sup>28</sup> Fergusson also felt strongly enough about the accusations evidently mounting by 1946 to include a defence of Wingate ('Some of those who now whisper that he was not all that he was cracked up to be remind me of the mouse who has a swig of whisky, and then says: "Now show me that bloody cat"') but, unfortunately for the historian, was not specific about what these accusations might be.<sup>29</sup>

A similar phenomenon was apparent in *Prisoners of Hope*, Brigadier Michael Calvert's account of commanding 77th LRP Brigade on Operation *Thursday*. While most of this work is a personal narrative, Calvert included a lengthy appendix giving testimony from the postwar interrogations of senior Japanese officers on the impact of *Thursday* on their operations in 1944, his reasons for including this being:

Two of the most controversial aspects of the campaign in Burma were the two Wingate operations and the results they achieved. Could the thirteen British...five Gurkha and three West Africa battalions and their attendant ancillary forces, bases, and RAF and USAAF effort [which made up Wingate's forces on *Thursday*] have been of greater use to the Burma campaign if employed elsewhere in a more stereotyped role?<sup>30</sup>

Some forceful answers to Calvert's questions were supplied by Kirby and Slim in the 1950s. In Volume III of the *Official History*, Kirby included an 'Assessment of Wingate' - he was the only

Allied commander in Southeast Asia to receive this treatment - which began by attributing Wingate's success as much to the patronage of Wavell and, later, the Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, 'who claimed Wingate as a genius', as to the validity of his ideas.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, 'Whether his theories were sound or unsound, he appeared as a "doer" at a time when something desperately needed to be done [about the dire predicament the Allies faced in Southeast Asia].'<sup>32</sup> Kirby then implied that Wingate's success in getting his ideas put into practice owed more to force of argument and skilful self-publicity than to their intrinsic merit, this leading, as he became more ambitious, to megalomania:

The way in which his ideas on the use of long-range penetration forces grew in Wingate's fertile imagination would form an interesting psychological study. From his early conception of lightly armed troops penetrating behind the enemy lines and attacking communications as part of a larger operation by conventional forces, the operations of Special Force [the Chindits] clearly became in his mind the only means by which northern Burma could be dominated. Subsequently, much increased in numbers, the force would become the spearhead of a victorious advance through southern Burma, Siam and Indo-China to win the war against Japan.<sup>33</sup>

So determined was Wingate to demonstrate this model that 'his handling of his forces became unsound', according to Kirby, who listed a series of perceived mistakes made by Wingate on both Chindit operations to support this claim.<sup>34</sup> Wingate was 'so obsessed by his theories that he forgot that victory in Burma could be achieved only by the defeat of the enemy's main forces' and, in his belief that lightly equipped columns could defeat the Japanese, he underestimated them as an enemy.<sup>35</sup> However, his influence with Churchill resulted in one-sixth of all British infantry in Southeast Asia being 'locked up in LRP formations suitable only for guerilla [sic] warfare.'<sup>36</sup> To Kirby, Wingate's ideas represented an egregious misdirection of scarce manpower and resources, based upon shaky concepts, imposed upon the British Army in Southeast Asia largely by Churchill.

These complaints were echoed by Slim in *Defeat into Victory*. Slim was candid about his clashes

of personality with Wingate, summarising him as a ‘strange, excitable, moody creature’ and giving the reader several opportunities to contrast Wingate’s histrionics with his own calm self-assurance.<sup>37</sup> However, the conqueror of the Japanese in Burma was critical of Wingate as military thinker also. He opened by dismissing Gideon Force - which had consisted of regular troops commanded by British officers - as ‘*Shifra* or brigands’ and by doubting whether a repeat in Burma would work ‘against a tougher enemy and in country not so actively friendly.’<sup>38</sup> Wingate was later described as ‘strangely naive when it came to the business of actually fighting the Japanese’, an enemy who would not be scared into retreating by threats to their rear, but would have to be defeated in battle, Wingate’s forces being too small and lightly-equipped to achieve this.<sup>39</sup> This was demonstrated by *Longcloth*, an operation in which a thousand men failed to return from behind Japanese lines, which had ‘no immediate effect on Japanese dispositions or plans’ and provided a ‘costly schooling’ in jungle fighting and air supply: its only tangible value was as propaganda and a slight rise in British confidence in fighting the Japanese in the jungles of Burma.<sup>40</sup> However, Wingate would not accept this and – two ranks subordinate to Slim - repeatedly threatened to report Slim to Churchill.<sup>41</sup>

In his chapter on ‘lessons learned’, Slim berated the plethora of special forces formed by the British in the Second World War, claiming that ‘Any well-trained infantry battalion should be able to do what a commando can do; [in Burma] they could and did’ and arguing that special operations in future should be limited to small parties carrying out sabotage, subversion and assassination, on the lines of the Special Operations Executive (SOE): ‘Private armies...are expensive, wasteful and unnecessary’, a drain on manpower leeching the best personnel away from units having to fight the enemy’s main armies in battle.<sup>42</sup> Kirby and Slim agreed broadly, therefore, that Wingate foisted an ‘unsound’ form of warfare upon British forces in Southeast Asia principally via the patronage of high-level figures, and a degree of bitterness over this is apparent from both their works. Slim also demonstrated animosity towards ‘special forces’ in general, as a drain and diversion from forces

intended to destroy the enemy's main armies in battle.

By this time, the late 1950s, literature had been published suggesting that Wingate had been courting controversy ever since his time in Palestine, in particular, *Wingate's Phantom Army* by Wilfred Burchett (1946) and *Gideon goes to War* by Leonard Mosley. Burchett's politics must be considered in any reading of *Wingate's Phantom Army*: a journalist and a lifelong Marxist, Burchett spent most of the 1950s and 60s in North Korea and North Vietnam, and was effectively exiled from his native Australia, as a traitor, for tricking Australian prisoners into participating in communist propaganda through a combination of blackmail and posing as a journalist conducting 'interviews' wherein they were induced into condemning their government or confessing to 'war crimes'; he was a lifelong apologist for the communist regimes in North Korea and Bulgaria.<sup>43</sup> Burchett portrayed Wingate as a kindred spirit, anti-imperialist and anti-British, and added to the existing controversy the suggestion that Wingate's politics were not only a major cause of friction with his colleagues, but lay at the heart of a quasi-revolutionary mission which framed his military operations. In Palestine, Burchett alleged, Wingate almost single-handedly turned the tide of the Arab revolt, against obstruction from an anti-Semitic British High Command. Later, Wingate saved Haile Selassie and Ethiopia from attempts upon them by 'international sharks...racketeers and stock market strategists' firstly through encouraging the Emperor to appeal directly to 'the people of England, America and China' and, secondly, by seizing and transforming previously half-hearted and inept British attempts to stimulate guerrilla warfare in Ethiopia.<sup>44</sup>

Mosley also presented a Wingate at odds with the rest of the British Army: he had Wingate dismiss General Headquarters, Jerusalem, as 'a gang of anti-Jews', and implied that the passivity of timid Jewish politicians and the Islamophilia of the British was condemning Jewish settlers on the frontiers of Palestine, 'with nothing but a few rook rifles per settlement' to massacre until Wingate galvanised them onto the offensive and shamed the British authorities into supporting them.<sup>45</sup> Also

echoing Burchett, Mosley portrayed Wingate as rescuing Haile Selassie from a British colonial establishment which half-welcomed the Italian occupation of Ethiopia and treated him with supercilious dismissiveness until Wingate launched an assault upon the staff in Khartoum.<sup>46</sup> The implication of both these works is that Wingate was a maverick and an ‘outsider’, fighting the ‘establishment’ from the early days of his career.

That the ‘establishment’ might be extracting retribution via the published record was argued in the 1960s and 70s by Tulloch, Mead and Thompson. Derek Tulloch had been a close friend of Wingate since their time at the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich, in 1920-22, and served as his Brigadier, General Staff (Chief of Staff) on *Thursday*. Tulloch had been consulted by the authors of the *Official History*, and, according to Mead, was growingly disturbed by its tone, particularly after Kirby became involved.<sup>47</sup> He had in his possession a large body of Wingate’s official papers - now added to those in the Imperial War Museum - and in 1972 produced his own account of Wingate in Burma, *Wingate in Peace and War*, based on these. That Tulloch was writing to defend a departed friend must be considered in reading this work, which revolves partially around an alleged conspiracy to cancel *Thursday*, instigated by the Supreme Allied Commander, Southeast Asia, Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, who allegedly preferred amphibious attacks directed at Singapore and Sumatra.<sup>48</sup> Once *Thursday* was launched, Tulloch claimed, Wingate planned to divert Chindit columns away from their initial mission, which was to support Chinese forces under the American General, Joseph Stilwell, advancing into central Burma in an attempt to restore land communications with China, and redirect them towards attacking the communications of the Japanese 15th Army, then engaged in its offensive against Imphal and Kohima, in what Tulloch called Wingate’s ‘Plan B.’<sup>49</sup> Tulloch therefore developed one major existing theme, the notion of ‘Wingate versus the establishment’ and suggested a new one, that his military prescience may have impacted upon the decisive battle of the Burma campaign.

In 1972, Tulloch asked Peter Mead to assist him with research and ‘advise what more could be done to correct the Official History’s assessment of Wingate.’<sup>50</sup> Mead was a Royal Artillery officer who had served with Tulloch on Wingate’s staff on *Thursday*, and later transferred to the Army Air Corps, finishing his career in 1964 as its Director, with the rank of brigadier. After Tulloch’s death in 1974, Mead continued his task of rebutting the *Official History*’s perceived calumnies against Wingate, and produced *Orde Wingate and the Historians* in 1987. As the title implies, this work was the first published historiography of Wingate, but much of it is a deliberate counterblast against the *Official History*. Upon reading the latter work in the 1970s, Mead dedicated himself ‘to unbend[ing] a piece of bent history.’<sup>51</sup> The central theme of Mead’s work was the existence of an official anti-Wingate ‘line to take’ originating shortly after Wingate’s death. Mead presented extensive evidence for this, but much of it was anecdotal, circumstantial and uncorroborated: for instance, Mead presented a story told him by Calvert, that Calvert had discovered in the War Office the minutes of a high-level meeting where it was decided ‘to discourage future officer intake [sic] from modeling themselves on Wingate’, because Wingate was ‘a divisive influence in the Army’, and also what he interpreted as derogatory comments made about the Chindit operations in Sandhurst and British Army Staff College training literature.<sup>52</sup> Mead’s overview of the existing literature was thorough but slanted, with anything less than hagiography being viewed as under the influence of the ‘conspiracy’, even the broadly sympathetic, but balanced, works by Sykes and Shelford Bidwell.<sup>53</sup> However, alongside this was some interesting original research, in which Mead demonstrated from documentary evidence that some senior officers were, indeed, obtuse and resistant about Wingate’s ideas and also discovered the testimony of certain Japanese senior officers to the impact of *Thursday* upon their Imphal-Kohima offensive, apparently available to Kirby and his co-authors and, apparently, ignored by them.<sup>54</sup> The principal value of Mead’s work, therefore, was in presenting the first historiography of the Wingate controversy and in presenting some new documentary evidence, albeit

limited.

To further the aim of 'restoring' Wingate's reputation, Mead enlisted the support of perhaps Wingate's highest-placed and most powerful posthumous supporter - Sir Robert Thompson. Thompson served throughout the Second World War with the Royal Air Force (RAF), including as an air liaison and forward observation officer on both Chindit operations and later became a globally respected expert on counterinsurgency, in which capacity he advised the administration in Malaya during the communist guerrilla insurgency of 1948-60 and the Nixon White House in the latter stages of the Vietnam War; his *Defeating Communist Insurgency* is still regarded as a seminal work in this field.<sup>55</sup> Although he had written the foreword to Tulloch's book, Thompson did not, apparently, read the *Official History* until 1977, at Mead's suggestion. After doing so, he accepted Mead's argument that official recognition and, by implication, correction of perceived inaccuracies in the *Official History* would be the only means of settling the controversy. They subsequently presented the Cabinet Office with a suggested appendix, drafted by Mead, pointing out the alleged errors in the *Official History* and referring the reader to Sykes, Tulloch or Mead for guidance: their request that this be pasted into all copies of Volume III of the *Official History* has yet to be granted.<sup>56</sup> Thompson, thereafter, was an outspoken defender of Wingate in print and on television, and his memoirs, *Make For the Hills*, published in 1989, contained five chapters, nearly a quarter of the book, devoted to the Chindit operations and an extended assessment of Wingate. Thompson claimed that Wingate was first to realise that air supply could grant British forces superior relative mobility to the Japanese in the jungle and also, more contentiously, that he advocated close air support of troops fighting on the ground in the face of some apparent resistance from the RAF. He also claimed that Wingate was alone in advocating an overland offensive into northern Burma from India. Thompson's core argument was that resentment against Wingate, culminating in the 'hatchet job' of the *Official History*, came largely in reaction to Wingate's uncompromising and unsettling personality and the radicalism of his military



ideas, which others in India simply did not understand.<sup>57</sup> Thompson was unequivocal about Wingate's historical significance: after presenting his assessment of the Chindit contribution to Imphal and Kohima - that it was a key factor in the Japanese defeat, and might have been greater, with more resources - Thompson commented that every time he saw the photograph of Slim and his Corps Commanders being knighted on the field of Imphal after the battle, 'I see the ghost of Wingate present. He was unquestionably one of the great men of the century.'<sup>58</sup> Thompson's Wingate was, therefore, a misunderstood hero maligned by military Luddites.

A central message conveyed by several key works in the literature, then, is that Wingate aroused such strong feelings during his lifetime that some of the disputes he engaged in continued decades after his death. Numerous authors portray Wingate taking on a perceived 'military establishment', which, by the 1960s, was personified by S Woodburn Kirby, although Wingate's clashes with authority apparently began years before they met. Moreover, this 'establishment's' principal objection to Wingate was that he presented new forms of warfare challenging accepted ideas, a view confirmed, apparently, by Kirby and Slim. It follows from this that investigating the nature of those ideas might provide some indication of why Wingate was such a controversial figure: however, there appears to be disagreement among the few investigating them.

*Previous work on Wingate's military ideas*

**The operation was, in effect the old cavalry raid of military history on the enemy's communications, which, to be effective against a stout-hearted opponent, must be made in tactical co-ordination with a main attack elsewhere.**

**- Field Marshal Viscount Slim, commenting on Operation Longcloth<sup>59</sup>**

**From a point of view of statecraft, you do not try to make heroes of**

**guerrillas.... [B]ecause if you do, every young man wants to copy that revolutionary or guerrilla. What you must do is give all the kudos to your regular army, just like the Tsar did on the retreat from Moscow...**

**- Brigadier Michael Calvert <sup>60</sup>**

**[A] masterful description of manoeuvre warfare...**

**- General Sir Michael Rose, on Calvert's Prisoners of Hope<sup>61</sup>**

There seems to be little agreement even among Wingate's own colleagues and contemporaries as to where his military ideas and practice fit. Kirby described the Chindits as guerrilla forces; to Fergusson, the proud Highlander, Wingate was a leader of irregular forces in the tradition of Robert the Bruce and Bonnie Prince Charlie, while the novelist John Masters, who was Brigade Major, then acting commander of 111th Brigade on the second Chindit operation, claimed specifically they were based on the Long Range Desert Group.<sup>62</sup> Subsequent authors can be divided broadly into those who view Wingate as a leader of guerrilla irregulars, those who see him as attempting to wage guerrilla operations with specially trained regular troops, and those, usually military officers, writing in staff college papers or publications based upon them, who attempt to project military doctrine of their own time onto Wingate's operations, with Wingate portrayed as 'pioneering' said doctrine. Among the 'Wingate as guerrilla' school, Michael Elliot-Bateman placed Wingate firmly in the context of 'people's war' while Robert Asprey and David Shirreff also described Wingate purely as a leader of irregulars.<sup>63</sup> Yet, Otto Heilbrunn, John Terraine and John W Gordon placed Wingate firmly in the 'special forces' camp, Heilbrunn in particular seeing him as one of several commanders of the Second World War creating special units to execute guerrilla-style warfare deep in the enemy's rear.<sup>64</sup> This has some support from the official historian of British airborne forces, Lieutenant Colonel Terence Otway, who treated *Thursday* as a massive and protracted airborne operation.<sup>65</sup> Of those seeing Wingate as a pioneer of 'advanced' forms of warfare, Major Luigi Rossetto of the Canadian Army argued specifically against the 'Wingate as guerrilla' school, claiming that Wingate was attempting a

practical application of Basil Liddell Hart's 'Theory of the Indirect Approach'; Robert Lyman's military biography of Slim, from 2004, also attempted to place the Chindit operations in the context of Slim's wider application of a form of 'indirect approach'.<sup>66</sup> Conversely, Major John Atkins, another British Army officer, has contended that Wingate pioneered 'nonlinear noncontiguous military operations', an apparent staple of post 1990s American military doctrine.<sup>67</sup> It appears, therefore, that there are multiple interpretations of Wingate's military ideas and practice, and with little agreement between them.

The closest to a consensus falls among those who portray Wingate as a guerrilla leader. Elliot-Bateman's anthology, *The Fourth Dimension of War*, was produced in 1970, against the background of the Vietnam War. His keynote essay dwelt upon how Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* had influenced 'people's war', by which he meant explicitly the collapse of enemy resistance via a mixture of selective military action, guerrilla warfare, espionage and subversion as, he argued, had been practiced by Mao Tse-tung in the 1930s and 40s and Vo Nguyen Giap between then and 1970.<sup>68</sup> Wingate's operations in Ethiopia and Burma, and his theory of long-range penetration, were presented as examples of Sun Tzu's concept of *cheng* and *ch'i*, sometimes translated as 'ordinary' and 'extraordinary' force; as Elliot-Bateman explained it: '[T]he extraordinary or indirect force (known as the 'ch'i' force) act where and when their blows are not anticipated, while the normal force (known as the 'cheng' force) fixes or distracts the enemy'; depending upon circumstances, either may be the decisive force, but Elliot-Bateman clearly endorsed Sun Tzu's exhortation to 'use the normal force to engage; use the extraordinary to win.'<sup>69</sup> While guerrillas could act in either role, Elliot-Bateman argued that Gideon Force and the Chindits represented a *ch'i* force in action, with the rest of Slim's forces in Burma being the *cheng*.<sup>70</sup> However, there were differences: Wingate's operations involved infiltrating the enemy rear with specialist regular troops, whereas 'classical' guerrilla warfare involved raising the penetration force from the local populace; moreover, whereas

‘classical’ guerrilla forces required the unqualified support of the majority of the local populace, long-range penetration forces did not.<sup>71</sup> Whether Wingate encountered the ideas of Sun Tzu, perhaps via the 1910 translation by Lionel Giles, is unknown, and, in the absence of any direct evidence, speculation is all that is possible.

Robert Asprey published *War in the Shadows* in 1975 with a similar remit to Elliot-Bateman: ‘to explain the Vietnam war to American readers in the historical terms of guerrilla warfare.’<sup>72</sup> Asprey, too, assessed Wingate as a guerrilla commander, but was perhaps more prosaic than Elliot-Bateman, providing a highly critical narrative of Wingate’s operations (and his behaviour), concluding by contrasting what he called the ‘qualitative’ ideas of Wingate with the ‘saturation’ approach of TE Lawrence, a distant relative of Wingate to whom this thesis will return. Asprey did not explain his terms and definitions, but it can be inferred from his text that he understood Wingate’s approach to centre upon small units of hand-picked and highly-trained men, striking at key targets, while Lawrence aimed at infesting enemy-held areas with as large a number of partisans as possible, to pin and distract the maximum number of enemy troops.<sup>73</sup>

David Shirreff’s *Bare Feet and Bandoliers*, from 1995, is the only published book-length history of Wingate’s operations in Ethiopia. Shirreff did not theorise about the origins of Wingate’s ideas, but he was unequivocal that Wingate was attempting a guerrilla war using local irregulars, comparing the Ethiopian ‘patriots’ with the Spanish guerrillas of the Peninsular War of the 1800s and Lawrence’s Arabs. He argued that guerrillas were used most effectively to attack enemy lines of supply; cooperation with regular forces usually impaired them, but ‘the most effective patriot forces were those which had a hard core of regulars’, Shirreff contending that Wingate’s aim was to insert just such a ‘hard core’ consisting of Gideon Force, which consisted of two battalions of Ethiopian and Sudanese regular troops under British officers.<sup>74</sup> These authors portray Wingate as a new kind of military leader, attempting to create ‘extraordinary’ forces, based upon guerrillas organised around

a smaller number of specialist regular troops, to wage a protracted campaign in the enemy rear.

The second group of authors has chosen to concentrate on the ‘special force’ characteristics of Wingate’s operations, although they do not ignore the guerrilla aspects, either. Otto Heilbrunn’s main academic interest was guerrilla warfare, as practiced by communist movements in the 1950s and 60s, but his *Warfare in the Enemy's Rear*, from 1963 dealt with ‘The forces of the rear...the airborne troops, the Special Forces, the partisans and certain elements of the air forces’ in the Second World War.<sup>75</sup> Yet, he placed Wingate’s Chindits in *two* contexts, the first being the many ‘special’ units - Commandos, Long-Range Desert Group, Special Air Service - raised by the British in the Second World War, the second being the history of guerrilla warfare.<sup>76</sup> The Chindits were regular soldiers trained to use guerrilla methods, ‘they would harass the enemy in guerrilla fashion, they would weaken him by destroying his supply dumps and supply lines, and they would tie down his forces which would have to protect their communications...and hunt the intruders.’<sup>77</sup> However, Wingate moved the Chindits towards ‘conventional’ operations, aimed at seizing and holding ground, on Operation *Thursday*, which hinged upon Strongholds, fortified bases, supplied by air, from which Chindit columns sortied against Japanese communications in the early stages of the operation.<sup>78</sup> Heilbrunn argued that the impact of this was to reduce the number of Chindits available for aggressive operations, most of them now being tied up in defending the Strongholds. Overall, however, Wingate’s main contribution to military thought, according to Heilbrunn, ‘was his demonstration that professional soldiers could profitably adopt guerrillaism [sic] and we have drawn the conclusion that they [the Chindits] could have disorganized [sic] and demoralized [sic] the enemy, as they were ordered to, had they been given the chance.’<sup>79</sup>

John W Gordon’s essay on Wingate in the 1991 anthology, *Churchill's Generals*, placed Wingate even more firmly in the Special Forces camp, Gordon stating that:

To look at Wingate is to look at the British style of warfare. For, while virtually all major combatants in World War II experimented to some degree with so-called "special forces", it was the British experiment with them that holds pride of place both as to scale and expectations. Moreover...Orde Wingate must be seen as Winston Churchill's paramount theorist and most committed advocate of their use.<sup>80</sup>

Gordon traced the British interest in 'unconventional operations' from Lawrence to Churchill, who, in the post-Dunkirk period saw them as the best means to strike back at the Germans physically and, perhaps more important at that stage of the war, psychologically. Churchill, he claimed, was inspired by the 'conjunct operations' of the Napoleonic Wars and by the supposed extensive use of Special Forces by the Germans in the invasions of 1940, this leading to the creation of the Commandos and SOE.<sup>81</sup> Wingate created the largest special force of the war, with Churchill's backing, and developed a doctrine for its use; however, 'The units...would not be made up of guerrillas, with their free and easy ways, but of soldiers acting with the discipline, training and reliability of regular formations.'<sup>82</sup> Heilbrunn and Gordon therefore agree that Wingate attempted to use specialist regular units to wage guerrilla warfare behind enemy lines.

Interestingly, the one published analysis of Wingate's operations by a true peer - a British officer of similar age, rank and experience - concentrated exclusively on their 'regular' aspects. Lieutenant Colonel Terence Otway commanded 9th Battalion, the Parachute Regiment, in the Normandy landings of June 1944, where he won the Distinguished Service Order and lost most of his battalion storming the German gun batteries at Merville on 6 June itself. In 1951, he was commissioned to author the Official History of British airborne forces in the Second World War, this work being significant in presenting an assessment of Wingate, from another official historian, at odds with Kirby's. Otway's remit was to extract 'lessons learned' from the British use of airborne forces in the war, and *Thursday* was analysed accordingly, as an airborne operation, reliant on air support and supply. Otway began by commenting that *Longcloth* 'showed clearly the scope offered for applying new methods in the Burma theatre...prov[ing] that the power of supply and control [of behind the

lines operations] was limited only by the number of aircraft and trained crews available.<sup>83</sup> There followed a narrative of the planning and execution of *Thursday*, stressing its air aspects - air supply, casualty evacuation, close air support, construction of airfields in hostile territory by airborne engineers - and also of the Stronghold concept. Otway emphasised the operation's commencing with air landings, resulting in three brigades 'embedded behind the enemy's lines and more or less at the centre of four Japanese divisions'.<sup>84</sup> Subsequent operations by these brigades created a 'clamp' upon Japanese communications in northern Burma, undone when the Chindits were ordered north to support Stilwell.<sup>85</sup> Otway evidently did not view the Chindits as a purely guerrilla force, his narrative emphasising the fierce, protracted battles taking place around some of the Strongholds, and the role of close air support by the Air Commando in inflicting mass destruction upon the Japanese. In Otway's professional opinion, the Chindits were an air-inserted all arms main force unit capable of major engagements inflicting heavy casualties upon the Japanese.<sup>86</sup> Moreover, they were successful in this role, Otway concluding that:

The main lesson that emerged from these operations was that Wingate's theories on Long Range Penetration...had proved correct in detail...His force had gnawed a hole in the entrails of three Japanese divisions which had weakened them to such an extent that their eventual collapse was complete.<sup>87</sup>

Moreover, *Thursday* tested concepts useful in future airborne operations. To Otway, therefore, Wingate was a successful theoretician and practitioner of airborne warfare.

Another interpretation of Wingate's ideas was presented by Luigi Rossetto in 1982, in his *Major General Orde Charles Wingate and the Development of Long-Range Penetration*, the published version of his master's thesis for the Royal Military College of Canada, completed in 1967. Rossetto contended that Wingate's concept of long-range penetration was an offshoot of Basil Liddell Hart's 'strategy of the indirect approach', defeating the enemy by following the line of least resistance to his

most vulnerable areas, there to 'dislocate' his forces from their command, control and supply.<sup>88</sup> There is some historical evidence to support this idea. Wingate and Liddell Hart met in 1938 and corresponded for some time afterwards, Wingate sending Liddell Hart copies of his training notes and memoranda for his operations in Palestine, and Liddell Hart providing Wingate a letter of introduction to Churchill; Liddell Hart also claimed that Wingate's actions in Palestine had been influenced by his ideas.<sup>89</sup> Yet, Rossetto's work, in published form, was largely biographical and narrative and Wingate's military ideas formed one theme among several. However, Rossetto did present the hypothesis that Wingate was attempting a new form of warfare, combining the 'indirect approach' with his own ideas and resembling the Soviet concept of 'deep battle', associated most closely with Marshal Mikhail Tukachevsky. Therefore, according to Rossetto, authors who judge Wingate simply as a guerrilla leader or as a commander of Special Forces miss the point.<sup>90</sup>

This is original, but, for reasons discussed already, Rossetto had to rely upon the works of Mosley, Sykes, Slim and Kirby, papers available at the Public Record Office at the time, and some material on Palestine he obtained via contacts at RMCC to support his case. Inevitably, therefore, his hypothesis was based largely upon secondary sources, and he was unable to establish any *direct* link between Wingate's ideas and Liddell Hart's, apart from the latter's own testimony, nor did he demonstrate empirically how the Chindit operations might have been the 'indirect approach' in action. The possibility of a link between Wingate's military thought and Liddell Hart's had been touched upon by Shelford Bidwell in his history of *Thursday*, and dismissed: '[I]t must be said that Wingate was no "Liddell-Hartist". He was a "Wingate-ist": in his arrogance he admitted no mentor', an observation borne out by Wingate's never citing any source but himself for his ideas.<sup>91</sup> Nonetheless, the idea that there was a possible link between the indirect approach and Wingate's concept of long-range penetration had become a theme in the literature.

This theme was taken up by Robert Lyman, a former British Army officer, in *Slim, Master of War*,



in 2004. Lyman's claim was that it was Slim who continued the tradition of Liddell Hart into the war in Burma and beyond: 'Slim's real contribution to the art of war was to provide a practical bridge between the original theory of the "indirect approach" expounded by Major General JFC Fuller, Sir Basil Liddell Hart and other members of the "English" school of military strategy during the inter-war era, and the modern [post 1990s] doctrine of "manoeuvre warfare"', encapsulated by Lyman as 'the concentration of force to achieve surprise, psychological shock, physical momentum and moral dominance' and which he saw as demonstrated in Slim's victories at Imphal and Kohima in 1944 and Meiktila in 1945.<sup>93</sup> The role of Wingate in this was to organise 'long-range "hit and run" type operations [sic] behind enemy lines', in opposition to Slim's approach, which was to mass the greatest British force available against Japanese weakness.<sup>94</sup> Lyman clearly viewed Wingate as more of a media and propaganda creation than a serious strategist: in his view, *Longcloth* was carried out without strategic rationale and was a far from unambiguous vindication of Wingate's ideas, but was built into a major victory by GHQ India in order to boost morale. After this, the resources directed to Wingate by a grateful Churchill resulted in Wingate's ideas growing out of control, Wingate wishing to initiate large-scale operations on the Japanese lines of communication, yet 'Slim knew that Wingate could never hope to achieve the decisive advantage he sought. His aircraft-supplied troops, light in artillery and bereft of armour, would exhaust themselves quickly', something Lyman saw happening in the latter stages of *Thursday*, another operation launched without 'strategic imperative'.<sup>95</sup> Wingate was in 'strategic competition' with Slim and is, in some ways, the 'villain' of Lyman's book. The resources diverted to *Thursday*, 'a colossal military blunder', according to Lyman, were sources unavailable for Slim's planned decisive battle on the Imphal Plain, but Slim had no choice but to accede, due to pressure from Churchill; Wingate's 'arrogant assumption that nothing else in the region mattered, and...the offensive methods he used to obtain what he wanted' led to numerous clashes with the stoic Slim, who seems to have understood the role of LRP better than

Wingate himself.<sup>96</sup> If Rossetto's hypothesis is combined with Lyman's, this could be portrayed as a clash between two different interpretations of the indirect approach, were it not for Lyman's failure to establish empirically any link between Slim and Liddell Hart (and there is no record of any direct correspondence between the two at the Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives at King's College). Moreover, Lyman contradicted himself: in his introduction, Slim was clearly influenced by the 'English manoeuvrist' school of strategy, the indirect approach in particular, yet, later, he merely shows a 'common ancestry' with this 'school', arising from 'the demands of intelligent soldiering' rather than any theoretical input from elsewhere.<sup>97</sup> Moreover, his views on Wingate and LRP echoed largely those of Slim in *Defeat into Victory*, a work he inevitably cited heavily. Nevertheless, this is another work placing Wingate in a doctrinal context centering on Liddell Hart.

An alternative 'placing' of Wingate was made by another British Army officer, Major John Atkins, in a monograph produced for the US Army Command and General Staff College, arguing that operations in Burma pioneered another key concept of post-1990s military doctrine, expressed in modern US military jargon as 'nonlinear, noncontiguous operations'. Although no clear definition was provided, from the text it can be deduced that these are operations in which units move and fight in widely dispersed formations. Rather than forming a solid 'front', facing the enemy, they aim to strike him in depth, using seaborne or airborne movement, and air support and air supply in lieu of conventional artillery and communications respectively, as Atkins argued, the US military have attempted in the post-2001 'War on Terror.'<sup>98</sup> Wingate's Chindits pioneered this type of operation, claims Atkins, and, perhaps unsurprisingly for a student at US Army Staff College, he suggests Wingate's inspiration may have been the Confederate cavalry raiders of the American Civil War.<sup>99</sup> Like these forces, Wingate's initial aim was to fill the enemy rear areas with mobile units, which would concentrate to attack key enemy installations, then disperse and use their superior mobility to avoid retribution.<sup>100</sup> From the attachment of the Air Commando, these operations were supported

effectively by battlefield airpower, Atkins describing the accuracy of air attacks on *Thursday* as ‘superb’.<sup>101</sup> Overall, the Chindit operations ‘demonstrated that mobile, noncontiguous, nonlinear operations could succeed when supported by airpower’, setting an example soon followed by all British forces in Burma.<sup>102</sup> In contrast with Lyman, Atkins not only saw Wingate as playing a valuable part in the British victory in Burma, but as a forerunner of twenty-first century warfare.

The main impression gained from a survey of works trying to analyse Wingate’s military ideas is of lack of consensus, and repeated attempts to project the ideas and concepts of others onto his. To some authors, Wingate was a guerrilla commander, to others, an airborne commander or practitioner of manoeuvre warfare; he might also be a disciple of Robert the Bruce, Nathan Bedford Forrest or Basil Liddell Hart, according to source. Moreover, most of these works consist of interpretations of the published work either of Wingate’s peers and contemporaries or his biographers – and even those who knew him best could not agree on what he was trying to do or what spurred him to do it. This begs the question of what a survey of Wingate’s own papers and other contemporary documents might yield that is different from this, leading to the main theme of this thesis.

### *The thesis*

This thesis investigates the question, *how far did the military thought and practice of Major General OC Wingate part company with British Army doctrine of his time?* This melds the controversy over Wingate’s ideas with the debate over their origin. The principal contention of this thesis is that the answer to this question is ‘Not as much as the previous literature has argued’, that Wingate’s thought and practice do not represent any significant departure from British Army war fighting methods of his time, but derived from a number of methods and practices prevalent in the Army of the period, and which were utilised as part of their military strategy by several British theatre commanders.

Methodology was straightforward, consisting of establishing the strategic situation faced by

British forces in the theatres where Wingate was deployed and the 'official' British strategic and operational solutions to this, followed by examining Wingate's proposals, allowing comparison and contrast. This entailed a survey of Wingate's papers in the Imperial War Museum and British Library and papers and correspondence held in other collections. Alongside this went a review of official British government and military papers, principally in the National Archives at Kew and the Churchill Archive at Cambridge, in order to ascertain the state of British Army doctrine for the span of Wingate's career, 1922 to 1944, alongside its approach to operations in this period. This was supplemented by interviews with a number of former Chindits and, most importantly, Sir Douglas Dodds-Parker, who served as Wingate's staff captain in Sudan and Ethiopia in 1940-41, before going on to become a senior operative with SOE and a minister in the Conservative government of 1951-1956. The thesis therefore combines published and unpublished material, including a higher proportion authored by Wingate himself than hitherto, with primary source oral testimony from contemporaries, at least one of them a significant practitioner of unorthodox warfare himself.

From this, a different pattern has emerged than found in material published hitherto. There appears to be no single discrete model for Wingate's operations, no 'mould' into which they can be neatly fitted. Rather than being identifiable as distinct guerrilla, airborne or special forces, Wingate's long range penetration operations combined all three methods, relying upon a core of lightly-armed regular forces, some inserted by air in later operations, cooperating with local irregulars and supported liberally by airpower, operating against vital targets in the enemy rear, thus forcing him to disperse his strength and be destroyed in detail, either by Allied heavy forces or LRP forces themselves. Wingate's ideas evolved organically from his time in Palestine onwards, and had multiple roots. His military experience was gained exclusively in or around Britain's imperial possessions in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. The British Army of the time specialised in the 'small wars' prevalent in these areas, and had developed coherent operational practices involving all-arms columns

penetrating rapidly into enemy territory, and, as early as the 1920s, was experimenting with air supply and close air support of these columns. There was also a long-established practice of using locally recruited volunteers, under British officers, for scouting and ambush work in territory the enemy thought safe. None of these ideas were new, and were all apparent in Wingate's operations.

The use of combined-arms columns operating in cooperation with local irregulars was extended into operations against regular armies from 1917 onwards, most notably by Wingate's distant - and much-loathed - relative, TE Lawrence. Lawrence was one of the inspirations for the doctrine for directing armed resistance in Axis-occupied territory devised in 1939 by Lieutenant Colonel Colin Gubbins, then with the MI(R) covert operations organisation of the British War Office, and applied by G(R) - an offshoot of MI(R) - in planning for Ethiopia. It was this operation that Wingate took over in late 1940, and his campaign in Ethiopia was based clearly upon his own interpretation of the existing doctrine, modified by conditions he discovered there. Wingate's writings indicate that the operational concept he developed subsequently, long range penetration, was rooted explicitly in what happened in Ethiopia, and also that he intended to apply this model in Burma until conditions there modified it further. Wingate's operational thought and practice was therefore multi-causal and evolving constantly; it also accorded with a number of other practices of the British Army of his time and before.

The structure of the thesis reflects this. The next chapter summarises British Army doctrine in the inter-war period in both 'small' and 'large' wars, and, in the case of the former, focuses on the evolution in thought from Major General Charles Callwell to Major General Charles Gwynne, authors of the two most influential works on this type of operation in this period. The following chapter summarises Wingate's experiences in Sudan, in 1928-1933, and its possible influence on what came after, before discussing Wingate's opinions of Lawrence. Chapter Four covers Wingate's time in Palestine, 1936-39, and demonstrates that Wingate's activities with the Special Night Squads were

far from the departure from British counterinsurgent methods that the literature sometimes made them seem, but actually formed an integral part of a British military strategy which proved highly successful, defeating the Arab revolt by 1939. That Wingate's thought and practice demonstrably fit into contemporary British strategy is also a theme of Chapter Five, which covers Wingate's operations in Ethiopia in 1940-41. The chapter demonstrates that the use of specialist forces to wage irregular and guerrilla warfare against Germany, Italy and their occupied territories was a cornerstone of British strategy in this period, principally because their expulsion from the Continent gave them little other option. Such forces were used also in North and East Africa for a number of reasons, not least of which was the enthusiasm of the British theatre commander, Wavell, for this kind of unit. The next two chapters deal with the first and second Chindit operations respectively, and demonstrate that the Chindit concept evolved organically from a model resembling the operations Wingate had commanded in Ethiopia, based upon the different geography, both physical and human, of Southeast Asia, the nature of the Japanese as an opponent, and the greater resources available. Indeed, it was due to the latter that Wingate's plans not only evolved, but escalated, from his original scheme, involving auxiliary operations combining small numbers of British troops with local partisans, to a plan to inflict decisive, theatre-level defeat upon the Japanese through a major air-land offensive. Wingate hoped to prove this final concept on Operation *Thursday*, the operation on which he was killed. The final chapter attempts to analyse and establish Wingate's true 'place' in British military history, based upon the new evidence in this thesis, before reviewing the literature in the light of this new assessment and suggesting avenues for further research. The thesis, therefore, centres upon the argument that Wingate presented a coherent, evolving model of warfare, derived from previous methods used by the British Army in extra-European operations, distilled through his own experience, and fitting into British strategy in the theatres where he was active, apart from a period at the end of this life.

It is essential, therefore, to establish the state of British Army 'doctrine' - presuming there was one - in the period of Wingate's career, in order to demonstrate just what Wingate was parting from or agreeing with. The next chapter will consist of a review of the relevant British military procedures and fighting instructions of the day, as planned for major wars and actually practiced in the colonial 'small wars' in which Wingate cut his teeth.

#### NOTES - CHAPTER ONE

1. Quoted in John Bierman and Colin Smith, *Fire in the Night: Wingate of Burma, Ethiopia and Zion* (London: Macmillan 2000), p.379

2. Julian Thompson, *The Imperial War Museum Book of the War in Burma 1942-1945* (London; Sidgwick & Jackson 2002), p.62

3. Yigal Allon, *The Making of Israel's Army* (London: Valentine, Mitchell 1980), pp.8-10; for Sharon's opinion of Wingate, see Brian Bond, *Liddell Hart: A Study of his Military Thought* (London: Cassell 1977), pp.247-248; for Dayan's, see in particular Moshe Dayan, *Story of My Life* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson 1976), pp.44-48 and Robert Slater, *Warrior Statesman: The Life of Moshe Dayan* (London: Robson 1992), p.47

4. See David Ben-Gurion, 'Our Friend: What Wingate did for us', *Jewish Observer and Middle East Review* No.27, September 1963, LHCMA File 15/3/311; Dayan, *Story of My Life*, pp.45-48

5. Colonel OC Wingate, 'The Ethiopian Campaign, August 1940 to June 1941', several copies held in the IWM Wingate Abyssinia Papers; the best published history of this operation is that by David Shirreff, *Bare Feet and Bandoliers: Wingate, Sandford, the Patriots and the part they played in the Liberation of Ethiopia* (London: Ratcliffe 1995); see also Wilfred Thesiger, *The Life of My Choice* (London: Collins 1987)

6. Wingate, 'Ethiopian Campaign', pp.1, 4-5, 14-15; Colonel OC Wingate, 'Appreciation of the Ethiopia Campaign', several copies held in the IWM Wingate Abyssinia Papers, pp.3-7, 10, 13-14

7. Vice Admiral the Earl Mountbatten of Burma, *Report to the Combined Chiefs of Staff by the Supreme Commander South-East Asia 1943-1945* (London: HMSO 1951), Section A, Para.5,

## Section B, Para.36

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9. Major General S Woodburn Kirby *et al*, *History of the Second World War, The War Against Japan, Volume III: The Decisive Battles* (London: HMSO 1961) [hereafter *OHJ3*]; Field Marshal Sir William Slim, *Defeat Into Victory* (London: Cassell 1956)

10. Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, pp.218-220; ‘LRP Groups - Comment on note of DSD by Colonel OC Wingate’, IWM Wingate Chindit Papers, Box I

11. Currently displayed in the Imperial War Museum, London

12. Wingate to Central Command, Agra, of 15 August 1942, IWM Wingate Chindit Papers, Box I; Dayan, *Story of My Life*, p.47; Philip Stibbe, *Return via Rangoon* (London: Leo Cooper 1995), p.19

13. Author’s interview with Sir Douglas Dodds-Parker, of G(R) and Special Operations Executive, and Wingate’s Staff Captain in East Africa, 25 August 2004; Wilfred Burchett, *Wingate’s Phantom Army* (London: Frederick Muller 1946), p.43; Michael Calvert, *Fighting Mad: One Man’s Guerrilla War* (London: Jarrold 1964), p.113; Stibbe, *Return via Rangoon*, pp.20-21

14. Sykes, *Wingate*, p.249; Thesiger, *Life of My Choice*, p.320

15. See Wingate, ‘Appreciation of the Ethiopia Campaign’, p.16, where he refers to General Sir Alan Cunningham as a ‘military ape’; see also Shelford Bidwell, *The Chindit War: The Campaign in Burma 1944* (London: Book Club Associates 1979), pp.38-44; Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, pp.218-219, 220; Thesiger, *Life of My Choice*, pp.319-320, 330, 332-333, 336, 349-350

16. Anonymous, ‘Narrative of Events: May to November, 1941’, IWM Wingate Abyssinia Papers, Box II

17. Tom Segev, *One Palestine, Complete: Jews and Arabs under the British Mandate* (London: Abacus 2000), pp.430, 587-588

18. Duncan Anderson, ‘Slim’, in John Keegan (Editor), *Churchill’s Generals* (London: Abacus 1999), pp.315-316; Julian Thompson, *The Imperial War Museum Book of War Behind Enemy Lines* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson 1998), pp.135-140, 179-180, 185, 256, 421, *War in Burma*, pp.60-68



19. Sir Robert Thompson, *Make for the Hills* (London: Leo Cooper 1989), pp.71-76; Derek Tulloch, *Wingate in Peace and War* (London: Macdonald 1972); Michael Calvert, *Prisoners of Hope* (London: Jonathan Cape 1952), especially pp.283-303; Peter Mead, *Orde Wingate and the Historians* (Braunton: Merlin 1987); David Rooney, *Wingate and the Chindits: Redressing the Balance* (London: Arms & Armour 1994)

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21. Luigi Rossetto, *Major General Orde Charles Wingate and the Development of Long-Range Penetration* (Manhattan, Kansas: MA/AH 1982); Colonel Prithvi Nath VSM, *Wingate: His Relevance to Contemporary Warfare* (New Delhi: Sterling 1990); the other passages cited are in Kirby, *OHJ*, pp.486-492; Calvert, *Prisoners of Hope*, pp.274-280; Mosley, *Gideon Goes to War*, pp.67-69, 126-131

22. For example, Royle, *Orde Wingate*, pp.118-119 for some of his findings, 332-333, 336 for his sources

23. Major OC Wingate, 'Sand-model lectures illustrating strategy and tactics of Ethiopian Campaign, Lecture No.1 - First Principles', G(R), 11 January 1941, IWM Wingate Abyssinia Papers, Box I, p.1

24. Kirby, *OHJ3*, p.223

25. R Thompson, *Make for the Hills*, p.73

26. Charles Rolo, *Wingate's Raiders* (London: George Harrap 1944), pp.18, 25

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## CHAPTER TWO

### THE DOCTRINAL BACKGROUND

**One point...is crystal clear: for whatever reasons, the British Army does not embrace a philosophy (for the want of a better word) which animates the actions of all soldiers...**

**- Brian Holden Reid, 1990<sup>1</sup>**

**[I]f an Army is to succeed, everyone in it must know the class of action other people on their right and left, or in front of or behind them, will take under certain circumstances. It is fatal not to work to a common doctrine...**

**- General Sir Philip Chetwode, 1923<sup>2</sup>**

#### *Introduction - Military Doctrine*

This chapter will establish the institutional context for Wingate's career, thought and practice. The central theme of this thesis is whether Wingate offered a model of warfare differing radically from that endorsed by the British Army of his time, and it is therefore crucial to establish whether the British Army of the period 1923 - the year Wingate was commissioned - to 1944, the year of his death, had a prescribed model for war fighting, officially approved and agreed upon by all, and whether Wingate departed from it. This chapter, therefore, examines whether the British Army of Wingate's day had a *doctrine*.

This task is made difficult by the British Army apparently shying away from formal, prescriptive military 'doctrine' until recently, there being no identifiable, single codified British military doctrinal document until 1989, and even then, this document's definition of doctrine was vague: 'Put most simply, doctrine is what is taught [consisting of] fundamental principles by which the military forces guide their actions in support of objectives.'<sup>3</sup> Other authors have been more explicit. Shelford

Bidwell and Dominick Graham defined doctrine as:

[T]he definition of the aim of military operations; the study of weapons and other resources and the lessons of history, leading to deductions of the correct strategic and tactical principles on which to base both training and the conduct of war...<sup>4</sup>

Colonel Trevor N Dupuy was even more prescriptive:

[Doctrine comprises] Principles, policies, and concepts which are combined into an integrated system for the purpose of governing all components of a military force in combat, and assuring consistent coordinated employment of these components. The origin of doctrine can be experience, or theory, or both....Doctrine is methodology and, if it is to work, all military elements must know, understand and respect it.<sup>5</sup>

To draw these strands together, 'doctrine' translates as 'teaching' and has been transferred from religious to political to military usage to denote any attempt to create a coherent, systematic way of doing things, usually taking the form of an officially endorsed set of recommended actions or behaviour for any given situation.<sup>6</sup> Doctrine acts as a bridge between theory and practice and is separate, yet interlinked with both: theory explains doctrine, practice enacts it. This leads to the first identifiable characteristic of British military doctrine: it has tended to be empirical rather than theoretical. Indeed, in discussing the history of 'doctrine' in the British Army, Colin McInnes and John Stone identified 'a traditional aversion in the British Army to theorising about war, and an organisational culture which emphasised "common sense"'.<sup>7</sup> This was taken for granted at the time under survey here: writing in 1930, Liddell Hart proposed that:

[W]hat seems to be far more important than abstract principles are practical guides....Yet the modern tendency has been to search for a "principle" which can be expressed in a single word - and then needs several thousand words to explain it. Even so, these "principles" are so abstract that they mean different things to different men, and, for any value, depend on the individual's own understanding of war....In contrast, certain axioms seem to emerge from a close and extensive study of war. These cannot be expressed in a single word, but they can be put in the fewest words necessary to be practical.<sup>8</sup>

This is not to imply that the British Army did not study and learn from experience: on the contrary, a wide variety of official pamphlets and unofficial but widely read and endorsed books and articles were published by the War Office, numerous headquarters and journals such as the *Army Quarterly* or the *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute* in the period 1918-1939; many of these will be cited below. The key is that rather than viewing ‘military doctrine’ as the link between theory and practice, it might, in the case of Britain in the interwar period, be more accurate to see it as the link between past military experience (or perceptions of it) and current military practice, and therefore as something developing organically over time.

There appear to be cultural reasons for this, in particular the image the British Army had of itself. In 1921, in the aftermath of victory in the First World War, Major FC Festing (later Field Marshal Sir Frank Festing) wrote that ‘Other armies may train successful armies in other ways, for armies adopt a discipline best suited to their national characteristics. But the British system has stood the test of war over and over again.’<sup>9</sup> The influence on British military practice of belief in ‘national characteristics’, that those of a certain ethnicity or culture will think, behave and react in certain, predictable ways, is a theme running through this thesis. Wingate, like many Europeans of his time, was explicitly of this view, this thesis citing numerous examples of his beginning or resting a case on the assumed national characteristics of the enemy and claiming that his methods met or exploited them. He was not alone in this attitude, a factor in Slim’s prescribed tactics against the Japanese being his interpretation of their previous behaviour.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, adapting operational and tactical methods to suit the ‘character’ of the enemy was common in ‘small wars’ and counterinsurgencies outside Europe, the very type of conflict in which Wingate acquired his operational experience, pre-1939. In the best-known contemporary work on this subject, Major General Charles Callwell discussed the different types of opponent faced by the British and other armies in such conflicts and how tactics



should be adapted to suit their favoured fighting style, and touched frequently upon 'national characteristics', for instance in discussing intelligence gathering ('The ordinary native found in theatres of war peopled by coloured races lies simply for the love of the thing, and his ideas of time, numbers and distance are of the vaguest...'), the danger of treachery and the world view and favoured tactics of hill tribesmen ('He is a fighter the world over, and always has been...[A]lthough once beaten, they take it like good sportsmen, hoping for better luck next time') and those living in jungles ('[T]hey have not the love of war for its own sake nor the sporting instincts...of the hill man...[I]t would be absurd to place the races of West Africa on the same platform as warriors with the Pathans and Gurkhas...').<sup>11</sup> Some argued that national characteristics applied also to major wars. In 1933, Wavell, then commanding 6<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade, suggested that such influences should be recognised in the form of a new branch of the War Office 'to study ourselves, our national characteristics and our reactions as a nation to military matters' in the same way the Intelligence Branch studied those of other countries, so they could form the basis of a coherent recruiting and training programme.<sup>12</sup>

David French sees the origins of the British attitude to doctrine as lying in the British perception of their own national character, which rejected intellectualising about practical matters such as war and politics as egregiously 'foreign', and saw pragmatism as separating the British character from the European. French illustrated this with the example of the British officer, observing *Wehrmacht* exercises, as late as 1939, commenting that German junior officers lacked imagination because they all came to essentially the same solution to the same tactical problem, 'What he failed to see was that this actually demonstrated that the German army possessed the inestimable advantage that its junior leaders had imbued a common understanding of their tactical doctrine.'<sup>13</sup> Belief that peoples acted in certain predictable ways, including in war, seems, therefore, to have been common among British Army officers of Wingate's time. Their interpretation of their own 'character' was that it embraced pragmatism and rejected abstract theorising.

Yet, the British Army of the inter-war period was also aware of the potential value of ‘doctrine’. In 1923, Lieutenant General Sir Philip Chetwode, General Officer Commanding in Chief (GOC in C) Aldershot Command, argued that ‘if an Army is to succeed, everyone in it must know the class of action other people on their right and left, or in front of or behind them, will take under certain circumstances. It is fatal not to work to a common doctrine...’<sup>14</sup> while in 1928, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Field Marshal Sir George Milne, demanded ‘We must have one doctrine throughout the Army.’<sup>15</sup> Moreover, the Army believed it had this doctrine: the 1920 *Field Service Regulations (FSR)* declared itself explicitly the British Army’s doctrine for land warfare, and in 1925, the future General Sir Henry Pownall, a gunner officer, reviewing the 1923 *FSR*’s chapters on artillery, welcomed it as the doctrine which the Royal Artillery lacked previously, while subsequent editions were identified as ‘doctrine’ in review articles in official publications, with the term ‘British Defence Doctrine’ being used in a review article in 1938, albeit in the context of a discussion of battlefield tactics.<sup>16</sup> It appears, therefore, that many influential British Army officers of the 1920s and 1930s not only believed that doctrine was important, but that they had one, centred upon *Field Service Regulations*. Consequently, given its apparent contextual importance, there follows an analysis of what *Field Service Regulations (FSR)* actually said, and how it developed over the inter-war period.

However, a contention of this thesis is that the British Army of Wingate’s time was not one army, but two. The army for which *FSR* was intended as ‘doctrine’ was organised, trained and equipped to execute major operations against other regular forces, presumably in Europe. The rest of the Army, throughout the inter-war period, continued the traditional role of fighting ‘small wars’ and police actions against irregular and tribal enemies in the Empire, particularly in India, the Middle East and Africa. It was in the context of this ‘Imperial’ army that Wingate gained his operational experience before 1939 and, as will be shown, it developed methods of its own that were extended into

operations against regular forces in North and East Africa in 1940-41, some of which Wingate furthered. Consequently, a summary of British methods in Imperial operations follows that of *FSR*.

*Field Service Regulations*

Without a continental commitment there was little reason to adopt the organization, training, equipment or doctrine necessary for meeting a threat in Europe....The training and equipment of the British army responded to the needs of policing the empire, not to European warfare.

- Elizabeth Kier<sup>17</sup>

[T]he periods between major European wars have not been characterised by inactivity or genuine peace: the army's job in the 1840s, 1890s or 1920s was not to prepare for the next war but to fight the current one.

- Hew Strachan<sup>18</sup>

Editions of *Field Service Regulations* were published in 1920, 1923-24, 1929 and 1935. The later editions - authored in 1929 by Major General CP Deedes and in 1935 by Major General Archibald Wavell - leaned heavily upon the 1920 Edition, authored by Colonel JFC Fuller and reflecting his widespread philosophical and intellectual interests, particularly his interpretation of Clausewitz.<sup>19</sup> The institutional background to these volumes was an army reverting to its pre-1914 role as a colonial police force. This role was likely to expand, given that, under the terms of the 1919 peace settlements, Britain added to an already global empire colonial territory of the defeated powers, mandated under the League of Nations. Indeed, after 1918, the idea grew within the Army that the First World War had been an aberration, a distraction from 'real soldiering' in the Empire, and unlikely to be repeated. In 1926, Milne described the war as 'abnormal' and opined that it would be unlikely that the British Army would ever fight another war in Europe, while as late as 1937, the Minister for the Co-Ordination of Defence, Sir Thomas Inskip, listed the creation of a continental expeditionary force third in the list of army priorities after the air defence of Great Britain and reinforcing Imperial garrisons.<sup>20</sup> There was, therefore, as of the 1920s through to the late 1930s, a view, prevalent in

official circles, that British forces would not be committed to another major land war in Europe.

Nevertheless, the experience of large-scale operations against regular forces in 1914-18 had, unsurprisingly, wrought irrevocable changes, particularly upon military thought. The most obvious manifestation of this was the literary output of a number of officers and ex-officers, of whom the best known are Liddell Hart and Fuller, both producing book-length works in print to this day. There were also papers published by these and many others in service journals, particularly *The Army Quarterly* and the *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*, as well as the various corps and regimental periodicals. At the practical level, senior serving officers including Bernard Montgomery, William Slim and John Dill disseminated their interpretations of the British experience in the First World War as instructors at training institutions such as the Staff Colleges at Camberley and Quetta (Wingate did not attend either, despite passing the entrance examination). There was, therefore, much literary speculation and debate on the lessons of the First World War.

This impacted on all the editions of *FSR*. Each edition began by discussing the role of the army, the chapter on ‘Military Policy and Plans’ in the 1920 edition paraphrasing Clausewitz’s definition of war as ‘*an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will.*’<sup>21</sup> The aim of force was to ‘rapidly influence the enemy people in the desired direction’ and ‘*the ultimate objective, which is the destruction of the enemy’s main forces, must always be held in view, and all other undertakings subordinated to this objective*’ unless ‘questions of policy’ resulted in lesser objectives being pursued.<sup>22</sup> The Army was therefore committed to defeating the enemy army in battle, after which its government, under pressure from its civilian populace, would sue for peace. *FSR 1920*, again echoing Clausewitz, stressed that the strategic outcome of a conflict hinged upon attacking the enemy’s ‘centres of gravity’, and that these attacks hinged on what was achievable at battlefield level: ‘The objective which appears most likely to lead to decisive results should, as a rule, be selected. At the same time the relative probabilities of tactical success must receive full consideration. A

strategical plan which ignores the probabilities of tactical success is foredoomed to failure', a proposition which may have been influenced by the British experience on the Western Front in 1914-18.<sup>23</sup> The 'doctrine' of the recently victorious British Army in the early 1920s was therefore oriented 'bottom-up': the prime objective was to destroy the enemy army in battle, the attainment of strategic aims hinging upon this. Although the 1929 *FSR* still advocated destroying the enemy army, the apocalyptic tone of 1920 was moderated in favour of a holistic approach, use of force forming part of a coherent scheme of coercion and deterrence also involving diplomatic and economic pressure, while the 1935 edition saw Wavell take this a stage further, moving away from the bloody simplicity of the battlefield and arguing that the state imposed its will upon others 'by employing part or all of the means of persuasion at its command. These...include diplomacy, economic influence applied in the form of financial or commercial restrictions...and, in the last resort, the use of armed forces...'; he implied also that political-strategic aims might be reached via manoeuvre, 'by so interrupting vital lines of supply and commerce as to deny him the means of conducting his national life...'<sup>24</sup>

At the battlefield level, *FSR* was non-prescriptive, as befits an army suspicious of abstract principles. All editions stressed they should be interpreted according to circumstance; while there were principles of war, these were not laws, but guidelines for action, based upon past experience.<sup>25</sup> These were first adumbrated by Fuller in the 1920 edition, and in the order given by Wavell in 1935, were:

- *A Fixed Aim*, with 'all effort...continually directed towards its attainment...and every plan or action must be tested by its bearing upon this end.'

- *Concentration* '[T]he greatest possible force - moral, physical and material - should be employed at the decisive time and place in attaining the selected aim or objective'

- *Co-operation*, not only of all parts of an army, but with the other services and with the civil

authority

- *Economy of force* 'A corollary of the principle of concentration is that of *economy of force* at less vital points [italics Wavell's]'

- *Security*, '[P]roviding adequate defence for vital and vulnerable points...so as to obtain freedom of action...'

- *Offensive Action*, which granted 'power to force the enemy to conform [to our will]'

- *Surprise*, the aim being to create 'a situation for which the enemy is unprepared...upset[ting] his plans and forc[ing] him to hurried and unconsidered action' via 'calculated stratagem devised to mislead...by an unexpected rapidity of movement or by action in an unsuspected place.'

- *Mobility* was a corollary to surprise, and consisted specifically of 'the power to move and to act more rapidly than the opponent.'<sup>26</sup>

At the heart of the interwar *FSRs* was belief in the primacy of human factors in war, particularly willpower, stated most explicitly in 1920:

Success in war depends more on moral than physical qualities. Neither numbers, armament, resources nor skill can compensate for lack of courage, energy, determination, and the bold offensive spirit which springs from a national determination to conquer. The development of the necessary moral qualities is, therefore, the first objective to be attained in the training of an army. Next in importance are organization and discipline...The final essential is skilful, resolute and understanding leadership.<sup>27</sup>

Belief in will, particularly the need for the British commander to impose his will upon the enemy commander's, was expected to shape the interpretation of *FSR*'s principles of war. While the 1929 and 1935 *FSRs* both still saw success in war as hinging upon willpower, they departed from the narrow view of 1920. The 1929 edition advocated the offensive as the best means of imposing British will upon the enemy, but practical reasons were given also:

A commander who decides to assume the offensive is able to select his points of attack; he is more likely to surprise his opponent, and to be able to develop superior force at the decisive place.... By attacking, he will often force the enemy to conform to his movements and will thus have taken the first step towards attaining the objective of a battle....<sup>28</sup>

Yet, Wavell's 1935 edition included a third volume, on operations and command of 'higher formations', which not only presented mobile operations as a possible alternative to the seeking of major battle, but suggested an awareness of a level of war above that of the battlefield but below that of the direction of the war, what would later be identified as the *operational level*.<sup>29</sup> In describing the need to pursue a fixed aim, it stated the need to 'dispatch...one or more military expeditions, the aim of which is to defeat enemy forces or to occupy places of strategical importance' which may include the enemy capital, points or areas furthering an economic blockade, or 'centres of his national effort', Wavell trying to instill the notion that such 'expeditions' could be coordinated to produce a strategic outcome.<sup>30</sup> He alluded also to manoeuvre, 'movement that aims at inducing or forcing [the enemy] into an unfavourable position' and could consist of 'attack or threat against the line of communications; a disposition of forces that threatens two or more of the enemy's vulnerable points and leaves him in doubt which is the real objective; the use of detachments to induce dispersion or prevent concentration', roles Wavell would assign to Wingate's Gideon Force in Ethiopia and the Chindits in Burma.<sup>31</sup> Attacks on enemy communications, Wavell argued, 'upset the equilibrium of the enemy commander', and may force him 'to surrender or fight at a disadvantage; or, by a threat to do so, to cause him to disperse his forces for their protection.'<sup>32</sup>

This is pertinent to this thesis in that Wingate can be shown firstly, to have understood the existence of this 'new' level of war also, and, secondly, because his operational thought and action were aimed largely at how to strike most effectively at the enemy's communications in order to 'upset his equilibrium', or, as Wingate put it, 'attack his plan'. Such ideas were being promulgated several years before Wingate came to prominence, as the 1935 *FSR* demonstrates. Consequently, while

‘battle’ remained at the heart of all editions of *FSR*, there was some evolution in the form it should take.

This becomes more apparent still in reviewing its recommendation of the best employment for each arm. *FSR 1920* saw battle as hinging upon infantry action at close quarters, with other arms, including tanks, supporting this.<sup>33</sup> However, by 1929, an army could only succeed through the broader cooperation of an explicitly combined arms approach: ‘It must...be the aim of every commander so to combine the efforts of the component parts of his force as to ensure that his infantry reached their objective in the best possible condition for engaging in close fighting.’<sup>34</sup> Infantry was ‘the arm which confirms the victory and holds the ground won’, but its vulnerability to defensive fire meant that its advance to close contact had to be covered by firepower from artillery and tanks, another point taken further in the 1935 edition, which recommended that plans for battle ‘should be made in terms of fire power rather than of men.’<sup>35</sup> As to how other arms might combine into the attack, the 1920 volume suggested that cavalry could ‘turn’ the enemy flank, prior to and away from the main battle, to raid communications and threaten lines of retreat, while principal tank roles were assisting the infantry, destroying enemy tanks and ‘to exploit a success’ (with no further detail provided) in that order, although commanders were advised to keep a reserve of tanks to ‘break up the enemy’s reserves, to complete the demoralization of his troops, and to disorganize his staff arrangements and communications’ following a breakthrough of the enemy front line.<sup>36</sup> By the 1930s, roles had evolved, reflecting technological change. The 1929 and 1935 editions commented on tanks that their attributes enabled them to ‘strike a blow not only against an enemy’s flanks, but also against his headquarters and rear services’, and the task of making ‘flank or rear attacks’ was added to the list given originally in 1920, these delivered by tanks supported by aircraft: one paragraph, plagiarising that on cavalry in the 1920 *FSR*, suggested that tanks and armoured cars could be directed around the enemy’s flanks to attack reserves, gun positions and headquarters.<sup>37</sup>



The British Army, therefore, from 1918 was clearly partial to the concept of mobile operations in the enemy's rear areas, provided it had the weaponry. However, this still lay firmly within an approach based upon battle, with mobile forces either supporting the battle or exploiting or finishing the situation battle created.

Battles would be fought to a single plan imposed via an autocratic, centralised system of command. In the 1920 *FSR*, the commander was to delegate to subordinates 'such powers as circumstances may render advisable. In these cases, the powers entrusted to each commander, and his sphere of action, will be clearly stated in written instructions when not defined by regulations.'<sup>38</sup>

By 1929, command philosophy had been modified: commanders allocated tasks to subordinates 'who, within their individual scope, will use their own initiative in arranging the methods by which they will perform them.' However, the 1929 *FSR* warned that 'delegation to a subordinate of undue liberty of action is as fatal an error as undue centralisation of authority' and while subordinates had to realise that 'to remain inactive from fear of accepting responsibility is worse than to err in choosing their course of action' and should try to foresee what needed to be done next at all times, nonetheless they should remain fixed to their commanders' intent, if not to the letter of his orders.<sup>39</sup> When it came to delegation of command authority, commanders were allowed to delegate upon subordinate commanders 'acting at a distance' - the definition was no clearer than this - 'such powers as he may consider advisable' but these should be stated in written instructions where not defined in regulations, thereby limiting a subordinate to following written orders.<sup>40</sup>

The 1935 edition brought a slight evolution, containing a new section on 'Operation Instructions', which allowed subordinate commanders to act on their own judgement, but warned that these were to be used sparingly; as with previous editions, under normal circumstances, should a subordinate commander encounter an unforeseen situation, he was required to report this and await new orders, although under other circumstances a subordinate could depart from orders but 'will be held

responsible for any failure that may ensue.<sup>41</sup> Action, therefore, would be controlled centrally, with subordinate commanders allowed limited freedom of action, operating within a 'master plan', controlled tightly from above. As will be shown below, in this respect, Wingate was fully in accordance with prevailing thought, his operations being executed as much to a 'master plan' as Montgomery's.

Moreover, all Wingate's proposed plans of action were rooted in widely held British assumptions about the opposing force's 'national characteristics', and aimed at imposing his will upon them and so controlling their behaviour. In Palestine, he aimed explicitly at producing a certain state of mind not only in the Arab insurgents, but upon their leadership and civilian supporters also. In Ethiopia, he aimed again at breaking Italian morale, which proved a tougher task for him than it was for the British Army in the Western Desert at the same time. In Burma, his aim was to disrupt and distract the Japanese planning process and, in doing so, create a situation Allied armies could exploit. Another echo of *FSR* is that his main instrument in all three campaigns was infantry, albeit with special organisation and training, but drawn generally from existing units - indeed, and surprisingly, given the claims of some authors, Wingate expressed misgivings about Commandos and other 'special forces' in his official correspondence from Burma. In Palestine, Wingate's Special Night Squads were a purely infantry force, albeit with at least one instance of *ad hoc* cooperation with aircraft; by the second Chindit operation, infantry units formed part of a combined arms approach utilising airpower for mobility and close support. An argument could be constructed that Wingate's operations can be shown to be rooted in the doctrinal concepts and recommendations of *FSR*, with which he lived all his professional life.

However, *FSR* recommended its various doctrines should be interpreted in the light of experience. In Wingate's case, his experience was gleaned in the 'other' British Army, a long way from Europe, in operations in a far-flung Empire. Therefore, an overview of how the Army went about its business

in ‘small wars’ in Africa and Asia is a crucial tool for placing Wingate more firmly in the context of his time and place.

*‘Frontier Warfare’*

A common theme in studies of British colonial operations of the inter-war period is the apparent absence of any consistent ‘doctrine’ guiding them. Tim Moreman and Tim Jones, for instance, emphasised the pragmatism and organic evolution of ideas and practice that shaped the British approach to this type of campaign.<sup>42</sup> Others, however, claim to detect some consistency: Hew Strachan and John Pimlott both argued that British ‘small wars’ were characterised by a number of discernable characteristics: restraint in the use of military force, which was always viewed as a last resort, plus a recognition that the insurgents may have genuine grievances which excessive force might make worse.<sup>43</sup> Edward Spiers noted that while improvisation was the keynote of all Imperial campaigning, due to the variety of terrain, climates and enemies, in most cases, the aim was to bring the usually poorly-armed enemy to battle, where they could be destroyed by superior British firepower.<sup>44</sup> There is, therefore, some disagreement over whether there is any consistent and identifiable pattern to British colonial operations in the interwar period.

Yet, a survey of contemporary literature, official and unofficial, and of British activity in these ‘small wars’, reveals certain methods, practices and attitudes recurring throughout. It also suggests that some claims made in the literature must be nuanced. In larger colonial conflicts of this period, or those in vital strategic areas, the British Government did attempt to find and treat with moderate elements among any insurgents; however, it seems to have had little compunction about using force to get them to listen. Moreover, many officers evidently paid no more than lip service to notions of restraint or understanding the enemy’s cause, consistently advocating aggressive and sometimes ruthless responses to disorder, the best known being the Amritsar incident of April 1919, when

Brigadier General Reginald Dyer ordered Gurkha troops to open fire on Indian rioters, killing 379.<sup>45</sup>

The claim that insurgencies persisted because the authorities were not harsh enough was recurrent, even after the shock-wave of Amritsar, and was made not just by Wingate in Palestine but also by several others, including senior officers. Indeed, many officers apparently held the Hobbesian view that anti-British insurgency constituted a criminal revolt against lawful authority - dismissed variously as 'banditry', 'dacoity' and, later in the period, 'terrorism' – or arose from ignorant, excitable natives coming under the malign influence of populist agitators such as the 'Mad Mullah' of Somaliland, Saya San in Burma in 1931 or Haj Amin al-Husseini, the Mufti of Jerusalem, in 1929-1939.<sup>46</sup>

Such attitudes were expressed most lucidly in one of the most oft-mentioned books in British military literature, *Small Wars: Their Principles and Practice*, by Colonel (later Major General) Charles Callwell, published in three editions between 1896 and 1906.<sup>47</sup> This work seems to have influenced not only at least two generations of colonial soldiers, including, possibly, Wingate, but also approved Army doctrine, the chapter on 'Warfare in Undeveloped and Semi-Civilised Countries' in the 1929 edition of *FSR*, for instance, appearing to be virtually an unattributed summary of Chapters VI-VIII of the 1906 edition of Callwell.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, given that Callwell intended to provide a digest of strategy and tactics in colonial warfare, he reflected prevailing opinion in the Army as much as influenced it, and many of the tactical and operational methods he described and approved can be observed in practice in Imperial operations in 1918-1939.

Many of these are described in another oft-cited work, *Imperial Policing*, published in 1939 by Major General Charles Gwynn; Gwynn's work not only provided narratives of colonial operations in 1919-1939, but also offers a useful digest of prevailing British Army thought in this field as it stood at the end of this period. Perhaps the major evolution from Callwell's work is that Gwynn argued that Callwell's model of 'small wars' - military campaigns aimed at defeating the insurgents in battle - now represented but one end of a spectrum of counter-insurgency also comprising the restoration of civil

order under martial law, or supporting police in the face of a threatened breakdown in order: indeed, Gwynn opened the main body of his text with a case study of the Amritsar episode as ‘how not to do things’, wherein he made little attempt to conceal his disgust at what had happened there, and his low opinion of Dyer.<sup>49</sup> The theory of ‘small wars’ therefore evolved throughout the inter-war period, based on well-known and well tested principles and the lessons of experience.

This is pertinent to this thesis, in that Callwell, Gwynn and others developed a form of warfare different, in many key respects, from that derived from the experience of European wars and digested in *FSR*, and it was in the context of *this* form of warfare that Wingate’s ideas developed. However, ‘Imperial Policing’ or ‘Frontier Warfare’ did share some ground with *FSR*. In particular, some consistency with *FSR*’s recommendations for major wars was expressed in the belief that military action should be aimed at crushing the enemy’s will under that of the British commander. This was because a common theme in British ‘small wars’ thought, from Callwell to Wingate, was that their opponents were unsophisticated and excitable ‘savages’ or criminal miscreants who could be overawed or, if necessary, terrorised into recognising the folly of defying the Empire. Callwell was firm that ‘boldness and vigour’ were essential because ‘The lower races are impressionable. They are greatly influenced by a resolute bearing...’, caution being interpreted as weakness being another recurring claim throughout this period.<sup>50</sup>

As with Fuller, two decades later, Callwell advocated what was effectively a tactical solution to strategic problems: a swift offensive, aimed at bringing the insurgents to battle, would shatter their resolve and deter would-be allies and imitators, as ‘the impression made upon semi-civilised races...by a bold and resolute procedure’, was always great.<sup>51</sup> Such action would also reduce the risk of the Army becoming involved in ‘desultory’ and protracted operations involving guerrilla warfare, in which the locals had the advantage.<sup>52</sup> Emphasis upon will and resolve was redoubled in dealing with ‘insurrections’ - politically motivated urban uprisings, distinct from ‘open’ warfare against tribal

warriors or Boer guerrillas - 'where the object is not only to prove to the opposing force unmistakably which is the stronger, but also to inflict punishment on those who have taken up arms.'<sup>53</sup> Here, even wholesale destruction of villages and hostage-taking were warranted and, although Callwell recommended such measures be sparing and carefully targeted, he tacitly acknowledged that 'severity' was sometimes necessary *pour encourager les autres*: 'Uncivilised races attribute leniency to timidity...fanatics and savages...must be thoroughly brought to book and cowed or they will rise again.'<sup>54</sup>

Gwynn was less sanguinary than Callwell, but was also firm that swift, decisive action by the Army, under conditions of martial law, represented an economy of effort, his ideal also being to bring a situation under control before it could dissolve into guerrilla warfare, and that threatened rather than overt violence minimised the need for larger deployments and higher levels of force. However, while unequivocal that captured insurgents should be dealt with severely and summarily, Gwynn was less enthusiastic than many about collective punishments and reprisals against the communities supporting them, arguing that these were likely to prevent a willing acceptance of lawful authority.<sup>55</sup> The Army's aim in this type of operation was, therefore, to force rebellious natives to respect British authority, an analogue to *FSR*'s emphasis upon imposing British will upon the opposition. Arguments for boldness, aggression and 'severity' towards insurgents recur throughout professional writing of this period and, as will be shown, Wingate's arguments for these place him firmly within this largely mainstream 'school of thought'. The application of such methods in Palestine will be discussed below, but, suffice to say at this point, the expression of consistent *attitudes* becomes apparent from even a cursory survey of British 'small wars' of 1919-1939.

There is stronger contemporary evidence for Callwell's 'vigour' and 'severity' than there is for the 'restraint' advocated by Gwynn and identified by some historians. Martial Law was enforced in rebel areas of Ireland in 1920-1921, 21 death sentences being passed upon IRA members and sympathisers

by courts martial, rebel houses being blown up and the Army's official *Record* of operations referring openly and with undisguised approval to unauthorised reprisals by troops in Cork in May-June 1920, placing *Sinn Fein* leaders in army convoys to forestall ambush, and the activities of the 'Black and Tans', the mainly British volunteers in the Royal Irish Constabulary who became a metaphor for crass brutality on both sides of the Irish Sea. Moreover, the *Record*, an official War Office document, expressed contempt for political authorities throughout, effectively judging the effectiveness of any action by the strength of the outcry in the press and Parliament, which the authors viewed as a nest of IRA sympathisers.<sup>56</sup> 'Severity' was conspicuous in other Imperial operations of the time: martial law, including extensive use of the death penalty, and punitive measures, including the destruction of hostile villages (including by aerial bombing by the RAF) and the confiscation of crops and livestock, featured prominently in the suppression of the Iraq revolt in 1920-21, the Moplah rebellion in India in 1921-22, and the Burma rebellion of 1931.<sup>57</sup> The usefulness of reprisals was even discussed in the official press of the Indian Army, an unattributed article in the *Journal of the United Services Institute of India* discussing how operations could be executed on the Northwest Frontier 'against a village...which has misbehaved itself, with the object of doing as much damage as possible', to capture 'outlaws' and destroy houses sheltering them, or to carry off livestock, providing tactical templates for these, including the following advice:

It is...a good plan when searching houses to send a couple of villagers into every house immediately in front of the search party. Should the inmates prove truculent their own friends will get the benefit of the first shot and the troops will know what to expect.<sup>58</sup>

As late as 1938, the Army and police in the Northwest Frontier kept a 'hostage corps' of the sons of known hostiles, to be thrown into houses where tribesmen were known to be hiding, ahead of police search parties, or placed in the front lorries of convoys to prevent ambush.<sup>59</sup> 'Severity' was therefore, apparently, a typical part of such operations and received official approval.

However, by the 1930s, more politically sophisticated means of directing force in insurrections were being introduced, Burma in 1931 seeing the introduction of the system of 'Military Control' applied later in Palestine.<sup>60</sup> Military Control represented a politico-military mean between civilian control and martial law; the Civil Administration, represented by the Viceroy or High Commissioner, remained supreme, but devolved all responsibility for public security and order on the General Officer Commanding (GOC) who controlled the Army and police. The GOC and High Commissioner were supposed to confer regularly on policy, as were local commanders and District Commissioners. Troops and police were empowered to arrest and search without warrant, but civil law remained in force, reinforced by emergency measures.<sup>61</sup> At some levels, therefore, this period saw an attempt to move away from the purely military 'small wars' approach to one based upon military aid to the civil power, Gwynn's work perhaps reflecting this change in attitude.

Tactical methods remained more consistent, and were distinct from those propounded in the various editions of *FSR*. *FSR* emphasised battle decided by firepower, conforming to a plan devised and directed by a strict command hierarchy. However, the tactical and operational pattern developed in Imperial operations in the inter-war period was different, 'success' in colonial operations being measured by killing or capturing rebel leaders or the rebels asking for terms.<sup>61</sup> Operations centred on all-arms columns, widely separated and advancing on broad fronts, with aircraft acting in observation or in lieu of artillery, harrying the enemy, keeping him on the move and, once he was engaged, using superior mobility to outflank him, cut or threaten his line of retreat, 'turn' him out of his position or defeat him in a converging attack or drive him onto a cordon established across his line of retreat.<sup>63</sup> This kind of open warfare differed from the tightly controlled and concentrated European battlefield envisaged by *FSR*. Colonial operations of the British and other armies had traditionally centred upon such columns, sometimes purpose-organised for various missions but just as likely to comprise whatever troops could be scraped together in theatre.<sup>64</sup> Callwell discussed column organisation for



particular types of 'small war', and contended that separate, but cooperating columns could produce strategic results from the confusion they instilled about British objectives, the intimidatory effect of apparent British ubiquity and the subsequent panic-diffusion of enemy strength as native commanders tried to confront every column.<sup>65</sup> Callwell's ideal pattern was to pin the enemy with a small force in front while larger columns turned his flanks. While an irregular enemy was unlikely to have any lines of communication to threaten, the appearance of large forces in his rear was likely to panic him into retreat from his position, the outflanking columns then destroying him in detail on the move. Emphasis throughout was upon speed, aggression and flexibility rather than weight of numbers, Callwell believing that such characteristics allowed small forces to overcome larger numbers of poorly-led natives through surprise and 'moral force'.<sup>66</sup> This could be achieved through having columns carry their supplies with them, removing the need for lines of communication and, in a departure from the approach to major warfare encapsulated in *FSR*, through extensive devolution of command authority and tolerance of initiative, Callwell quoting the French general, Boguslawski, writing on the Vendee campaigns of the 1790s, 'The leaders of the columns must be officers who, in certain cases, understand how to depart from the plan of operations on their own responsibility, if the general situation appears to have altered' and Field Marshal Lord Roberts' – an experienced 'Imperial Warrior' if ever there was one - instructions that column commanders should be allowed the 'utmost latitude of movement', arguing that such was essential in hill and jungle warfare.<sup>67</sup> Operations in 'small wars', therefore, centred upon mobile action by all-arms columns, aimed at manoeuvring the enemy into defeat in operations eschewing rigid planning or centralised command. The theories and practices Wingate would place behind the Chindits were tried and trusted before 1943.

The period 1919-39 saw the melding of twentieth-century technology with these nineteenth-century techniques. In Ireland in 1919-21, units of the Army and the Royal Irish Constabulary patrolled the countryside in columns of infantry or armed police carried in armoured

lorries, escorted by armoured cars; such columns regularly employed 'cordon and search' techniques, cordoning off areas in which the IRA were believed to be active, while other columns, or cavalry units, carried out 'drives', intended to push the IRA onto the cordon; although of limited use in actually catching IRA men, Charles Townshend recounts that these methods were deemed threat enough to force the IRA, on several occasions, to break down its large 'Flying Columns' into smaller, less effective units.<sup>68</sup> Aircraft were used for spotting, although this was hampered by the small number of machines available, inability to tell IRA men from civilians, and the lack of wirelesses capable of communicating from air to ground.<sup>69</sup> In the Iraq rebellion of 1920-21, Baghdad and other towns were fortified while small columns, heavy in artillery and engineers, carried out punitive counter-attacks against rebel villages; later, very large columns, consisting of two squadrons of cavalry, an artillery brigade and six battalions of infantry, were used to establish a permanent presence in outlying areas.<sup>70</sup>

In the 1921 Moplah rebellion in southern India, columns of lorry-borne infantry occupied villages by surprise and cordoned rebels in inhospitable areas where they had the option of surrender or starvation. Use was also made of a technique utilised extensively later on in Palestine, inducing ambushes of armed columns disguised as supply convoys; interestingly, Captain Carpendale, writing on the Moplah campaign for the United Services Institute of India, had clearly read Callwell, as he cites the same historical sources in support for these methods.<sup>71</sup> In India from the 1920s, 'frontier columns' included tanks, armoured cars and towed artillery, and experimented with night operations.<sup>72</sup>

The inter-war period saw the use of aircraft in support of such operations become commonplace. In the 1920 Iraq rebellion, outlying British Army garrisons, their ground lines of communication cut by the rebels, were resupplied by aircraft, dropping ammunition and medical supplies.<sup>73</sup> Following the suppression of the rebellion, at the behest of the Colonial Secretary, Winston Churchill, the RAF took

over responsibility for keeping order in Britain's mandated territories in Iraq, Transjordan and Palestine: the subsequent policy of 'Air Control' centred on RAF bombers, operating from defended bases, supporting fast-moving units of RAF armoured cars, a technique employed on numerous punitive operations from the 1920s through to the early 1930s, and which was sufficient to defeat a Wahhabi invasion of Transjordan, launched from Saudi Arabia, in 1924.<sup>74</sup> In 1931, no less than twelve years before Wingate presented similar ideas as his own, Major LVS Blacker of the Guides Infantry was arguing that columns operating on the Northwest Frontier of India could be re-supplied by airdrop or air landing, increasing their mobility through removing the need for large numbers of slow-moving pack animals (Wingate used both animal and air supply), and their firepower through allowing greater numbers of automatic weapons to be carried, as well as improving morale through speedy casualty evacuation.<sup>75</sup> Wingate presented similar arguments in 1943-44. The Mohmand operation of July-October 1933 saw RAF aircraft, attached to columns, bombing snipers and, later, 'any enemy seen.'<sup>76</sup> The second Mohmand operation, two years later, saw the operation's commander, Brigadier Claude Auchinleck, use aircraft to 'weaken the resistance' of the Mohmands ahead of the advance of his ground forces, and support battalion columns used during the advance to outflank and 'turn' the Mohmands out of strong defensive positions; moreover, increasing use was made of wireless to coordinate the movement of columns - something presented in the literature as another Wingate innovation - although this was undone frequently by degradation of high frequency signals in the mountainous terrain.<sup>77</sup> Between larger engagements, ambushes were set along snipers' favourite paths, which were also bombed to prevent tribesmen returning to the sanctuary of their villages.<sup>78</sup>

Another military method used extensively by the British in their 'small wars' was the creation of specialist units, raised and trained on the initiative of individuals or small groups of relatively junior officers, circumventing approved 'chains of command', and intended to carry out tasks deemed

beyond the capability of British regular troops. Callwell recommended that every force should have a 'Corps of Scouts', reconnoitering, raiding and ambushing ahead of the main advance, consisting of purpose-trained and organised units answering directly to the force commander, made up either of Gurkhas - used in this role on the Northwest Frontier for ninety years - natives armed with British weapons and commanded by British officers, or second and third-generation white settlers familiar with the geography of the area of operations.<sup>79</sup> An application of this in practice, and an apparent forerunner of Wingate's Special Night Squads, was the Corps of Gurkha Scouts formed by Captains NH Edwards and GG Rogers of the Northwest Frontier Force (NWFF) in 1919. This consisted of two platoons drawn from all Gurkha units in the NWFF and directed by the Force HQ, organised specifically for night-time ambush work inside hostile tribal territory on the Northwest Frontier - the same role the SNS would fulfill in Palestine - and, although its war diary is incomplete, it seems to have been involved continuously in such activity from May to August 1919, during which time it carried out one successful ambush of a large Pathan force.<sup>80</sup>

Such specialist forces can be identified in other theatres, also: in September 1920, the Royal Irish Constabulary, its morale collapsing in the face of IRA terrorism directed at officers and their families began raising its Auxiliary Division. The 'Auxies' consisted of independent, lorry-borne companies of ex-British Army officers, and, although technically police, received little in the way of police training, being in actuality an armed para-military force trained in counter-insurgency by the Army and intended to react swiftly with armed force to the appearance of IRA activity in a given area. 5th Division, for instance, trained 'Black and Tans' and Auxiliaries in counter-ambush drills and night raiding in rebel areas under its remit.<sup>81</sup> Indeed, Charles Townshend identifies the Auxiliaries explicitly as 'the nearest approach to a specialist counterinsurgency force so far', although poor discipline and a culture of heavy drinking led to them gaining a reputation for wildness and self-defeating brutality to equal the Black and Tans.<sup>82</sup> According to Townshend, the British Army's performance against the

IRA began to improve when, from 1921, it abandoned its large motorised columns in favour of a new technique involving infantry patrols operating away from roads, gathering intelligence and carrying out the occasional ambush of the IRA.<sup>83</sup> Likewise, in Burma in 1931, British troops cordoned rebels in inhospitable areas, allowing ‘packs’ of Burmese irregulars - presumably under British officers - to hunt them down.<sup>84</sup> The use of irregular units as ‘special forces’ to carry out certain missions therefore featured prominently in the British ‘small wars’ and counterinsurgencies of Wingate’s time. The supposedly innovative Special Night Squads, therefore, could be viewed as part of the continuum of established British Imperial military practice, not a new and dramatic departure from it.

It can be concluded that British colonial operations of the inter-war period were characterised by rapid, aggressive and occasionally ruthless displays of force to cow the insurgents into submission. Operations involved using mobile all-arms columns to dominate the countryside and isolate the insurgents, and routine use of *ad hoc* irregular specialist units, often raised from the local community and commanded by British officers, is also evident from some campaigns, their main roles being scouting, ambush work and taking the war to the enemy by hunting insurgents on their own territory.

Most significantly for this thesis, these methods were carried into the Second World War, in operations against the regular forces of the Italians, Germans and Vichy French in North Africa and the Middle East in 1940-41, British action in this period and theatre hinging upon manoeuvre by dispersed motorised columns. The November 1941 edition of *Notes from Theatres of War*, the Army’s official digest of lessons learned from operations, argued that ‘Mobile desert warfare appears to be largely a matter of columns of all arms, which may work over long distances very widely separated’, and a key feature of British operations of this period was such columns moving through desert or mountain to bypass enemy positions and either cut their communications or line of retreat or surprise them with attack from the rear, as recommended by Callwell and exemplified by actions during *Operation Compass*, Wavell’s offensive against the Italians in Cyrenaica in December 1940,

in particular XIII Corps' devastating attacks on the Italian Nibeiwa-Sidi Barrani camps on 9-11 December 1940, and 7th Armoured Division opening the attack on Bardia in mid December by cordoning off the road between Bardia and Tobruk before advancing upon the town from behind.<sup>84</sup> This also happened in Italian East Africa: in April 1941, 24th Gold Coast Brigade made a 25-mile march through the Somali bush to occupy the road and river crossings north of Jelib on the Juba River, which was taken by the brigade's parent formation, 12th African Division, advancing 'from three directions' the following day, the Italian garrison surrendering without a fight.<sup>85</sup> Throughout, there was extensive utilisation of *ad hoc* task forces for manoeuvre at a level above the tactical but below the strategic. In Eritrea, General Sir William Platt, GOC East Africa, formed Gazelle Force, commanded by Brigadier Frank Messervy and consisting of an Indian armoured car regiment, a motor-machinegun group of the SDF, and attached artillery, to harry Italian communications to the north and east of Kassala, a factor in the Italian withdrawal from Sudan; Gazelle Force then cut the roads around Agordat, causing another Italian retreat and after this, sought, unsuccessfully, to 'turn' the Italians out of Keren via threatening their line of retreat.<sup>86</sup> In Iraq, Habforce (Habbaniyah Force, consisting of 4th Cavalry Brigade, reinforced by the Arab Legion, some RAF armoured cars and a battery of 25-pounders) was not intended as a manoeuvre force, but as something with an older pedigree, a 'flying column' relieving beleaguered British garrisons; however, in June 1941, following the resolution of the Iraq crisis and during the Allied invasion of Syria, Habforce operated from Mosul against Vichy communication to the west of Palmyra, assisting in the Allied occupation of that town and destroying several German airfields.<sup>87</sup> By the end of this period, use of 'task forces' had percolated below divisional level in the Western Desert: 'Jock Columns', named for Colonel 'Jock' Campbell VC of the Royal Horse Artillery, who first devised them in December 1940, were created from 7th Armoured Division's artillery support group, and consisted of a battery of 25-pounder field guns, a company of lorry borne infantry and some armoured cars, executing harassing attacks on

advancing Italian and German formations and lines of supply, sometimes at some distance behind the front.<sup>88</sup> They were used initially as a 'make-shift', a means of sustaining offensive action when the remainder of the division was weakened by its logistic state: yet, their use proved popular, as by November 1941 *Notes from the Theatres of War* was extolling their use and recommending they be strengthened by adding tanks.<sup>89</sup>

Another pre-war practice continued into the Second World War was the creation of specialist units to wage war in enemy-occupied territory. Although the continuous fronts in Europe made such operations highly difficult, the wider spaces and open flanks of the desert war were another matter. In June 1940, Wavell accepted a proposal from the desert explorer Ralph Bagnold, to create long-ranged motor patrols capable of crossing the sand sea to the south of the main operational area to reconnoitre Italian positions and force the Italians to divert troops from the Egyptian frontier by raiding targets of opportunity inside Libya.<sup>90</sup> Bagnold's Long Range Desert Group (LRDG) took its orders directly from Wavell himself at GHQ Middle East, and during Operation *Compass*, distracted Italian attention via raids on key airfields and supply roads. Wavell noted in official reports that Bagnold's attacks resulted in Italian supply convoys ceasing altogether in some areas and their forward troops becoming more cautious than previously.<sup>91</sup> May 1941 saw the debut of the best-known penetration force of all, as L Detachment, Special Air Service, initially a small unit of volunteers commanded by Captain David Stirling of the Scots Guards, carried out its first airborne raid on an Italian airfield in Cyrenaica; following the failure of this mission, the SAS switched to long-ranged lorry and jeep-borne raids, focusing upon Axis airfields and operating initially alongside the LRDG.<sup>92</sup> Wingate's operations in Ethiopia and, initially, in Burma, came therefore at a time when the British Army already made extensive use of scratch-assembled mobile columns and special forces, intended to harry enemy communications, and can be viewed as a continuation of established British practice, as will be discussed below.

The proliferation of such forces in the British army of this time has been attributed to, amongst other things, a 'cavalry' culture in 7th Armoured Division, officers' reading of Liddell Hart, or the influence of Brigadier Eric Dorman-Smith, Commandant of the Staff College at Haifa and Wavell and Auchinleck's roving 'tactical consultant', as loathed in some quarters as Wingate.<sup>93</sup> However, Wavell had been GOC Palestine, from where Lieutenant General Sir Richard O'Connor came directly to take command of Western Desert Force (XIII Corps) in 1939. O'Connor and many other officers, particularly those in the Indian Divisions, had served on the Northwest Frontier, where similar methods had been applied for decades, a pioneer of their combination with tanks, wireless and aircraft being Claude Auchinleck, who would succeed Wavell as CinC Middle East in June 1941; Auchinleck and Dorman-Smith were both officers of the Indian Army.<sup>94</sup> British methods in Africa in 1940-41 might, therefore, be interpreted as an evolution from small war 'doctrine', consisting of using trusted pre-war tactical and operational methods to fulfill the strategic mission of destroying the Italian armies in North and East Africa.

Another vital factor shaping operations was geography, the Libyan Desert and the savannah of southern Ethiopia being particularly suitable for mobile forces. In other circumstances, they were not used. In Eritrea, manoeuvre operations were precluded by the mountainous, heavily wooded terrain, in which any advance had to be along the few roads, passing through easily defended defiles.<sup>95</sup> Italian resistance in Eritrea was broken not via manoeuvre, but by the seven-week siege and assault of the fortified town of Keren from February to March 1941. Lieutenant General Sir William Platt, GOC Sudan and British commander at Keren, acknowledged the origin of methods used elsewhere in describing his own: '[A] certain amount of the lessons of Frontier warfare had to be unlearned due to the influence of artillery, mortars, LMGs and aircraft on mountain warfare.'<sup>96</sup> Platt's methods involved a steady buildup of supplies, ammunition in particular - Platt would not begin an attack until his artillery had 600 rounds per gun - prior to deliberate, timetabled divisional assaults built around the



artillery fire plan, based on 'the maximum number of guns', with tanks reverting to their 'traditional' role of 'shooting in' the infantry, the intention being to weaken the enemy gradually and methodically, rather than smash him with a single blow.<sup>97</sup> Likewise, during the invasion of Syria in June 1941, a combination of hilly terrain crossed by rivers and unexpectedly tough resistance from the Vichy French defenders resulted in 8th Australian Division executing deliberate assaults in which firepower was prioritised over mobility.<sup>98</sup> In these battles, Commonwealth forces fought in brigades and divisions, not columns. Different methods of fighting, therefore, were emerging in this single theatre over a short period.

Wingate's operations in East Africa in 1940-41 therefore took place within an army whose senior commanders regularly used mobility to target key points in the enemy infrastructure with missions set to a level above the tactical but below the strategic. Formations were organised to maximise their ability to do this, and permanent units and organisations specialising in this role, such as the LRDG were emerging to fit 'troops to task'. Although Wingate would later employ all-arms columns, supported by air and coordinated by wireless, in mobile operations, aimed at manoeuvring his opponents into difficult or impossible positions, it is clear that these units were not 'new' other than in their existence. The theories and practices underpinning the Chindit operations turn out, when placed in the context of British Army operational practice of Wingate's time, to at least share ancestry with existing methods. It therefore remains to explore and confirm the similarities and differences between Wingate's ideas and methods and those of *FSR*, British Army 'small wars' practices, and subsequent developments, in tactical and operational methods during the Second World War. This will begin with his time as a subaltern in the 1920s, and is made easier by his putting his thoughts on operations and tactics on paper from the earliest stages of his career.

## NOTES FOR CHAPTER TWO

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23. *Ibid*, p.19

24. *Field Service Regulations 1929, Volume II - Operations*, hereafter *FSR 1929(ii)* (London: HMSO 1930), pp.2, 4; *Field Service Regulations 1935, Volume III - Operations: Higher Formations*, hereafter *FSR 1935(iii)*, (London: HMSO 1935), pp.1-2

25. *Field Service Regulations 1920 Volume II, Operations*, hereafter *FSR 1920(ii)* (London: HMSO 1920), pp.15-16; *FSR 1929(ii)*, pp.6-7; *FSR 1935(iii)*, pp.5-6

26. *FSR 1935(iii)*, pp.5-8

27. *FSR 1920(ii)*, pp.13-14

28. *Ibid*, p.42

29. See *British Defence Doctrine*, pp.1.9, 1.12

30. *FSR 1935(iii)*, p.6

31. Ibid, p.21
32. Ibid, p.22
33. *FSR 1920(ii)*, pp.22-24
34. *FSR 1929(ii)*, p.97
35. Ibid, p.11; *Field Service Regulations, 1935, Volume II - Operations: General* (London: HMSO 1935), p.25
36. *FSR 1920(ii)*, pp.22-24, 163, 185-186, 201
37. *FSR 1929(ii)*, p.17, 125-126
38. *Field Service Regulations 1920, Volume I - Organisation and Administration*, hereafter *FSR 1920(i)* (London: HMSO 1920), p.14
39. *FSR 1929(ii)*, p.5
40. Ibid, pp.5-6; *Field Service Regulations 1929, Volume I - Organisation and Administration* (London: HMSO 1930), p.10
41. *FSR 1935(ii)*, p.27-28
42. Tim Jones, *Postwar Counterinsurgency and the SAS 1945-1952: A Special Type of Warfare* (London: Frank Cass 2001), pp.5-13; TR Moreman, "Small Wars" and Imperial Policing: The British Army and the theory and practice of colonial warfare in the British Empire, 1919-1939', in Brian Holden Reid (Editor) *Military Power: Land Warfare in Theory and Practice* (London: Frank Cass 1997), pp.108-110, 113-124
43. John Pimlott, 'The British Experience', in Ian FW Beckett, *The Roots of Counter-Insurgency: Armies and Guerrilla Warfare 1900-1945* (London: Blandford 1988) pp.17-21; Hew Strachan, *The Politics of the British Army* (Oxford: Clarendon 1997), pp.169-171
44. Edward Spiers, 'The late Victorian Army: 1868-1914', in Chandler (Ed), *Oxford Illustrated History of the British Army*, pp.199-203
45. See Major General Charles W Gwynn KCB CMG DSO, *Imperial Policing* (London: Macmillan 1939), pp.34-64; Philip Anthony Towle, *Pilots and Rebels: The use of aircraft in unconventional warfare* (London: Brassey's 1989), pp.35, 40,43. Dyer was actually a substantive Colonel, local acting Brigadier General.

46. Anonymous, 'The Burmese Rebellion 1931', *Journal of the United Services Institute of India (JUSII)* Volume LX 1932, pp.146-150, 153-154; 'MFC', 'Raids and Reprisals on the North-West Frontier', *JUSII* Volume LIV, 1922, pp.383-392

47. Callwell, *Small Wars*, cited already

48. Ibid, pp.71-108; *FSR 1929(ii)*, pp.204-207

49. Gwynn, *Imperial Policing*, pp.3-5, 34-64

50. Callwell, *Small Wars*, p.72

51. Ibid, pp.76-78

52. Ibid, p.41

53. Ibid, pp.41-42, 147-149

54. Ibid, p.148

55. Gwynn, *Imperial Policing*, pp.14-21, 23-24, 99-100

56. PRO WO141/93, 'Record of the Rebellion in Ireland in 1920-21 and the part played by the Army in dealing with it, Volume I – Operations', pp.22, 24, 26 30-31, 33-35; PRO CJ 4/152, 'The Black and Tans', pp.1-2; Charles Townshend, 'The Anglo-Irish War', unpublished paper presented to the Institute for National Strategic Studies, Foreign Policy Institute, Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, pp.12, 14-15, and *Britain's Civil Wars: Counterinsurgency in the Twentieth Century* (London: Faber & Faber 1986), pp.57-58

57. Anonymous, 'The Burmese Rebellion', pp.157-161; Captain W St J Carpendale, 'The Moplah Rebellion 1921-22', *USII Journal* Volume LVI 1926, pp.79, 82, 86-87; Captain CMP Durnford, 'The Arab Insurrection of 1920-21', *USII Journal* Volume LIV, pp.188-189; Towle, *Pilots and Rebels*, especially pp.20-23, 29, 41-45

58. 'MFC', 'Raids and Reprisals', p.391

59. AF Perrott, Inspector General of Police, Northwest Frontier Province, to Major General Richard O'Connor of 18 October 1938, LHCMA O'Connor Papers File 3/2/1

60. 'Burmese Rebellion', pp.155-157

61. Ibid, pp.155-156; Appendix C to PRO 191/88, 'History and notes on operations; disturbances in Palestine', 1936-1939; O'Connor to Major General DK McLeod of 21 May 1939, LHCMA

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62. For instance, see PRO WO32/3522, Mohmand Operations 1933, Report and Decorations; PRO WO32/4148, Report on Mohmand Operations, 1935

63. See PRO WO32/3522; PRO WO32/4148; PRO WO191/75, Preliminary Notes on lessons of Palestine Rebellion 1936, February 1937, especially Para.26 and the whole of p.10; PRO WO191/88, History and Notes on Disturbances in Palestine, 1936-39, pp.2-3; PRO WO32/9401, Disturbances, 1936, p.4; Townshend, *Britain's Civil Wars*, pp.64-65

64. Carpendale, 'Moplah Rebellion', pp.77-78; Durnford, 'Arab Insurrection', pp.186-188; Townshend, *Britain's Civil Wars*, p.64

65. Callwell, *Small Wars*, especially pp.108-114, 135-136, 140, 290-291, 362

66. Ibid, pp.125-149

67. Ibid, pp.80-81, 142 150-194, 171-172

68. Townshend, *Britain's Civil Wars*, p.64

69. PRO WO141/93, Record of the Rebellion in Ireland, Volume I, pp.32, 43-44; Volume IV Part I - 5th Division, pp.16-17; Townshend, 'Anglo-Irish War', pp.33-35, and *Britain's Civil Wars*, p.64

70. Durnford, 'Arab Insurrection', pp.186-189

71. Carpendale, 'Moplah Rebellion', pp.82-86, 88-89, compare with Callwell, *Small Wars*, pp.130, 133-135, 141; see also Gwynn, *Imperial Policing*, pp.98-100

72. Moreman, "'Small Wars' and Imperial Policing", pp.119-120; 'Shpagwishtama', 'The Changing Aspect of Operations on the North-West Frontier', *JUSII* Volume LXVI 1936, pp.103-104

73. Towle, *Pilots and Rebels*, p.14

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75. Major LVS Blacker OBE, 'Modernised Mountain Warfare', *JUSII* Volume LXI 1931, pp.89-95

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77. PRO WO32/4148, pp.4-5, 6-7, 9; 'Shpagwishtama', 'Changing Aspect of Operations on the

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78. Ibid, pp.2-3, 11, 14; 'Shpagwishtama', 'Changing Aspect of Operations on the NW Frontier', pp.105-107

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80. India - Northwest Frontier Force Corps Troops - Corps of Gurkha Scouts, War Diary, 1919 May-1919 August, in PRO WO95/5390

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83. Ibid, p.66

84. Anonymous, 'Burmese Rebellion', pp.160-161

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88. PRO WO32/11434, Para.ii).6; Telegram from CinC ME to War Office of 14 June 1941, in PRO WO106/3073, Iraq: Operations April-May 1941; Report from Wavell to the War Office of 27 July 1941, in PRO WO201/174, Plan 'Exporter', June 1941; Wavell's Sitrep of 30 June 1941, in PRO WO106/2089

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94. Moreman, 'Small Wars and Imperial Policing', pp.116-120
95. PRO WO106/2290, p.44
96. PRO WO201/297, 'Abyssinia and Eritrea: Operational Dispatch by Lt Gen. Sir William Platt', Part IA, p.5
97. Ibid, Part II, pp.5-14; PRO WO106/2290
98. PRO WO106/3073, Syria, Operations Summaries, May-July 1941



### CHAPTER THREE

#### - WINGATE BEFORE PALESTINE, 1923-1936

**[P]ossession of the interior lines gives a priceless advantage to the possessor...[and] although it may be possible to derive special advantages from exterior lines...he who deliberately divides his forces in order unnecessarily to assume them is a pedant with little knowledge of war.**

**- Lieutenant Orde Wingate, 1926<sup>1</sup>**

**[C]olumns achieve their results by skilful concentration at the right time and in the right place, where they will deliver the maximum blow against the enemy. The essence of LRP is concentration, the method of dispersal is only a means to achieve ultimate concentration.**

**- Brigadier Orde Wingate, 1942<sup>2</sup>**

#### *Introduction*

This chapter covers the period from Wingate's gazettement as a second lieutenant in the Royal Artillery in 1923 to his arrival in Palestine in 1936. The key episode in this period appears to be the four years he spent on attachment to the Sudan Defence Force, 1928-33, an experience which may have exerted more influence upon his subsequent military ideas than previous authors have appreciated. However, papers survive from both before and after this period that indicate an interest in military theory and operations and opinions on operational and tactical methods broadly consistent with those expressed later in his career and also demonstrating characteristics common with those covered in the last

chapter. Finally, it was during this period that Wingate appears to have encountered the ideas of his distant relative, TE Lawrence, which exerted a powerful influence upon his own - in some cases, through a determination to demonstrate that he and Lawrence were *not* alike. This period therefore provides a logical starting point for a comparison between Wingate's ideas and those of the rest of the Army, and contends that the influence of Wingate's earliest military experience on his subsequent ideas should not be dismissed.

### *Wingate's First Promotion Paper*

One of the earliest instances of Wingate committing his views to paper dates from 1926 when, as part of the examination for promotion from lieutenant to captain, he produced an essay on 'Strategy in Three Campaigns' - the Russo-Japanese War, the German invasion of France in 1914 and Allenby's Palestine Campaign of 1917. As the two quotations opening this chapter indicate, some consistency with later arguments was evident even at this early stage, in particular the belief that superior positioning and mobility allowed rapid concentration of force against a divided opponent. However, Wingate was firm in this paper that this could be attained only if a force maintained its 'interior lines' and held a central position against an opponent trying to surround it, a concept different from those he expressed later, and, indeed, the paper was, effectively, a polemic against the 'strategy of envelopment' which Wingate saw as attempted by the Germans in France in 1914. Wingate's views did not indicate any innovative tendencies on his behalf, and it could be argued that all he did was regurgitate the calls for concentration of force found in all inter-war editions of *FSR*. He opened with an attack on the idea of fixed rules of strategy, stating that, if Napoleon had revealed 'the science of war' (some familiarity with the works of Clausewitz and Jomini might be presumed, but is un-provable) then surely fewer military blunders would be evident since his time. Instead, 'we see generals making the same old mistakes, ignoring even their own maxims and failing to recognise the blunders of others' - powerful stuff from a junior officer.<sup>3</sup> It might be possible to derive principles from 'intermingling causes with effects', but Napoleon said he learned nothing from the sixty battles he fought and so, on that evidence alone, the reader should 'cease to talk of "principles of strategy"'; the best that could be hoped for was to examine common conditions between battles and campaigns.<sup>4</sup>

It seems, then, that Lieutenant Wingate was as sceptical of abstract principles as many of his seniors in the interwar British Army.

Something else shared with others of his day was a propensity to begin and end his case on 'national characteristics'. For instance, on the Schlieffen Plan:

Envelopment as strategy is folly, unless used to round up uncivilised or guerrilla enemies....But as in [Napoleon's] day, so today the Teuton loves envelopment. He is never happy unless his armies are scattered over vast tracts of territory, all approaching his concentrated enemy from different directions.<sup>5</sup>

While, on Russian attitudes to the expansion of the Empire:

The Russian people...knew little and cared less for the emperor's ambition to extend his domains. They were content to remain in their own country and could not see that any useful purpose was to be served by enslaving the Manchu. Their attitude was typical of the Slav race...<sup>6</sup>

Wingate went on to suggest that such national characteristics could lead to strategic blunder. Germany invaded France in 1914, attacking her strongest enemy, not her weakest - Russia - and seeing Schlieffen's plan to envelop the French army undone by Moltke the Younger's adjustments and by the French moving their reserves on interior lines to halt the German offensive at the Marne.<sup>7</sup> In the chapter on the Russo-Japanese War, which is incomplete, Wingate berated the Japanese for adopting 'the absurd idea of envelopment for envelopment's sake' from their officers' staff training in Germany - presumably how the Japanese overcame this handicap to win the war was in the missing passages.<sup>8</sup> From these examples, Wingate concluded 'it is not possible to cut your enemy's communications at theatre level': by 1944 he would not only be saying the diametric opposite, but proposing a complete new model of warfare aimed at this very objective. In 1926, he held up as the only true means to victory the suitably Clausewitzian-Jominian ideal of 'obtaining superiority at the decisive point', which Allenby had achieved repeatedly in Palestine.<sup>9</sup> Sykes recorded that, for this

paper, Wingate obtained a mark of 78%, two marks short of a distinction.<sup>10</sup> While its analysis was puerile in places, the paper had a number of indications of what was to come later: firstly, Wingate recognised that speed and skill could compensate for numbers, an argument common also to Callwell and to all editions of *FSR*, as was his advocacy of concentration of force at the decisive point. Second is Wingate's belief in and espousal of national characteristics as the basis for military style, something shared with many other officers. Thirdly, it is apparent that the pontificating and sometimes scabrous literary style which was to get Wingate into serious trouble later in his career developed early.

### *The Sudan Defence Force*

The examination for captain came while Wingate was a subaltern in the Royal Garrison Artillery, stationed at The Royal Artillery Centre at Larkhill, and all the biographies concern themselves more with his social activities - hunting to hounds in particular - than his military interests at this time. This uneventful period ended in autumn 1926, when the Army sent him on an Arabic language course at the School of Oriental Studies of the University of London. A keen student, Wingate obtained a mark of 85% on his preliminary examination after just four and a half months and was encouraged by his tutor, Sir Thomas Arnold, to seek a posting to the Middle East or North Africa with a view to qualifying as an interpreter.<sup>11</sup> Wingate had been interested in serving in Egypt or Sudan since 1924, when he began regular correspondence with his father's first cousin, Sir Reginald Wingate. 'Cousin Rex' had been Kitchener's intelligence officer during the Omdurman campaign of 1898, Governor General of the Sudan, *Sirdar*, or commander in chief of the Egyptian Army and British High Commissioner in Cairo, in which capacity he had supported Lawrence and others in fomenting the Arab revolt of 1916-18, although he was forced to stand down in 1919 after failing to deal effectively with Arab nationalists.<sup>12</sup> Sir Reginald encouraged Wingate to continue his Arabic studies in the Sudan, by attending the language classes run by the Sudan Agency, the colonial 'government' of the

Sudan, and also suggested that Orde should apply for a posting with the Sudan Defence Force(SDF), producing a letter of introduction to the SDF's commander, Major General Sir Hubert Huddleson.<sup>13</sup> This overcame the younger Wingate's not meeting the criteria to join the SDF - he had been commissioned fewer than five years and would normally require a recommendation from a serving officer of the SDF, which he did not have - and exemplifies one of the most significant factors in Wingate's career, his cultivation of powerful patrons to whom he could appeal outside the formal chain of command.<sup>14</sup> This approach to service politics was important for two reasons: firstly, as a source of friction with peers, which may have some bearing upon the historical record; secondly, and more pertinent to this thesis, at later stages of his career, Wingate can be observed tailoring his military ideas specifically to present solutions to a potential patron's strategic or operational dilemmas.

Wingate served with the SDF from 1928 to 1933, the last four years as a *Bimbashi*, or acting local major. For a young officer in his mid to late twenties, this marked a considerable promotion and the granting of independent command and freedom he may not have had otherwise. This seems to have made a deep and lasting impression. He was engaged on small operations throughout this time, which represents his longest continuous period of command, yet previous references to its possible impact upon his subsequent military practice are passing. According to Mosley, 'Orde Wingate regarded the Ethiopian frontier as a training ground upon which he could work out the theories of guerilla [sic] warfare which were already working in his brain'<sup>15</sup>, while Royle commented that Wingate learned three lessons in Sudan:

The first was that, properly trained and motivated, small groups of men could learn to survive in a hostile environment. Second, they could operate in isolation far from home base provided they were properly led and had faith in their commanders. Third, they had to be kept up to the mark and galvanised by constant training...<sup>16</sup>

Generally, however, the biographers focus more upon the impact upon Wingate's personal psychology, as he suffered his first major attack of clinical depression during this time, arising from a combination of too much time spent in the monotonous Sudanese desert, his first sight of death - a man killed by his soldiers - the sudden death of his sister and a major crisis in the religious faith on which much of his self-image rested.<sup>17</sup> Yet, the length of his experience in the Sudan would suggest some impact upon Wingate's professional and intellectual development, and his *protégé*, Moshe Dayan, stated explicitly that Wingate put the lessons of his Sudan experience into practice in Palestine later on.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, a survey of Wingate's time in Sudan is necessary to establish its importance in his military development.

The SDF demonstrated many of the characteristics of the locally-raised forces under British officers alluded to in the previous chapter, although it was a regular, not an irregular force. It was a new force, founded in 1924, when Egyptian troops were withdrawn from Sudan following the assassination of the *Sirdar*, General Sir Lee Stack, and the revelation of widespread agitation in the ranks by Arab nationalists.<sup>19</sup> In 1928, it consisted of the Camel Corps (a mixed force of mounted infantry), a motor transport and machine gun battalion and three infantry 'corps' (actually battalions), the Equatorial Corps, the East Arab Corps and the West Arab Corps, Wingate being posted, in June 1928, to the East Arab Corps, stationed along the border with Eritrea.<sup>20</sup> He was made *Bimbashi* - acting local major - of Number 3 *Idara*, an Arab infantry company based at Gedaref; the majority of his 375 troops were Muslim Arabs, but there was a minority of black troops, a mixture of Somalis from southern Sudan and Muslim immigrants from other parts of Africa who had settled in Sudan following their *Haj* to Mecca.<sup>21</sup> The amount of independence granted British officers was notable: each *Bimbashi* was personally responsible for enlisting his own recruits, devising a training programme, promoting and discharging his soldiers, and for administering all military law among them.<sup>22</sup> Such independence of authority was continued in every force subsequently raised and trained

by Wingate, including the Chindits, but this was within an army more formal in its practices than the SDF, particularly after 1943.

Training was realistic, desert conditions allowing free use of live ammunition during exercises, and route marches of 5-600 miles were carried out upon a regular basis in remote areas in order to 'show the flag'; each *Idara* carried its own supplies on these marches, supplemented by game shot by the *Bimbashi*. Each February, the SDF would concentrate for combined exercises with 47(B) Squadron RAF, the unit responsible for air control of the remoter regions of the Sudan, and Wingate participated in operational experiments in air-ground cooperation while with the SDF.<sup>23</sup> A number of characteristics of forces Wingate would command in the future were evident, the most obvious being the raising and training of forces by their own commanders for long-distance operations involving possible cooperation with aircraft.

Missions varied. The threat of a possible revival of Mahdism was taken seriously into the 1930s and had resulted in uprisings in the majority Arabic provinces of Kordofan and Darfur in 1916, 1921 and 1928; more frequent were small-scale police actions against tribal chiefs resisting Government control, particularly among the black hill tribes of southern Sudan.<sup>24</sup> However, the problem with which Wingate was concerned for most of his time at Gedaref was *Shifra*, gangs of Ethiopian bandits crossing the border from Ethiopia and Eritrea to poach ivory, skins and meat or kidnap slaves - many of them girls to be sold into prostitution - from the non-warlike *Nuba* tribes of the border area.<sup>25</sup> *Shifra* were a major nuisance to the Colonial authorities, so much so that many in Khartoum welcomed the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1935 as likely to put a stop to their activities, and the popular image of the Ethiopian as 'a rascal, a thief and a slave-trader' was to have some bearing upon Wingate's operations with them in 1941.<sup>26</sup> The SDF's main role in Wingate's time in Sudan was, therefore, as a para-military police force, intended to secure Sudan's frontiers from criminal incursion and keep the peace in the interior.

For guidance on these roles, the Army and SDF had Callwell's recommendations upon 'Bush Warfare' and *FSR*'s chapter on 'Warfare in Undeveloped and Semi-Civilised Countries', which leaned heavily upon Callwell. Indeed, the 1929 edition semi-plagiarised Callwell, opening by stating that the principles of war still applied in campaigns in such countries, and the aim should be to break down enemy resistance through forcing them to concentrate for battle; this could be achieved by threatening their capital, their sacred sites or their wells and crops, as recommended by Callwell before.<sup>27</sup> An alternative course of action which Callwell could not have anticipated, writing, as he was, in the 1900s, was 'Air Control' - 'an interruption of normal life which can be enforced by properly directed air attack until the enemy is ready to make terms' as *FSR* put it.<sup>28</sup> However, aircraft were less effective in close or broken country (such as the Sudanese-Ethiopian border) or where friendly and hostile tribes were mixed: 'In such circumstances the best chance of success lies in a well-planned combination of the action of aircraft with that of troops' which, in desert areas, should be mounted or supported by armoured cars.<sup>29</sup> As noted previously, the SDF exercised annually with the Fairey IIIFs of 47(B) Squadron RAF, and operated with them under joint command of the *Kaid all'Am*, the GOC Sudan; the RAF provided close support for the SDF's Camel Corps during the attempted Mahdist uprising in Nuer in 1928 and a *Nuba* revolt in the Eliri Jebel in 1929, and resupply and reconnaissance for a number of long-range patrols during a border dispute with Italian Libya in 1931.<sup>30</sup> Although Wingate did not participate in these operations, he was surely aware of them, and these techniques would recur in his campaigns in 1941 and again in 1942-44.

Air control, or large-scale air-ground action, was of limited use against an opponent as diffuse and unpredictable as the *Shifita*, particularly as they had sanctuary across the border. Control of the border had to be maintained through infantry or police patrolling, intended to track the gangs down and arrest or destroy them.<sup>31</sup> Douglas Dodds-Parker, who served as a District Commissioner - responsible for policing - in the Sudan-Ethiopia border region in the late 1930s, and was also attached to the SDF,



recalled that the standard technique for dealing with *Shifita* was a version of the 'drive', in which SDF or police patrols would push inwards from the border along the raider's favourite tracks, forcing them deeper into Sudan where they could be caught more easily.<sup>32</sup> Wingate's operations in Sudan were no major departure from this, as illustrated by the patrol in April 1931, pursuing two gangs of *Shifita* poaching in game reserves in the Dinder and Gallegu country. Each of the gangs was a dozen strong, half of them slaves, and had not crossed the border to fight; Wingate therefore ordered that fire was only to be opened if they resisted arrest or seemed on the point of getting away.<sup>33</sup> He arranged his route of patrol in order to get between the gangs and their sanctuary and take them by surprise. On 11 April, he took two sections of the Eastern Arab Corps out of Singa, on the Blue Nile, announcing that his destination was the town of Roseires to the south: instead, they headed for the island of Umm Orug on the River Dinder.<sup>34</sup> There, on 19 April, two poachers were captured and given pardons upon condition that they disclosed where the main party was operating. Wingate was able to surround a band of nine poachers near Ras Amer shortly after, and in the subsequent fight one of the poachers, evidently a former soldier of the SDF, wearing the remains of its uniform, was killed, this being the incident contributing to Wingate's attack of depression. A similar action took place on 21 April, when Wingate's patrol again surrounded and surprised a band of eleven poachers, killing one and arresting the rest.<sup>35</sup> Wingate's tactics aimed at using cover and concealment to surround the gangs, then surprise them with attack from all sides: his aim was practical, as *Shifita* could out-run even a man on horseback in the rough country of the Dinder, and could get clean away if alerted.<sup>36</sup> Patrol tactics, therefore, depended upon deception, surprise and selection of the best areas of operation, all things Wingate would stress later.

These became more apparent still in Wingate's report of a later patrol, the following February. He chose to march on a route going from point-to-point along the frontier, including stretches of open desert, because:

(1) That the approach of the patrol would be unexpected at almost every point of descent on poaching areas, since by cutting across long stretches of waterless country each line...would be out of reach of warning by fleeing poachers.

(2) That should Abyssinians be poaching on GALLEGU-DINDER the patrol would be between them and their base. This had special value in view of possible air cooperation.<sup>37</sup>

The aim was, therefore, to surprise and possibly ambush the *Shifta* as they tried to retreat to their 'sanctuary' in Abyssinia, a pattern in accordance with SDF procedures as described by Dodds-Parker and which Wingate later hoped to repeat in counter-terrorist operations in Palestine. A subsidiary aim was to experiment with cooperation between patrols and spotter planes: in the event, Wingate noted:

[P]oachers associate the appearance of aircraft with the approach of soldiery and are on their guard. As the only chance of catching them lies in achieving a complete surprise this would not seem an advantage...With the legitimate presence of honey gatherers, etc, and the apparent very great difficulty in seeing anything in the densely bushed areas it is very unlikely that aircraft would be able to detect anything but a very considerable party of Abyssinian poachers, and even in that event it would be impossible to see them once they had broken up.<sup>38</sup>

In the earliest traceable example of his differing with institutional 'accepted wisdom' on operations and tactics, Wingate concluded that the SDF's existing approach, based on 'drives', limited its efficacy in dealing with poachers. In a note on game protection in the Dinder area, he argued that while this deterred some poaching:

Owing to expence [sic] the measures taken against the poachers are limited to the maintenance of highly mobile patrols operating at irregular intervals and in various directions; and it should be plainly understood that such wide toothed and occasional combing has not the smallest chance of success in inhabited country.<sup>39</sup>

This arose from a common problem in counterinsurgency: inability to distinguish insurgents from civilians. In particular, SDF patrols relied upon following the tracks of poacher gangs, in areas crossed regularly by nomads and their herds.<sup>40</sup>

Whatever his criticisms of SDF procedures, there is no recorded evidence that Wingate deviated from or tried to change them. Indeed, there was just one minor confrontation during Wingate's time in Sudan when, shortly after arrival, he was warned by the CO of the Eastern Arab Corps about discussing religion and politics - including Marxism - in the officers' mess.<sup>41</sup> This aside, he seems to have been liked by his fellow officers in the SDF and respected for his prowess on the polo field.<sup>42</sup> Any major controversy over his character, therefore, began later.

It would appear that it was in Sudan that Wingate developed his skill - and taste - for training and leading forces 'in his own image', free of intervention from above, as the Special Night Squads, Gideon Force and the Chindits were all to be. While this was standard practice in parts of the Empire, it certainly was not with the 'main' Army in England, something the 'colonial' officer Wingate failed to appreciate at every turn. Moreover, Wingate was evidently beginning to think critically about tactics, and was becoming confident enough to question accepted wisdom in official reports. However, it would be an exaggeration to claim he 'parted company' with his colleagues in terms of military thought at this stage. This period is also of interest in that some of the counter-insurgency practices Wingate applied in Palestine seem to have been learned from the SDF, in particular concentration upon insurgent entry and exit points and the use of deceptive movement to achieve surprise.

### *Wingate contra Lawrence*

By 1936, and Wingate's arrival in Palestine, other influences were apparent. One seems unlikely, as it was that of an individual whom Wingate apparently detested and never missed an opportunity to disparage - TE Lawrence 'of Arabia'. There is no record of their having met, although Lawrence's parents were guests at the Wingate family home in Reigate in the 1900s, and Wingate was stationed at Larkhill in 1923-27 while 'Trooper Shaw' of the Royal Tank Corps - the pseudonym under which

Lawrence sought escape from the attention his own myth had created - was stationed close by at Bovington.<sup>43</sup> However, there were connections between them. Lawrence's father was Wingate's great uncle, thrice-removed on his mother's side, and many who knew both men, including Churchill, Wavell, Liddell Hart, Chaim Weizmann, Leo Amery and Field Marshal Sir Edmund Ironside detected similarities in appearance and personality between them.<sup>44</sup> Sir Reginald Wingate, as GOC of the Hejaz Expeditionary Force, was Lawrence's operational commander in 1917 and provided the 'Baksheesh and rifles' with which Lawrence enlisted the support of the Arab chiefs, almost bankrupting the Egyptian gold reserves in doing so.<sup>45</sup> Wingate's two great benefactors, Wavell and Churchill, also knew Lawrence well. In 1920, Churchill invited Lawrence to join the Colonial Office's recently formed Middle Eastern Department as Advisor on Arab affairs, originating the policy of controlling the Middle East using Lawrence's Hashemite allies, Faisal and Abdullah, the sons of Sherif Hussein of Mecca, and remained in contact with Lawrence until Lawrence's fatal motorcycle crash in 1935.<sup>46</sup> Wavell made Lawrence's acquaintance while a staff officer in Egypt in 1917, was assigned by Allenby to stop him entering Syria in 1920, when the French feared he might instigate a revolt, and in the 1920s and 1930s, Lawrence was an infrequent but welcome guest at Wavell's house. Wavell liked Lawrence personally, but was unsure whether his reputation as a soldier was justified, and implied that it was self-created: 'His name will live for his words and spirit more than for his wars.'<sup>47</sup> Wingate and Lawrence, therefore, were not only distant relatives, but had numerous personal and professional contacts in common.

The notion, expressed by Wavell, that Lawrence was perhaps more capable as a man of letters than as a soldier also lay at the heart of Wingate's assessment of him. Lawrence is today best known partially via David Lean's film of 1962, in which he was portrayed by Peter O'Toole, and partially via *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, his personal account of the Arab revolt, published posthumously in 1935. Both these sources present what could be described as the 'Lawrence Myth', that Lawrence

was the principal driving force behind the Arab revolt against the Turks of 1917-18, an event which saw the Bedouin liberate themselves from the Turkish yoke in a brilliant guerrilla campaign devised, commanded and led by Lawrence, only to then be betrayed by the imperialist ambitions of Britain and France. It seems to have been in the wake of Lawrence's death in 1935 that Wingate became interested in him, and he was apparently familiar with the contents of *Seven Pillars* by the time of his arrival in Palestine, sixteen months later. He was unimpressed with what he read, perhaps disgusted by some of it, in particular, perhaps, Lawrence's romanticisation of the *Bedu's* homosexuality, and allusions to Lawrence and *Seven Pillars* in reports and correspondence indicated consistently Wingate's view that Lawrence was crassly overrated as both thinker and commander, and his Arabs, mere desert bandits who had to be bribed to do anything, little different from the *Shifra* he had chased in Sudan.<sup>48</sup> Worst of all, Wingate argued, the 'Lawrence Myth' was exerting a malign influence on British policy in the Middle East, and giving Arabs authority and influence they did not deserve. In his paper, 'Palestine in Imperial Strategy', written in 1939, Wingate commented on 'that unfortunate masterpiece', *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom*:

The vanity of the principals plus a great amount of romantic dust has been allowed so far to obscure what really did happen. A ragged horde of at most a few thousand and often only a few hundred Bedouin, paid in gold for approximately two days' fighting per month...caused the Turks a certain amount of embarrassment and anxiety....In return for the highly paid assistance of this small rabble of Hejazi Bedouin, we have handed over to the 'Arabs' the whole of Saudi Arabia, and the Yemen, Iraq, Trans-Jordan and Syria. A more absurd transaction has seldom been seen.<sup>49</sup>

In his written Appreciation of the analogous situation in Abyssinia in 1941 - to be cited extensively in the chapter on that episode - Wingate was at pains to emphasise the differences between Lawrence's methods and his own, in one passage effectively treating the words 'Lawrence' and 'wrong' as interchangeable.<sup>50</sup> Most significantly, Wingate developed a vitriolic anti-Arabism and anti-Islamism, which would impact upon his actions in Palestine. This is discussed below, but at this

stage it is notable that there is no evidence of Wingate holding any opinion whatsoever on Middle Eastern politics before the period 1935-36, and it is unclear whether it was a cause or a product of his Zionism. Sykes, the only one of Wingate's biographers to notice this, saw Wingate's anti-Arabism and rejection of Lawrence as coming first, and key in driving him towards Zionism, Wingate's 'opposition temperament' meaning that, in the wake of the Arabophile enthusiasm engendered by Lawrence (and no doubt galvanised and made more irritating to Wingate by the publication of *Seven Pillars* and a wave of hagiographies following Lawrence's death) Wingate compulsively took the opposite stance.<sup>51</sup> However, other reasons suggest themselves. Sir Reginald provided an alternative - and more authoritative - source of information from most of Lawrence's hagiographers, at least two of whom, Robert Graves and Basil Liddell Hart, were close friends of their subject and evidently took the 'Lawrence Myth' at face value.<sup>52</sup> Whatever its origins, Wingate's aversion to Lawrence and much of what he stood for was apparent throughout his life and work.

Wingate's attitude to Lawrence is relevant for two reasons. Firstly, and touched upon already, is the part it played possibly in shaping his political beliefs and his relationship with his peers. Contemporary papers reveal that Wingate was not the lone voice that Sykes and Royle in particular portray, as there were many others, some very senior, who challenged the 'Lawrence Myth' at the time. The anonymous author of a Colonial Office memorandum from 1938 echoed Wingate in complaining of the distorting effect of the myth of the Arab Revolt, and the resulting overestimation of Arab resolve, upon British policy in Palestine; in actuality, he claimed, the Arabs had to be bribed constantly and provided no more than 'nuisance value.'<sup>53</sup> Lawrence himself warranted just two mentions in the official British summary of the Arab revolt, one in a footnote; this document presents Lawrence as just the best-known of several staff officers of the British Military Mission to the Arabs, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel SF Newcombe.<sup>54</sup> British official documents from 1917-1918 were sceptical about the cost-effectiveness of the revolt, which was conditional upon British financial

and logistical support throughout - particularly rifles and ammunition - and in March 1918, faced extinction as funds began to run out.<sup>55</sup> From Autumn 1917, a policy of giving the Arabs an incentive to attack trains on the Hejaz railway by allowing them to keep all they plundered from wrecked trains was adopted; this may have been at Lawrence's suggestion, he being candid about the *Bedu's* motivations in his published works.<sup>56</sup> Forces involved in the Hejaz operations never consisted of just Bedu warriors: the Arabs were supported by British armoured cars, the Anglo-Egyptian Camel Corps and regular air-raids from January 1918 and the force jointly commanded by Feisal and Lawrence in Syria in September 1918 resembled less a guerrilla band than an all-arms mobile column, including 450 Egyptian-trained Arab regulars, elements from the Camel Corps, an armoured car troop, a battery of 65mm French mountain guns, and Gurkha and Egyptian demolition parties, resupplied partially by air.<sup>57</sup> There was, therefore, some organisational resemblance to the 'frontier columns' discussed above, and, given their role was to operate against Turkish communications, their mission was not dissimilar, either. Moreover, there is some resemblance also to Wingate's operational model, as applied two decades later.

Despite this, Lawrence had critics not only in Wingate but at the highest levels of the Army, both in his time and later. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff in 1917, Field Marshal Lord Robertson, had opposed the diversion of resources on this scale to the Hejaz as undermining Allenby's effort at the main front in Palestine, a forerunner of an argument directed at Wingate in 1943-44.<sup>58</sup> Replying to Wingate's sending him a draft of his paper 'Palestine in Imperial Strategy' in 1939, General Sir Edmund Ironside - himself no stranger to covert operations<sup>59</sup> - endorsed Wingate's views on the Arab revolt and referred to Lawrence as an 'unfortunate charlatan...such an impossible creature that I cannot understand how this wretched myth has sprung up around him....Had it not been for men like Liddell Hart he might have been forgotten'.<sup>60</sup> Expressing general disdain for covert operations and irregular forces, General Sir William Platt, Commander of the British advance into Eritrea in 1941

(and emphatically no friend of Wingate, either), pronounced, 'The curse of this war is Lawrence in the last.'<sup>61</sup> Indeed, Lawrence James, author of a recent biography of Lawrence, has assembled a large body of evidence to suggest that the 'Lawrence myth' was beginning to unravel even by 1935, and that many who knew Lawrence in 1917-18 were never taken in to begin with.<sup>62</sup> Wingate was, therefore, far from alone in taking issue with the popular image of Lawrence.

This makes the second factor linking Lawrence with Wingate seem all the more paradoxical. Not only is there a detectable resemblance between Lawrence's military organisation and Wingate's, but an overview of Lawrence's military philosophy, laid out as Wingate would have read it, in *Seven Pillars*, Lawrence's earlier work, *Revolt in the Desert*, and the entry on 'Guerilla Warfare' (sic) Lawrence authored for the 1929 edition of *Encyclopedia Britannica*, outline several other concepts which possibly influenced Wingate, perhaps unconsciously. The first of these was directing effort against enemy communications, rather than armies, forcing the enemy to disperse to counter this. Commenting upon the inability of the Arabs to halt the Turkish advance on Mecca in late 1916, following a lengthy period of inertia, in his *Britannica* piece, Lawrence noted that:

[P]erhaps the virtue of irregulars lay in depth, not in face, and that it had been the threat of attack by them upon the Turkish northern flank which had made the enemy hesitate for so long. The actual Turkish flank ran from their front line to Medina, a distance of some 50 miles, but if the Arab force moved towards the Hejas [sic] railway behind Medina, it might stretch its threat...as far, potentially, as Damascus, 800 miles away to the north.<sup>63</sup>

Lawrence contended that such a move - directed at the Turks' point of critical vulnerability - would enable the Arabs to eject the Turks from their territory without the need for major battle.<sup>64</sup> Lawrence advocated war based upon forcing an enemy wedded to the concept of decisive battle to disperse his strength; from *Seven Pillars*:

And how would the Turks defend [the Hejaz railway]? No doubt by a trench line across the



bottom, if we came like an army with banners; but suppose we were...an influence, an idea, a thing intangible, invulnerable, without front or back, drifting about like a gas?...It seemed a regular soldier might be helpless without a target, owning only what he sat on, and subjugating only what, by order, he could poke his rifle at.<sup>65</sup>

Secondly, superior mobility meant attacks could be launched upon key points in the enemy infrastructure before he could react. To have greatest strategic effect, attacks should be directed not at the enemy's armed strength, but at his supplies, with the aim of attaining material superiority. Should he advance, friendly forces should retreat:

We were to contain the enemy by the threat of a vast unknown desert, not disclosing ourselves until we attacked. The attack might be nominal, directed not against him but his stuff; so it would not seek either his strength or his weakness, but his most accessible material. In railway-cutting it would be usually an empty stretch of rail; and the more empty, the greater the tactical success.<sup>66</sup>

Consequently, the Arabs' greater mobility and familiarity with the desert should be used to manoeuvre them in a campaign of incessant 'tip and run' attacks to which the Turks could launch no effective response.<sup>67</sup> The main impact of this would be psychological, 'arrang[ing] the mind of the enemy...then the minds of the enemy nation making the verdict', reflecting the common belief in will as the decisive factor in war discussed already.<sup>68</sup> Moreover, Lawrence contended that irregulars had the advantage in operations targeting the enemy's will in that they lacked the predictability and reliance upon weight of force of regular units, which Lawrence saw as forcing human material to conform to a lowest common denominator that irregular warriors like the *Bedu* were free to ignore.<sup>69</sup> Finally, to allow freedom of movement, a rebellion should have a population if not actively friendly, then at least sympathetic to the point of not betraying rebel movements to the enemy; 'Rebellions can be made by 2% active in a striking force, and 98% passive sympathetic'; to bring this about, a rebellion should have the ability to win popular support through an attractive political aim or what

Lawrence called 'doctrine (the idea to convert every subject to friendliness)'.<sup>70</sup> 'Doctrine', the political 'message' aimed at promoting popular support for the Allied cause in enemy-occupied territory, featured prominently in Wingate's writings on 'penetration warfare', particularly from the Ethiopia period. Wingate also stressed the need to win over the population in the area of operations, as will be shown, but felt their role should be confined to scouting and providing information, rather than fighting, echoing Lawrence's belief that guerrilla warfare centred on an active minority. These will be discussed in context below but at this stage, given the similarity between Lawrence's 'doctrine' and Wingate's, and their views on the role of the general population in guerrilla warfare, it is difficult not to detect some influence of one on the other.

However, while Lawrence's abstractions in other areas may have been considered by Wingate, it would be rash to search for any direct link in tactical or operational thought. At the heart of Lawrence's mode of warfare was victory through pure manoeuvre: striking at the enemy infrastructure would force him to disperse his forces and eventually break his will to fight through frustration and exhaustion, without the need to risk battle:

Most wars are wars of contact, both forces striving to touch to avoid tactical surprise. Ours should be a war of detachment. We were to contain the enemy by the silent threat of a vast unknown desert, not disclosing ourselves until we attacked. The attack might be nominal, directed not against him, but his stuff....We might turn our average into a rule...and develop a habit of never engaging the enemy....Battles in Arabia were a mistake, since we profited in them only by the ammunition the enemy fired off. Napoleon said that it was rare to find generals willing to fight battles; but the curse of this war was that so few would do anything else....We had nothing material to lose, so our best line was to defend nothing and to shoot nothing.<sup>71</sup>

Wingate, as will be shown, always stressed defeating the enemy in battle and saw the aim of his operations as forcing battle under the most advantageous circumstances. If Wingate adopted some of Lawrence's concepts, beyond 'doctrine', then he applied them within a different model of warfare. However, the evidence indicates that Lawrence did affect this model. Through his writing and

personal connections, Liddell Hart in particular, and against the background of growing popular revulsion at the 'slaughter' of the Western Front, Lawrence created a body of enthusiasm in both the Army and the British political establishment for what, in his and Wingate's day, was called 'Scallywagging', later 'covert operations', the use of small specialist units or individual agents to sow and direct rebellion in enemy territory. In 1939, Colonel JCF Holland, commanding MI(R), the forerunner of SOE, put *Seven Pillars* on his essential reading list for all MI(R) personnel and referred to the Arab revolt frequently in his official writings, while Wavell was firm that operations inside occupied Ethiopia in 1940-41 should conform with the model practiced by Lawrence.<sup>72</sup> Wingate executed covert operations in Ethiopia under the auspices of both Wavell and MI(R) and so it seems Lawrence may have created, indirectly, an environment sympathetic to this model of warfare. Lawrence's impact on Wingate was therefore far greater than Wingate would have cared to admit.

#### *Wingate's Staff College Examination Papers*

Wingate read *Seven Pillars* after his return from Sudan, while Adjutant of 71st Territorial Army Artillery Brigade in 1935-36. Administrative and training duties aside, his main professional concern was entry to the Staff College at Camberley, without which it was unlikely he would reach senior rank. He sat the entrance examination twice, in February and June 1936, and passed on the second attempt. However, the next stage was to achieve nomination by a selection committee chaired by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS): Wingate was rejected at this stage, prompting the much-recounted incident of his introducing himself to the CIGS, Field Marshal Sir Cyril Deverell, during an exercise and presenting a copy of his article in the *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, on his expedition to find the 'lost oasis' of Zerzura, with which he had closed his service in Sudan, with the implication that Deverell should reconsider. Impressed by Wingate's audacity and,

apparently, by the article, Deverell promised to find Wingate a staff job appropriate to his rank and experience, and Wingate was assigned as an Intelligence Officer in HQ 5th Division, in Haifa, in September 1936.<sup>73</sup>

Two of Wingate's examination papers survive. Not only do these demonstrate the development of Wingate's ideas by this time, but they provide evidence that two key passions developed earlier than previous published works have detected. Firstly, Wingate appears to have had an academic interest in Palestine some months before arriving there, suggesting, combined with his attitude to Lawrence, that he arrived with many of his opinions on the region forming already. The second paper shows that his much-cited hatred and suspicion of staff officers may have originated even before the first of his numerous clashes with them.

It is possible that Wingate's interest in the Middle East was inspired by Sir Reginald, as his exam answer, 'The importance of Palestine and Trans-Jordan to the Empire' concentrated entirely upon imperial geopolitics, without mentioning the ethno-nationalist issues which shape much of the politics of the region and which were to become his obsession. He opened by outlining how the situation in the region had changed since 1914; previously, the region had been controlled by Turkey, no threat to 'our communications with the east for the reason that she was not strong enough'; the situation would be different were the region controlled by a rival European power, 'The necessary measures for the defence of the Suez Canal and Egypt would have cost immense sums of money and would not even then have afforded real security.'<sup>74</sup> Once Turkey disappeared from the scene, however, the area became vital to the Empire's interests for several reasons. First was the oil resources of Iraq; Britain could not rely upon sources of oil in the hands of other European countries, 'The pipeline to Haifa is already of considerable military importance to our fleet...We must, therefore, control the territory through which it runs. So long as Iraq is not controlled by any other power, we do...control the oil supplies from her oil fields' - Wingate would soon have a personal interest in the pipeline.

Secondly was air communications to India; were a foreign power to control Transjordan, it would soon dominate Iraq, as well, and be in a position to menace the air route across northern Arabia. Thirdly was British influence: 'To cede the control of these territories to a strong, expanding and propagandist power would be to deal a decisive blow to our influence in the Near East. Egyptians, Arabs, Iraqis and Persians, would all conclude that the domination of Great Britain was over...'<sup>75</sup> This paper is interesting in indicating how far Wingate's opinions developed over the next three years. He was to become an advocate of a 'strong, expanding and propagandist' Jewish state in the region, and concluded that Arab opinion - and oil - was unimportant. However, his Jewish state, as he envisaged it, would be a guardian of British interests in the region, and Wingate would enlist similar geopolitical arguments to those given in the paper in its support.

The question Wingate answered on the second paper has not been found, but appears to have concerned the sources of military inefficiency. Wingate argued that the higher the rank, the greater the damage arising from narrow-mindedness, beginning with a definition of narrow-mindedness which provides an excellent example of his combative style:

Anyone who accepts this phrase without definition is guilty of slovenly thinking. In the last analysis it means that mental quality that clings to a particular view in disregard of facts and opinions that are opposed to it. It is always given a bad sense in use, and here means clinging to views from stupidity or obstinacy when intelligent thought and admission of all the facts would compel a departure from them....It has to be admitted that staff officers are peculiarly prone to this fault.<sup>76</sup>

This was because 'their long and arduous training tends to make them prize the ideas and opinions they have imbibed from their teachers. The learning has cost them many pains [sic] and the thought that those pains, in some cases, have been thrown away is unacceptable to many of them.'<sup>77</sup> Wingate argued that their pride in their systems was such that they 'would prefer failure along the right lines to success along the wrong ones.'<sup>78</sup> He then, prophetically, illustrated his point with a hypothetical

account of a campaign in East Africa; the commander of a 'native corps' complains that the rigid march timetable drawn up by the staff actually stifles the main advantages of his troops, their ability to march across country at three times the rate of British troops and to live off the land:

The staff officer regards the native corps commander as an old-fashioned soldier who does not know how to conduct a modern operation. He prefers to believe, without investigation, the civil authorities' view of the resources available. He resents the tone adopted and the implication that he and the rest of the staff are making a blunder. In short, he refuses to face the facts, convinces himself that he is justified in dismissing his critic as an ignoramus, and suppresses his evidence.<sup>79</sup>

Although there is no evidence, it might be that this rather polemical paper stemmed from first-hand experience. Wingate was certainly to accuse staff officers of all these sins in the future. Wingate's conclusion is interesting in illustrating that, at this time, he was still an advocate of concentration of effort, blaming on the German General Staff in 1914 'the pig-headed worship of the envelopment theory of strategy...which led directly to disaster.'<sup>80</sup> The examiner complimented Wingate's style and his ideas, and awarded him a 'VG+' grade. This is in contrast to his mark on the tactics paper, where, Tulloch recalled, instead of answering the question, Wingate 'content[ed] himself with writing a thesis proving that the examiner did not know his subject', this presumably being Wingate's earlier, unsuccessful attempt.<sup>81</sup>

It appears, therefore, that Wingate arrived in Palestine with many of the opinions which were to shape his subsequent relationship with his peers, and their memories of him, developing already if not set firmly in his psyche. This reverses previous opinion of Wingate, influenced mainly by Mosley and Sykes, which argues that his Zionism, which arose from his personal opinions and early experiences, was the major influence upon his view of imperial strategy and the role of force within it, and that his problems with authority first arose in Palestine from an implied Arabophile conspiracy.<sup>82</sup> Even a brief overview of Wingate's intellectual interests in this period suggests that the actuality was more

complex and deeper rooted.

*Conclusions - Wingate before Palestine*

The Captain Wingate who arrived in Palestine in 1936 was an officer with some deep, and strongly held opinions already evident. In a series of papers and reports he had exhibited not only a growingly combative style, but a consistent belief in the value of ‘interior lines’ and the use of mobility and deception to achieve surprise and concentration of effort; he also demonstrated a belief that a people’s ‘national characteristics’ would affect their military behaviour. He had also acquired several years’ experience of commanding irregular forces in small-scale operations in rough country, courtesy of the SDF and, at the end of this period, had discovered the works of his relative, TE Lawrence. Yet, at no point can he be viewed as a ‘maverick’: while he commented critically upon some of the methods used by the SDF, he did not try to change them. It is also evident that some of his opinions of Lawrence were shared by others, including senior officers, and his examination papers achieved good marks, despite their critical content and tone. Moreover, as the previous chapter indicates, Wingate’s SDF experience was shared by hundreds of other officers, in Africa and elsewhere. As the next chapter will demonstrate, the diverse strands covered in the previous two chapters would come together in the hills of Galilee in 1938, the cradle of the ‘Wingate myth’.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER THREE

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3. Wingate, ‘Strategy in Three Campaigns’, p.1

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5. Ibid, pp.6-8

6. Ibid, p.15
7. Ibid, pp.6-9
8. Ibid, p.17
9. Ibid, pp.10, 11-13
10. Sykes, *Orde Wingate*, p.51
11. Ibid, pp.53-56
12. PRO WO106/6104, 'Summary of events during Arab revolt in province of Hejaz', 1918, pp.12-15; TE Lawrence, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (London: Jonathan Cape 1935), pp.58, 62, 111-113
13. Sykes, *Orde Wingate*, pp.56-57
14. Royle, *Orde Wingate*, p.48
15. Mosley, *Gideon Goes to War*, p.22
16. Royle, *Orde Wingate*, p.68
17. Ibid, pp.62-63, 69-70; Sykes, *Orde Wingate*, pp.68-69
18. Dayan, *Story of My Life*, p.46
19. Colonel BT Wilson DSO RE, 'The Sudan of To-Day', *RUSI Journal* Volume LXXIX, 1934, p.538
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22. Boustead, 'Camel Corps of the SDF', p.553
23. Ibid, pp.554-556; Wilson, 'Sudan', p.541
24. Boustead, 'Camel Corps of the SDF', pp.556-557
25. Dodds-Parker Interview of 24/8/2004; Sykes, *Orde Wingate*, p.65
26. Mosley, *Gideon Goes to War*, p.98
27. *FSR 1929*(ii), pp.205, 207; see also Callwell, *Small Wars*, pp.34-42, 85-107
28. *FSR 1929*(ii), p.205
29. Ibid, pp.205, 211-212



30. Boustead, 'Camel Corps of the SDF', pp.556-557; Wilson, 'Sudan', pp.543-544
31. Sykes, *Orde Wingate*, p.65
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33. *Bimbashi* OC Wingate, 'Report on DINDER Patrol carried out by two sections of No.2 Idara EAC from 11/4/31 to 26/4/31', Copy No.3, IWM Wingate 'Early Life' Papers, Box III, p.1
34. Ibid, p.3
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40. Ibid, p.1
41. Royle, *Orde Wingate*, pp.60-61
42. Ibid, pp.61-62
43. Mosley, *Gideon Goes to War*, pp.12-13
44. See Leo Amery's diary entry of 10 December 1939, in John Barnes and David Nicholson (editors), *The Empire at Bay: The Leo Amery Diaries 1929-1945* (London: Hutchinson 1988), pp.576-577, wherein he compares Wingate favourably with Lawrence; Liddell Hart to Wavell of 12 December 1948, wherein he comments on Wavell's piece on Wingate for *The Dictionary of National Biography* and that Wingate 'was clearly casting himself for the role of a second TE', LHCMA Liddell Hart Papers Files LH 1/730-733, Pt.3; Weizmann, *Trial and Error*, p.389
45. See particularly WO106/6104, pp.6, 12-15; Lawrence James, *The Golden Warrior; The Life and Legend of Lawrence of Arabia* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson 1990), pp.114, 147-149, 161
46. James, *Golden Warrior*, pp.322-325, 360; see also Conor Cruise O'Brien, *The Siege: The Story of Israel and Zionism* (London; Weidenfeld & Nicholson 1986), p.158
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48. For a summary of Wingate's views on Arabs, see Captain OC Wingate, 'Palestine in Imperial Strategy, HMS Dorsetshire 6/6/39', TBL Wingate Palestine Papers, Manuscript Number 2313, pp.1-4

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51. Sykes, *Orde Wingate*, pp.109-110

52. See, for instance, Liddell Hart's manuscript, 'Lawrence of Arabia - The (Almost) Free Man', in the LHCMA Liddell Hart Papers, File 9/13/27

53. PRO CO732/81/3, 'Note on the possibility of concerted military opposition from the Arab peoples to HM Government's policy in Palestine', 1938, pp.2-3

54. PRO WO106/6104, pp.3, 12

55. High Commissioner for Egypt to Foreign Office of 6 January 1917, in PRO FO141/825

56. Telegram from Foreign Office to High Commissioner for Egypt of 1 September 1916, Telegram from CinC Ismailia to High Commissioner for Egypt of September 1916, both in PRO FO141/462; PRO CAB 37/161/9, 'War Cabinet, 1st Meeting' Minutes Signed 9 December 1916, Paragraph 11

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59. Brian Bond, 'Ironside', in Keegan (Ed), *Churchill's Generals*, pp.17-18

60. Ironside to Wingate of 8 June 1939, TBL Wingate Palestine Papers, Manuscript 2313

61. Quoted in Sykes, *Orde Wingate*, p.250

62. James, *Golden Warrior*, pp.xi-xii, 16, 192, 279-283, 291, 332, 341

63. Lawrence, 'Guerilla', p.881

64. Ibid, pp.882-883

65. Lawrence, *Seven Pillars*, pp.197-198
66. Ibid, p.200
67. Lawrence, 'Guerilla', pp.886-888
68. Lawrence, *Seven Pillars*, p.201
69. Lawrence, 'Guerilla', pp.889-890; see also Lawrence's notes on proofs of Liddell Hart's *The Decisive Wars of History*, in LHCMA Liddell Hart Papers 9/13/18, especially pp.2-3
70. Lawrence, 'Guerilla', p.890; Captain TE Lawrence to the Right Honourable Arthur Balfour of 29 July 1917, in PRO FO141/825, wherein he suggests a possible 'doctrine' for the Arab Revolt
71. Lawrence, *Seven Pillars*, pp.200-201
72. Holland's Reading List is in PRO HS8/260, 'MI(R) Progress Reports, 1939-1940'; Brigadier Arthur Smith, BGS HQ ME, to General Sir William Platt, GOC East Africa, of 28 September 1939, in PRO WO201/2677, especially Para.2
73. Sykes, *Orde Wingate*, pp.98-103
74. Index No.8, Paper No.2, Question No.2 (b), 'The importance of Palestine and Trans-Jordan to the Empire', IWM Wingate Early Life Papers Box 3, p.1
75. Ibid, p.2
76. Index No.8 Paper No.2 Question No.3, 'What is to be discussed?', IWM Wingate 'Early Life' Papers, Box 3, p.1
77. Ibid, pp.1-2
78. Ibid, p.2
79. Ibid, p.3
80. Ibid, p.3
81. Tulloch, *Wingate in Peace and War*, p.43
82. Bierman & Smith, *Fire in the Night*, pp.59-64; Mosley, *Gideon Goes to War*, pp.34-38, 71-72, 74-78; Royle, *Orde Wingate*, pp.97-99; Sykes, *Orde Wingate*, pp.104, 110

## CHAPTER FOUR

## WINGATE AND COUNTERTERRORISM IN PALESTINE, 1937-39

**I cannot speak too highly...of the Special Night Squads....organized and trained by Captain OC WINGATE, Royal Artillery, from my Staff, who has shown great resource, enterprise and courage in leading and controlling their activities. These Squads have been supplemented by Jewish supernumeraries who have done excellent work in combination with the British personnel. The story of the inception and gradual development of this form of activity, and its successful results, provide a great tribute to the initiative and ingenuity of all concerned.**

- General Sir Robert Haining, 1938<sup>1</sup>

**[Captain Wingate's] tendency...to play for his own ends and likings instead of playing for the side...has become so marked...as to render his services in the Intelligence Branch nugatory and embarrassing. His removal to another sphere of action has been timely.**

- General Sir Robert Haining, 1939<sup>2</sup>

*Introduction*

The Lexicon of the Israel Defence Force (IDF) states, 'The teachings of Orde Charles Wingate, his character and leadership were a cornerstone for many of the *Haganah's* commanders, and his influence can be seen in the Israel Defence Force's combat doctrine.'<sup>3</sup> Wingate's influence on Israeli military policy was confirmed by the founders of the IDF and the State of Israel: David Ben-Gurion, Israel's first Prime Minister, stated that had Wingate lived, he would have been the natural choice to lead the IDF during the 1948 War of Independence; to Moshe Dayan, 'He was a military genius and a wonderful man'; in 1976, Ariel Sharon told Brian Bond that Wingate was his boyhood hero and he 'read avidly' about his exploits in Abyssinia and Burma; when asked about the comparative influence of Wingate and Liddell Hart over Israeli military doctrine, Yitzhak Rabin stated that Wingate's was

greater, as did Sharon's mentor, Major General Avraham Yoffe; Yigal Allon listed Wingate at the top of those who had exerted most influence, ahead of Liddell Hart and Yitzhak Sadeh.<sup>4</sup> Until 1999, all school textbooks in Israel covered Wingate's contributions to Zionism without qualification or criticism.<sup>5</sup>

Another side to the story has emerged since the 1950s. Sykes alleged frequent breakdowns in discipline among Wingate's Special Night Squads (SNS), and Royle provided evidence that Wingate's brand of 'personal leadership' sometimes ran to enforcing discipline with his fists and boot.<sup>6</sup> The SNS sometimes seemed dangerously amateurish, its first large action, at Dabburiya in July 1938, seeing one Jewish policeman killed and Wingate seriously wounded by fire from their own side.<sup>7</sup> Most serious are allegations that the SNS were Jewish 'death squads', fighting terror with terror. Mosley claimed that Wingate tortured and then murdered a suspected terrorist on his very first patrol; this is uncorroborated, but Sykes alluded to 'innocent loiterers [who] were shot among rebels who returned the fire' when the SNS raided the village of Beit Shean a few months later.<sup>8</sup> Bierman and Smith mention one unauthorised killing of an Arab civilian, occurring while Wingate was on leave in London in autumn 1938, but imply that by then events were out of his control.<sup>9</sup> However, the most serious allegations, surprisingly, have come from Israelis. The post-*Intifada* period has seen the emergence of the so-called 'New Historians', a group of revisionist Israeli writers including Benny Morris, Avi Shlaim, Tom Segev and Gideon Levy, using previously closed Hebrew and Arabic sources to argue that the Jewish State, from its earliest beginnings, has been neither as innocent nor as defenceless as is frequently claimed.<sup>10</sup> In 1999, Segev published a history of the British Mandate including allegations that Wingate not only tortured and beat Arabs in reprisal for terrorist attacks, but personally murdered several.<sup>11</sup> Segev gave no dates for these incidents and located only one, but his claim that many in the Zionist leadership viewed Wingate as more trouble than he was worth was corroborated by no less a source than Ben-Gurion, who had personal dealings with Wingate

throughout the period 1937-44.<sup>12</sup> Outside Israel, Hew Strachan described Wingate's methods as 'state terrorism', while Charles Townshend described the SNS as a 'still more dubious' version of the Black and Tans.<sup>13</sup> There appears, therefore, to be a very dark side to the Wingate myth.

As has been discussed already, 'severity' against insurgents was advocated by Callwell and by several other senior British officers. Whatever the misgivings expressed about such methods, post-Amritsar and post-Ireland, it can be demonstrated that if Wingate was ruthless in dealing with insurgents, then he had company. However, the commonest impression given in the *pro*-Wingate sources is that Wingate single-handedly turned the tide of the Arab revolt against obstruction from a British 'military establishment' institutionally Islamophile and anti-Semitic, and from timid Jewish politicians. Burchett, in 1946, suggested that 'The Arab revolt was an *ersatz* production foisted on Palestine by the Axis, and more or less winked at by the British [therefore] we [sic] allowed Axis money and Axis arms to pour into Palestine to be used against the people we had lawfully permitted to settle there.'<sup>14</sup> Wingate, 'after a lot of trouble', obtained authority to form 'special light squadrons [sic]' and in a few weeks, 'squashed' the rebels in his operational area; however:

Many of the General Staff officers, in accordance with the fashion of the day, had become anti-Semitic, and Wingate's exploits were not looked upon favourably....The special squads were disbanded and after waiting around with nothing to do Wingate left for England...<sup>15</sup>

Mosley dwelt also upon the attitude of the British authorities (having Wingate describe General Headquarters, Jerusalem, as 'a gang of anti-Jews') and on the passivity of the Jewish leadership which condemned Jewish settlers in Galilee 'with nothing but a few rook rifles' per settlement, to massacre, it only being after galvanisation by Wingate that the Jews went onto the offensive.<sup>16</sup> Sykes quoted Wingate's disparagement of British tactics at length, and Wingate's criticism of the British Army is taken at face value by those concerning themselves more directly with his military ideas.<sup>17</sup> Rossetto

claimed that the Jews ‘never managed to form a common front with the British and preferred to follow a policy of strict self-defence’ against Arab guerrillas; the British reliance on mechanised transport and heavy weaponry allowed the rebels to hit, run and then melt back into the countryside.<sup>18</sup> British action against the rebels was sporadic and timid, the rebels always being warned by the locals in time to either lay ambushes or escape: this situation was rectified only when Wingate realised that the British had to form ‘small squads’ to meet the rebels on their own terms, principally operating by night which the British Army had, according to Rossetto, avoided previously.<sup>19</sup> Royle emphasised Jewish criticism of British tactics, comparing them unfavourably with Wingate’s.<sup>20</sup> The consensus in the literature, therefore, is that Wingate was alone in his readiness and ability to tackle the Arab insurgents and was advocating ideas different not only from those of his peers in the British Army but from the Jewish military leadership also.

A study of official papers of the time, and the testimony of Jewish leaders and some of Wingate’s colleagues does not support this. In reality, it appears that the SNS operated within a British counterinsurgency strategy derived from established practice, adapting many of the methods described in Chapter Two of this thesis, and effective enough to force several changes in strategy upon the insurgents, and in which there was extensive Anglo-Jewish and Anglo-Arab cooperation. Moreover, Wingate’s allegedly ‘radical’ use of Jewish policemen and volunteers in counterinsurgent operations had the blessing of his commanders and the British High Commissioner in Palestine, in contravention of British Government policy. The remainder of this chapter will clarify both these issues and the extent to which Wingate’s tactical and operational thought at this time parted company with that of his colleagues – if at all.

*The Development of the Arab Revolt*

The Palestinian Arab revolt of 1936-39 arose from a long historical process. Palestine was administered, from 1919, by the British Colonial Office acting under a Mandate from the League of Nations. This was never easy politically, because the Balfour Declaration of 1917 committed the British to 'use their best endeavours' to assist the creation of a Jewish national homeland in Palestine, while the 'civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities' - Arabs making up 90% of Palestine's population in 1917 - would not be prejudiced.<sup>21</sup> Transjordan, although previously part of Palestine and incorporated into the Mandate, was formed into a separate Arab Emirate, and Palestine, Transjordan and Iraq took on vital strategic importance for the Empire, as a buffer zone protecting Egypt and the Suez Canal, and as an aerial artery between Britain and India, as Wingate appreciated (see Chapter Three above).<sup>22</sup> Apart from occasional outbreaks of sectarian rioting, there was relative peace until 1929, mainly because the Jews remained a minority, and a Jewish national homeland in Palestine seemed an unlikely prospect. However, the mid 1920s saw Europe begin its greatest spasm of anti-Semitism, beginning in Poland in the 1920s and moving to unprecedented levels with the rise of the Nazis. The USA had restricted all immigration in 1924, so Palestine now fulfilled the role Theodor Herzl, the founder of modern political Zionism, envisaged for it, a Jewish national sanctuary: Jewish immigration to Palestine, encouraged by the Nazis, rose from 4,000 arrivals per year in 1931 to over 61,000 in 1935, plus perhaps 5-6000 illegal immigrants smuggled in per year.<sup>23</sup> The perceived existential threat to the Palestinian Arabs posed now by this explosive increase in Jewish immigration produced a violent Arab nationalist response sharpened by militant Islam. This was initiated by Sheikh Muhammad Izz al-Din al-Qassam, a Syrian cleric who had been preaching anti-colonial *jihad* since 1911, whose followers began attacking Jewish settlements in mid-1935.<sup>24</sup> Qassam was killed in battle by the British in November 1935, and reacting to his 'martyrdom', from early 1936, Muslim



clerics began to demand resistance to any Jewish takeover of Palestine, the most prominent being Haj-Amin al Husseini, the Mufti of Jerusalem and, since 1929, head of the Supreme Muslim Council, the Palestinian Arab 'government' set up by the British.<sup>25</sup>

The subsequent insurgency fell into four broad phases:

- *Phase One.* The British traced the beginning of the revolt to 19 April 1936, when the Supreme Muslim Council called a general strike of Arab workers with the tacit backing of the Arab Higher Committee, an unofficial Arab 'government' created in Palestine to represent Arab interests, also chaired by the Mufti. The strike lasted six months, accompanied by rioting - mainly targeting Jewish areas and businesses - sabotage, murders of civilians from both communities, and, in the summer, the formation of large guerrilla units in the countryside.<sup>26</sup> The British noted early that these units centred upon 'volunteers' from Syria and Iraq, many of them apparently with regular army training; these were reinforced by local Palestinian Arabs, who were notably less aggressive and disciplined.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, British official reports indicated that the rural Arab population was lukewarm towards the rebellion and, unless coerced directly by the guerrillas, were generally law-abiding; in the later stages of the campaign many cooperated actively with the British while a number turned violently upon the guerrillas. Consequently, the 'rebellion' resembled less an insurgency than an invasion, using guerrilla methods, in support of an elite of urban agitators centred on the Mufti. The military direction of the guerrilla campaign was initially in the hands of Fawzi al-Quwuqji, a Syrian Druze and former officer in the Ottoman Army, who had led a revolt against the French in 1925 before being appointed Commandant of the Iraqi Army Military Training College.<sup>28</sup> Quwuqji was enlisted by the Higher Arab Committee to give the insurgency direction and discipline; this he did, among other things producing a simple codified doctrine for guerrilla warfare dubbed the 'Damascus *FSR*' when copies fell into British hands.<sup>29</sup> Iraq, which had received nominal independence from Britain in 1932, and now the most pro-Axis of the Arab states, not only provided Quwuqji and volunteers for the guerrilla bands

but also spoke internationally on behalf of the Higher Arab Committee and pressured British policy with vague threats of escalation to a general confrontation in the Middle East.<sup>30</sup> Contrary to Burchett's claims, Germany and Italy seem to have offered little more to the guerrillas than propaganda support, most of their weapons in actuality being leftovers from 1914-18 or previous rebellions.<sup>31</sup>

With just one brigade in Palestine, the British authorities were unable to carry out the rapid, vigorous response a Callwell or Gwynn might recommend. Yet, *Operations Instructions*, an *ad hoc* 'doctrine' for dealing with the insurgency, devised by Brigadier JF Evetts, Commander of Troops, Palestine, followed closely the 'frontier warfare' tradition furthered by Callwell, *FSR* and recent British practice. Evetts aimed to bring the guerrillas to battle by tempting them to attack convoys accompanied by armoured cars and lorries mounted with Royal Navy pom-pom guns, by occupying villages and waterholes they might contest, and offensive 'cordon and sweep' operations intended to kill or capture rebel leaders.<sup>32</sup> Evetts, therefore, seems to have envisaged a 'small war', rather than a policing operation. At the political level, the British Government announced in August 1936 that a Royal Commission, under Lord Peel, would be sent to Palestine to investigate Arab and Jewish grievances and to ascertain if the Mandate was being implemented satisfactorily; however, before it could convene, law and order should be restored.<sup>33</sup> In the biggest movement of British troops since the First World War, two infantry divisions, the 5th and the 8th, were formed into the Palestine Expeditionary Force, under Lieutenant General JG Dill, raising the garrison to 80,000, alongside four squadrons from RAF Bomber Command.<sup>34</sup> Orders in Council were passed authorising severe measures: martial law was imposed, allowing the death penalty for saboteurs, those illegally wearing British uniform or carrying concealed firearms and life imprisonment for those willingly supplying the rebels.<sup>35</sup> Collective punishment of pro-rebel villages, consisting of fines, demolition of houses, and enforced curfews, was also allowed.<sup>36</sup> This was offensive action, reinforced by 'severity', as Callwell

had recommended.

The massive reinforcement allowed the British army to go onto the offensive. 'Preliminary Notes on Lessons of the Palestine Rebellion' of 1937 described and set tactical methods until 1938, when it was supplanted by 'Military Lessons of the Arab Rebellion in Palestine', in time to be rendered irrelevant by a subsequent change in rebel methods.<sup>37</sup> These documents did not depart from 'frontier warfare' practice: infantry columns, small enough to tempt the guerrillas to try their chances but mobile enough to converge rapidly upon 'the sound of the guns' were to sweep rebel areas on a wide front. Upon encountering a guerrilla band, standard procedure was to send an 'XX' wireless call, for air support, or 'GG' for tanks, these 'fixing' the gang in its position before 'shooting in' an infantry counterattack.<sup>38</sup> Emphasis was on getting into bayonet and grenade range: Callwell was enthusiastic about the bayonet, believing that native irregulars had a terror of cold steel.<sup>39</sup> The 'Preliminary Notes' suggest this sentiment was common:

Infantry finding itself within 200 yards of the rebels should go straight in with bayonets and butts...Nine times out of ten the enemy will fire a few rounds wildly and try to run away. If encountered at longer range efforts should be made to pin the enemy to the ground with fire while lightly equipped troops try to get round the flanks and behind him.<sup>40</sup>

However, the most notable feature of these operations was the use of aircraft in support of the columns on the ground, the RAF carrying out reconnaissance for army columns, 'pinning' insurgents in villages while columns moved up, and providing close air support in response to 'XX' calls, Dill complimenting them upon the speed with which they could respond.<sup>41</sup> The methods applied by British forces in 'small wars' elsewhere were therefore continued in Palestine.

- *Phase Two* began in September 1937 with the breakdown of the truce pending the report of the Peel Commission and ended with the defeat of the major guerrilla forces by the British army in early 1938. Three developments contributed to this. The first was Sir Arthur Wauchope's replacement as

High Commissioner by the more hawkish Sir Harold MacMichael in February 1937; second was the employment by the Palestine Government of Sir Charles Tegart, former Commissioner of Police in Calcutta, as an advisor on police organisation and methods from December 1937 to June 1938; third was the refinement of Army tactical and operational methods. Tegart's principal contributions were his recommendation that the northern border, with Lebanon and Syria, be closed by a barbed wire fence, covered by concrete blockhouses (the 'Tegart Line') and, significantly for this thesis, recommending the forming of specialist counterinsurgency units.<sup>42</sup> Such a 'Third Force', part way between army and police, had been used in Palestine before: in 1921, the Palestine Gendarmerie had been formed by Colonel Wyndham Deedes, at the behest of the High Commissioner, in response to an outbreak of sectarian rioting. Although initially recruited on a 'mixed' basis, issues of reliability led to it becoming 'all-white', its members including large numbers of former Black and Tans and members of the RIC Auxiliary Division; Charles Townshend implies that the intention behind this force, which was disbanded in the mid 1920s, was to control Palestine through intimidation.<sup>43</sup> Now, Tegart (an Ulsterman) called for the raising of 'Rural Mounted Police', from 'the tough type of man, not necessarily literate, who knows as much of the game as the other side', and composed 'partly of British and Palestinians [from which ethnicity Tegart did not specify]'.<sup>44</sup> These would patrol rural areas, gathering information on the gangs and attacking any they encountered, freeing the Palestine Police for more orthodox police work.<sup>45</sup> Tegart's proposal was rejected on the grounds stated by a senior government official that 'In effect this will be rather like the "Black & Tans" with some of the original personnel of that body and might easily supply material for the same kind of reputation as they, rightly or wrongly, obtained in the Irish troubles.'<sup>46</sup> Wingate was not, therefore, first to suggest the formation of specialist counterinsurgent units, or, indeed, to utilise them.

Wavell succeeded Dill as GOC Palestine on 12 September 1937. Martial law was lifted at the end of the general strike, and the resumption of hostilities in September 1937 was met with 'Military

Control', described already.<sup>47</sup> Operations consisted of action against guerrilla bands smaller and less aggressive than previously, confining themselves to robbing villages and ambushing small police and army patrols and, when engaged, preferring long-ranged fire-fights before a swift retreat.<sup>48</sup> In response, the Army refined the system of mobile columns, with ten per brigade, now with mules, allowing them to pursue rebels into the hills, use superior mobility to harry the gangs, and if possible cut off a gang's routes of retreat and then 'drive' in upon them, the Army destroying a number of large gangs in this way in early 1938.<sup>49</sup> Twice in the space of a fortnight in November 1937, Evetts, now commanding 16th Brigade in Galilee, destroyed rebel gangs, one action involving a column of 2nd East Yorkshires climbing a several-thousand foot mountain in darkness to attack a rebel base, capturing its leader and an arsenal of weapons, earning Evetts one of several mentions in dispatches.<sup>50</sup> In March 1938, 16th Brigade fought the largest engagement of the rebellion, at Jenin, resulting in heavy rebel casualties; in the following fortnight, the Brigade destroyed the biggest guerrilla band in Galilee, killing its leader.<sup>51</sup> British tactics, therefore, proved effective long before Wingate's involvement. However, they forced a change in operational method upon the rebels that did, temporarily, nullify the British tactical advantage and was to provide Wingate with an opportunity.

- *Phase Three* lasted from March 1938 to the end of that year, the period in which Wingate created and led the SNS, which can now be seen not as a reaction to the inadequacy of British counterinsurgency techniques, but to a shift in rebel strategy. Thanks to previous British success, the rebels were reduced to a strength of around 1,000 over the whole of Palestine, and switched to terror attacks on the rural Arab population, murdering or kidnapping Arabs known to have moderate views or suspected of supplying information to the government, or coercing villagers into acts of sabotage. The terrorist offensive was concentrated upon Galilee, southern Palestine being relatively peaceful until late in this period.<sup>52</sup> As pointed out by Lieutenant General Sir Robert Haining, who succeeded Wavell as GOC in April 1938, the rebels now had no 'centres of gravity' against which the Army

could concentrate.<sup>53</sup> From May 1938, the British responded by billeting platoon-sized detachments of British troops in villages in terrorist-affected areas, protecting law-abiding Arabs and patrolling the surrounding area.<sup>54</sup> Much of this patrolling was by night, Haining emphasising the need to be ‘top-dog’ by night some time before Wingate began raising the SNS.<sup>55</sup> 25 villages were occupied by the end of May, as the Tegart line was completed, and there was nightly patrolling of the northern frontier until early December, when it was suspended following a temporary resumption of the rebels assembling in large gangs.<sup>56</sup> The gangs, from late May, switched their activities to sabotage and attacks on Jewish settlements, the situation Wingate’s counterterrorist operations were intended to resolve.<sup>57</sup>

By October 1938, the British had reached the most critical stage of the rebellion. Haining was forced to admit, in his Official Report for November that, due to overstretch, he had cancelled all offensive operations and: ‘The situation at this time was such that civil administration and control of the country was, for all practical purposes, non-existent. The number of troops in the country was still insufficient to do more than hold down the essential localities and communications.’<sup>58</sup> Stuart Emeny of the *News Chronicle*, who was to die in the same air crash as Wingate in 1944, reported that the British had lost control over Palestine outside Haifa and Tel Aviv.<sup>59</sup> Moreover, it was feared that the rebels were winning the battle for hearts and minds. Haining noted that:

[T]he steadily increasing number of...incidents, and the damage and dislocation caused to government property and communications forbids their dismissal as trivial. They are, in fact, symptomatic of what is now a very deep-seated rebellious spirit throughout the whole Arab population, spurred on by the call of a Holy War. The rebel gangs have now acquired, by terrorist methods, such a hold over the mass of the population that it is not untrue to say that every Arab in the country is a potential enemy of the government...He dare not be otherwise, if called upon by the rebels to give his physical or financial aid to their cause.<sup>60</sup>

The Army was hampered by two developments. Firstly, the Munich crisis in September resulted in reinforcements earmarked for Palestine being held in England and Egypt.<sup>61</sup> Secondly, the collapse

of the Palestine Police, resulting from widespread bribery and intimidation of its 1,500 Arab officers, and from incompetence, insubordination and anti-Semitism among its British elements.<sup>62</sup> On 12 September, Haining took the Palestine Police under his direct command, Tegart was summoned from England for further consultations, and the force was ‘purged.’<sup>63</sup> The other response was to allow Wingate to organise the SNS, something he had been badgering GHQ in Jerusalem to do for several months.

#### *Wingate and Anglo- Jewish cooperation*

Much of the Wingate literature has confined its consultation of Jewish/Israeli testimony almost entirely to those who knew Wingate personally. Looking beyond this - even in the published record - reveals that not only did Anglo-Jewish military cooperation not begin with Wingate, but was extensive before his arrival. This was idealistic as well as practical, Wingate being far from the only Zionist in the British Army. Haggai Eshed, the biographer of Reuven Shiloah, founder of *Mossad*, the Israeli Secret Service, revealed the extent to which intelligence officers of the *Haganah*, the Jewish underground militia, found sympathisers among their counterparts in the British Army and RAF, among them Captain Alan Strange, a strong critic of ‘pro-Arab British policy’ prior to Wingate’s arrival, and Lieutenant Anthony Simonds.<sup>64</sup> Simonds, an officer of the Royal Berkshire Regiment, was to become a close friend of Wingate and served under him in Ethiopia. He was portrayed by Royle and Bierman and Smith as an affable lightweight, taken seriously neither by the Jewish leadership or his colleagues in the Army, and there is, indeed, a Wodehousian air to his correspondence with ‘My Dear Old Orde’.<sup>65</sup> However, Simonds emerges from these same letters as a strong idealist and natural sympathiser with ‘underdogs’; he pointedly lived in the Jewish quarter of Jerusalem, was privately critical of perceived anti-Semitism in the Palestine Police, and was deemed

worthy of cultivation by Shiloah himself as early as 1934.<sup>66</sup> He was also regarded highly enough by his superiors to be placed in charge of all political intelligence in Palestine from August 1937 and by 1945 was a lieutenant colonel and senior operative of MI9, aiding the escape of shot-down Allied aircrew from occupied Europe.<sup>67</sup> There was, therefore, a small body of vociferously pro-Jewish British officers serving in Palestine before Wingate's arrival.

Indeed, Wingate appears to have arrived late to this group. According to Lieutenant Colonel Ivor Thomas, who, as a corporal, was Wingate's clerk at GHQ Jerusalem, Wingate showed little discernible interest in Jewish affairs until he began to learn Hebrew six months after arriving, this being purely for intelligence purposes.<sup>68</sup> However late-developing it was, Wingate's Zionism is crucial to this study in that his actions in Palestine aimed at fulfilling his interpretation of Zionist policy, and formed three consecutive but overlapping strands. First was an anthropological interest in Jewish culture perhaps originating in his role as an intelligence officer, transmogrifying rapidly into passionate enthusiasm and belief that the Jews could use their achievements in Palestine to establish their worthiness of a nation-state. Second was a fierce anti-Islamism and anti-Arabism, alluded to by Sykes but passed over by subsequent authors, which may have derived from Wingate's religious beliefs and his antipathy to Lawrence. This was expressed through ethnic stereotyping of Arabs, dismissal of their religion, aspirations and military potential, this hardening into belief that all Arabs were potential terrorists who needed to be either cowed into submission or expelled from Palestine altogether. Thirdly came the belief that a Jewish state, holding Dominion status within the British Empire and with its own British-trained army, would be a bulwark of British interests in the Middle East, would secure the Empire the gratitude of 'international Jewry', and provide a vital ally in the approaching clash with fascism.

Wingate was not alone in these opinions. Not only did Dill and his successors take the Army Council's initial instruction to 'crush' the rebellion very seriously, and argued consistently, on



‘Callwellian’ lines, for greater ‘severity’, but they were also prepared to enlist Jewish military support.<sup>69</sup> Dill favoured a robust line with the Arabs throughout his time as GOC. In his first dispatch, of October 1936, he argued that: “[D]efensive duties” and dispersal do not work, & repressive measures, including martial law, resulted in a decrease in violence in early September. Martial law would ensure that gang leaders were caught & punished, & the military could go on the offensive.<sup>70</sup> This was necessary because of Arab ‘national character’. ‘[T]he Arabs respect strength and regard forbearance as weakness, which they despise’, Dill claiming that Arabs respected British authority most in those areas where measures were harshest.<sup>71</sup> Likewise, the Air Officer Commanding, Palestine and Transjordan, from 1938-39, Air Commodore Arthur Harris, advocated bombing rebel villages, as the RAF had done in Iraq and on the Northwest Frontier.<sup>72</sup>

However, arming the Jews was another issue. Jews formed part of the Palestine Police and all of the irregular Supernumerary Police (JSP) which enlisted 3,000 volunteers between April and October 1936.<sup>73</sup> The JSP was confined initially to protecting settlements and sections of railway running through majority Jewish areas but it is evident that Dill not only wanted to expand their numbers, but use them offensively against the Arab insurgents.<sup>74</sup> Nor was he alone: the unnamed author (possibly Evetts) of the ‘Military Lessons of the Arab Rebellion in Palestine’ of 1938, advocated using a legalised *Haganah*:

There is little doubt that in the end the authorities benefited by the subterranean defence organizations which their policy had forced underground, and it might perhaps have been better to have legalised and controlled at an earlier period the very natural activities which developed below the surface.<sup>75</sup>

Wauchope opposed this vociferously, writing to Dill in December 1936 that ‘[T]he formation of armed Jewish units, or offensive action by Jews against Arabs [w]as a grave danger to the future of this country’ and to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, a month later, ‘If Jewish units are allowed

to act offensively against Arabs in Palestine, I fear the chances of the two people [sic] ever living together amicably will vanish for generations.’<sup>76</sup> The status of Jewish units was raised in a secret dispatch of 26 January 1937 from Wauchope to the Colonial Office, prompting a conference in London in March, involving Wauchope, the CIGS, Deverell, other senior service officers and representatives of the Foreign Office, aimed at fixing policy on these issues. The policy decided is worth dwelling on, as it stood until 1939 and therefore provided political context for Wingate’s SNS operations. It was agreed to follow Wauchope’s line that, prior to the imposition of military control, ‘Jews should be employed for defensive purposes only, and only in areas mainly Jewish’, restricting them to defending their own settlements: yet, they could receive appropriate training ‘in limited numbers’, pending their use for railway protection work.<sup>77</sup> However:

Any such training should...be carried out with the utmost discretion, in order to avoid giving the impression...that His Majesty’s Government already foresee that after the publication of their decisions upon the Report of the Royal Commission [the Peel Commission] a state of affairs will inevitably prevail in which the forces of authority will be ranged against the Arab population. *As regards the employment of Jews even for defensive purposes in predominantly Moslem areas, it was agreed that this would be politically most undesirable.* [Italics mine]<sup>78</sup>

Once military control was authorised, decisions on the military employment of Jews would rest with the GOC, under the advice of the High Commissioner, who was authorised to report his objections to London if the GOC decided to employ Jewish units ‘for purposes or in circumstances to which there might appear to be grave political objection.’<sup>79</sup> In particular:

It was...agreed that in view of the possibly serious reactions which might thereby be provoked in neighbouring Arab countries, the General Officer Commanding should not, in any circumstances, decide to use Jews for offensive purposes, without the prior authority of His Majesty’s Government.<sup>80</sup>

From March 1937, JSP were authorised to carry out ‘hot pursuits’ of fleeing gangs, and in summer that year they were placed formally under British Army command and training.<sup>81</sup> Ben-Gurion recalled that by then, both the Jews and the British Army accepted the JSP as ‘legal *Haganah*’ and the best available source of military training for young Jewish men.<sup>82</sup> Wingate, therefore, became involved in counterterrorist operations in Palestine at a time when Jewish militias and the British Army were already escalating the level of force used against the insurgents and beginning to cooperate in its application, even while theoretically constrained by British Government policy.

#### *The genesis of the Special Night Squads*

Intelligence in Palestine was the responsibility of the RAF Intelligence Organisation, Jerusalem, reporting directly to the GOC or AOC: it was established practice to attach an Army subaltern, such as Simonds, but unusual for a captain of fourteen years’ service, like Wingate, to be assigned, and it is possible that this was arranged by Deverell.<sup>83</sup> The Intelligence Organisation operated up to six regional Special Service Officers (SSOs), whose duties were ‘to procure information of a military, political and topographical nature and to keep in touch with the feeling in the country by touring their districts’; each SSO employed agents and was required to ‘maintain close liaison with their district commissioner, police and...military commanders.’<sup>84</sup>

It was as a SSO that Wingate first visited Jewish settlements in Galilee, ordered by Wavell in February 1938 to discover the routes by which terrorist gangs and gun-runners were entering Palestine from Syria and Lebanon.<sup>85</sup> Wingate led several JSP patrols in April and May, setting ambushes on fords across the Jordan and tracks leading from them, and from this concluded that static ambushes were ‘useless’ under these circumstances, the maze of tracks leading from the Jordan

combining with the sound of the river and civilian activity to mean a successful ambush would be down to sheer luck.<sup>86</sup> More effective, Wingate opined, would be the SDF method of patrols sweeping known infiltration routes - although he did not mention the SDF and presented the idea as original and his own. Consequently, in early June, Wingate approached the local commander, Evetts, proposing to raise specialist patrol units to secure the areas around the northern settlements at night.<sup>87</sup> An appreciation written on 5 June 1938 indicates that Wingate was firm that JSP should participate: units could either be British, with Jewish supernumeraries acting as guides and interpreters, or British-trained JSP, 'ideal for this task, as possessing expert local language both of area, and character and language of Arabs. There is ample evidence of their courage and they are intensely keen and eager to learn'; conversely, 'Arab police are useless, being both sympathetic towards, and in awe of, the gangs....Trust will become appropriate after, and not before, the Government has scotched the terror.'<sup>88</sup>

Fortuitously, Wingate's proposal offered a solution for operational and tactical problems vexing Evetts since 1936. The rebellion entered its third phase - night-time terrorism by small bands - in March 1938 and the British response of village occupation and night-time patrolling of the surrounding countryside was proving of limited effectiveness. The official digest of lessons of the rebellion, of 1938 noted that:

[A]ny engagement at night inevitably favoured an enemy who was usually met behind good cover in a carefully chosen position with a well-reconnoitred line of retreat behind him. To carry out offensive night operations of any extent was therefore to invite casualties from an opponent more at home at night than the British soldier, whom night deprived of most of the advantages of his superior weapons.<sup>89</sup>

In his 1936 'doctrine', Evetts criticised British night-time tactics in a series of passages that apparently influenced Wingate's organisation and training for the SNS. He commented upon the

standard reaction to coming under fire at night:

There is a tendency at the moment for troops when sniped merely to return the fire with their rifles in the hope of silencing it. Such action is not only bad for training, morale and discipline, but in a very large number of cases is a waste of ammunition. Hostile night snipers...undoubtedly gain a moral uplift, a great deal of amusement, and practically no casualties from the bulk of our return rifle fire. In addition...unaimed rifle fire at night is likely to be a danger to our own troops and civilians...<sup>90</sup>

Evetts' solution was the tactics of 'hill warfare' in India, wherein parties of picked men located and outflanked ambush positions from higher ground; moreover, Evetts agreed with Callwell on the bayonet, for its terror effect and the lesser risk of British troops shooting each other in the dark<sup>91</sup>: 'The aim of infantry is to close with the enemy and kill him at short range with fire or the bayonet. This principle...if applied correctly will have far more effect on enemy snipers than hundreds of unaimed rounds at long range.'<sup>92</sup> Ambushes and snipers should, ideally, be dealt with by:

[O]ffensive action of small patrols consisting of a few lightly clad men carrying the minimum of equipment necessary, and if possible wearing rubber-soled shoes, either in ambush positions or working around the flanks or rear of the snipers' positions.<sup>93</sup>

JSP tactics in defending settlements from nighttime attacks were, for the period 1936-38, as desultory as those of the British; according to the official digest:

The normal procedure in the almost nightly "attacks" on Jewish colonies was somewhat as follows. The Arabs would take up positions behind suitable cover after dark from which they could fire at longish range. The first round would be the signal for the Supernumeraries to man their defence posts and open heavy rifle fire in the direction of the enemy, accompanied as a rule by Verey lights. For a short time a fire fight would go on during which targets would seldom be visible to either side and neither would move from their prepared cover. Eventually the Arabs, fearing the arrival of reinforcements and feeling that honour had been satisfied, would withdraw in the dark and return to their homes for the night's rest....Action of this type may sound very unenterprising, but on the other hand it is difficult to see what else the

Supernumeraries could have done with their small numbers and lack of tactical training.<sup>94</sup>

The suggested solution was '[T]o organize and officer the Supernumeraries on the pattern of the regular police, and again, if possible, to place the whole police system under the commander of the military forces.'<sup>95</sup> Wingate had concluded already that 'moving ambushes' of British troops and JSP, operating from Jewish settlements on the northern frontier, could combine with the Tegar Line to seal the frontier, but his model was applied eventually further south. Rebels sabotaged the Iraq Petroleum Company's pipeline across northern Palestine, to the refinery and port at Haifa, from the beginning of the rebellion in 1936.<sup>96</sup> The British patrolled the pipeline with armoured cars and lorry borne infantry, supplemented by machine gun posts with searchlights, with JSP covering the final twenty miles on the coastal plain, but found all these of limited use in the hilly area along the border with Syria: they concluded that attacks could be minimised, but not stopped altogether and that, 'In any case, cunning will be the essence of success, which can only be obtained by surprise, and to gain that troops must be prepared to go on and on night after night without any visible results if they are to collect their bag in the end.'<sup>97</sup> Attacks escalated during the third phase of the rebellion, the pipeline being punctured several times a night. Haining, upon succeeding Wavell in April 1938, made superiority at night a priority, as discussed already, and it was probably on the strength of this and Evetts' reputation that Haining became, temporarily, another Wingate backer. In May 1938, with MacMichael's sanction, Haining authorised Evetts and Wingate to train Jewish Supernumeraries to patrol the pipeline and for night time 'ambush work' in 16th Brigade's area.<sup>98</sup> A month later, an Army Order was issued allowing JSP throughout Palestine to patrol and carry out ambushes outside their settlements.<sup>99</sup>

*The Evolution of the SNS*

The main sources for Wingate's military thought at this time are the reports and training literature he prepared in mid to late 1938, while commanding the SNS. In these documents, Wingate presented his own solution to a strategic situation unacceptable to the British, aimed at producing a certain state of mind in the enemy, and pressuring him in order to affect his strategic decision-making through tactical action, as Wingate was to attempt again in 1941-44. This can be seen as coming from the same culture that produced *FSR* and the organic 'frontier war' doctrine encapsulated by Callwell, in particular, the use of special, locally-recruited units for counter-guerrilla work; indeed, while Callwell extolled such forces' usefulness as scouts, he also argued that their innate skills and local knowledge would make them valuable auxiliaries in battle, particularly in 'hill warfare'.<sup>100</sup> However, Wingate can be seen as parting company with the views of his colleagues, not only in tactical methods and the means used to instill them in his troops, but in his calls for the entire offensive against the insurgents to be centred upon SNS-type units.

On 5 June 1938, Wingate produced an appreciation of 'the possibilities of night movements by armed forces of the Crown with the object of putting an end to terrorism in Northern Palestine', a document outlining his counterterrorist doctrine - and a 'doctrine' is what this was, as force structures, training programmes and tactics can be seen as derived from recommendations made in this paper and its sequels. Wingate began by setting out his objective, 'To set up a system and undetected movement [sic] of troops and police by night, across country and into villages, surprising gangs, restoring confidence to peasants, and gaining government control of rural areas.'<sup>101</sup> He then stated why British forces had not achieved this, his phrasing not only exposing his stance on a number of issues, but suggesting a strong Evetts influence:

It has been admitted by the civil authority that, on the approach of darkness, the virtual control of the country passes to the gangsters. In the dark they are free to visit villages

without the smallest risk of any action being taken against them. They are free to move without danger anywhere...Neither police nor troops move by night as a general rule. When they do move it is usually by car and on the main roads. When ambushed in so doing, as is to be expected, the practice has been to return fire, a useless proceeding by night, and, after an exchange of shots, to allow the gangs to withdraw unpursued. Surprise has always been inflicted by the gangs, not by our forces, and such will continue to be the case so long as present methods are followed.<sup>102</sup>

Wingate's comments on the results of this are interesting, given allegations made against him by Mosley and Segev: 'The result of all this is that the gangs, who enjoy a warm bed as much as anyone, make a practice of visiting villages by night. *Here they oppress and terrorise the peasants in [a] manner which the Government could not rival even were its objective to do so.* [Italics mine]'<sup>103</sup> His solution blended 'village occupation', Evetts' recommended night tactics and the guerrillas' own methods:

There is only one way to deal with the situation; to persuade the gangs that, in their predatory raids, there is every chance of their running into a government gang which is determined to destroy them, not by an exchange of shots at a distance, but by bodily assault with bayonet and bomb....What is needed, therefore, is to produce in the minds of the rebels the conviction that the armed forces are able to move at night as freely and dispersedly [sic] as themselves, without their being able to obtain, as heretofore, previous knowledge of such movement, that whenever they enter a village to prey it is more than likely that they will be surprised there; that, even when they move across country by the most isolated tracks, they are liable suddenly to be attacked - not by a distant exchange of shots, from which little is to be feared, but by bodily encounter for which they are totally unfitted.<sup>104</sup>

Wingate echoed Callwell and Evetts in arguing that guerrillas were 'unfitted' for this kind of combat because of dislike of close combat, and an innate terror of cold steel:

The rebels have shown that, while they are able to face attacks when occupying covered and previously prepared positions, they are quite unable to face any kind of charge or surprise onslaught. This is their character, and experience will not change it. In person they are feeble and their whole theory of war is to cut and run. Like all ignorant and primitive people they are especially liable to panic.<sup>105</sup>



While this passage might have come from Callwell himself, it initiates a common theme in Wingate's military thought, reaching its apotheosis in Burma: military doctrine should be dialectical, human-centred and designed to direct British strength in command, training and 'national character' against enemy weaknesses in these same areas, thereby turning superiority in training, aggression and initiative into operational and tactical advantages. Here, British and Jewish troops were better educated and armed, and with the advantages of systematic training and coordinated command – '[T]hey know more about war than the gangs': consequently, it should be possible for purpose-trained 'government gangs' to defeat many times their number of disorganised and poorly led insurgents.<sup>106</sup>

To illustrate this, Wingate recounted his early intelligence-gathering patrols, and lessons learned. The two most important were that, firstly, his 'government gangs' should be supported by an intelligence network capable of identifying bottlenecks in the rebels' routes of movement and supply, critical vulnerabilities upon which patrols should be concentrated, and that, secondly, the 'government gangs' should pay frequent visits to Arab villages, 'both arms and gangsters would be found there at times, and the *Bedu* would rapidly cease both to fear and to afford asylum to the gangs'.<sup>107</sup> Given that villagers would almost certainly detect and report the 'government gangs' presence to headmen, subtlety was pointless; far better to establish a strong presence, the better to impose British will upon the Arab population:

[I]t is best to pay a visit to a village on the way home, waking up the Mukhtar [headman] and assembling a few villagers. It can be pointed out to them that terror by night will in future be exercised, where necessary, by [the] Government, whose forces are close to hand and able to visit any area at a moment's notice; that, consequently, failure to notify the presence of a gang will be regarded as evidence of complicity, since the excuse of terrorism will no longer be valid....It is my belief that, once the Arabs believe the truth of such statements, it will not be long before cooperation is forthcoming.<sup>108</sup>

As to organisation, each 'government gang' should consist of ten men, a NCO and an officer,

based not in an Arab village, as other British units were, but in a *Jewish* settlement, the one operating centre where they could be assured of safety between operations and from which information would not be leaked.<sup>109</sup> These would be formed into a 'Night Movement Group', under the command of a single officer overseeing all training and recruitment, coordinating action with 16th Brigade, collating and disseminating intelligence, and operations.<sup>110</sup> Reflecting Wingate's experience in the Sudan and the 'small wars' tradition, the wide dispersal of the units meant that command responsibility had to be devolved downwards as Wingate realised in drawing up tasks for the Group commander. However, his aim was to 'coordinate all night movements from one centre which is in touch with all Government Intelligence Centres.'<sup>111</sup>

Wingate established his headquarters at Ein Harod, in north eastern Palestine near the borders with both Transjordan and Lebanon, and covering the pipeline.<sup>112</sup> In May, he was joined by 36 British soldiers under Lieutenant HEN Bredin of the Royal Ulster Rifles, who was appointed second in command, Lieutenant Rex King-Clark of the 1<sup>st</sup> Manchesters, and Second Lieutenant Michael Grove of the Royal West Kents. Alongside these were eighty Jewish Settlement Police, 24 of them also *Haganah* members, as Wingate no doubt knew. Officially they were JSP under British Army command, and were referred to as 'SNS Police' in correspondence.<sup>113</sup> Wingate's training notes from this period indicate that he was trying to instill doctrine in his new command, based upon the theory of counter-insurgency summarised in his paper of 5 June. That document is interesting also from the insight it gives into Wingate's approach to training: he had argued there that soldiers should have instilled in them tactical drills aimed at ensuring a rapid, consistent and effective reaction to encountering a gang at night, and at Ein Harod, the JSP, having undergone individual weapons and fieldcraft instruction from British NCOs, were then trained by Wingate himself, in their squads, to adopt set tactical responses, both as individuals and as a squad, in reaction to torch and hand signals, including the final signal to throw grenades and then charge home on a gang with the bayonet.<sup>114</sup>

Although the evidence is open to interpretation, this might be presented as a forerunner of the tactical training via battle drills which became standard in the British Army in the Second World War: these were standard at the time in the German and Soviet armies, but were not adopted by the British until 1940.<sup>115</sup> It may be, therefore, that Wingate, a Royal Artillery officer, was ‘ahead of his time’ in terms of infantry tactics and training.

The SNS saw its first action on the night of 3 June 1938, when a patrol, led by Wingate himself, ambushed and scattered a group of saboteurs on the pipeline, wounding two; on 11 June, two patrols chased a gang into the village of Danna, and in the ensuing fight, two insurgents were killed, three wounded and six captured.<sup>116</sup> On 15 June, Wingate reported that the pipeline had not been attacked for a week, and that the local Arabs were now respecting curfews, arguing that this was vindication of his methods, which should now be expanded across Palestine.<sup>117</sup> This led to Wingate’s strategy becoming notably more ambitious.

The SNS was soon extending its activities beyond ambushes to pre-emptive raids using Jewish fighters in majority Arab areas in an apparent contravention of official policy, as detailed already. On the night of 11/12 June 1938, Wingate personally led a raid, consisting of three Squads, on the village of Jurdieh, on the Palestine-Lebanon border; not only was he unequivocal that his aim was to ‘destroy’ a gang reported to sleep there, but he took the raiding force through Lebanon to hit it from the rear; two insurgents were killed, and Sykes reported that the Arab headman at Jurdieh then asked his Jewish opposite number, at the settlement of Hanita, for a truce.<sup>118</sup> From July, SNS activity extended to pre-emptive raids on villages suspected of harbouring terrorist gangs, culminating in the raid on Dabburiya on the night of 10/11 July, which saw three squads operating in concert to, in the words of Wingate’s official report, ‘find and destroy’ the gang, an escalation from ‘ambush work’ along the pipeline. Ten terrorists were reported killed, four bodies were recovered the following morning, and for this action, Wingate received the Distinguished Service Order (DSO).<sup>119</sup> Given that

this would need to be approved by both Evetts and Haining, this suggests that Wingate's interpretation of 'defensive' and 'protective' operations and theirs concurred, and that the Army had little objection to using Jewish police on such operations, whatever the policy agreed in London. Wingate's report on Dabburiya suggested that the escalation to attacking suspected terrorist bases was calculated to intimidate; note the final sentence of this passage:

The Mukhtars and villagers...represent themselves as unwilling victims of terrorism. The truth is, as my recent experiences have shown, that in these remote rural areas every fellah is a potential gangster. So long as he thinks he can escape punishment for complicity this state of affairs will continue....[T]he attack on Government and the Jews is regarded with general approval by Moslem peasants who have, hitherto, experienced little difficulty in persuading the Government of their comparative [sic] innocence of crimes committed in their vicinity, but, in reality, by themselves. I attribute the cessation of sabotage on the pipeline not to any change in this direction, but to the experience that anyone hanging about the line for an unlawful purpose was liable swiftly and silently to vanish away.<sup>120</sup>

From a memorandum on the development of the SNS, produced at the same time, Wingate argued that the SNS should expand to a strength of over 200 from its existing strength of 90-100, with 150 more Jewish police, enlisted for the duration of hostilities, and more British personnel drawn from 16th Brigade.<sup>121</sup> A characteristic trait now emerged, Wingate simply expecting the Army to produce whatever resources he demanded, regardless of their actual availability: 'I will obtain the necessary transport from Jewish sources. For its use, the Government will pay, on claims presented by me. It will be dirt cheap.'<sup>122</sup> Wingate closed this passage by defending pre-emption: '[S]abotage [on the pipeline] ceased purely owing to the offensive, not the defensive measures I have taken. So long as I confined myself to the line sabotage increased [sic]...'<sup>123</sup> Wingate, therefore, identified his operations unambiguously as 'offensive' in official correspondence and was open about the role of Jewish supernumeraries in them.

Moreover, he had high-level support for this. Haining's lauding of Wingate in his official dispatch

to London of 24 August 1938 is quoted at the head of this chapter. Another admirer was Harris, who commented that the best anti-rebel work in Palestine was ‘done by “special” night squads (very secret) composed of a selected officer and up to say thirty mixed volunteer soldiers and sworn in local (mostly Jew) toughs’; Harris felt that such a gendarmerie was ‘what is really lacking in the internal security provisions locally.’<sup>124</sup> In September 1938, Evetts placed an official report arguing that all three brigades in northern Palestine should form Night Squads, and stating that he had allowed Wingate to forward to Haining a proposed SNS structure for the whole of Palestine.<sup>125</sup> Jewish participation in counter-terrorist operations expanded throughout 1938, in reaction to overstretch among British units and the collapse of the Arab police. 14th Brigade, south of 16th Brigade’s operational area, organised night squads of its own, although what role Jewish supernumeraries performed, if any, is unclear.<sup>126</sup> Another combined British-JSP night squad was raised in southern Palestine to protect the Palestine Electric Corporation’s line from Zichron Ya’akov to Rosh Ha’ayin, another favourite saboteur’s target.<sup>127</sup> From July, JSP mobile patrols were organised to protect sensitive areas; by Spring 1939 there were 62 patrols, and the JSP had exclusive responsibility for covering the Haifa-Lyddah railway.<sup>128</sup> On 11 September 1938, MacMichael granted Haining authority to attach 200 JSP to Army units on six-month contracts, for internal security duties.<sup>129</sup> Haining praised a later SNS raid in his November dispatch, again not concealing its offensive aim: ‘Perhaps the most dramatic [action] of all was the Night action at KAFR LIDD...where five special Night Squads surrounded a gang resting in the village, killing fourteen and capturing two, together with some important documents.’<sup>130</sup> The SNS, therefore, far from being the aberration that some of Wingate’s biographers portray, was just one expression of growing Anglo-Jewish military cooperation by late 1938.

Indeed, in the autumn of 1938 the SNS graduated to its last and most controversial stage - reprisal attacks. Given the reactive, intelligence-driven nature of these operations, they were often executed

rapidly and on Wingate's own initiative, and there are indications that participants may frequently have let rage triumph over discipline. The first such action resulted when Chaim Shturman, a veteran Zionist, head of the Ein Harod settlement and a friend of Wingate's, was killed by a mine in mid September. Within hours, Wingate raided the nearby Arab village of Beit Shean (or Beisan), issuing orders to round up all suspected rebels and shoot those trying to escape.<sup>131</sup> At least two were killed, but Sykes claims that accounts of this incident were later exaggerated by the terrorists for propaganda purposes; Brenner recalled to Sykes that Wingate suffered pangs of guilt after the Beat Shean incident, assembling the SNS and giving a lecture against collective punishment - British army policy at the time, and recommended in professional publications.<sup>132</sup>

The next large operation, in which all previous elements drew together, was launched in reaction to a major terrorist atrocity at Tiberias on 2 October 1938. A large gang entered Tiberias and murdered nineteen Jews, eleven of them children in a nursery who had their throats slit before being set alight: the death toll may have been higher had the raiders not given themselves over to drunken looting. The attack was a political disaster for the British, as the battalion garrisoning Tiberias, the 1st South Staffords, did not intervene, some of its soldiers being trapped in their barracks by Arab machine gunners, while others in the town hid until the shooting stopped.<sup>133</sup> Wingate quickly redeployed two squads covering another village and ambushed the gang on its way out of Tiberias, killing at least forty, the SNS being the only British unit to engage the Tiberias gang.<sup>134</sup> On 3 October, the SNS caught the remainder of the gang between Dabburiya and Mount Tabor, and in a combined attack with the RAF, killed another fourteen.<sup>135</sup> Fortuitously, the new GOC Middle East, General Sir Edmund Ironside, was touring Palestine, and rushed to Tiberias upon hearing of the attack, coming across the aftermath of Wingate's ambush. Ironside approved the ambush retrospectively - having summarily sacked the CO of the Staffords - and replaced Wavell temporarily as Wingate's main patron.<sup>136</sup> Ironside therefore became the third British general to approve Wingate's methods, again

refuting the popular image of a 'maverick', at odds with the rest of the Army.

### *After Wingate*

By October 1938, Wingate was showing signs of mental and physical exhaustion, and shortly after the Tiberias incident, returned to Britain on leave. In November 1938, the rebellion entered *Phase Four*, seeing the British resume large-scale offensive operations against the rebels while seeking to enforce a political solution. Following the Munich conference, Britain (prematurely) ceased viewing Germany and Italy as a threat to her interests in the Middle East, while attempts to resolve the revolt peacefully broke down over disagreements over the Balfour Declaration and the Mandate and the British Government's refusal to negotiate with terrorists.<sup>137</sup> The release of units held back for home defence allowed the British a more aggressive strategy than in the previous ten months, encouraged by the desperate state the guerrillas had reached by this time. Terrorism turned the rural Arab population against them, mainly from weariness at constant village searches, curfews and other restrictions, but also by the large criminal element among the guerrillas using the rebellion as cover for drug and weapon smuggling and protection rackets, extorting primarily from the very Arab peasants they claimed to be 'liberating.'<sup>138</sup> By the end of 1938, a new factor had emerged - Arab vigilante gangs, attacking the insurgents to extract revenge for previous atrocities.<sup>139</sup> The rebellion was now imploding.

Major General Bernard Montgomery assumed command of 8th Division, including 16th Brigade, in December 1938. Montgomery's favoured pattern of operations could have been lifted straight from Callwell: the British were 'definitely at war' and any return to civilian control could only follow the complete destruction of the gangs in battle.<sup>140</sup> There was a resumption of cordon and sweep operations by mobile columns and greater use than before of night-time raids on village suspected of harbouring guerrillas, now involving all units, not just the Night Squads.<sup>141</sup> Montgomery singled out

16th Brigade for particular praise: 'Jack Evetts require[s] no urging in this respect! During the ten days ending today we have killed a hundred in my divisional areas...'<sup>142</sup> On 1 January 1939, Montgomery reported that the rebel gangs were breaking down into small groups, their activities limited to sniping or sabotage.<sup>143</sup>

The SNS were active throughout. In May 1939, 16th Brigade reported that SNS activity meant the gangs were no longer operating from villages, and therefore were cut off from their main sanctuaries and sources of supply: however, locating them was becoming more difficult; more night ambush work was the solution, 'A few highly trained night squads and ambush patrols can have greater moral and material effect than columns.'<sup>144</sup> Some of this evidently involved the Arab vigilantes, a 'special platoon' of the 2nd Leicesters cooperating with 'pro-government' Arabs from autumn 1939.<sup>145</sup> Contrary to much of the literature, not only did the SNS survive Wingate's departure from Palestine, but use of the method expanded. As the idea of using a 'third force' preceded Wingate's arrival, so it continued after his departure.

Whatever the benefits of the method, the involvement of Jews in applying it was now a major issue, and it was now that Wingate became the political embarrassment his biographers depict. He arrived in London just as the Royal Commission, set up by the British government the year before under the chairmanship of Sir John Woodhead, aimed at producing a plan for the partition of Palestine agreeable to both communities, published its report.<sup>146</sup> Woodhead recommended a truncated Jewish state, minus Galilee and the Negev, with Jerusalem to remain under the Mandate, and a ban on any further Jewish immigration. The report was endorsed by the Colonial Secretary, Malcolm MacDonald, when introduced to Parliament in November 1938. Despite the Woodhead Report now, effectively, being government policy, Wingate, still a captain, aimed to get the report rejected. His main tool was an alternative partition plan, devised by himself, Chaim Weizmann, President of the International Zionist Organisation and, later, the first President of Israel, and an old friend of



Wingate's, and Ben-Gurion, in which the Jews would surrender Galilee and Haifa in return for taking full possession of the rest of Palestine from Tel Aviv down to Aqaba: Wingate discussed this with Lord Lloyd, the former High Commissioner in Egypt and President of the British Council, with whom he lunched with Weizmann and Ben-Gurion on 28 October 1938.<sup>147</sup> Lloyd agreed to submit the plan - a Jewish state completely absorbing Transjordan and differing radically from the Woodhead proposals - to 'some of his Arab friends', and to MacDonald, minus Wingate's calls for a Jewish army.<sup>148</sup> Wingate obtained a more sympathetic hearing from the Conservative MP, Zionist, anti-appeaser and former minister, Leo Amery, who became a lifelong supporter. Amery's diary entry of 4 November 1938 gives an interesting first-hand account of Wingate's attitudes at the time:

He gave me a pitiful story of the feebleness, timidity and actual cowardice of the Palestine administration in the face of Arab terrorism. Even Haining, who on the whole has backed him, is afraid for political reasons to police the Palestine-Trans-Jordan frontier with anything except the [Transjordan] Frontier Force which is Arab and makes no real attempt to prevent the smuggling of arms.<sup>149</sup>

Perhaps the two most prominent contacts Wingate made in this period were Basil Liddell Hart and Winston Churchill. Liddell Hart was acquainted with Weizmann, Ben-Gurion and Amery, and was perhaps aware of the SNS and the nature of its operations already. Wingate presented Liddell Hart with copies of a number of his training papers and reports and on 11 November 1938, Liddell Hart produced a letter of introduction to Churchill, in which he described Wingate, ironically, as having a 'Lawrence-like role' in Palestine, but - almost certainly parroting Wingate's own views - claimed Wingate was 'hampered by the hesitation of politicals out there to give permission for the expansion of the special force to an adequate role'; he included copies of Wingate's papers 'likely to interest your military mind.'<sup>150</sup> Wingate seems to have first met Churchill not through this letter, but at a party in London on 30 November, providing at first hand his opinion of the current situation in Palestine and the operational effectiveness of the SNS.<sup>151</sup> Burchett saw a link between this meeting

and Churchill arguing, during the debate on the Woodhead Report, that he had it on 'high military authority' that the Jews could handle the revolt themselves if they were allowed to raise their own armed forces.<sup>152</sup> Wingate subsequently obtained a private meeting with MacDonald, although a record of their conversation has not survived.<sup>153</sup>

Therefore, not only was a British Army officer, of relatively junior rank, leading Jewish units in offensive operations in a majority Arab area, contravening policy agreed between the Army, the High Commissioner and the Colonial Office, but he provided documentary evidence of this to Liddell Hart and Churchill, two of the most garrulous individuals in British public life, in addition to approaching the Secretary of State and members of both Houses of Parliament, in an unsubtle attempt to pressure British Government policy. It is probably because of this, not because of any innate hostility to Wingate's military ideas, that the attitude of Wingate's military superiors, particularly Haining - who had sanctioned the creation of the SNS, praised Wingate in official communications, approved his DSO and apparently turned a blind eye to the discrepancies between SNS activity and agreed policy - changed. In December, Wingate was ordered back to Jerusalem and reassigned to GHQ; he was not to lead the SNS, or any other Jewish unit, again, and was subsequently banned from entering Palestine whether on duty or on leave.<sup>154</sup> It was also during this period that one of the most-cited incidents of Wingate's career took place. Wingate's annual Confidential Report for 1938, authored jointly by his immediate superior, Wing Commander Alan Ritchie, head of military intelligence in Palestine, and by Haining, praised Wingate's imagination and energy, but both commented, in uncompromising terms, that Wingate's attachment to the Jewish cause was affecting his judgement and his effectiveness as an officer.<sup>155</sup> Wingate's response was to exercise the right of any officer, to appeal to the King over an adverse personal report, although he was persuaded to drop the matter before the matter got to Buckingham Palace.<sup>156</sup> It is apparent, then, that Wingate's fall from favour coincided with his return to London and his attempts, as a captain in the British Army, to influence

British government policy on behalf of the Zionists.

This coincided with an apparently terminal breakdown in Anglo-Jewish relations. Upon returning to Palestine, Wingate entered into another controversy. It is noteworthy that, while the Night Squad method continued in favour, there was evidently a growing lack of enthusiasm among the British high command for Jewish involvement. On 23 January 1939, an 8<sup>th</sup> Division Intelligence Conference published a report stating its opposition to ‘the dressing up of Jews as British soldiers; in particular it is considered undesirable to have a proportion of Jews in SNS detachments; these should be entirely British’ because ‘if it is desired to conciliate the Arab, we should not provoke him by using Jews in offensive action against him’.<sup>157</sup> This was a restatement of agreed policy, whatever the abrasive language. Wingate’s response was to send a lengthy written complaint to Montgomery, who not only supported his view, but promised to recommend Jewish squadmen for decorations.<sup>158</sup> However, this took place against the background of a downward slide in Anglo-Jewish relations, accelerated by the publication in May 1939 of the MacDonald White Paper, which took the recommendations of the Woodhead Report a stage further: there would be no Jewish state, Jewish immigration was to cease after five years, and a majority Arab- Palestinian state was to be created after ten years. The White Paper’s publication was followed by a 24-hour general strike by Jewish workers on 18 May 1939 and violent demonstrations in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, during which a British policeman was shot dead by a sniper; from July to September ‘armed Jews both in parties and as individuals’ carried out sabotage attacks on both urban and rural areas and ‘bodies of armed Jews entered Arab villages and demolished Arab houses in retaliation for outrages.’<sup>159</sup> As the Jews were now viewed as a greater threat to order than the Arabs, a change in British policy was precipitated. In his last dispatch as GOC, of July 1939, Haining commented that the White Paper had ‘damped the flames’ of the Arab rebellion, but was turning the Jews against the British, as demonstrated by Jewish rioting and an increase in bombings by the Jewish terrorist organisation *Irgun Zvai Leumi*, the military arm of the Zionist

Revisionist movement, which argued that peaceful co-existence between Jews and Arabs was not then possible.<sup>160</sup> The relationship between the Army and the *Haganah*, on which the SNS had hinged, ended as the Army began to treat *Haganah* and *Irgun* as they had previously treated Arab terrorists. In his first dispatch of August 1939, Haining's successor, Lieutenant General Sir Evelyn Barker, reported that 43 Jews had been arrested for 'illegal drilling', another 38 had been tried and sentenced to lengthy prison terms, and that, in his view, many Jews were clearly preparing for 'armed intervention'.<sup>161</sup> This, and Haining's shifting attitude to arming the Jews, suggests an attitude among many in the British political-military establishment that the Jews should be supported for as long as doing so served British interests in the region or at least did not threaten them, which allowed Jews and British to work together for mutual benefit against a common threat. However, should the Jews become a threat to British interests, they should be dealt with as 'severely' as the Arabs before them. It only was at this late stage, from late 1938 onwards, that Wingate's views and those of the rest of the Army can be identified as 'parting company.'

### *Conclusions*

Militarily, Wingate's ideas worked. Evidence for this includes the reduction of attacks on the pipeline - and their resumption after Wingate left - the satisfactory impact of the Jurdieh and Dabburiya raids and the dislocation of the gangs from their village bases reported not only by Wingate but by HQ 16th Brigade a year later.<sup>162</sup> Indeed, they may have been *too* successful, being possibly a factor in shifting the impetus of the terrorist offensive southwards to Judea in autumn 1938 - when few other British units were engaged in offensive operations in Galilee.<sup>163</sup> These operations can be viewed as furthering a tradition in British 'small wars' practice beginning with units such as the Gurkha Scouts of the Northwest Frontier. Moreover, it was to continue after 1945, as the use of specialist forces and 'government gangs' has become standard counter-insurgent practice in several

armies, not least the British. Units formed by Wingate's *protégés*, Bernard Fergusson in Palestine in 1946-47 and Michael Calvert in Malaya in 1950-51, Frank Kitson's 'counter-gangs' in Kenya in the 1950s, and the Omani *Firquat* of the 1960s and 70s had much in common with the SNS, mixing British troops with local irregulars, operating from bases inside insurgent territory and using the insurgents' own operational and tactical methods against them; the British Army has institutionalized this via 22 Regiment, SAS, re-founded by Calvert in Malaya, whose soldiers have often had a role analogous to that of the British troops in the SNS.<sup>164</sup> It would be extravagant to attribute all this to Wingate's influence, but he can be seen as fitting comfortably into a 'tradition' in the British Army's approach to counter-insurgency.

Friction between Wingate and his peers in Palestine arose from his involvement in the Mandate's politics. The Wingate of the biographies was truculently Zionist almost upon arrival, the authors claiming this guaranteed the enmity of his colleagues and superiors, who, except Wavell, only backed him under duress. However, viewing Wingate's actions within their historical and institutional context reveals a complex, evolving relationship, in which Wingate initially had the unforced support and protection of British senior commanders, but lost it gradually due to his becoming a political liability. This liability status extends beyond that of a decorated serving officer publicly opposing government policy: that Wingate apparently had permission from Haining to carry out offensive operations involving Jewish police, in a disputed region, is a matter of official record; so is the policy agreed between the War Office, the Colonial Office, the GOC and the High Commissioner, that Jewish police or militia would *not* be used for offensive operations in majority Arab areas. There is a clear contradiction between Government and Army policy here. When and if this became known, as likely when Wingate contacted Lloyd, MacDonald, Amery, Liddell Hart or Churchill, it had the potential to cause an almighty public scandal endangering Britain's status as the Mandatory power, and inflaming Arab opinion across the entire Middle East.

It is here that a key point of departure between Wingate's ideas and the rest of the Army emerges. While many British officers advocated arming the Jews, and praised them as soldiers, at no point, anywhere in official correspondence and reports in the public domain, is this linked to fulfilling Jewish political objectives at the expense of Arab. Indeed, Wingate's operations with the SNS seem to have stemmed from an institutional culture placing operational and tactical imperatives ahead of political ones and so contradicting the holistic approach of later editions of *FSR*. The Army's aim throughout was the defeat of insurrection against British authority through military means, in which political niceties seem to have been forgotten or disregarded. Belief that the British Army was anti-Semitic, rather than realist, seems to have arisen from Wingate's interpretation of British policy. Not for the last time in its history, the British Army was caught between two uncompromising ethno-religious nationalisms, each regarding any attempt at even-handedness, conciliation or compromise as betrayal. Throughout 1936-39, for instance, the British Government faced repeated accusations from Zionist lobbies in Britain and the USA of pro-Arab bias and not doing enough against the insurgents.<sup>165</sup> This was almost certainly intended to pressure the Colonial Office in directions it would rather not go, and seems not to have reflected the Army's apparently sincere attempts at even-handedness. For instance, Haining's decision to reform the Palestine Police was affected, in part, by the 'Tendency to "pro-Arab" bias on the part of [the] British superior cadre *instead of being wholly impartial*. [Italics Mine]'<sup>166</sup> Moreover, the Army seems to have been prepared to give the Jews the benefit of the doubt, attributing most of the post-1938 trouble to recently-arrived young sophisticates, Haining, for instance, expressing to MacDonald, in August 1939, a belief that recent Jewish immigrants, 'brought up in the tradition of Russian Nihilism' were responsible for much of the Jewish violence.<sup>167</sup> Ben-Gurion commented that the British Army 'did not always support the pro-Arab leanings of the Administration and knew the difference between the Arab gangs and the Hagana [sic].'<sup>168</sup> Moreover, others joined Wingate in his suspicion of the 'politicals' in the Colonial Office. In January 1939,

Major General Richard O'Connor, commanding a division in southern Palestine, wrote to Edward Keith-Roach, District Commissioner for Jerusalem, castigating him for perceived over-familiarity with the Mufti: 'The Husseinis have openly declared war on the British regime; they instigate assassination, arson and every sort of disloyalty; whilst I find on all sides, the inclination to act at their dictation and to find excuses for their conduct.'<sup>169</sup>

It could be concluded, therefore, that the Army's attitude in Palestine was one of pragmatism, prioritisation of restoring order over political imperatives, and of apparent impartiality between the two communities, as demonstrated by their willingness to use both Jews and law-abiding Arabs as military assets while taking a tough line against terrorists of both ethnicities. In taking the part of one of those communities while demonising the other, Wingate departed from this and, indeed, could be presented as the antithesis to Arabists such as Keith-Roach. This belief was communicated to Liddell Hart and Amery, and possibly to Burchett and Mosley, all of whom apparently accepted Wingate's view unquestioningly (and Burchett's imposing his own agenda cannot be discounted), as have subsequent biographers. Where Wingate did part company with prevailing military opinion, it was in intensity, rather than direction, and his personality and politics made him more of a 'maverick', at this stage, than his military ideas, which conformed to established British practice in counter-insurgency and British strategy in Palestine. Yet, even his politics did not damage his career prospects, as the next chapter will demonstrate.

#### NOTES FOR CHAPTER FOUR

1. PRO WO32/9497, 'Operations in Palestine, 20 May-30 July 1938', pp.6-7
2. 'Remarks of GOC 10/7/39', TBL Wingate Palestine Papers, File 2313
3. Quoted, Tom Segev, *One Palestine, Complete: Jews and Arabs under the British Mandate* (London: Abacus 2000), p.430
4. Slater, *Warrior Statesman*, p.4; Dayan, *My Life*, p.47; Bond, *Liddell Hart*, pp.247-248;

David Ben-Gurion, 'Our Friend: What Wingate did For Us', *Jewish Observer and Middle East Review*, 27 September 1963, LHCMA Liddell Hart Papers, File 15/3/311, p.16; Bierman & Smith, *Fire in the Night*, p.390; Segev, *One Palestine*, p.470

5. Michael B Oren, 'Orde Wingate: Friend under Fire', *Azure* Issue #10 ([www.azure.org.il/10-oren.html](http://www.azure.org.il/10-oren.html)), p.3

6. Royle, *Orde Wingate*, pp.128-130; Sykes, *Orde Wingate*, pp.154-155

7. Royle, *Orde Wingate*, pp.134-138

8. Mosley, *Gideon goes to War*, pp.58-59; Sykes, *Orde Wingate*, pp.169-170

9. Bierman & Smith, *Fire in the Night*, pp.115, 125

10. The most prominent of the 'new historical' works are Benny Morris' *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict 1881-2001* (New York: Random House 1999), Segev's *One Palestine, Complete* and Avi Shlaim's *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World* (London: Penguin 2000), while the explicitly military dimensions of Israel's self-image as 'a community under siege' are criticised by Michael Handel in 'The evolution of Israeli Strategy: the psychology of insecurity and the quest for absolute security' in Williamson Murray, MacGregor Knox and Alvin Bernstein (Editors), *The Making of Strategy: Rulers, States and War* (Cambridge CUP 1994). For an introduction to the 'new' historians and their intellectual opponents, the 'new-old historians', see Matthew Hughes' review of Avi Shlaim's *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World* on the Institute of Historical Research Website, <http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews>

11. Segev, *One Palestine*, pp.430-431; see also Oren, 'Friend under Fire', p.3

12. Ben-Gurion, 'Friend', pp.15-16; Segev, *One Palestine*, p.431

13. Hew Strachan, *The Politics of the British Army* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1997), pp.169, 171; Charles Townshend, *Terrorism: A Brief Introduction* (Oxford: OUP 2002), p.125

14. Burchett, *Wingate's Phantom Army*, p.45

15. Ibid, p.46

16. Mosley, *Gideon Goes to War*, pp.46-49, 52-54, 72;

17. Sykes, *Orde Wingate*, pp.109-110, 121-125, 135-137

18. Rossetto, *Orde Wingate*, pp. X-XI



19. Ibid, pp. X-XII, 28-3
20. Royle, *Orde Wingate*, pp.118-119
21. Conor Cruise O'Brien, *The Siege: The Story of Israel and Zionism* (London: Grafton 1986) pp.87-90, 125; Segev, *One Palestine*, pp.36-39
22. Major EW Polson Newman, 'Britain's Position in Palestine', *RUSI Journal* Volume LXXXI 1936, p.866; PRO CO733/410/11, 'The Strategic Importance of Palestine', 1939
23. O'Brien, *Siege*, pp.166-167
24. Ibid, pp.167-168, 196-200
25. Ibid, pp.202-203; David Ben-Gurion, article in *Jewish Observer and Middle East Review*, 4 October 1963, LHCMA 15/5/311, p.18; O'Brien, *Siege*, p.209; Segev, *One Palestine*, p.212
26. PRO WO191/70, 'Military Lessons of the Arab Rebellion in Palestine, 1936', February 1938, pp.1-2, 22-23, 159-161; O'Brien, *Siege*, pp.210-213; Townshend, *Britain's Civil Wars*, p.104
27. PRO 191/70, pp.1-2, 160
28. Cutting from the *New York Times* of 16 October 1936, in PRO CO733/316/1, 'Interests and Opinions of the USA on the situation in Palestine', August-December 1936; see also Townshend, *Britain's Civil Wars*, p.106
29. Ibid, and see Appendix B to PRO WO191/88 for 'Damascus FSR'; 'Documents and Portraits', TBL Wingate Palestine Papers, File 2313, pp.10-16
30. Folios 7a, 32a, 40a, 41b, 55a, 57g in PRO WO191/86, 'Report of Palestine Royal Commission: events preceding and following publication', June-September 1937; Telegram from Clark Kerr to FO in PRO CO733/348/9, cited above; 'Documents and Portraits', pp.10-12, 14
31. Weapons, see PRO WO191/70, pp.148-149; Propaganda, see PRO WO32/4562, 'Hostile propaganda in Palestine 1938: unfounded allegations against behaviour of British troops', 1939, and Appendix D to PRO WO33/1436, 'Information for Commanders of reinforcing troops in Palestine', 1936; 'Documents and Portraits', p.14
32. Annex F to PRO WO33/1436; PRO WO191/70, p.161; PRO WO191/75, 'Preliminary notes on lessons of Palestine rebellion, 1936', Paras.26-29; Townshend, *Britain's Civil Wars*, pp.105, 108
33. PRO WO32/4176, 'Palestine Disturbances: Policy Adopted', 1936, especially pp.3-4

34. PRO WO32/4500, 'Notification to Parliament of calling out of Section "A" Army Reserve to form Palestine re-enforcements', 1936; 'A Correspondent in Jerusalem', 'Service Problems in Palestine', *RUSI Journal* Volume LXXXI 1936, pp.805-807; Townshend, *Britain's Civil Wars*, p.107

35. Army Council Instruction of 7 September 1936, Folio 7a in PRO WO32/4174, 'Army Council Instructions to Lieutenant General JG Dill regarding the command of the Palestine Armed Forces', 1936; The Palestine Martial Law (Defence) Order in Council 1936, and other papers in PRO WO32/9618, 'Palestine Disturbances, Martial Law Policy', 1936-1938

36. PRO WO32/4562, pp.9-11; Matthew Hughes, 'The Meaning of Atrocity: British Armed Forces and the Arab Revolt, 1936-39', unpublished paper of 2007, especially pp.21-22; Towle, *Pilots and Rebels*, pp.46-47; Townshend, *Britain's Civil Wars*, pp.105-106, 109-110

37. PRO WO191/70

38. PRO WO191/75, p.10, Paras.10, 26, 29; PRO WO33/1436, Paras.15-36

39. Callwell, *Small Wars*, pp.376, 398-400

40. PRO WO191/75, p.29

41. Towle, *Pilots and Rebels*, pp.49-51; Townshend, *Britain's Civil Wars*, p.108

42. PRO WO191/90, 'Development of the Palestine Police Force under military control', 1939, pp.9-10; 'Section III: Frontier Protection, posts and roads', in PRO CO733/383/1, 'Police Reorganisation, Sir C Tegart's Mission to Palestine', 1938; Townshend, *Britain's Civil Wars*, pp.111-112

43. Townshend, *Britain's Civil Wars*, pp.91-92, 99-100

44. 'A Rural Mounted Police', in PRO CO733/383/1, pp.1-2

45. Ibid, p.2

46. Unattributed handwritten comment on p.5 of Ibid.

47. Appendix C to WO PRO191/88, 'History and notes on operations: disturbances in Palestine', 1936-1939; Major General Richard O'Connor to Major General DK McLeod of 21 May 1939, LHCMA O'Connor Papers, Folio 3/4/54

48. PRO WO191/88, p.2

49. Ibid, pp.2-3
50. PRO WO32/9401, 'Disturbances, 1936', p.4
51. PRO WO191/88, p.4
52. PRO WO32/4562, pp.3-4; PRO WO191/88, pp.4-5; 'Kidnappers in Palestine - The Terrorists' Technique', *Daily Telegraph* 28 December 1938, in LHCMA File 15/5/297
53. PRO WO32/4562, p.4
54. Ibid, pp.1-2; Townshend, *Britain's Civil Wars*, p.108
55. PRO WO32/9497, 'Operations in Palestine, 20 May - 30 July 1938', pp.1-2; Sykes, *Orde Wingate*, p.137; Rossetto, *Orde Wingate*, pp.30-33
56. PRO WO32/9497, p.6
57. Ibid, pp.2, 7; PRO WO191/88, 'History and notes on operations, disturbances in Palestine', p.4
58. PRO WO32/9498, 'Operations in Palestine 1 Aug - 31 Oct 1938', p.5
59. Stuart Emeny, 'Arabs gain control over large areas in Palestine', *News Chronicle*, 12 October 1938, LHCMA File 15/5/297
60. PRO WO32/9498, p.2
61. PRO WO 191/88, p.5
62. PRO WO191/90, 'Development of the Palestine Police under military control', 1939, pp.3-4
63. PRO WO191/90, pp.6, 9-14
64. Haggai Eshed, *Reuven Shiloah, The Man Behind the Mossad: Secret Diplomacy in the Creation of Israel* (London: Frank Cass 1997), pp.25-26
65. See Bierman & Smith, *Fire in the Night*, pp.70-71; Royle, *Orde Wingate*, pp.106-108
66. Eshed, *Shiloah*, p.27
67. Ibid, p.27; Air Commodore Graham Pitchfork, *Shot Down And On The Run: The RAF And Commonwealth Aircrews Who Got Home From Behind Enemy Lines 1940-1945* (London: National Archives 2003), pp.151-154, 158, 164; Sir Douglas Dodds-Parker expressed admiration for Simonds in his interview with the author of 24/8/2004
68. Transcript of IWM Sound Archives interview with Lieutenant Colonel Ivor Thomas,

pp.25-26, 29; Wingate to his mother of 20 March 1937, TBL Wingate Palestine Papers, File 2313

69. PRO WO32/4174, p.7, cited already.

70. CRPal/10126/G, Dill's Report on events in Palestine to the WO, from 15 September to 30 October 1936, in PRO WO32/9401, 'Disturbances, 1936', Para.6

71. Précis of Dill's Dispatch No CR/Pal/1026/G, in PRO WO32/9410, Para.17; Telegram from High Commissioner, Palestine, to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 10 September 1936, Folio 39a in PRO WO32/4176; Folios 43b-57b in PRO WO32/4176; Memorandum of Comments by the High Commissioner on General Dill's report on events in Palestine from the 15th September to the 30th October, 1936, in PRO WO32/4178, 'Respective Functions of High Commissioner and General Officer Commanding the Forces', 1937, Paras.23, 34

72. Townshend, *Britain's Civil Wars*, p.110

73. CR/Pal/10126/G, PRO 32/9401, Para.20

74. Ben-Gurion, 'Britain's Contribution', pp.13-14; PRO WO191/70, p.118

75. PRO WO191/70, p.30

76. Letter from Wauchope to Dill of 15 December 1936, in PRO WO32/4178; Wauchope to Secretary of State, 26 January 1937

77. Letter from Colonial Secretary to Officer Administering, the Government of Palestine, Folio 30b in PRO WO32/4178, Part 1, Paragraph a)

78. Ibid, Part 1, Paragraph a)

79. Ibid, Part 1, Paragraph b)

80. Ibid, Part 1, Paragraph b)

81. Ben-Gurion, 'Britain's Contribution', p.14

82. Ibid, pp.13-14

83. WO 33/1436, Part IV, 'Present Intelligence System', p.1

84. Ibid, pp.2-3; IWM Thomas Interview, pp.19-20

85. 'Appreciation by Captain OC Wingate, of Force HQ Intelligence on 5.6.38 at NAZARETH of the possibilities of night movements by armed forces of the Crown with the object of putting an end to terrorism in Northern Palestine' (hereafter 'Night Movements'), in the papers of Major General

HEN Bredin, IWM, pp.3-4

86. Ibid, p.6; 'The Plan' – a three-page manuscript on Wingate's recesses of the Jordan, is held in TBL Wingate Palestine Papers, File 2313

87. Sykes, *Orde Wingate*, p.141

88. Wingate, 'Night Movements', pp.12-13

89. PRO WO191/70, p.147

90. Annex F to PRO WO33/1436, p.2

91. Callwell, *Small Wars*, pp.304-305, 486-487

92. Annex F to PRO WO33/146, p.2

93. Ibid, p.2

94. WO 191/70, p.119

95. Ibid, p.119

96. Ibid, p.119; 'Documents and Portraits', p.222

97. PRO WO32/9401, pp.4, 15-16

98. PRO WO33/1436 Part II Para.8; PRO WO190/70, p.131

99. Ben-Gurion, 'Britain's Contribution', p.14

100. Callwell, *Small Wars*, pp.144, 345-346

101. Wingate, 'Night Movements', p.1

102. Ibid, p.1

103. Ibid, p.1

104. Ibid, p.2

105. Ibid, p.2

106. Ibid, p.3; see also 'Organization and Training of Special Night Squads' (different document from that cited elsewhere) in TBL Wingate Palestine Papers, File 2313

107. Wingate, 'Night Movements', pp.4-5, 11

108. Ibid, p.6

109. Ibid, pp.13, 16

110. Ibid, pp.15-16

111. Ibid, p.3
112. Sykes, *Orde Wingate*, p.149
113. PRO WO191/90, p.18; Ben-Gurion, 'Friend', p.15
114. Wingate, 'Night Moves', p.37; Wingate to King-Clark of 17 July 1938, IWM King-Clark Papers; Appendix to Captain OC Wingate, 'Organisation and Training of Special Night Squads (SNS), HQ 16 Inf Bde No.1127/1 August 1938', IWM King-Clark Papers, pp.2-3
115. David French, *Raising Churchill's Army: The British Army and the War against Germany* (Oxford: OUP 2000), pp.21, 218-219; Timothy Harrison Place, *Military Training in the British Army, 1940-1944: From Dunkirk to D-Day* (London: Frank Cass 2000), pp.49-79, 134-135, 168-170
116. Wingate, 'Organisation and Training', pp.1-2
117. Captain OC Wingate GSI, 'Principles Governing the Employment of Special Night Squads', Nazareth 10.6.37 [although Wingate refers to later dates], IWM King-Clark Papers, pp.1-5
118. 'Report of Operation by Special Night Squad at [unreadable] JURDIEH [unreadable] on night 11/12 June 1938', TBL Wingate Palestine Papers, File 2313; Sykes, *Orde Wingate*, p.151
119. Captain OC Wingate OCSNS, 'Report of Operations carried out by Special Night Squads on the Night of 11/12 July 1938', LHCMA Liddell Hart Papers, p.1; pp.2-3; Lieutenant Rex King-Clark, SPECIAL NIGHT SQUAD 1<sup>ST</sup> BATTALION THE MANCHESTER REGIMENT – PERSONAL DIARY', IWM King-Clark Papers, p.27
120. Wingate, '11/12 July', pp.1-2
121. Captain OC Wingate, 'Note on the Development of Special Night Squads, RAF Hospital, Sarafand, on 14.7.38', LHCMA Liddell Hart Papers, pp.1-3
122. Ibid, p.3
123. Wingate, '11/12 July', pp.1-2
124. Quoted in Townshend, *Britain's Civil Wars*, p.110
125. Commander 16<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade's Memo CR/Pal/8336/17/G of 12 September 1938, TBL Wingate Palestine Papers, File 231
126. PRO WO32/9497, pp.6-7

127. Ben-Gurion, 'Friend', p.16
128. Ben-Gurion, 'British Contribution', p.14
129. MacMichael to MacDonald of 11 September 1938, in PRO WO32/4176, p.1
130. PRO WO32/9498, pp.1-2
131. Sykes, *Orde Wingate*, pp.168-170
132. Ibid, pp.169, 177
133. Ibid, pp.178-179; Royle, *Orde Wingate*, pp.142-143
134. Bierman & Smith, *Fire in the Night*, pp.116-117; Sykes, *Orde Wingate*, p.180
135. Sykes, *Orde Wingate*, pp.180-181; Royle, *Orde Wingate*, pp.143-144
136. Sykes, *Orde Wingate*, p.180
137. PRO CO733/386/23, pp.2-3
138. Secret Cipher from GOC Palestine to War Office, 19 January 1939, in PRO WO106/2018A  
 'Tour of Egypt by CIGS – Notes', 1939, First Part
139. PRO WO32/4562, p.4
140. Montgomery to Adam, 4 December 1938, in PRO WO216/111 'Major General BL Montgomery, 8 Division Palestine: demi-official correspondence', November 1938-February 1939, p.1-3; see also Townshend, *Britain's Civil Wars*, pp.112-113
141. PRO WO216/46, 'Brief notes on Palestine by Major General BL Montgomery', 1939, p.3; Instruction No.1 issued to 8th Division by Montgomery, 25 November 1938, LHCMA O'Connor Papers, 3/4/4
142. Montgomery to Adam, 4 December 1938, p.5
143. Montgomery to Adam, 1 January 1939, in PRO WO216/111, p.2
144. 16th Infantry Brigade Intelligence Summary No.44, 9 May 1939, in PRO WO201/2134, 'Palestine Intelligence Summaries: 16th Infantry Brigade Operations', 1939-1940, p.1
145. '16th Infantry Brigade Summary', 5 September 1939, in PRO WO201/2134
146. Wingate met informally with members of the commission during its investigations; see Sykes, *Orde Wingate*, pp.160-166
147. David Ben-Gurion, 'Table Talk with Lord Lloyd', *Jewish Observer and Middle East Review*,

13 December 1963, LHCMA 15/5/311, p.14

148. Ibid, pp.15-16

149. Amery's Diary Entry of 4 November 1938, in Amery, *Empire at Bay*, p.534

150. Letter from Liddell Hart to Churchill of 11 November 1938, LHCMA 15/5/30; BH Liddell Hart, *The Second World War* (London: Cassell 1970), pp.382-383

151. Sykes, *Orde Wingate*, pp.192-193

152. Burchett, *Wingate's Phantom Army*, p.46

153. Sykes, *Orde Wingate*, p.190

154. The written order confirming this, issued by the War Office in 1940, has not survived in the public domain, but Douglas Dodds-Parker had a sighting of it in Wingate's Personal File upon Wingate's arrival in Khartoum in 1940; the Order was apparently signed by Brigadier (later Field Marshal Lord) Gerald Templer. Dodds-Parker interview of 24/8/2004, and cited in Sykes, *Orde Wingate*, p.232

155. 'Annual Confidential Report by Officer's Immediate Commander, by Wingco [sic] AP Ritchie RAF 18/11/38'; 'Extract from Army Form B.194 in respect of Captain OC Wingate DSO, Royal Artillery, covering the period 1.11.38 to 30.4.39'; 'Remarks of GOC 10/7/39', all in TBL Wingate Palestine Papers, File 2313

156. Wingate's 'Complaint to the Sovereign', which runs to eighteen pages, and its eight-page annexure, are in TBL Wingate Palestine Papers, File 2313

157. Quoted in Wingate to Haining of 31 January 1939, TBL Wingate Palestine Papers, File 2313

158. Quoted in Ibid

159. PRO WO 191/88, pp.8-9

160. PRO WO 32/9500, 'Operations in Palestine 1 Apr-30 July 1939', pp.1-4

161. PRO WO 201/169, 'Dispatches on operations in Palestine by Lt Gen Barker', Aug 1939-Sept 1940, p.3

162. R King Clark, Acting OC SNS to Brigade Major, 16 Infantry Brigade, of 29 July 1938, TBL Wingate Palestine Papers, File 2313; King Clark reported that in the two weeks since Dabburiya, not a gang was encountered, despite extensive patrolling, nor were there any instances of sabotage on the



pipeline.

163. PRO WO32/9498, pp.2-5

164. Asprey, *War in the Shadows*, pp.425-427, 639, 1126-1127; Tony Geraghty, *Who Dares Wins: The Special Air Service 1950-1992* (London: Little, Brown 1992), pp.187-188, 198-203, 325, 331, 333-334, 336-338

165. PRO WO106/2018A, Third Part; PRO WO191/70, p.30; PRO CO733/316/1-2; Townshend, *Britain's Civil Wars*, pp.85-87

166. PRO WO33/1436, Chapter ii, Para C (i)

167. Minutes of a meeting between Macdonald and Haining at the Colonial Office on Sunday, 20 August 1939, in PRO CO733/389/18

168. Ben-Gurion, 'Britain's Contribution', p.14

169. O'Connor to Keith-Roach, undated of January 1939, LHCMA O'Connor Papers, 3/4/10

## CHAPTER FIVE

## WINGATE IN ETHIOPIA, 1940-1941

**This brilliant action....as a feat of arms carried out by a minute regular force supporting irregulars in very difficult country against an enemy greatly superior in numbers and armament can have few parallels.**

- Lieutenant General Sir Harry Wetherall's Dispatch on operations in western Ethiopia, 1941<sup>1</sup>

**Wingate took me round various offices at Headquarters. As he shambled from one to another, in his creased, ill-fitting uniform and out-of-date Wolseley helmet, carrying an alarm clock instead of wearing a watch, and a fly-whisk instead of a cane, I could sense the irritation and resentment he left in his wake. His behaviour certainly exasperated [General Sir William] Platt, who anyway had little sympathy with irregular operations. I once heard Platt remark...‘The curse of this war is Lawrence in the last’**

- Sir Wilfred Thesiger<sup>2</sup>

*Introduction*

This chapter examines Wingate's role in East Africa in 1940-41, where he organised and commanded guerrilla operations in the Gojjam region of Italian-occupied Ethiopia. These operations have contributed significantly to the apocrypha about Wingate. The most persistent story is that Wingate 'restored' the Emperor of Ethiopia, Haile Selassie, to his rightful throne by *coup de main*, under the noses of the British Government and Army, who planned to turn Ethiopia into a British protectorate. This is taken for granted in Ethiopia<sup>3</sup> but has also entered the literature, predictably, via Mosley<sup>4</sup> and Rooney, who, in a paper given to the British Commission for Military History in 1997, stated explicitly that:

At the end of the campaign in June 1941, to the chagrin of Platt's two divisions advancing from the north, and Cunningham's three divisions coming up from their base in northern Kenya, Wingate stole the limelight and personally escorted the Emperor Haile Selassie into his capital, Addis Ababa.<sup>5</sup>

Rooney also saw in Wingate's Gideon Force the direct ancestor of the Chindits:

[Wingate's] acute observation both of his own forces and the enemy enabled him to build up a body of ideas which came to fruition in plans for the Chindits. To keep in touch with his columns Wingate established effective wireless communication, and this was the key to all future Chindit operations.<sup>6</sup>

Rossetto also presented Wingate's ideas on guerrilla operations as completely original, a new form of warfare, based on Liddell Hart's 'indirect approach'.<sup>7</sup> A study of contemporary documents and testimony - including Wingate's own papers - suggests that these views may require some revision. Creating and training purpose-designed British Army units to operate in enemy-occupied territory in cooperation with local partisans had been the remit of the Military Intelligence (Research) [MI(R)] branch of the War Office at least since 1939, and Wingate's Gojjam operation was one of several initiated in 1940 not by Wingate, but by MI(R)'s Middle Eastern sub-branch, G(R). MI(R) formed an integral part of British strategy, post-Dunkirk, wherein the perceived impossibility of defeating German regular forces in battle, at least in the short term, led the British toward a more Fabian strategy, born of necessity, based on blockade, long-range aerial bombing, subversion by bodies such as MI(R) and, later, SOE, and operations by various types of special force. Wingate's operations in Ethiopia should therefore be placed in the context of this strategy and his ideas, presented before, during and after the Gojjam campaign, should be compared with MI(R)/G(R) doctrine - and the term is appropriate here - as devised largely by Colonel (later Major General) Colin Gubbins, later Director SOE. It emerges that Wingate inherited an existing operation applying

Gubbins' recommended operational procedures faithfully, and produced subsequently a set of operational procedures of his own derived partially from Gubbins' and partially from his own experiences in Palestine and Ethiopia. Perhaps the biggest difference was that Wingate insisted, increasingly, on concentration of force and resources, rather than the dispersal and economy of effort that was the hallmark of other MI(R) operations. Wingate's methods moved away from subversion and partisan warfare - about which he seems never to have been enthusiastic - towards use of purpose-designed regular forces, menacing the enemy's lines of communication, with occasional support from local irregulars.<sup>8</sup> This evolved into the model presented in Wingate's post-Ethiopia papers, which introduce another key theme of his military thought: 'attacking the enemy's plan', disrupting their preparation for their main effort via establishing a constant, nagging threat to their points of critical vulnerability, distracting their attention, forcing them to disperse their forces, and creating a situation friendly forces could exploit.<sup>9</sup> Wingate's Ethiopia operations therefore develop old themes and introduce new ones.

*British Strategy, 1940-41, and the development of special and raiding forces*

Chiefs of Staff meetings throughout May and June 1940, facing the imminent expulsion of British ground forces from France, dwelt regularly on economic warfare, bombing and the 'spread of revolt' as the main means of maintaining hostilities. Indeed, By 25 May, with the British Expeditionary Force pocketed around Dunkirk, they had become 'the only way' to do this.<sup>10</sup> On 7 June, the Director of Military Operations, Major General Sir John Kennedy, speaking from a brief prepared by MI(R) proposed to the Chiefs of Staff that:

We are certainly not going to win the war by offensives in mass and the only way of success is by undermining Germany internally and by action in the occupied territories. German aggression has in fact presented us with an opportunity never before equaled in history for bringing down a great aggressive power by irregular operations, propaganda and subversion

enlarging into rebel activities...Seen in this light, the war may be regarded as an inter-connected series of wars of independence....It must be recognised as a principal that not only are these activities part of the grand strategy of the war, [but] probably the only hope of winning the war...<sup>11</sup>

It was assumed, during and after the German invasions of France and the Low Countries, that covert operations were a cornerstone of Axis strategy. Detachments of the *Brandenburg* special operations units of the *Abwehr*, German military intelligence, often wearing civilian clothing or Dutch and Belgian uniforms, had carried out deep reconnaissance and seized bridges ahead of advancing Panzer columns, and this may have been the inspiration for widespread rumours of 'Fifth Columns' of traitors operating in Allied countries.<sup>12</sup> MI(R) made much of reports that Germany was organising a worldwide network of 'Fifth Columns' and it was taken for granted in official circles that sabotage and subversion by traitors would feature prominently in any German invasion of England.<sup>13</sup>

Ironside, now Commander-in-Chief, Home Forces, ordered the creation of 'Ironside Units' to counter this threat, thereby providing an opportunity for Wingate. Upon his final return from Palestine in 1939, Wingate was promoted major and assigned as adjutant of 56th Light Anti-Aircraft Brigade, a Territorial Army formation forming part of the air defence of the Kent coast. On 1 June 1940, Wingate contacted Ironside suggesting he could form a SNS-type unit from the brigade to counter 'Fifth Column' activity in England. Ironside asked Wingate to present a formal proposal to General Huddleston, now GOC Northern Ireland, who, according to Wingate, 'was delighted by the proposed force and said it was exactly what was needed to curb activities disloyal elements and encourage loyal elements [sic]' By 6 June, Wingate had 150 volunteer soldiers and ten officers from 56th Brigade. However, when he reported to GHQ Home Forces the same day, in discussions with Major General Bernard Paget, Ironside's Chief of Staff, it apparently emerged that Haining, now the Deputy CIGS, 'had strong personal objections' to Wingate. Wingate met a different reception at the

War Office the same day, no objections being raised other than that the deployment of his unit in Northern Ireland might provoke the IRA. Moreover, Ironside told Wingate he intended to deploy his force, once it was ready, telling him to report to General Sir Ronald Adam, GOC Northern Command; Ironside and Adam were both keen to deploy Wingate's proposed unit to deal with a rumoured 'Fifth Column' in Lincolnshire, and when Wingate met with Adam's staff, he was instructed to produce the unit. Upon returning to GHQ Home Forces to expedite its assembly, he discovered he had to submit details of its establishment to the War Office for approval; having done so, he learned the War Office 'might or might not approve after an indefinite period for consideration', and there the matter rested until the threat of invasion receded in August.<sup>14</sup> Far from his being a pariah, some senior officers were prepared to give Wingate's ideas a hearing and to find work which fit his talents. Moreover, Ironside's support provides further evidence for Wingate's ability to cultivate powerful benefactors, allowing him to circumvent normal military chains of command and which was also to have considerable bearing upon his career, as will be demonstrated shortly.

More important, however, for Wingate's development was the strategy Britain adopted from the summer of 1940 through to early 1942, which made extensive use of special units and organisations to wage 'unconventional' warfare. Among the few who speculate on why Britain formed so many such units in 1939-45, General Sir John Hackett saw them as arising from the British tradition of 'adventurous individualism' blending with new technology, the aeroplane and wireless in particular, and the realisation of the vulnerability of modern armies to threats to their communications (themes Wingate took up later).<sup>15</sup> Among historians, John Keegan sees a key factor as being Winston Churchill's military romanticism, and apparent denial that wars of his day were decided by mass attrition rather than by acts of daring by small bands of heroes.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, as early as 1917, Churchill, then a backbench MP, had drafted a paper calling for the development of specialist sea-landing forces to capture islands off the German coast by *coup de main*, and Churchill was to be Wingate's most

powerful and enthusiastic patron.<sup>17</sup> If placed in its historical and strategic context, however, the early development of such forces seems more prosaic: they were one of the few means of Britain maintaining hostilities, post-Dunkirk. In June 1940, Churchill, now Prime Minister and Minister for Defence, ordered that offensive operations should be carried out against the coast of occupied Europe, and the task of commanding these raiding operations - the objective being 'to mystify the enemy and cause him to disperse his forces' - was assigned to Lieutenant General AGB Bourne of the Royal Marines, with Evetts attached to his staff as Director, Raiding Operations.<sup>18</sup> Unfortunately, assets for such 'harassing' operations were minimal, consisting of the six Independent Companies formed by MI(R) and MI(R)'s Training Centre at Inverailort (see below); four more Independent Companies were in training for 'minor [amphibious] raids' by the end of July, but it was recognised by the War Cabinet that the lack of equipment, particularly landing craft, would limit them to small-scale raids for the foreseeable future.<sup>19</sup> Bourne was also promised elements from Britain's fledgling airborne forces, Churchill, having observed the impact of German *Fallschirmjägern* in the Low Countries, ordering the creation of a 'Parachute Corps' of 5,000 men in response.<sup>20</sup> Contemporary documents indicate this was envisioned initially as a raiding force, destroying vital objectives and drawing off large Axis formations or carrying out minor harassing operations including sabotage, intelligence gathering or cooperation with resistance movements, all roles Wingate would assign to his LRP forces in Ethiopia and Burma.<sup>21</sup> At Churchill's urging, specialist equipment for raiding and amphibious operations were developed rapidly – the first Landing Craft, Tank, was being tested by October 1940 – and by the end of 1940, a new command, Combined Operations Command, under Admiral Sir Roger Keyes, was overseeing the development of amphibious and raiding operations.<sup>22</sup> In March 1942, Keyes was succeeded as Director, Combined Operations by Commodore Lord Louis Mountbatten, who was to be another Wingate patron.

The development of these forces was accelerated by the strategy set at Chiefs of Staff meetings

from August to November 1940, which was based on the assumption that defeating the *Wehrmacht* directly was not currently feasible, but that Germany's rapid expansion left her open to attacks on her oil and heavy industry, disrupting which would create 'unemployment, critical shortages...and general economic disorganisation.'<sup>23</sup> Consequently, Britain should tighten her economic blockade on Europe, combine it with a RAF bomber offensive against German industry and use diplomacy to keep potential German allies neutral.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, every effort should be made to encourage resistance in Axis-occupied territory, leading to an expanded role for MI(R), previously an obscure branch of the War Office.<sup>25</sup>

*MI(R), G(R) and covert operations in 1939-40*

Perhaps one reason why the relationship between Wingate and MI(R) has not been investigated is that the history of MI(R) itself remains unwritten – the historians of SOE, William Mackenzie, MRD Foot and Mark Seaman, all discussed MI(R) summarily and in terms of its input into SOE, for instance.<sup>26</sup> However, from 1939 through to its absorption into SOE in 1940, MI(R) played the leading part in devising British policy towards 'Para-Military Activities', which it encapsulated as:

[A]ll the new features of war involved in the modern German conception of war as total and continuous. It therefore comprises activities both in peace and war which may be summarised as follows:-

a) In Peace

Organisation of the civil populace for war...Propaganda...as an attack on psychology....Political and intelligence activities in other countries, including the infiltration of personnel and creation of potentially treasonable organisations.

b) In War

The above activities, coupled with overt acts of violence against the enemy in the form of sabotage, etc., other than those carried on by the regular forces of the State, operating regularly - together with irregular operations of regular forces.<sup>27</sup>

In September 1939, three separate organisations were tasked with this: Section D of the Secret



Intelligence Service, which oversaw sabotage, subversion and misinformation via individual agents, Electra House, the Foreign Office department handling propaganda, and MI(R) in the War Office. MI(R) developed from GS(R), the research section of the Directorate of Military Operations and Intelligence of the War Office, formed in 1938 with a bland remit: 'Research into problems of tactics and organisation under the direction of the DCIGS.'<sup>28</sup> In March 1939, Section D and GS(R) presented a joint paper to the Chiefs of Staff arguing that the German seizure of Czechoslovakia and designs on the Balkans had opened up the possibility of 'an alternative method of defence...to organised armed resistance...based on the experience we have had in India, Irak [sic], Ireland and Russia, i.e. the development of a combination of guerilla and IRA tactics.'<sup>29</sup> In April 1939, MI(R) was tasked with putting this into action, instructed by the CIGS, General Lord Gort, to study guerrilla methods with a view to producing a 'guerilla *FSR* incorporating detailed tactical and technical instructions, applying to each of several countries' including assessing their vulnerability to such activity.<sup>30</sup> Lieutenant Colonel JCF Holland, head of GS(R) since 1938, co-author of the April 1939 paper, and an enthusiast for guerrilla warfare since fighting the IRA in 1919-1922, presented his report in June.<sup>31</sup> This was based on a reading list including *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, Edgar Snow's *Red Star Over China*, the memoirs of General von Lettow-Vorbeck, studies of the *Franco-Tireurs* in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71 and the Arab rebellion in Palestine.<sup>32</sup> Holland stated that:

[I]f guerrilla warfare is coordinated and also related to main operations, it should, in favourable circumstances, cause such a diversion of enemy strength as eventually to present decisive opportunities to the main forces of his opponent [sic]. It is therefore an auxiliary method of war of which we have not yet sufficiently exploited the possibilities.<sup>33</sup>

Holland considered guerrilla activity to be the only viable means of supporting Britain's Allies in central Europe and had already established Missions at British Embassies in Eastern Europe to gather information on potential subversives and the suitability of the country for guerrilla operations and

recommended the creation of teams of guerrilla and sabotage specialists to support them.<sup>34</sup> After this, MI(R)'s role expanded to 'Research and preparation of projects for irregular operations as a contribution to normally conducted operations [and] Operation of such projects when they are not the function of any [other] organisation or HQ'<sup>35</sup> This was the definition to which Wingate worked from Ethiopia to the early stages in his operations in Burma.

MI(R) had also produced its 'guerilla FSR', a series of pamphlets by Lieutenant Colonel Colin Gubbins, an old friend of Holland and fellow veteran of the Irish 'troubles', assigned to MI(R) at Holland's request.<sup>36</sup> These, and Holland's subsequent strategic recommendations, constituted an identifiable doctrine in that subsequent MI(R) operations - including in Ethiopia - can be seen as based upon Gubbins' pamphlets. MI(R)/G(R) also brought a number of individuals who were to serve with Wingate into the special operations world, including Michael Calvert and Peter Fleming, and Simon Fraser, Earl of Lovat, who became Chief Instructor at MI(R)'s training centre at Inverailort and who Wingate tried to recruit in 1944.<sup>37</sup> MI(R) had also established a sub-branch, G(R), at GHQ Middle East in Cairo, and in October 1940, instructors from Inverailort were sent to establish schools in Australia and Burma, the Burma school still being in place, under Calvert's command, when Wingate arrived in 1942 and some of its instructors going on to command Chindit columns.<sup>38</sup>

MI(R) doctrine accepted that to meet British strategic ends, guerrilla activity should be fostered pro-actively and perhaps initially even against the wishes of the majority of the target population.<sup>39</sup> Consequently, Gubbins' key pamphlet, *The Art of Guerilla Warfare*, was based throughout on the scenario of resistance against occupying forces, in cooperation with the forces of external Allies as part of an international conflict. Gubbins' summary of the aims of guerrilla activity, from *The Art of Guerilla Warfare* outlined that:

The object of guerilla warfare is to harass the enemy in every way possible within all the territory he holds to such an extent that he is eventually incapable either of embarking on a war,

or of continuing one that way already have commenced.... This object is achieved by compelling the enemy to disperse his forces in order to guard his flanks, his communications, his supply detachments, etc., against the attacks of guerillas, and thus so to weaken his main armies that the conduct of a campaign becomes impossible...The whole art of guerilla warfare lies in striking the enemy where he least expects it, and yet where he is most vulnerable: this will produce the greatest effect in inducing, and even compelling, him to use up large numbers of troops in guarding against such blows.<sup>40</sup>

This should begin with sabotage by individuals or small groups, escalating via ‘The action of larger groups working as a band under a nominated leader, and employing military tactics, weapons, etc., to assist in the achievement of their object, which is usually of a destructive nature’ to ‘the culminating stage of guerilla warfare...large formations of guerillas, well-armed and well-trained, which are able to take a direct part in the fighting by attacks on suitable hostile formations and objects in direct conjunction with the operations of the regular troops.’<sup>41</sup> A concept Gubbins may have derived from Lawrence, and which played an important part in Wingate’s thinking from 1941, was superior relative mobility in the operational environment concerned, which, combined with superior intelligence, would allow the setting of a tempo with which a more formally organised and commanded enemy could not cope. From the *Art of Guerilla Warfare*:

It is mobility, in information and in morale that the guerillas can secure the advantage, and those factors are the means by which the enemy’s superior armament and numbers can best be combatted. The superior mobility, however, is not absolute, but relative - i.e. to the type of country in which the activities are staged, to the detailed knowledge of that country by the guerillas, etc. In absolute mobility, the enemy must always have the advantage - i.e. the use of railway systems, the possession of large numbers of motors, lorries, armoured cars, tanks, etc...By the judicious selection of ground, however, and by moves in darkness to secure surprise, the guerillas can enjoy relatively superior mobility *for the period necessary for each operation*. The enemy will usually be in a country where the population is largely hostile, so that the people will actively co-operate in providing information for the guerillas and withholding it from the enemy. The proper encouragement of this natural situation...will ensure that the guerillas are kept *au fait* with the enemy’s movements and *intentions*, whereas their own are hidden from him. [Emphasis Gubbins]<sup>42</sup>

Above all, Gubbins argued, guerrilla action hinged upon leadership: 'The central authority must, and perforce will be, some man of prestige or weight who has been a leading personality in the territory in time of peace...Leaders of local partisan bands will be selected from those of standing or mark in the locality who possess the necessary attributes of personality.'<sup>43</sup> However, British officers should be attached, 'either to serve directly as commanders, more particularly in the higher spheres, or as specially qualified staff officers or assistants to guerilla commanders.'<sup>44</sup> The larger the movement, 'the greater the need for a leaven of regular officers to carry out the basic work of simple staff duties, and to effect liaison with the regular forces', an arrangement becoming more formal as the movement progressed:

In cases where the guerillas are a nation in arms, or part thereof, fighting for their freedom in alliance with or assisted and instigated by a third power which is willing and anxious to render all assistance to them, it will usually be advisable for that third power to be represented by a mission at the headquarters of the guerilla movement. The duties of such a mission would be to provide expert advice, to ensure liaison, to arrange the supply of arms, ammunition, money, etc., and to provide leaders and assistants to leaders, if such were found to be necessary.<sup>45</sup>

The Mission would, in most cases, come to resemble a 'guerrilla GHQ', its remit including identifying likely partisan leaders, providing them with weapons, ammunition, explosives and wirelasses, liaison with outside regular forces and devising an overall plan of campaign; at later stages, it would provide technical experts and trained staff officers to coordinate the guerrilla bands and provide them with a degree of regular organisation; Gubbins implied, but never stated, that another function was to ensure that guerrilla action could be directed to British strategic ends.<sup>46</sup>

Summer 1940 also saw MI(R) contemplate the use of specially organised regular units to operate behind enemy lines either alone or in cooperation with partisans. This is pertinent to Wingate in

identifying a set of military procedures that the previous Wingate literature has either ignored or missed completely: specifically, the use of specialist light infantry, supplied by airdrop and using close air support in lieu of artillery, to establish a permanent presence in the enemy rear, was discussed by MI(R) almost three years before Wingate raised such units in Burma. On 7 June 1940, MI(R) finished its 'Appreciation of the Capabilities and Composition of a small force operating behind the enemy lines in the offensive', to 'disrupt enemy L of C, destroy dumps and disorganise HQ', its methods being 'to travel fast...avoid organised opposition as much as practicable, except at the objective [and] to attack the weak points in the enemy's organisation, make the sites untenable as long as possible and then, in most cases, depart.'<sup>47</sup> This would be in support of main forces:

[I]t would appear essential that this force should act in conjunction with an attack by the main regular formations. In such circumstances, there would be fewer men to spare for sentries, fewer troops available for pursuit so that the effect of an interruption of L of C might be more effectual, if not decisive. To act before such an offensive might serve to wear down the enemy and to keep more of his forces on L of C but would make surprise less attainable.<sup>48</sup>

The force must travel light, its supplies carried by mules, camels or coolies, to maximise mobility, and any heavy equipment required would be flown in or airdropped.<sup>49</sup> The main fire support should come from the air: 'After a short aerial bombardment and before the enemy had time to emerge from their shelters, the operating force should drive home their attack. This calls for careful organisation and a high standard of co-operation and combined training, as well as good communications.'<sup>50</sup> In a late paper, from August 1940, Holland predicted that the strategic overstretch of Germany and Italy meant that 'irregular tactics' would become normal for the British Army, foreseeing the use of helicopter-borne spearhead forces to seize landing-grounds with reinforcements arriving on short takeoff and landing (STOL) aircraft, with most supplies delivered by air.<sup>51</sup> Helicopters aside, this bears some comparison with Wingate's final model of operations as put into practice on the second

Chindit operation in 1944.

Therefore, many ideas Wingate put into practice in 1941-44 were on paper before the end of 1940, and given that Wingate's Gojjam campaign was specifically a G(R) operation, and Wingate called for an expanded G(R) organisation in Burma upon his arrival there in 1942, it is difficult not to see a connection. However, formally establishing any direct link would be difficult: Wingate was not mentioned in any MI(R) documents, except for situation reports from G(R), and, as reiterated throughout this thesis, Wingate never credited any source but himself for his ideas.

G(R) remained independent after MI(R)'s absorption into SOE in the summer of 1940: given the greater opportunity for cooperation with regular operations in the Middle East, both Holland and Wavell, now Commander in Chief, Middle East, felt that G(R)'s activities should be controlled by Wavell's Headquarters, with SOE maintaining a 'watching brief' and supplying some of its funding.<sup>52</sup> Its personnel remained staff officers at GHQ Middle East, and had been busy, establishing an office in Khartoum under Lieutenant Colonel Terence Airey, to oversee operations in Italian East Africa, sending Missions to Somaliland - where an Operational Centre (see below) and a large body of local partisans were active throughout April and May 1941 - West Africa and the Belgian Congo, and was recruiting Arabic speakers for Missions to the Middle East.<sup>53</sup> However, from June 1940, its main task was escalating revolt in Italian East Africa.

### *G(R) and resistance in Ethiopia*

The literature claims almost universally that the British 'establishment' opposed the incitement of resistance in Ethiopia, and that the whole idea would have died without Wingate. Burchett claimed that 'Cairo and Khartoum were thick with missions of various kinds, most of them backed by glorified camp followers who were looking for concessions and special areas to exploit as soon as [Ethiopia] was occupied.'<sup>54</sup> Haile Selassie was ignored by these 'international sharks...racketeers and stock

market strategists' until Wingate arrived and told him to appeal directly to 'the people of England, America and China', after which Churchill 'settled the hash of the speculators' while Wingate flew the Emperor into Ethiopia as a *fait accompli*, the revolt arising therefrom.<sup>55</sup> Mosley had Wingate adopt the cause of the Emperor as a personal crusade, hand-pick a team of fellow believers - including Dodds-Parker and Airey, both of them in actuality serving with G(R) months before Wingate arrived - and use Wavell's and Churchill's authority to remove those in his way; again, according to Mosley, the resistance did not begin in earnest until Wingate and the Emperor arrived in Gojjam.<sup>56</sup> Sykes was aware of SOE - although he could not reveal this, as its existence was classified until the 1960s - but he did mention the 'department of the General Headquarters known as G(R)', and discussed its role in Ethiopia obliquely.<sup>57</sup> Both Sykes and Royle emphasised the lack of enthusiasm for Haile Selassie and Ethiopia among the British high command, and portrayed the Gojjam campaign almost as a 'three man band', between Wingate, Colonel Daniel Sandford, who will be discussed below, and the Emperor.<sup>58</sup> Even Anthony Mockler, who discussed the activities of the various G(R) Missions in detail, implied that Wingate devised the operational doctrine for the Gojjam operation himself.<sup>59</sup> Likewise, Shirreff, in an otherwise meticulous history of the Gojjam revolt, did not mention G(R) at all - Dodds-Parker, for instance, was merely a 'staff captain at GHQ' - and presented the thesis that the entire Gojjam operation was originated by Sandford, the 'hero' of his book.<sup>60</sup> Conversely, MRD Foot presented the operation as a SOE project, even though G(R) were still *de facto* a separate organisation, under the command of GHQ Middle East.<sup>61</sup>

Little of this is supported by contemporary documents. Ethiopian resistance to the Italians was chronic from 1936, and Harold Marcus related that from 1937, the Ethiopians had logistical support from the French *Deuxieme Bureau* and, from 1938, training from anti-fascist Italian veterans of the International Brigades, courtesy of the Comintern.<sup>62</sup> Nor, contrary to much of the Wingate literature, were the British idle: Electra House accumulated 10,000 rifles and a large treasure chest in Sudan

from 1938, and around the same time, Dodds-Parker, then a District Commissioner in Sudan, issued several hundred rifles to his friend, the Ethiopian aristocrat, Ras Mesfin, on condition he did not use them until Italy declared war on Britain.<sup>63</sup> In late 1938, Captain Richard Whalley of the SDF corresponded with the Foreign Office on the possibility of a 'scallywag show' in Ethiopia, requesting 'H.S. ESQ' be sent to East Africa with 'a prearranged plan with HMG for cooperation during, and after, event', allowing Whalley to recruit Ethiopian refugees in Kenya, forming them into a guerilla unit with which 'I shall try to annihilate the Italian company in vicinity Lake Rudolf...capture all arms for use further into the country, to arm tribesmen, &c, for the drive of Italians on to SDF'; a concurrent offensive, under the joint command of the explorer and friend of the Emperor, Wilfred Thesiger, and the Ethiopian Crown Prince, would threaten Addis Ababa. If Whalley could be supplied with 4,000 rifles, 200,000 rounds of ammunition, 10,000 Maria Theresa dollars (Ethiopian currency) and enough wirelasses to coordinate his guerillas, 'it would go down to history [sic] as one of the greatest routs ever.....'<sup>64</sup> That guerrillas could pin down Italian effort sufficiently enough to prevent their army in Italian East Africa being a threat to Sudan or Kenya was to be a common argument in the months ahead, Major Mallaby of the War Office commenting to ED Cavendish-Bentinck of the Foreign Office on 27 April 1939 that this may be the only feasible way to hold Sudan, given the small size of its garrison.<sup>65</sup>

Yet, when MI(R) inherited this project in mid 1939, it found little enthusiasm from British authorities in Khartoum. Khartoum reported that the Italians had pacified completely southern and eastern Ethiopia, and that the only resistance was in the west, the heartland of Ethiopia's traditional ruling ethnic group, the Amhara: supporting resistance was therefore viewed in Khartoum as not worth the effort and likely to provoke an Italian invasion of Sudan.<sup>66</sup> However, this did not preclude contingency planning, and G(R) produced a list of likely operatives for Ethiopia, the most significant being Colonel Daniel Sandford and Lieutenant Colonel Hugh Boustead.<sup>67</sup> Sandford, a retired British



officer, had explored in Ethiopia since 1907, farmed there since 1921 and, from January 1935, acted as an advisor to Haile Selassie, becoming a close confidant. Sandford escaped from Ethiopia during the invasion of 1935 and from his home in Guildford he then corresponded and visited regularly with the Emperor, in exile in Bath, over the next three years.<sup>68</sup> In September 1939, he was working in Wavell's intelligence cell in Cairo, from where he was sent to Platt by Wavell 'to retain at your discretion for work in connection with the ABYSSINIAN project.'<sup>69</sup> Another former Army officer, Boustead spent many years in the Sudan Political Service before joining the SDF in 1939. In October 1940 he was named specifically in the first MI(R) proposal to penetrate western Ethiopia, a plan to take two squadrons of the Sudan Horse up the Nile Valley; however, G(R) then designated him as Commanding Officer (CO) of the Frontier Battalion of the SDF, raised specifically to garrison G(R) bases on the frontier and inside western Ethiopia, in which capacity Boustead served under Wingate.<sup>70</sup>

In September 1939, Ironside and Wavell's Chief of Staff, Major General Arthur Smith, produced a policy for the 'conquest of Abyssinia' incorporating 'Native risings encouraged by Guerilla tactics by British columns and by Propaganda', in which Sandford evidently had much input.<sup>71</sup> These 'native risings', it was emphasised, should not go off at 'half-cock', part of the caution of the Sudan authorities being attributed to fear that a 'half-cock' operation was exactly what was going to happen.<sup>72</sup> To prevent this, it was recommended that a 'Guerilla Commandant' should be appointed to the staff in Khartoum to oversee a G(R) staff including 'several guerilla leaders', to ensure the rebellion was prepared and timed properly.<sup>73</sup> As to operations, Ironside suggested that 'small camel columns should be formed and should live on the country', and in southern Ethiopia, 'small self-contained columns mainly for harassing purposes on the lines of East Africa Campaign of last war.'<sup>74</sup> Wavell felt 'that there has been a tendency in the past to look on an offensive in Abyssinia too much on the "regular operations scale". He feels - with the CIGS - that operations should be

conducted more on the lines of those undertaken by Lawrence of Arabia.<sup>75</sup> These were to substitute for an invasion of Italian East Africa, freeing regular forces for the Mediterranean. This was the wider strategic context for the revolt until the end of 1940, the period covering Wingate's arrival and initial preparations.<sup>76</sup>

From October 1939, Sandford, under Wavell's orders, contacted resistance leaders inside Ethiopia, and also pressured the authorities to allow Haile Selassie to come to Sudan as soon as possible.<sup>77</sup> Dodds-Parker, recruited into G(R) from the Grenadier Guards in 1940, reconnoitred the Sudan-Ethiopia border, assessing the chances of rebellion in border regions, while GHQ Middle East ordered the assembly of arsenals near the border and the recruitment of British and Ethiopian volunteers for several G(R) Missions which, once Italy declared war, would enter Ethiopia to distribute arms, coordinate the rebellion and provide the resistance with technical support, as prescribed in Gubbins' pamphlets.<sup>78</sup> Consequently, when Italy declared war, on 10 June 1940, Wavell could issue operational instructions to G(R) that very day. The intent was to 'spread the revolt over the whole of ITALIAN EAST AFRICA and so harass the ITALIANS as to make them expend their resources on internal security.'<sup>79</sup> This would be supported logistically and directed, via the G(R) Missions, by the overall British commander in the region concerned – General Sir William Platt, the GOC Sudan, in the case of Gojjam - who would also send 'Technical Advisors' to assist resistance leaders.<sup>80</sup> A secret appendix to the Operational Order went into detail: Missions were to enter Ethiopia, thereby:

- a) Giving technical advice to the ABYSSINIAN Rebel Leaders
- b) Co-ordination of the activities of the various Rebel Leaders
- c) Acting as a channel for communications between C in C Middle East and the Rebel Leaders for political and administrative purposes.<sup>81</sup>

Also conforming to Gubbins' prescriptions, each Mission controlled several Report and Advisory

Centres (later re-designated Operational Centres), moving forward of the main Mission to:

- a) In an advisory capacity...form a link between the Mission HQ and outlying Rebel Leaders.
- b) ...[P]rovide a link in the supply organisation between the bases and the Rebel bands.
- c) As representing the Mission to advise the local Rebel Leader.<sup>82</sup>

This would ensure coordination with British strategy. The Head of the Mission was designated explicitly to control rebel operations in central Ethiopia via controlling their supplies: ‘To do so, he must have the necessary prestige, and this can be most easily acquired if the Rebels learn to regard him as the authority through whom they apply for the assistance they require.’<sup>83</sup> Sandford was to command Mission 101, the largest, tasked with penetrating the Gojjam plateau, the heartland of the Amhara elite, and then believed to be the main centre of resistance. On 21 June 1940, Platt issued operational instructions: Sandford was to ‘coordinate the actions of the Abyssinians under my [Platt’s] general direction’; Mission 101 was to be established inside Ethiopia by 1 August 1940, and should direct the rebels to prevent the Italians deploying troops away from northwest Ethiopia.<sup>84</sup>

This received a boost when Haile Selassie, dispatched by the British Foreign Office on Churchill’s orders, arrived in Khartoum on 27 June 1940. Mission 101 entered Ethiopia on 12 August 1940, Sandford deciding already that central and eastern Gojjam should be Mission 101’s main area of operations because it was the most accessible rebel area from Sudan. It was also the best location to spread the revolt in the directions ordered by Platt, its central position in western Ethiopia granting access to the main roads heading north and south from Addis Ababa, the capital and main administrative centre. Early deployments were successful. By mid September Sandford had established a base at Sakala, in northern Gojjam, and persuaded rival Ethiopian chiefs to begin guerrilla attacks against the Italians with gifts of arms and money; Boustead’s Frontier Battalion had established supply dumps on the frontier and was escorting supply convoys to the Mission. Sandford

also informed Platt that the locals were enquiring when Haile Selassie would return, in his view essential if the resistance was to be escalated.<sup>85</sup> He was encouraged greatly by what he saw as the keen response to a proclamation from the Emperor spread by Mission 101 and dropped as leaflets all over Ethiopia, and recommended that the Emperor should establish a forward headquarters on the natural fortress of Mount Belaiya by the end of November 1940.<sup>86</sup>

Unfortunately, the parlous state of GHQ Middle East's logistics led to the resistance taking a low priority. Haile Selassie saw this as arising from hostility from the 'establishment' in Cairo and Khartoum, communicating this opinion in several telegrams to Churchill.<sup>87</sup> This was one issue addressed by the Ministerial Conference at Khartoum on 28-31 October 1940, at which the Minister for War, Anthony Eden, General Jan C Smuts, the South African Prime Minister and member of Churchill's War Cabinet, Wavell, Platt and General Sir Alan Cunningham, the GOC East Africa, formulated policy towards Ethiopia. Wavell's appreciation was that Italian East Africa was cut off and running out of supplies, so the resistance should be sufficient to contain them. Consequently, the border posts at Gallabat and Kassala should be retaken, then used as entry points for supplies to the resistance.<sup>88</sup> Platt projected he could retake Gallabat by mid November, and Kassala thereafter, provided he received reinforcements, while Cunningham could begin operations against Kismayu, in southern Italian East Africa, by January 1941.<sup>89</sup> The conference also decided upon policy towards the Emperor: it was agreed that, while there were doubts about his acceptability to the Amhara nobility and other tribal groups, he was still the best available rallying point and should be used as such.<sup>90</sup> This conference, therefore, placed the Emperor at the heart of the resistance, by British government policy and military strategy, well before Wingate's arrival in East Africa.

Of equal interest is the meeting between Eden, Wavell, Platt's Chief of Staff, Brigadier Scobie, and Majors Brown and Sugden of G(R) on 29 October, at which the hitherto haphazard arrangements for the resistance were revealed to a clearly furious Eden. It emerged that just 5,073 out

of a promised 10,000 rifles had been issued to the resistance, most of these being ancient, single-shot Martini-Henrys, re-chambered to .303 calibre and intended originally for Local Defence Volunteers in England; just 735 of the more modern Lee-Enfields were available, and Ethiopians arriving on the frontier asking for weapons were being turned away.<sup>91</sup> There were two responses: the recruitment of 'free' Ethiopian battalions from refugee camps in Kenya and Sudan, which had begun already, should be escalated, and, as Haile Selassie had requested British officers to train and command them, it was agreed that this should be 'examined'; moreover, as the battalions' principal task would be to act as the Emperor's bodyguard once he entered Ethiopia, they should be trained as regular infantry, not guerrillas.<sup>92</sup> Secondly, and most significantly for this thesis:

Another request was for an officer representing the British Army to whom, in Colonel Sandford's absence, the Emperor could address military questions. It seemed evident...that what was needed was a senior staff officer to do for the revolt here what Colonel Sandford was doing the other side of the frontier. At present there was no coordination. General Wavell said he would appoint an officer for this purpose.<sup>93</sup>

Conforming with the Operational Order of 10 June, G(R) Technical Advisors would be attached to the resistance, which now, at Haile Selassie's insistence, would be designated officially as 'patriots', and the creation of the Report and Advisory Centres would be accelerated.<sup>94</sup> As to the 'senior staff officer' to liaise between the revolt and the Emperor, Amery and Wavell were both firm that this should be Orde Wingate. Amery had by then been recalled to the Cabinet by Churchill, as Secretary of State for India and Burma, and was to be Wingate's highest-placed supporter (and one of the most enthusiastic) until after the first Chindit operation, when Churchill replaced him. In August 1940, Amery had written to Lord Lloyd proposing Wingate should lead 'whatever Jewish force is raised in Palestine', but when Lloyd rejected this, Amery suggested him for Ethiopia.<sup>95</sup> The same month, Amery wrote to Haining, the Deputy CIGS, suggesting Wingate could be used in either the Middle

East or Ethiopia, making the telling observation that Wingate was '[n]ot altogether easy to fit into any ordinary disciplined organisation but very much the man for a small show on his own.'<sup>96</sup> Interestingly, in the light of his former differences with Wingate, Haining replied saying that, in response to Amery's suggestion, he had cabled Wavell offering him Wingate as 'suitable for leading irregulars or rebels in Abyssinia.'<sup>97</sup> Wavell had apparently cabled London already to request Wingate 'to fan into flame the embers of revolt that had smouldered in parts of the Abyssinian highlands ever since the Italian occupation', as he put it after the war, although Wingate's initial remit was less ambitious.<sup>98</sup> Wingate arrived in Khartoum in early November, his official role delineated in a letter from Platt to the Emperor of 10 November. He was appointed General Staff Officer 2 (GSO2) on Platt's staff, as a major, with the duty of promoting the rebellion; 'He will maintain close touch with Your Imperial Majesty on all military matters connected with the rebellion, and will represent my Headquarters in such matters.'<sup>99</sup> Circumstances point to Wavell summoning Wingate to administer 'shock therapy' to what he perceived as a flagging operation, unlikely to endear either of them to its planners. Captain Dodds-Parker was attached to Wingate as his General Staff Officer 3; a detailed description of the duties of this job might not be strictly relevant to this thesis, as Dodds-Parker appears in reality to have been involved almost entirely in pacifying the numerous senior officers Wingate offended over the following months.<sup>100</sup> Far from being a lone voice, driving an operation no-one else wanted, Wingate was expected to do what he did by senior commanders in the theatre.

### *Wingate takes charge*

By October 1940, G(R)'s efforts centred on Mission 101's supply base at Faguta and an outstation, Mission 101 North, under Major Arthur Bentinck, in the Lake Tana region, north of Gojjam. Whalley was supporting patriots in southwest Ethiopia from the Boma plateau in southern Sudan, and other Missions were forming.<sup>101</sup> Having met the Emperor in Khartoum, Wingate flew to Faguta

to confer with Sandford, intending to improve cooperation between Khartoum and Mission 101.<sup>102</sup> Wingate noted that his visit, of 20-22 November 1940, 'served its main purpose which was to convince me that my plan was workable', yet the record of this meeting provides the earliest evidence for the different approaches to the rebellion advocated by these two officers.<sup>103</sup> Sandford was pleased that regular supply convoys would now be coming his way, and by the impending arrival of the G(R) Operational Centres, which were being formed in Sudan and which Wingate would train (see below), and offered advice on their organisation.<sup>104</sup> However, Wingate wanted logistical support for the rebellion to be the sole responsibility of the Operational Centres, under his command, whereas Sandford preferred the existing arrangement wherein the Mission was responsible for distributing arms and money (echoing Gubbins).<sup>105</sup> Sandford had decided already that British 'Advisory and Store Centres' should be established in Gojjam, with dry-weather roads being built back to Sudan, along which supplies for the patriots should arrive, along with Haile Selassie and his bodyguard, at the earliest available opportunity. The aim was to secure Gojjam as the stronghold of a 'Free Ethiopian' Government and a base for guerrilla offensives against the roads running north from Addis Ababa to Eritrea and southwest to the Kenya border.<sup>106</sup>

The contrast with Wingate's proposed strategy, as presented in his official Report of the operation, is marked. It is here, not the politics or strategic aim of the rebellion, that Wingate parted company with his peers:

Hitherto we had made the mistake of appealing to the cupidity and self interest of the Ethiopians by offering them money and poor quality war material. These qualities were all on the side of the enemy. Courage, faith and self respect, these were the qualities we could appeal to successfully because they were on our side. We had first to convince the Ethiopian, suspicious as he was of all white men, of our bona fides. This meant he must see us fighting not by his side but in front of him. His contact with our young officers must convince him that...we were not only brave soldiers but devoted to the cause of his liberties.<sup>107</sup>

Wingate proposed that the British should not just send personnel in to distribute arms and money

and perform staff work:

[C]ease trying to stimulate the revolt from without, using agents, but...enter amongst the patriots using small columns of the highest fighting quality, with first class equipment, to perform exploits and to teach self sacrifice and devotion by example instead of by precept. *By doing so we should not only fan the revolt to proportions that really threatened the enemy's main bases, but should also assume its direction and control - a most important factor in any future settlement.* [Italics mine]<sup>108</sup>

These passages come from Wingate's final *Report*, written months after the campaign. However, that Wingate was not arguing retrospectively is construable from the organisation and training he provided his penetration forces, which were divided into three types, the G(R) Operational Centres, an independent Ethiopian mortar platoon, drawn from Ras Mesfin's retainers, and the two regular battalions, one Ethiopian, the other Boustead's SDF Frontier Battalion. Wingate intended to form ten Operational Centres, each consisting of a British officer (captain, major or SDF *Bimbashi*), five sergeants and 200 Ethiopians divided into ten guerilla squads, intended not to advise, but to fight: 'By doing exploits [sic] these young officers were to obtain an ascendancy over the patriots in their areas and were to keep in constant touch by wireless with the directing staff. The latter would thus be able to direct the available force into the most profitable channel.'<sup>109</sup> Wingate's aim, therefore, was not, apparently, to create a mass resistance movement, fighting a protracted guerrilla campaign, but to insert regular fighting units, led by British and British-trained Ethiopian officers, to wage war deep in the Ethiopian interior.

Some of Wingate's training notes survive, indicating that his ideas were still rooted largely in *FSR*, combined with his experiences in Palestine and his views on the relationship between war and politics. Echoing Palestine, Wingate saw an enemy whose 'national characteristics' made them vulnerable to the kind of action he was proposing: 'Here Italians would have to fight under conditions which brought out their worst qualities: conditions demanding bold manoeuvre, junior leadership, and ability to endure hardships.... Naturally timid, they preferred to think in terms of defence.'<sup>110</sup> Wingate



referred also explicitly to *FSR*, a unique citation of a source for his military ideas other than himself:

We are all familiar with the principles of war laid down in Field Service Regulations. According, however, to the character of the warfare we are engaged in, one or other of these principles is predominant. *The most important of all these principles, in all forms of warfare, is surprise, and the next to surprise, its opposite, security.* [Italics mine]<sup>111</sup>

Wingate therefore interpreted the Principles of War according to his mission and preferences, as *FSR* recommended. He put surprise on top of his list, giving his reasons in lecture notes for the Operational Centres, wherein it was clear again he intended them to have a tactical role; compare his choice of words with Lawrence's in *Seven Pillars*:

In other types of warfare the enemy tends to form a line of defended areas which shut out penetration by enemy forces until after his own collapse. In guerilla warfare, however, conditions exist which make it possible for our forces to live and move under the enemy's ribs. Surprise is always possible to guerillas, and the only limitation is security.<sup>112</sup>

Note also that Wingate was unequivocal, at this stage, that he was waging guerrilla warfare, rebutting Rossetto's challenge to those who describe Wingate as a guerrilla theoretician.<sup>113</sup> Surprise was obtainable by the use of new weapons, 'unexpected forms of propaganda' but, most commonly, 'by the use of unexpected boldness.'<sup>114</sup> Security arose from knowing the enemy, particularly how they would react to any given situation, and taking appropriate action to forestall this.<sup>115</sup> Both required high levels of efficiency, and therefore, of selection and training of personnel.<sup>116</sup> To Wingate, therefore, guerrilla warfare was a matter for professional experts, not amateurs – as he clearly came to view Sandford. There is some overlap with Gubbins detectable here.

This view is reinforced by Wingate's preferred training methods. As in Palestine, Wingate taught tactics through battle drills, instilled via explanation on sand models, demonstration by instructors, and imitation until the squads matched his required standard.<sup>117</sup> The aim was apparently to instill set

tactical methods and responses upon guerrilla forces via formal training, a move towards their 'regularisation' and not something mentioned in any MI(R) or G(R) document. As to the strategy these trained guerrillas would execute, this evolved organically as the campaign progressed and so must be reconstructed from Wingate's subsequent training memoranda, operational orders and the testimony of others. Initially, he echoed *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, almost certainly unconsciously, but also some of Gubbins' proposed guerrilla strategy:

Guerillas aim at bringing the enemy to a stand-still in the heart of this own occupied territory. It is impossible for any enemy always to present an unbreakable front at all points. Where his troops are living, training, resting, recreating and recovering from the effects of conflict with our regular forces, the enemy is compelled to lay himself open to attack. In normal conditions he counts upon his foe being unable to attack him in his rear areas; he counts upon the local population being either friendly or cowed. Guerilla warfare, in the first place, is therefore possible only when a large proportion of the civilian population surrounding the enemy's back areas is friendly to the guerillas. Where this is so, however, unrivalled opportunities exist for ambush and surprise of every description. The essence of guerilla warfare is...surprise combined with security.<sup>118</sup>

Wingate's aim, evidently, was to initiate an offensive inside Italian occupied territory, tied to British strategic aims, built around his 'trained guerillas' supported *by* rather than *supportive of* the patriots. He also revived a common theme: creating a sense of his ubiquity in the mind of the enemy via use of superior mobility, as Lawrence proposed in *Seven Pillars* - something which Wingate would perhaps not have appreciated having pointed out – and Callwell had done in *Small Wars*.

Wingate decided, while visiting Sandford, that Haile Selassie should establish a preliminary headquarters at Mount Belaiya, approximately halfway between the frontier and Gojjam. By December 1940, G(R) had secured enough camels to begin sending convoys to Belaiya to build a supply dump sufficient, Wingate estimated, to support the two regular battalions and the Operational Centres, and the first Operational Centre entered Ethiopia in late December.<sup>119</sup> However, his logistics soon fell victim to the environment, Wingate noting that:

I had hoped that Sandford's Mission would succeed in purchasing some five thousand mules to take over from the camels in the precipitous areas. It proved unable to provide these and the camels had to go wherever we went, with the result that the majority died in the course of the campaign.<sup>120</sup>

In fact, *all* of the 15,000 camels G(R) purchased in late 1940 were dead by June 1941, Wingate reporting that they died through stubbornly refusing to eat the plentiful grazing on the Gojjam plateau.<sup>121</sup> Whatever the cause, the mass attrition of the camels, the principal means of transport, inflicted considerable strain upon the campaign in its early stages and the expedition's precarious logistical state was to be another factor causing Wingate's doctrine to evolve in practice.

#### *The doctrine evolves*

The strategic context changed during training, initially as a result of the *debacle* at Gallabat on 6-10 November 1940, where Brigadier William Slim's 10th Indian Brigade's attempt to take a pair of Italian-occupied forts on the Sudan-Ethiopia border failed ignominiously - Slim losing all of his tanks and some of his British troops fleeing in panic - but then due to the swift Italian defeat in North Africa.<sup>122</sup> Wavell called a conference in Cairo on 1-2 December 1940 to update British strategy in the Mediterranean; present were Wavell, Platt, Cunningham, General HM Wilson (GOC Egypt) and Air Marshal Longmore, with Wingate invited to speak on the progress of the rebellion. Wavell informed the conference of *Compass*, to be launched ten days later, and ordered that pressure be stepped up concurrently on Italian East Africa. In the south, pressure would be exerted 'by means of small mobile columns' operating from Kenya, Cunningham being ordered to advance on Kismayu, in Italian Somalia in May or June, after which a penetration should be made into southwest Ethiopia in conjunction with forces operating from Boma in Sudan.<sup>123</sup> These would presumably consist largely of Whalley's patriots, as Wavell intended the main effort to be via guerrilla activity:

The ruling idea in my mind...at this conference was that the fomentation of the rebel movement...offered with the resources available the best prospect of making the Italian position impossible and eventually reconquering the country. I did not intend...a large scale invasion...I intended that our main effort should be devoted to furthering and supporting the rebellion by irregular action.<sup>124</sup>

This was but a small part of Churchill's strategy, emerging during December 1940, reacting to the rapid collapse of the Italians in Libya and the German buildup in Bulgaria, threatening Greece and Yugoslavia. On 31 December 1940, Churchill ordered that Italian forces in Italian East Africa should be destroyed by the end of April 1941, thus releasing British troops for deployment elsewhere. Wavell reinforced Sudan with 5th Indian Division, straight from India, plus two bomber squadrons, with 4th Indian Division redeploying from the Western Desert during December and January. The end of November 1940 saw the under-strength 1st South African Division, two African Brigades, two fighter squadrons and two bomber squadrons deployed under Cunningham in Kenya.<sup>125</sup> Operations were to begin on 19 January 1941, with Platt's 4th and 5th Indian Divisions striking at Kassala while Cunningham's 1st South African Division and 11th and 12th African Brigades pushed into Italian Somalia with the objective of capturing the capital, Mogadishu.<sup>126</sup> There was no initial intent to drive on into greater Ethiopia, and Platt's stated aim for the Gojjam rebellion was to pin Italian forces which might otherwise be used to reinforce Kassala, conforming with Holland's prescribed role for MI(R).<sup>127</sup> Wingate understood this implicitly and agreed with Platt a bold move to distract the Italians, taking the campaign to its next stage:

I pointed out to General Platt that at that moment, Xmas 1940, the enemy was prepared for us either to advance in force towards Gojjam, or to make out a major attack on Eritrea. He would rapidly transfer air forces to whichever front he considered the most dangerous. Platt's attack could not begin until the end of January. If the Emperor entered a few days in advance this would divert the enemy's attention and lead to the preliminary transfer of enemy aircraft. The plan was approved. The necessary covering operations were carried out; and, on 20th January 1941, the Emperor crossed the frontier at the place chosen by me on the River DINDER.<sup>128</sup>

Platt felt the presence of the Emperor would increase Italian interest in the Belaiya-Gojjam area; thus his insertion had the aim of supporting Platt's thrust into Eritrea, as Wingate understood.<sup>129</sup> Moreover, under the influence of Sandford's reports, it was still hoped the Emperor's re-entry would bring a mass uprising, although Wingate was already circumspect: 'The patriot forces appear, as I expected, to be able to move at will. They have their being within the guts of the enemy. Such forces, however, must be wisely directed or they tend to get out of control and invite disaster.'<sup>130</sup> Wingate was fulfilling the remit laid out in operational orders issued before his arrival, through applying his own interpretation of *FSR* and *MI(R)/G(R)* doctrine. This formed part of an overall military strategy, devised by Wavell, and part-driven by Sandford, in which guerrilla operations in the name of the Emperor played an integral part, and which would have developed without Wingate's participation.

Nevertheless, Wingate's ambition was soon evident. Having established the Emperor at Belaiya, on 6 February Wingate and Sandford flew back to Khartoum for a conference on policy for the campaign, on 12 February. Platt chaired the conference and also present were Terence Airey and Brigadier Maurice Lush, Platt's Deputy Chief Political Officer (and Sandford's brother-in-law). Wingate had written previously to Platt suggesting an expanded *G(R)* organisation, proposing himself as *GSO1* and 'Commander of British and Ethiopian Forces in the Field' with Mission 101 assisting him.<sup>131</sup> This was confirmed at the conference, an indicator of Wingate's standing at the time: Wingate, promoted Lieutenant Colonel, would 'direct the patriot operations in the field', while Sandford, now a Brigadier, was appointed the Emperor's personal advisor.<sup>132</sup>

Wingate's operational plan, approved at the conference, was again clearly not one for a protracted guerrilla campaign:

My primary objective was to drive the enemy out of Gojjam. After that I intended to move on

and cut the North and South communications between the capital and Dessye [not 'harass', as Platt instructed]. I knew the enemy would attack as long as possible along his Roman roads, and that, if I wanted to fight him, I must do so on these roads. I knew that he would resent the attack of Haile Selassie as an assault on his prestige and that if he were not hard pressed he would resume the offensive....With these facts in mind I made the following plan. I would divide my force into two parts, in the proportion of one to three. The weaker force should contain the Northern Italian Force until reinforced and strong enough to go on and cut the Dessye-Gondar road. The stronger force, under my own immediate command I would direct upon the Nile bridge at SAFARTAK [at the far western edge of Gojjam, on the main road from Addis Ababa into Gojjam] thus cutting the enemy's retreat, and then proceed by a process of night attack plus fifth column penetration to reduce the various garrisons.<sup>133</sup>

Wingate's attitude was that of an orthodox British commander of the time: it was his 'Master-Plan', and not to be revised by outsiders or those lower down the chain of command. The northern thrust, commanded by Major Anthony Simonds, summoned to East Africa at Wingate's request, was already moving towards Bahr Dar Giorgis as Wingate and the Emperor entered Ethiopia, and consisted of No.2 Operational Centre and No.3 Patrol Company of the SDF Frontier Battalion; it was to be known as Beghemder Force, after Beghemder province, northeast of Gojjam, in which it was to operate.<sup>134</sup> The main body, aimed at Safartak, Wingate designated Gideon Force, a title he had wanted to give the SNS.

It was Simonds who first drew attention to perhaps the major factor affecting the subsequent evolution of Wingate's plan. The first situation report Wingate received upon his return to Belaiya on 15 February 1941 was a letter from Simonds at Engiabarra, on the main Italian road behind Dangila. Upon climbing the Gojjam escarpment, Beghemder force had been asked to leave the immediate area by the locals, and Simonds noted:

There is a very distinct and noticeable apathy in the Gojjam, an attitude that "why fight & get killed, we have suffered enough for five years, let the British conquer the Italians & then we can take back Ethiopia for ourselves." This is a very real attitude and you must face up to it.<sup>135</sup>

This was corroborated by other Mission commanders: G(R)'s Mission 107 found the Galla and

Amhara of southern Ethiopia keener on killing each other than the Italians; Major Arthur Bentinck, commanding Mission 101 North in Beghemder, faced constant complaints about alleged British duplicity towards Ethiopia and refusals to cooperate unless more rifles were forthcoming.<sup>136</sup> Contemporary papers indicate that there was no such thing as a 'typical' patriot. As irregulars, their performance often depended on their standard of leadership which, to Ethiopians, was linked to rank: the retainers of senior Amhara nobles were full-time warriors and generally disciplined, aggressive and sometimes recklessly brave; those lower down the social scale - the type most prevalent in Gojjam - were often little more than opportunist *Shifta*, and could be more of a menace to their own side, and to civilians, than they were to the Italians.<sup>137</sup> It was probably with this and Simonds' growing concerns over the lack of aggression of 'patriot' elements – expressed in subsequent correspondence - in mind that Wingate issued a standing order on 9 February, restricting the issue of weapons to Ethiopians. Each Operational Centre carried 230 Springfield Rifles - a gift from the US government - eleven machine guns and large amounts of grenades and explosives; Wingate ordered that:

All this war material belongs to the Operational Centre and will on no account be issued to any patriot who is not going to become part of the Operational Centre and operate directly and permanently under its command...Issue of Springfield rifles to local feudal patriots is prohibited until further orders. The policy is to issue the feudal retainers with French rifles, or other inferior equipment. If possible issues to feudal retainers should be avoided altogether.<sup>138</sup>

This contradicted MI(R)/G(R) doctrine and Sandford's interpretation of why the Mission had been deployed in Ethiopia. Wariness about patriot support - escalating rapidly into vitriolic contempt about their motivation and effectiveness - seems to have been the major factor shifting Wingate from the idea of a general guerrilla campaign to one of a small number of units operating under regular command and control. As early as 7 February, he had sent a communication to G(R) Khartoum based

on his own observations and Simonds' reports:

Reference issue arms and ammunition (.) SANDFORDs proposed issues run counter to [Platt's] approved scheme and in my judgement [sic] lead to a situation out of our control (.) Small number patriots reaching BELAYA are not recruits for us to train Emperors bodyguard as agreed but emissaries local chiefs to whom they return (.) Their arming should take second place if we do it at all (.).... SIMONDS reports left at BELAYA confirm...uncoordinated patriot activity.<sup>139</sup>

A day later he confided in Boustead:

I am worried about...these numerous chits authorising feudal patriots to draw arms. As you can see for yourself at BELAYA arms given to feudal patriots are arms thrown away in nine cases out of ten - and we haven't arms to throw away....*Further, do not forget that the campaign will be fought by the armed forces. These are the Operational Centres, the Ethiopian Battalion and the forces under your own command. The supply and maintenance of these is your first consideration. Forgive me if this is already perfectly clear to you, but as these views are not entirely shared by certain other people, you may have been given a one-sided picture.* [Italics mine]<sup>140</sup>

Those 'certain other people' clearly included Sandford, whose actions throughout the campaign indicated that he saw its objective as a mass guerrilla uprising in western-central Ethiopia, to be achieved by issuing arms to patriots as far and wide as possible. By March 1941, he was probably alone in this hope. Not only was he opposed by Wingate and Boustead, based on what they saw as good evidence, but Bentinck, in Beghemder, was now reporting constant squabbling among chiefs over who got the most rifles, which were then used largely for bribing potential followers, wastage of G(R)-issued ammunition in frequent and incessant celebratory fusillades, and a racket involving 'patriots' selling their G(R)-issued rifles to *Shifta* or even the Italians.<sup>141</sup> Such experiences probably lay behind Wingate's standing order of 9 February, banning issues of weapons to patriots.

By early March, Mission 101 had a permanent line of communication (LOC) back to Sudan, with Royal Engineer units constructing a motorable track, allowing stores to be lorried to Matakal, on the western edge of Gojjam, from where they would be carried forward to Burye by camel convoy, and



a South African Air Force flight of three Ju-52s began regular shuttle flights from Sudan to Burye on 17 March.<sup>142</sup> Consequently, Wingate's 'Master-Plan' now resembled less a guerrilla campaign than an offensive by an unusually organised and under-strength regular brigade, a situation emphasised by its fixed line of communications and regularizing of its training, logistics and staff arrangements. Indeed, as the campaign progressed a resemblance to the 'small wars' model of all-arms, self-contained columns, supported by local irregulars, driving in behind the enemy, becomes apparent.

Moreover, Wingate's tactical approach increasingly resembled that of British forces concurrently engaging the Italians in North Africa. The biggest engagement of the campaign was on 6 March, when the Italian garrison of the fortified town of Burye – 6000 men, with armoured cars and close air support – retreating towards Debra Markos, the largest town in central Gojjam, following incessant guerrilla attacks on its lines of communication by the Operational Centres, took Gideon Force's 2<sup>nd</sup> Ethiopian Battalion by surprise at the Charaka River. In the subsequent battle, the Italians stormed defensive positions arranged hastily by 2<sup>nd</sup> Ethiopians and eventually broke through, effectively destroying the battalion – which fought hard throughout - although taking 650 casualties themselves.<sup>143</sup> In his official reports and private correspondence on this action, Wingate dishonestly portrayed this as an attempted 'decisive battle' – he had 'turned' the Italians out of a strong defensive position and was now trying to destroy them on the march by using his force's superior mobility to establish blocking and ambush positions onto which they were 'driven' (almost as Callwell recommended and O'Connor's XIII Corps had done with larger Italian forces in North Africa); had he air support, the Italians would have been annihilated.<sup>144</sup> He gave further impression, therefore, that his aim was swift victory through mobile, but 'conventional' warfare rather than the gradual wearing-down of a guerrilla campaign.

Furthermore, where local irregulars were involved, it was in support of regular forces; note Wingate's stated tactical aim in the following passage:

The modus operandi of the small regular forces is to ambush and cut communications and deliver night attacks, etc. on isolated positions. At the same time, by their presence they stimulate neighbouring patriot activity. After a few days in a given locality a large but temporary patriot force collects and cooperates with the regular nucleus. The enemy, perpetually harassed, eventually decides on flight, when an opportunity occurs for causing his complete disintegration through air action.<sup>145</sup>

In pursuit of the new aim, Boustead was made CO of Gideon Force, with Wingate promoted to Commander of British and Ethiopian forces in Gojjam.<sup>146</sup> By early March, news reached Gideon Force of the defeat of the main Italian force in Ethiopia, at Keren, and Wingate banked upon this producing three things: firstly, the greater air support upon which his mobile operations would hinge; secondly, the final collapse of Italian *morale*, arising from fear that the British would now pour reinforcements into Gojjam; thirdly, a boost in Haile Selassie's authority leading to an escalation of patriot activity, now it was clearer who was going to win.<sup>147</sup> These cohered into a modified version of his 'Master-Plan':

The patriot forces...which the Emperor's authority and prestige can raise, are not such as to enable them to deliver successful assaults on the enemy's fortified positions; they are such as to be able to forbid the enemy's movement and to pursue his forces once he leaves [them]. Our...object, therefore, after re-equipping and reinforcing the regular nucleus, will be to produce on the spot a large patriot force under the direct command of His Majesty the Emperor in person.<sup>148</sup>

Wingate therefore apparently had some use for the patriots. The first and most obvious was as a guerrilla force harassing Italian communications and small forces on the move while leaving 'high intensity' conventional fighting against larger forces and defended positions to the regular troops of Gideon Force. The second was playing a part in the increasing use of bluff, propaganda and psychological attack marking Wingate's subsequent operations in Ethiopia. On several occasions, beginning at the key Italian fortified town of Debra Markos on 30 March, Wingate communicated with the Italian commander, offering terms and implying that the Italians had a brief opportunity to

surrender to British regular forces, who would abide by the Geneva convention, and if refusing this, they would be left to the patriots, who would not.<sup>149</sup> Even the erudite Dodds-Parker took it for granted that the patriots would castrate any white man, British or Italian, falling into their hands, and Wingate took this fearsome reputation - in actuality largely unjustified - and turned it into a weapon, another example of his noting the tactical value of 'national characteristics'.<sup>150</sup> This produced one of the best-known episodes of Wingate's career – and the one of which he was seems to have been most proud – his inducing the surrender of an 14,000-man Italian force to an Ethiopian one less than a third of its size at Addis Derra in May. He employed the same 'scare tactics' he had planned for Debra Markos, his initial message, of 19 May, reading:

1. Since our last encounter at Debra Markos I have been engaged on the difficult task of organising your ex-Colonial troops into guerilla brigades. One of these, led by Ras Kassa [Haile Selassie's cousin and the most skilful of the patriot leaders, whose sons had been murdered by the Italians after surrendering under a false amnesty] I have brought with me from Addis Ababa. Two more are on the way...
2. In addition to these guerilla forces, a patriot contingent two thousand strong has just reached me...
3. As you are no doubt aware, the Duke of Aosta [the Italian governor of Ethiopia] and his army have surrendered to-day to the British Forces at Amba Alagi [this was true].
4. I have been ordered to withdraw all British personnel from your neighbourhood during the rainy period, leaving the conduct of the operations against you to the very considerable guerilla forces under Ras Kassa...who are now assembling around you...I linger here for perhaps twenty-four hours more only in the hope that you will decide not to sacrifice needlessly the lives of so many brave men...If you refuse this last offer, control passes out of my hands...<sup>151</sup>

This was a bluff; Ras Kassa's forces were almost out of ammunition and starting to go home, and the largest force of 'patriots' in the area were local Muslims, armed by the Italians but who had defected upon hearing of Aosta's surrender. Yet, the Italian commander at Addis Derra, *Colonello* Saverio Maraventano, confirmed in his memoirs, cited by Shirreff, that Wingate's psychological tactics were the key factor in his surrender, on 23 March: 14,000 Italians had been induced into

capitulation by 5,000 patriots and 150 British.<sup>152</sup> Again, Wingate's methods indicated a strong belief in 'national characteristics', and that they could be meshed to produce a desired military outcome, in this case, from 'soft, panicky Italians' facing 'merciless Ethiopian savages'. An interesting comment on Wingate's methods is that reports show that this was not an isolated ruse - as it has been presented in Wingate's biographies - but common practice by the British throughout the latter stages of the operation. Boustead made similar threats to leave the garrison of Debra Tabor to the charity of the patriots on 19-20 May, although he and Simonds were withdrawn before it could tell; on 22 May, Thesiger induced the garrison of Agibar fort to surrender with a similar threat.<sup>153</sup> Indeed, it may be that Wingate and Boustead arrived at the technique jointly, inspired possibly by a communiqué Wavell proposed to send Aosta after the British liberated Addis Ababa, telling him that unless the Italians capitulated immediately, Wavell would be unable to protect Italian nationals except in areas already under British occupation.<sup>154</sup> Wingate was perhaps again showing he was not above borrowing ideas from others, but then claiming them as his own.

#### *The impact of the Gojjam operation on Wingate's ideas*

The two principal sources for Wingate's ideas in the immediate post-Ethiopia period are his 'Appreciation of the Ethiopian Campaign', submitted to GHQ Cairo on 18 June 1941, and 'The Ethiopian Campaign, August 1940 to June 1941', produced after his return to London in November 1941. The 'Appreciation' illustrates Wingate's tendency to write strategic manifestos rather than straightforward reports, as at its core is Wingate's advocacy of his new theory of Long-Range Penetration – his first use of the term - distilled from 'lessons learned' from Gojjam. He opened by disparaging his famous relative: 'It became increasingly clear that the type of operation usually associated with the name of Lawrence, is wasteful and ineffectual. In fact, psychologically, it is wrong, and deprives us of much of the best support available'<sup>155</sup> The 'Wrong Method' had been

demonstrated in Ethiopia (by implication, by Sandford):

On entering the area, the commander gets in touch with the local patriot leader, and after an exhortation, suggests that the leader can do something to help out some operation. The patriot at once replies that he desires nothing better but has no arms...The commander asks how much he wants [and]...promises a fraction which he hands over and waits for results. These are nil...or, possibly, bogus reports of activities this type of commander believes to be true.

The patriot argues thus: "This person evidently needs my...help; so much that he is willing to part with arms he must know I have only the most rudimentary idea of how to use. Ergo, he has no one to fight for him, and so is prepared to give me this substantial bribe. Therefore, he is in a weak position, and may well be beaten. If that happens I shall be in the soup. That is an argument for not fighting, but no argument for not taking what he offers...I think on the whole, that the best and kindest way will be to accept the help with gratitude; to hold it in trust in case some day I can use it safely against the common enemy, and, meanwhile, to get to learn how to use it by settling once and for all that dispute over the water with the Smiths."<sup>156</sup>

The 'Right' method entailed a commander entering enemy territory with 'a small but highly efficient column with modern equipment and armament, but none to give away' and asking for nothing more than information:

The patriot goes away thinking - "This is curious. The force is very small, but no doubt much larger ones are at hand, or he wouldn't be so confident...I'd better watch this."

The...commander carries out a successful night attack. Next day comes the patriot saying - "Why didn't you tell me you intended to attack? I could have been of great help to you."

"Oh well you have no arms, and you're not a soldier. And after all why should you get killed? That is our job....you have no arms or ammunition, and I have none to spare."

"It is true that I have very little ammunition, but what I have I want to use in support of my flag."

"Very well, come along with me.... [I] can probably find some useful work for your followers. But I shall judge you by results, and if you make a mess of it, I shan't be able to use you again."

Result - the patriot rushes to the fray with keenness and devotion. He regards the commander as his leader. It is a privilege to help him.<sup>157</sup>

This 'corps d'elite' would be more effective than 'peddlers of war material and cash' because resistance depended upon appealing 'to the better nature, not the worse...We can hope that the rare occasional brave man will be stirred to come to us and risk his life to help our cause....All the rest - the

rush of the tribesmen, the peasants with billhooks, is hugaboo'.<sup>158</sup> Local support was essential because of the pattern of operations Wingate saw developing since 1939 - deepening the battle by penetrating the enemy's rear areas.<sup>159</sup> Wingate introduced Long Range Penetration with a rough definition (several others would be offered over the next two years):

The German, so far, has not had to attempt long range penetration (as distinct from sabotage) because he had always had the advantage of numbers and weight of armament, and so is usually conducting an offensive. But an army whose main forces are compelled...to adopt a defensive role cannot in the nature of things conduct short range penetration (i.e. penetration that links up at once with a general forward rush, which has, in fact, a tactical, as opposed to a strategical employment. Such penetration is carried out by mass descents of parachute troops, by small armoured thrusts with accompanying air contingents, and other means of close penetration.) Long range penetration can, however, be more effectual man for man, and weapon for weapon, than close penetration....[W]e are not discussing sabotage here, but something far more effectual: actual war and rebellion on the enemy's L. of C. [lines of communication]and in his back areas.<sup>160</sup>

This should be the role of specialist units, 'given the best armament available for [the] purpose' and 'under the command of the commander in chief of the whole theatre of operations.'<sup>161</sup> Operations should be targeted carefully:

The force should be given an objective such that the gaining of it will vitally effect [sic] the campaign in question. It is a common error to think that something has been achieved when forces have been assembled in desolate areas far from points vital to the enemy. Something is achieved only when the enemy's communications have been effectively broken and his armed forces in the rear areas destroyed. This is done only by hard fighting.<sup>162</sup>

To succeed in this 'hard fighting', the force commander should have available dedicated air support, with air staff at his headquarters, which should also include staff heads from all the existing branches, and a propaganda officer.<sup>163</sup> Planning should be guided by what Wingate called 'doctrine'. As Wingate might, again, not have appreciated having pointed out, this echoed Lawrence's 'doctrine, the idea that produces friendliness', the political *message* that military action should send to allies and

potential allies in enemy-occupied territory, that British forces were ‘on their side’<sup>164</sup>: ‘The force must operate with a definite propaganda...or creed of war...based on truth, and not lies. Lies are for the enemy. The truth is for our friends.’<sup>165</sup>

Wingate’s second missive, ‘The Ethiopian Campaign’ was shorter, with more emphasis on narrative and ‘lessons learned.’ The Gojjam operation now centred upon the patriot uprising: ‘In Ethiopia the local population not only made possible the advance of the British armies, but a separate patriot campaign played a decisive part in the defeat of the enemy’s plan and the conquest of Italian East Africa.’<sup>166</sup> This represented Wingate’s first mention of ‘defeating the enemy’s plan’, a concept not dissimilar to Lawrence’s ‘arranging the enemy’s mind’, entailing using manoeuvre and diversion to force him to dissipate his forces, prevent him concentrating for battle and distract him from his main effort.<sup>167</sup> Wingate concluded the ‘Ethiopian Campaign’ with a proposal that British strategy should centre upon penetration operations:

It is a mistake to imagine that operations of the kind described are possible only in a country like Abyssinia. They are possible wherever there is a patriot population....The scale of the success, and the magnitude of the odds, even making every allowance for the nationality of the enemy, justifies the belief that campaigns in other countries where there are patriots, even when occupied by Germans, will prove practicable....Let us select a force in the manner described, let us train it, let us arm and equip it suitably, let our military command regard it with favour, let aircraft be allotted for its support; and you will have a force many times as strong and efficient as the force with which I gained these successes. I may say in passing that the type of fighting I refer to has nothing to do with the operations of Commandos. I am talking of forces which live and fight in the heart of the enemy’s territory.<sup>168</sup>

Suitable theatres included Spain, Morocco and Algeria and, as Japan had entered the war in December 1941, ‘In the Far East there must already be several areas where such a force could operate with great detriment to the enemy.’<sup>169</sup> Moreover, penetration operations should spearhead the liberation of Europe:

All modern war in inhabited areas is war of penetration. The military problems correspond to those of revolt....If we are to control the first stages of liberation in Europe in order to avoid general anarchy, we had better start assembling forces of the type I have described. Their ultimate aim will be to form that coordinating and controlling element which alone will allow us to bring hostilities quickly and finally to a close.<sup>170</sup>

This melded MI(R)/G(R)'s doctrine and organisation with Wingate's own tactical and operational methods, adapted from his previous experience in Sudan and Palestine. It can therefore be seen that Wingate's Ethiopia campaign not only fitted nicely into Allied strategic culture of the time, but played a major part in the development of his military ideas and practice, producing a theory of war behind enemy lines. This appears to be an evolution from Gubbins' doctrine for such operations, enunciated in his pamphlets in 1940, and is similar to certain proposals MI(R) was offering at the time of its absorption into SOE. However, Wingate's innate distrust of 'patriot' forces led him to see these operations as the province of specially-trained regulars, not local partisans.

It serves the purpose of this thesis to identify some of the lessons others drew from the Gojjam operation. Dodds-Parker related that the use of aircraft for resupply – albeit limited – guided him in organising the first covert supply flights into Yugoslavia in 1942.<sup>171</sup> The Operational Centres had performed satisfactorily in Ethiopia, both as fighting units and *foci* for resistance, and were to be used by SOE as Operational Groups and 'Jedburgh' teams in Europe and Asia in 1944-45.<sup>172</sup> However, the most obvious difference between SOE's activities and those proposed by Wingate was scale. The Jedburghs were military personnel who operated in uniform, but were not the substantial fighting units Wingate envisaged, consisting as they did of two Allied officers and a wireless operator; moreover, their role was to distribute arms and coordinate the activities of resistance elements with Allied offensives.<sup>173</sup> They therefore resembled Gubbins' model for such units rather than Wingate's.



The following chapters examine how these ideas – Wingate’s and G(R)’s - evolved when confronted with a radically different scenario, albeit one which Wingate anticipated - facing the Japanese in the jungle of Southeast Asia. They also detail the reception they received from Wingate’s peers in that theatre.

#### NOTES FOR CHAPTER FIVE

NOTE: References to ‘Box I’ and ‘Box II’ below are to Wingate’s Abyssinia Papers, held in two boxes in the Department of Documents, Imperial War Museum.

1. Quoted in Shirreff, *Bare feet and Bandoliers*, p.212
2. Thesiger, *Life of My Choice*, p.320
3. Shirreff, *Bare Feet and Bandoliers*, pp.150-153, 178, 285-286, 293; Thesiger, *Life of My Choice*, pp.433-434; the high regard in which Wingate is held in Ethiopia is clear from communication the author had with the son and granddaughter of the patriot leader, Ras Mesfin, in 2003-2005
4. Mosley, *Gideon Goes to War*, especially pp.137-138
5. David Rooney, ‘Command and Leadership in the Chindit Campaigns’, in Gary Sheffield (ed) *Leadership & Command: the Anglo-American Military Experience since 1861* (London: Brassey’s 1996), pp.142-143
6. Ibid, p.286
7. Rossetto, *Orde Wingate*, pp.70-72
8. Colonel OC Wingate, Commanding British & Ethiopian Troops Employed, ‘Appreciation of the Ethiopian Campaign’, GHQ ME - 18/6/41, several copies in IWM Wingate Papers, Appendix D, pp.3-5, 9-10
9. See Colonel OC Wingate DSO, ‘The Ethiopian Campaign, August 1940 to June 1941’, several copies in the IWM Wingate Abyssinia Papers, p.2, for Wingate's first use of this term.

10. Appendix A to Aide-Memoiré on the Co-Ordination of Subversive Activities in the Conquered Territories, in PRO HS8/259, MI(R), Strategic Appreciations, 1940
11. Brief for DMO for COS Meeting of 7/6/40, in PRO HS8/259, p.1
12. For what the Allies suspected about German special forces, see FO Miksche, *Paratroops* (London: Faber & Faber 1943), p.65; PRO WO208/2998, 'Enemy Air-Borne Forces', pp.10, 25
13. Review of German Organisation, Auxiliary to Traditional Machinery, built up to assist in the achievement of German strategical and political aims, in PRO HS8/261, MI(R), Operational Reports, 1939-1940; JP(40) 253, Minutes of War Cabinet Joint Planning Sub-Committee of 17 June 1940, in PRO CAB84/15; 'Chronology of events following a proposal to establish a special type of unit to deal with penetration of enemy units behind lines, either by tanks, by parachutists or air-borne troops', Box I, p.1
14. 'Chronology', pp.1-2; Ironside to Wingate of 9 June 1940, Box I; Royle, *Orde Wingate*, pp.165-166
15. Hackett, 'Employment of Special Forces', pp.27-28
16. Keegan, introduction to *Churchill's Generals*, pp.3-5
17. Winston Churchill, *The Second World War* single volume edition (London: Cassell 1959), pp.297-300
18. War Cabinet Joint Planning Sub-Committee, Directive to Lieutenant-General Bourne, Report by the Joint Planning Sub-Committee submitting a draft directive, in PRO CAB84/15, Para.2, Draft Directive attached, Paras.1-2, 8
19. Draft Directive in Ibid, Paras.4, 10; JP(40) 363 of 31 July 1940, in PRO CAB84/17
20. Draft Directive, Para.4; 'Development of Parachute Troops', in PRO AIR2/7239, Para.1; JP(40) 421 of 14 June 1940, in PRO CAB84/15; Otway, *Airborne Forces*, p.21
21. 'Provision of Air-Borne Forces - Air Ministry Aspect', 25 December 1940, Para.1, Draft COS Paper - Policy as regards Air-Borne Forces, 19 January 1941, both in PRO AIR/7470; Otway, *Airborne Forces*, pp.22-23
22. Churchill, *Second World War*, pp.299-300; J Thompson, *War behind Enemy Lines*, pp.4, 5,

23. COS (40) of August 1940, Strategy, in PRO CAB84/17, Paras.3, 4-7
24. Ibid, Paras.19-24, Annex Paras.163, 173, 178; COS (40) of August 1940, Annex, Paras.203-205; COS (40) 27(O) of 25 November 1940, Subversive Activities in Relation to Strategy, in PRO CAB121/305, Para.6
25. COS (40) of August 1940, Paras.8, 19-24, 189, 191-193, Annex Paras.51-56, 196-198; 'Subversive Activities', Paras.4-5, 7-8; CP (40) 271 Home Defence (Security) Executive Special Operations Executive - Memorandum by the Lord President of the Council, 19 July 1940 Paras.a-d, f, g in PRO CAB 121/305
26. The Official History of SOE, not published until 2000 as William Mackenzie, *The Secret History of SOE* (London: St Ermine's Press 2000), see pp.7-12, 38-55; MRD Foot, *SOE: The Special Operations Executive 1940-1946* (London: BBC 1984), pp.6-17; Mark Seaman, "'A new instrument of war': the origins of the Special Operations Executive", in Mark Seaman (Editor), *Special Operations Executive: A new instrument of war* (Oxford: Routledge 2006) , pp.12-17
27. MIR War Office, Report on the Organisation within the War Office for the conduct of para-military activities, 25 August 1940 in PRO HS8/260, MI(R) Progress Reports 1939-1940, p.1
28. Colonel Holland to Brigadier Wyndham (undated) in PRO HS8/258 MI(R), Functions and Organisation, 1940, details policy.
29. 'Report on Organisation', p.1
30. Quoted, Mackenzie, *SOE*, pp.8-9
31. GS (Research) - Report for DCIGS No.8, Investigation of the possibilities of Guerilla Activities, 1 June 1939, in PRO HS8/260, p.1
32. Ibid, pp.1-2; Holland's reading list is in PRO HS8/261
33. Report No.8, pp.1-2
34. Ibid, pp.4, 6-7; Mackenzie, *SOE*, pp.44-46
35. Appendix C to DMO Briefing for 7/6/40, Para.1
36. Seaman, 'A new instrument of war', pp.10-11
37. DMO Briefing for 7/6/40, p.5; JP (40) 363, Minutes of War Cabinet Joint Planning Committee Meeting of 31 July 1940, in PRO CAB84/17; Mackenzie, *SOE*, pp.53-54; Calvert,

*Fighting Mad*, pp.45-46; Wingate to Mountbatten of 2 September 1943, IWM Wingate Chindit Files, Box II

38. Calvert, *Fighting Mad*, pp.53-58; Mackenzie, *SOE*, p.46; Appendix C to DMO Briefing for 7/6/40, Para.2

39. 'Appreciation of the Possibilities of Revolt In Certain Specified Countries by March 1941' in PRO HS8/259, pp.1-2; Dodds-Parker interview of 25/8/2004

40. Lieutenant Colonel C McV Gubbins, *The Art of Guerilla Warfare* (London: MI(R) 1939), copy in PRO HS8/256, pp.1-3

41. Ibid, p.1

42. Ibid, p.1

43. Ibid, p.4

44. Ibid, pp.6-7

45. Ibid, p.7, 9

46. Ibid, pp.16-17

47. 'An Appreciation of the Capabilities and Composition of a small force operating behind the enemy lines in the offensive', 7 June 1940, in PRO HS8/259, p.1

48. Ibid, p.1

49. Ibid, pp.1-2

50. Ibid, p.2

51. MIR No.283/40, Irregular Tactics and Strategy, August 1940, in PRO HS8/258

52. 'Report on para-military activities', p.5; Minute Sheet No.2, Register No. MIR No.309/40, in PRO HS8/258; CinC Middle East [Wavell] to War Office of 4 June 1941 and 16 June 1941, both in PRO HS3/146

53. CinC Middle East's Sitreps of 15 and 23 May 1941, in PRO WO106/2089; Appendix G to 'Report on Para-Military Activities'; Dodds-Parker interview of 24/8/2004

54. Burchett, *Wingate's Phantom Army*, p.47

55. Ibid, p.48

56. Mosley, *Gideon Goes to War*, pp.97-110

57. Sykes, *Orde Wingate*, pp.236-237
58. Ibid, pp.240-251; Royle, *Orde Wingate*, pp.178-202
59. Anthony Mockler, *Haile Selassie's War: The Italian-Ethiopian Campaign, 1935-41* (New York: Random House 1984) especially p.285
60. Shirreff, *Bare Feet and Bandoliers*, pp.22-28, 68
61. Foot, *SOE*, pp.251-264
62. Professor Harold G Marcus, 'Ethiopian Insurgency against the Italians, 1936-1941', unpublished paper, 1997, pp.7-8, 11-12
63. 'Extent of MIR Activities in the Past, At Present, and Possibilities for the Future' in PRO HS8/258, pp.6-7; Cipher Telegram No.341 to Sir M Lampson (Cairo) Foreign Office 26th April 1939, in PRO CO323/1670/4, Abyssinia: coordination of arrangements to foster rebellion, 1939; Dodds-Parker interview, 25/8/2005
64. Whalley to ED Cavendish-Bentinck of 21 February 1939, in PRO FO371/23377
65. Major Mallaby, WO, to Cavendish-Bentinck of 27 April 1939, PRO FO371/23377
66. MI(R) Report No.2: Progress Up To date and Action if War Breaks Out Early, in PRO HS8/260, pp.16-17; Major General Arthur Smith to HQ RAF Middle East of 10 April 1940, in PRO WO201/2677
67. Held in PRO WO201/2677
68. Shirreff, *Bare Feet and Bandoliers*, pp.4-7. Sandford's home in Charlotteville, Guildford, is still called 'Sandford House'
69. Wavell to Platt of 29 September 1939, in PRO WO201/2677
70. List in PRO WO201/2677, Paras. 2, 4; Report by Colonel Elphinston, G(R), on visit to Khartoum, PRO WO201/2677, Para.4; Cablegram from Khartoum to DMI of 25 May 1939, in PRO WO201/2677; Douglas Dodds-Parker, *Setting Europe Ablaze: An Account of Ungentlemanly Warfare* (London: Springwood 1983) p.57
71. Smith to Platt of 28 September 1939, in PRO WO201/2677, Para.2
72. Ibid, Para.2
73. Ibid, Paras.2, 5-6

74. Ibid, Paras. 2, 7
75. Ibid, Para.2
76. General AP Wavell's Dispatch on East African Operations, in PRO CAB120/471, p.1; *OHMI*, pp.391-392
77. Shirreff, *Bare Feet and Bandoliers*, pp.23-26
78. Ibid, pp.26-28; Dodds-Parker, *Setting Europe Ablaze*, p.57
79. GHQ Middle East Operation Instruction No.1 – 10/6/1940 in PRO HS8/261, Para.2
80. Ibid, Para.4
81. Ibid, Para.9
82. Appendix B to Operational Instruction No.1, Paras.1-2
83. Ibid, Para.4
84. Quoted, Shirreff, *Bare Feet and Bandoliers*, p.30
85. Major EA Chapman-Andrews, 'Abyssinia', in PRO FO371/24639, pp.1-2; Attachment to Sandford's Dispatch of 20 November 1940, in PRO CAB106/934; *OHMI*, p.403
86. Chapman-Andrews, 'Abyssinia', p.3
87. See, for example, Sir Ernest Thompson's internal memorandum of 29 August 1940, in PRO FO371/24635, or PRO CAB106/356, pp.8-9, 12 or Haile Selassie's telegram to Churchill of 23 August 1940, intercepted by the FO and now in PRO FO371/24635
88. Wavell, 'East African Operations', pp.1-2
89. *OHMI*, p.392
90. Ibid, p.404
91. 'Record of Meeting held at the Palace, Khartoum, on the 29th October 1940 - The Abyssinian Revolt', in PRO FO371/24639, pp.1-2
92. Ibid, p.7

93. Ibid, p.7
94. GHQ ME Operational Order No.1, Para.10
95. Amery, *Empire at Bay*, p.603
96. Amery to Haining of 24 August 1940, in Churchill Archives Amery Papers File AMEL 2/1/31
97. Haining to Amery of 24 August 1940, in Churchill Archives Amery Papers File AMEL 2/1/31
98. Wavell, *Good Soldier*, p.62
99. Platt to Haile Selassie of 10 November 1940, Box I
100. Dodds-Parker interview of 25/8/2005
101. Chapman-Andrews, 'Abyssinia'
102. Wingate, 'Ethiopian Campaign', p.5
103. Wingate, 'Appreciation', Appendix D, pp.1-2
104. Wingate, 'Ethiopian Campaign', pp.5-6; 'Appreciation', p.3; Sandford's Dispatch of 1 December 1940, in PRO CAB106/3050, Paras.9-11
105. Sandford's Dispatch of 1/12/40, Para.10
106. Colonel DA Sandford, 'Notes on Plans for Abyssinian Campaign', 10 November 1940, in PRO CAB106/3050
107. Wingate, 'Ethiopian Campaign', p.6
108. Ibid, p.6
109. Wingate, 'Appreciation', Appendix D, p.6
110. Wingate, 'Ethiopian Campaign', p.7
111. Major OC Wingate, 'Sand-Model Lectures illustrating strategy and tactics of Ethiopian Campaign Lecture No.1 - First Principles', 11 January 1941, Box I, p.2
112. Ibid, p.2
113. Rossetto, *Orde Wingate*, pp.72-74, 438-439
114. Wingate, 'Lectures', p.2
115. Ibid, pp.2-3

116. Ibid, p.2
117. Ibid, p.4
118. Ibid, p.4
119. Wingate, 'Appreciation', pp.9-10
120. Wingate, 'Ethiopian Campaign', pp.6-7
121. Sykes, *Orde Wingate*, p.246; Wingate, 'Appreciation', Appendix D, p.8
122. Thesiger fought at Gallabat with the SDF, qv. *Life of My Choice*, pp.315-318; see also Shirreff, *Bare Feet and Bandoliers*, pp.52-53
123. Wavell, 'East African Operations', p.2
124. Ibid, p.2
125. Ibid, p.2
126. *OHMI*, pp.397-399, 407-408
127. PRO WO106/2290, pp.40-42; PRO WO201/297, p.3
128. Wingate, 'Ethiopian Campaign', p.9
129. PRO WO201/297, p.3
130. Wingate's 'Notes on Sandford's Dispatches', 17 November 1940, Box II, Para.5
131. Undated letter from Wingate to Platt in Box II
132. Minutes of a Conference held at HQ Tps in the Sudan, 12 February 1941, Box I, Paras. 2, 3(a)-(e); Wingate, 'Ethiopian Campaign', pp.9-10; Shirreff, *Bare Feet and Bandoliers*, p.88
133. Wingate, 'Appreciation', pp.9-10
134. Ibid, p.10
135. See, for example, Simonds to Wingate of 12/2/41, Box II
136. PRO WO178/36, 'War Diary, 101 Mission, Northern Section', compiled by Major AWD Bentinck, entries of 15 and 19 September 1940, 24 and 25 November 1940; see also Report by Major Neville, commanding Mission 107 in southern Ethiopia, in PRO WO201/91
137. PRO WO291/297, p.11; PRO WO201/308, pp.44-47; Simonds to Wingate of 12/2/41; Thesiger, *Life of My Choice*, p.331; PRO CAB106/952, pp.62-63, 93-94
138. Wingate, 'Ethiopian Campaign', p.9; undated from Wingate to Platt in Box II; Minutes of



a Conference held at HQ Troops in the Sudan, 12 February 1941, Box II, Paras.2-3

139. Wingate to G(R) of 7 February 1941, Box II

140. Wingate to Boustead of 8/2/41

141. Bentinck's Diary entries of 15 and 23-27 September 1940, PRO WO178/36

142. Colonel OC Wingate, 'Notes for Lt.Col. Airey, Dambatcha, 11 March 1941', Box II, Para.4; Wingate, 'Appreciation', Appendix A, p.4, 'Ethiopian Campaign', p.10; Edmund Stevens, 'Writer on the Storm: Memoirs of a Correspondent at War', unpublished manuscript in IWM Department of Documents, pp.65-66

143. Wingate to Sandford of 7 March 1941, Box II; Wingate, 'Ethiopian Campaign', p.10; Wavell's Dispatch of 9 March 1941, Folio 385 of PRO WO106/2088; PRO WO201/297; Thesiger, *Life of My Choice*, pp.335-336, the latter being the most honest account of the battle from an eyewitness

144. Wingate, 'Ethiopian Campaign', p.10; Wingate to Sandford of 7/4/41

145. Wingate, 'Appreciation', p.3

146. Wingate, 'Ethiopian Campaign', p.10

147. Gideon Force Operational Order No.2, 13 March 1941, Box II

148. Wingate to Airey of 31 March 1941, Box II

149. Communiqué, Commander, British and Ethiopian Forces, GOJJAM, calling DEBRA MARKOS, 30 March '41, Box II

150. Dodds-Parker, *Setting Europe Ablaze*, p.63, and interview of 25/8/2004

151. Commander, British and Ethiopian Forces, to the Commander, Italian Forces between Addis Derra and Agibar, 19 May 1941, Box II

152. Shirreff, *Bare Feet and Bandoliers*, p.206

153. Report on Operations at Debra Tabor - HQ Frontier Battalion, 29th May 1941, Box II, Paras.11-13; Thesiger, *Life of My Choice*, p.348

154. CinC ME to WO of 12/4/41, PRO WO193/379

155. Wingate, 'Appreciation', p.4

156. Ibid, p.4

157. Ibid, pp.4-5
158. Ibid, pp.5-6
159. Ibid, p.6
160. Ibid, p.7
161. Ibid, pp.7, 10
162. Ibid, pp.6-7, 13-14; see also Wingate, 'Ethiopian Campaign', pp.4-5
163. Wingate, 'Appreciation', p.6
164. Lawrence, 'Evolution of a Revolt', p.69, 'Guerilla Warfare', p.890
165. Wingate, 'Ethiopian Campaign', p.1; 'Notes Relating to Possible Employment', Box II
166. Wingate, 'Ethiopian Campaign', pp.13-14
167. Lawrence, *Seven Pillars*, pp.200-202
168. Wingate, 'Ethiopian Campaign', pp.14-15
169. Ibid, p.14
170. Ibid, pp.14-15
171. Dodds-Parker, *Setting Europe Ablaze*, p.67
172. Ibid, pp.72-73; PRO HS7/111, SOE Oriental Mission, March 1941-May 1942, pp.30-31
173. Mackenzie, *Secret History of SOE*, pp.603-606

## CHAPTER SIX

WINGATE IN BURMA (1) – THE ORIGINS OF THE CHINDITS,  
1942-1943

**Only in one direction did there seem any prospect of action in the near future. It lay in the person of a broad-shouldered, uncouth, almost simian officer who used to drift gloomily into the office for two or three days at a time, audibly dream dreams, and drift out again....In our frenzy of planning, we used to look on this visitor as one of those to be bowed out, as soon as it was possible to put a term to his ramblings; but as we became aware that he took no notice of us anyway, but that without our patronage he had the ear of the highest, we paid more attention to his schemes. Soon we had fallen under the spell of his almost hypnotic talk...**

- *Brigadier Bernard Fergusson*<sup>1</sup>

**Wavell used Wingate...as an irritant to stir up his junior generals. He did this by extolling his original ideas on war and battle in a self-confident and masterly manner. [When Wingate first met Slim] Slim pointed out that he had just taken over, he was not impressed by the units under his command who had not been taught how to fight orthodox warfare let alone guerrilla warfare and that he had no troops at all to spare for what he considered useless and unnecessary diversions.**

- *Brigadier Michael Calvert*<sup>2</sup>

*Introduction – Wingate's Doctrines for Burma*

This chapter opens a discussion of Wingate's ultimate operational doctrine, as demonstrated in Operations *Longcloth* and *Thursday*, the Chindit operations of 1943 and 1944, and Wingate's writings of the time. In the absence of any previous detailed survey of Wingate's papers from this time, discussion of the thought behind the Chindit operations has been speculative, impressionistic and sometimes contradictory. This is observable even among Wingate's subordinate commanders:

Bernard Fergusson, the proud Highlander, saw similarities between Wingate's methods and those of Robert the Bruce in the hills of Galloway and Carrick in 1307, while John Masters, Brigade Major and later acting commander of 111th Brigade on Operation *Thursday*, stated explicitly they were based on the Long Range Desert Group.<sup>3</sup> Among the biographers, Sykes whimsically saw their origin in the childhood games, set in a fantasy kingdom, Wingate played with his brother and sisters in their back garden at Godalming.<sup>4</sup> More prosaically, both Luigi Rossetto and Shelford Bidwell saw the Chindit operations as practical application of Liddell Hart's 'strategy of the indirect approach' (and Liddell Hart claimed Wingate as a disciple) but Bidwell, who admired Wingate but was dismissive of Liddell Hart, commented 'Wingate was no "Liddell Hartist". He was a "Wingate-ist": in his arrogance he admitted no mentor', a phenomenon supported by evidence presented already in this thesis.<sup>5</sup> Rossetto and John W Gordon suggested that LRP also represented a derivation from and solution to Japanese 'short range penetration' tactics, a proposition refuted by Wingate's presenting his ideas on LRP several months before his arrival in Burma.<sup>6</sup> Although his *evidence* is circumstantial, exaggerated and simply wrong in places, Rooney's *conclusions*, that LRP operations in Burma evolved from those in Ethiopia, came closest to those arising from a survey of relevant documents, from which it can be demonstrated that Wingate adapted the model of LRP operations advocated in his Ethiopia reports to the circumstances of Burma, this then evolving organically with the strategic situation.

In actuality, Wingate's papers reveal three distinct operational models devised for Burma, moving away gradually from the 'Ethiopian'. The first, devised in 1942, prior to the British retreat from Burma, was never put into practice: this involved a straightforward adaptation to East Asian conditions of the doctrine Wingate had experimented with in Ethiopia: a guerrilla campaign involving indigenous 'patriot' irregulars trained and led by a revived G(R), stiffened by a hard core of purpose-trained regular troops. Wingate's second model resembled that presented in his *Appreciation* of the Gojjam campaign. This emphasised 'deepening the battle' through columns of

Chindits, purpose-trained regular light infantry, supplied by airdrop, attacking or threatening vital logistical targets deep behind Japanese lines with the intent of disrupting their planning process and forcing them to divert forces away from the main battle. This model was experimented with on Operation *Longcloth*. The third model added an air-land element, his columns now being inserted behind enemy lines by glider and operating from defended temporary airstrips or 'Strongholds', from which they were supplied and reinforced, as part of a general offensive. The aim here was again to distract Japanese attention from the main battle, but with the more ambitious intent of steering their forces against the Strongholds and into situations where they could be destroyed in detail. The growing scale of the forces under Wingate's command is also notable. Wingate's initial model of operations involved a force similar in size and organisation to the one he commanded in Ethiopia - four columns created from two battalions, supporting the activities of a number of G(R) Operational Centres. By 1943 and Operation *Longcloth*, this had become a brigade-sized force of eight columns and when Operation *Thursday* was launched a year later, it was with a force equivalent in manpower to two British Infantry divisions, supported by a specialist unit of the United States Army Air Force (USAAF) comprising fighters, bombers and a large transport element. At the time of his death in March 1944, Wingate was proposing a continent-wide offensive involving the equivalent of an Army Group. Wingate's ideas and the forces at his disposal evolved with the strategic situation.

Yet here, as in Palestine and Ethiopia, Wingate presented an identifiable doctrine tailored to his interpretation of the cultural strengths and weaknesses of his opponent and intended to fulfill his interpretation of Allied strategy. Other British commanders in Southeast Asia did likewise, and their interpretations, and the recommendations stemming there from, must be compared and contrasted with Wingate's to fulfill the intent of this thesis. This centres on the problem Wingate, Slim and other British commanders in Southeast Asia shared, as of 1941-43 - how to beat a Japanese Army which

terrified its opponents. It therefore allows the thesis to investigate different solutions to the same problem.

*British and Japanese operations and tactics, 1940-41*

When Wingate arrived in India in March 1942, he found an atmosphere not uncondusive to the kind of operation he advocated. Not only were G(R) and SOE active already in the region, but also there were a number of other specialist units and formations planning to operate against Japanese rear areas.<sup>7</sup> From early 1941, the anticipated scenario in Asia was a Japanese attempt to weaken the resistance of China, which they had invaded in 1937, by cutting the Burma Road, China's main supply route from Southeast Asia, which ran across Burma - British Imperial territory - from Assam in India with another branch south to Rangoon, Burma's capital and main port.<sup>8</sup> In 1940, the Japanese began to pressure the British diplomatically to close the road. The British viewed this as indication that the Japanese might use force to close the road, and in November, Major General LE Dennys was appointed Military Attaché to the Chinese Government in Chungking, but was also designated, secretly, as head of Mission 204, a G(R) Mission under the orders of Far Eastern Command (and which had apparently survived the rest of that organisation's absorption into SOE).<sup>9</sup> In April 1941, the Commander in Chief, Far East, Air Chief Marshal Sir Robert Brooke-Popham, wrote to the War Office arguing that, as a contingency, a corps of Chinese guerrillas should be created, consisting of fifteen companies commanded by officers from the Indian Army, with specialist British personnel attached for demolitions work, a guerilla school being created in Burma to train them.<sup>10</sup> Brooke-Popham requested a Royal Engineers officer as chief instructor and Major Michael Calvert was relocated from Australia, where he had been chief instructor at a similar school created by MI(R) for the Australian Army.<sup>11</sup> Mission 204 was given the remit, 'By providing the cadre for a Chinese Guerilla Corps d'Elite [sic], to contain the maximum number of Japanese forces in China and relieve

pressure on British forces elsewhere.<sup>12</sup> The role of guerrilla forces was therefore to be diversionary, defensive and as substitute for action by main armies, as in earlier operations in East Africa.

This was also apparent in the strategy developed over the following months, Brooke-Popham writing to London in August to argue that, while Britain should avoid direct confrontation with Japan, this did not preclude Dennys suggesting to the Chinese that they should prepare demolitions of key sites in southern China, nor the infiltration into areas adjoining Burma of ‘personnel trained in demolition work’, nor the opening of arms smuggling routes across the Himalayas.<sup>13</sup> The War Office communicated to Wavell, the new Commander in Chief, India, in September 1941 that, given Britain’s strategic situation, were the Japanese to attack the Burma Road, the only practicable response would be ‘infiltration of [a] limited number of British personnel into China to assist guerilla operations and demolition work.’<sup>14</sup> The Chinese should not be informed, and such action could not be attributed to the British Government, but to ‘volunteers’ perhaps akin to the International Brigades of the Spanish Civil War or the American ‘Flying Tigers’ fighting the Japanese already in China.<sup>15</sup> The main component of Mission 204, Calvert’s guerilla school at Maymyo in Burma, was therefore given the cover name of ‘Bush Warfare School’, and his trainees were organised into cadres called ‘Commandos.’<sup>16</sup> For personnel purposes, Mission 204 came under GOC India, who was permitted to expand its numbers and budget, although operational command was delegated onto Dennys.<sup>17</sup> It was anticipated the Mission would operate in Southeast China, around Canton and Hong Kong, and in east-central China around Hankow, and it was proposed to create another guerrilla school, at Liyang.<sup>18</sup>

Other covert warfare organisations were active in this region. SOE established its Oriental Mission in Singapore in May 1941, to organise guerrillas in China, Malaya and the Dutch East Indies; in July, they set up No.101 Special Training School near Singapore to train civilian and military personnel to form ‘stay behind parties’ in the event of Japanese aggression in Southeast Asia; another

Mission was set up in India, on Amery's initiative, in August, and reported directly to the Viceroy.<sup>19</sup> Soon, Sir Frank Nelson, head of SO2, the department of SOE which had taken over most of the roles of MI(R), was suggesting that Mission 204 should be 'amalgamated' with SOE, producing a 'line to take' from the War Office: Mission 204 trained British officers to lead Chinese guerrillas after the beginning of war with Japan: SOE operated in civilian dress and could be active before hostilities broke out.<sup>20</sup> There was a rather obvious lack of enthusiasm for SOE from the British military in Southeast Asia, discussed at length in Charles Cruickshank's history of SOE's activities in the Far East; Cruickshank suggested that this was due to the military's general hostility to covert operations not under its direct control, and did not mention Mission 204.<sup>21</sup>

The question of who was responsible for which kind of operation became a side-issue when hostilities finally erupted in December 1941. In mid-December, GHQ India proposed that if the Japanese continued their offensive into Malaya, and reinforced it by road and rail links running through their puppet-ally, Thailand, the British should form defended bases at all points leading from Burma into Thailand from which 'small mobile guerilla columns' should operate into Thailand, against airfields and railways. Behind this, a field force of at least two divisions should be prepared for an offensive into northern Thailand in April 1942, concurrent with a Chinese offensive from Yunnan, southern China; the columns should begin training 'at once', implying a new and separate organisation from Mission 204.<sup>22</sup> While never acted upon, this proposal is interesting, given GHQ India's alleged hostility to Wingate's not dissimilar proposals.

The plan was not enacted because the Japanese struck in Burma first, and it was soon apparent that G(R) and SOE faced an opponent far more able in covert operations than themselves. Louis Allen, Christopher Bayly and Tim Harper all discuss the extent to which the anti-British Burmese nationalist movement had become effectively a tool of Japanese Military Intelligence, skillfully using the myth of the 'Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere' - an analogue to Wingate's 'doctrine',



claiming the Japanese aimed at an Asia of free, equal nation-states - to suborn the *Thakins* or 'Masters', the young urban intellectuals who led the movement. Bayly and Harper also echo Wavell, Slim and Calvert in speculating on the extensive – but largely circumstantial - evidence for Japanese infiltration of the Indian National Congress: Subhas Chandra Bose and the Indian National Army aside, there was the coincidence of the emergence of Mahatma Gandhi's 'Quit India' movement with the retreat from Burma, Gandhi's call for any Japanese invasion to be met with passive resistance, and the large and bloody Congress-agitated uprising in northeastern India, which continued into 1943 and included apparently carefully planned sabotage of communications into Burma, which Wavell took for granted was the work of 'enemy agents'.<sup>23</sup> SOE admitted the subversion of the *Thakins* caused them some difficulty, and it was to have considerable bearing on penetration operations in Burma in 1942-43, including Wingate's.<sup>24</sup> The extensive resources the Japanese invested in cultivating Burmese nationalists paid off in 1942: as if to confirm the efficacy of both Holland's and Wingate's ideas, the invasion of Burma saw the Japanese make extensive use of Burmese agents to spread the propaganda of the Co-Prosperity Sphere, and this produced the desired result<sup>25</sup>: there was extensive arson and sabotage in British-occupied towns, Slim admitting that saboteurs got 'short shrift' when caught; more direct was General Joseph W Stilwell, heading the US Mission to the Chinese Nationalist Leader, Chiang Kai-shek, and Chiang's *de facto* chief of staff and commander of Chinese forces committed to Burma, who approved a standing order that Burmese saboteurs should be summarily shot.<sup>26</sup> Of even greater use to the Japanese was the 'screen' of Fifth Columnists, up to two miles deep, preceding their advancing army and guiding them to and around British positions, some interesting support for Wingate's argument that the best use for local partisans was to improve the mobility of regular forces.<sup>27</sup> Infiltration by Fifth Columnists also crippled another British special force. The special units of the Burma Frontier Force (BFF) had been raised in 1941 to delay and harass any Japanese advance into Burma from Thailand; these were irregular units, consisting of around 500

Burmese under British officers with local knowledge, each unit organised into two mounted troops and three infantry companies.<sup>28</sup> While providing a useful screening role in the British retreat from Burma, like many other local forces, it was hastily assembled, poorly equipped and eventually disintegrated through desertions.<sup>29</sup> The untrustworthiness of many Burmese also forestalled SOE's plans to create 'stay behind' parties in Burma.<sup>30</sup>

Penetration forces were an integral part of Japanese doctrine. Captured Japanese Combat Instructions, translated and circulated among British commanders for intelligence purposes, indicated a doctrine applying a concept of manoeuvre warfare which was sophisticated, yet also of its time, in being rooted in ethnic and cultural assumptions about the superiority of Japanese over Westerners. The principal objective of Japanese doctrine was to 'smash and disrupt the enemy's command organisation', it being presumed that cowardly *Gaijin* would panic without direction from above. This would be compounded by cutting their supplies by concentrating effort against airfields, supply dumps and lines of communication.<sup>31</sup> Japanese commanders issued simple, broad orders, usually detailing a single objective, and subordinates were expected to 'demonstrate initiative' in pursuing this (although they often failed egregiously to do so). Tactically, emphasis was on noisy frontal attacks by 'jitter parties', allowing larger forces to use cover or darkness to infiltrate weak spots in the enemy front line, or turn his flank, to deliver the main attack against his supplies and communications.<sup>32</sup>

In the 1942 Burma campaign, and again during XV Corps' ill-fated offensive in the Arakan in December 1942-March 1943, reliance on motor transport for supply tied British forces to narrow fronts centred upon roads and motorable tracks, leading to, as Slim put it, British strategy in 1942-43 being based upon 'a rather nebulous idea of retaining territory' and the dispersal of Anglo-Indian forces along Burma's widely-spaced roads.<sup>33</sup> Consequently, the jungle was left to the Japanese, whose doctrine seemed purpose-designed for such conditions. The Imperial Japanese Army was a

predominantly light infantry force, trained to live off the land - or by plunder - and to use enemy supplies, including weapons and ammunition: that Japanese units could operate temporarily independent of any communications against a foe who could not survive without them created almost perfect conditions for Japanese tactics, as described in the 1943 British doctrine for jungle warfare:

The Japanese always tried to advance on as broad a front as possible, making use of all available communications as to routes of approach. On gaining contact, their methods were to fix a front and attack by encirclement....Encirclement was usually made in the form of simultaneous attacks in depth, one coming in on a smaller arc than the other. The shallower attack would normally come in at a depth of about 1,000 yards and would probably be initiated by the commander of the leading battalion, while the deeper attack would come in at a distance up to five miles, and would probably be initiated by the regimental commander.<sup>34</sup>

'Hooking' forces moved in concentrated columns without scouts or picquets, relying on the jungle for cover and local Burmese for guidance and intelligence, to establish fortified blocks across main supply routes 5-6 miles behind the front line, in areas difficult for artillery or tanks; some of these were very large, it taking a two-day battle to remove one established at Prome during the 1942 campaign.<sup>35</sup> *Notes from Theatres of War*, the British Army's periodical digest of 'lessons learned' from operations, emphasised the shock effect upon British-Indian units, presuming they were facing no more than a large patrol in front, suddenly finding a Japanese battalion or regiment dug in astride their line of supply and retreat.<sup>36</sup> Slim noted British commanders acquiring 'a road block mentality which often developed into an inferiority complex'.<sup>37</sup>

Japanese doctrine seemed therefore almost purpose-designed to exploit British weaknesses, and, at Wingate's arrival, the British Indian-Army was suffering from major morale problems, the most obvious manifestations referred to by contemporaries as 'Green Hell' or 'Super-Jap' syndrome. The jungle was an alien environment not only to the British, but to most Indians: there is strong contemporary testimony that the combination of darkness, poor visibility, unfamiliar noises and the apparent ubiquity of the Japanese had deleterious psychological effects, one anonymous report

referring to the jungle ‘Having a marked effect on [the] nerves of young troops.’<sup>38</sup> In another example of ethnic stereotyping, the view spread that the Japanese soldier, toughened by an arduous oriental upbringing and the Samurai ethic, was fully ‘at home’ in the jungle, and his superior fieldcraft, ability to keep going ‘on a handful of rice’ a day and maniacal devotion to his Emperor meant he would always have a decisive advantage over his pampered, city-bred white opponents.<sup>39</sup> The author ‘Aquila’ was more balanced than most, but tells much of attitudes in 1942-44 – note, once again, the ethnic stereotyping:

It soon became clear that the country was so difficult that small parties of Japanese with their greater mobility could only too easily threaten our unwieldy land lines of communication, and that European troops requiring a cumbersome commissariat organization behind them were at a great disadvantage....What was needed was some way of alleviating this deadlock whereby better troops were being defeated and out-manoeuvred by the Japanese, who took to the conditions in Burma as apes to the jungle.<sup>40</sup>

To many, this seemed hopeless; on two separate occasions, in April 1942, Alexander and his Chief of Staff, Brigadier TJW Winterton, admitted to Stilwell that British soldiers were ‘simply afraid of the Japs’ - and Stilwell, who hated the English possibly more than he did the Japanese, made frequent amused references to ‘windy Limeys’ in his diaries.<sup>41</sup> Prior to transferring to Wingate’s command from Wavell’s staff, Bernard Fergusson was told by a colleague: ‘You’ll be mad to go into the jungle with Tarzan [Wingate was nicknamed after Edgar Rice Burroughs’ jungle-lord, then featuring in a popular series of films starring Johnny Weissmuller]...The fellow’s a crackpot. In any case, the British cannot compete with the Japanese in the jungle. It’s suicide to think you can crawl through their lines. They’ll hunt you down every time.’<sup>42</sup> It was probably with such attitudes in mind that Fergusson made numerous sardonic references to the ‘Green Hell’ in his published work.<sup>43</sup>

This malaise gave cause for concern at the highest levels. The *Official History* recounted that Churchill had firm - and predictable - ideas on what remedial action to take, of some contextual

interest for any study of Wingate in Burma:

He demanded that new commanders should be found, that troops whose morale had been lowered should be severely disciplined and that, if regular Indian Army troops were incapable of fighting the Japanese in the jungle, commando formations should be developed.<sup>44</sup>

Churchill determined on re-taking Burma as part of Britain's long-term strategy for defeating Japan, but there were differences with the Americans on to how to proceed. Appreciations by the War Cabinet and Combined (British and American) Chiefs of Staff, made in 1942, were that Japan would not invade India, and that Japanese strategy would henceforth be entirely defensive, aimed at inducing war-weariness among the Allies.<sup>45</sup> In response, Churchill demanded Japan 'should be engaged all over her Empire, to maximise the overstretch on her already inefficient resources.'<sup>46</sup> This would involve the re-conquest of Burma, a strategic objective for both Allies, but for different reasons. In January 1942, Churchill wrote to Wavell that 'China bulks as large in the minds of many [Americans] as Great Britain' and that the US Chiefs of Staff considered the Burma Road 'indispensable for world victory.'<sup>47</sup> To the Americans, clearing the Burma Road was a means to an end - breaking the blockade of China quickly so that Chinese forces could be strengthened, the better to pin Japanese forces away from the Pacific, with China also being used as a secure base for a bomber offensive against the Japanese home islands.<sup>48</sup> This strategy was favoured by Chiang - predictably - and by General Claire Chennault, commander of the 'Flying Tigers' and, from March 1943, of the US Fourteenth Air Force, based in China, and possibly the only westerner Chiang trusted.<sup>49</sup> Washington therefore pressed for the earliest possible re-opening of the Burma Road, a strategy necessitating an Allied offensive into northern Burma.<sup>50</sup> In the interim, they established what was, at the time, the largest airlift in history, the air-bridge from India over the 'Hump' of the Himalayas to Chungking, the Chief of Staff of the USAAF, General HH Arnold, making this a strategic priority from early 1942.<sup>51</sup>

The British, specifically the old Imperialist, Churchill, had no sympathy with the venal Chiang, the War Cabinet concluding in 1943 that opening the Burma Road would help China 'on psychological rather than practical grounds.'<sup>52</sup> The British objective was to regain their colonial possessions in Burma, Malaya and Singapore.<sup>53</sup> Throughout 1942 and into 1943, Churchill pressed Wavell to carry out a seaborne invasion of southern Burma, with the objective of retaking Rangoon, then driving north to clear the Burma Road while incidentally securing the rest of Burma, and he and Mountbatten argued consistently for sea landings in southern Burma, Malaya, Singapore and the Andamans until the diversion of resources for the invasion of Europe finally rendered this impossible.<sup>54</sup>

How Wingate's operational concepts fit into Allied strategy in Burma is detailed below, but it is notable that he presumed, from his arrival, that the British would launch a land offensive from India through northern Burma - as Wavell seems to have intended - and also seemed keen on obtaining the goodwill of the Chinese through demonstrating British resolve to defeat the Japanese on the Asian mainland. Consequently, his operational thought was more consistent with *American* strategy than British, and he was to obtain rather more cooperation from the Americans than from GHQ India or from 14th Army. Before either of these strategies could be enacted, some means of defeating the Japanese Army at the tactical and operational level in the jungles of Burma would need to be devised.

#### *British thought on jungle warfare*

As early as 1906, Callwell had outlined the demands of jungle warfare. Thick cover, and the absence of roads, made normal communications or logistics impossible, so operations should consist of the methodical advance of small infantry columns with local scouts and guides, their supplies being carried with them by coolies or animals. There should be as much devolution of command authority as possible, the main tactical units being the platoon or section. The jungle offered tactical opportunities for those willing to use 'guerrilla' methods - infiltration, flanking and turning, ambush

and surprise raids, and small fortified positions, if sighted correctly, could hold up far larger forces; the risk of outflanking and infiltration necessitated all-round defence, centred on fortified bases.<sup>55</sup>

Similar points were made in the first post-retreat British 'doctrine' for jungle warfare, summarised in *Military Training Pamphlet Number 52 - Forest, Bush and Jungle Warfare Against a Modern Enemy*, published in August 1942 and representing prevailing British thought on jungle warfare as of the first Chindit operation and the first Arakan offensive. *MTP52* drew upon the British experience in Malaya and Burma (where there were so many 'successes' the uninitiated might think the British won) but there were also almost as many examples derived from Germans fighting in pine forest in Poland and Russia, and in the Ardennes in 1940.<sup>56</sup> At the heart of *MTP52* was maintaining mobility in heavy forest, which it saw as essential to maintaining the initiative; this hinged upon training troops to travel light, on choosing the right portage - it was conceded that commanders might have to reduce their motor transport - and by allowing junior commanders to exercise their initiative.<sup>57</sup> Poor visibility made control of sub-units difficult, leading to a perceived need to attack 'within well defined courses', and *MTP52*'s core objective, the control of roads:

All control must centre on the road or main communication, which is generally the only tactical feature of any importance. To gain control of the road is of major importance in winning a battle. Provided that the road is held in depth, that the maximum numbers are held as a mobile striking force for counter-attack and that the means of control exist to alter the defensive organization quickly for the purpose of countering encirclement no amount of enveloping tactics or infiltration can be decisive.<sup>58</sup>

Extensive use should be made of fighting patrols, the aim of which should be to gather information on the enemy through raids and probes and to detect and ambush 'hooking' forces.<sup>59</sup> Offensives should consist of fighting patrols advancing along 'main axes of communication', battle beginning when these contacted the enemy.<sup>60</sup> Once battle was joined, the aim should be 'the

elimination of the enemy's control, the centre of which will almost invariably be on the main axis or road, as a preliminary to the annihilation of his forces' to be achieved by encircling, infiltration or direct assault down 'the main axis'.<sup>61</sup> It was presumed that other arms' participation would be essential, artillery laying a 'rolling barrage' down the main axis, tanks or armoured cars driving down the road to burst through enemy blocks, as they had failed to do numerous times in 1942.<sup>62</sup>

As to defensive tactics, the jungle made surprise attacks, infiltration and outflanking almost inevitable, therefore, defences 'must be both mobile and aggressive.'<sup>63</sup> Defence should be in depth, consisting of fortified positions organised for all-round defence, each containing sufficient supplies to be self-sufficient 'for several days'.<sup>64</sup> Each position would be a pivot for a 'mobile striking element', a large fighting patrol sweeping the surrounding jungle, providing early warning of any attack, and ambushing any incoming enemy.<sup>65</sup> There is some resemblance to the system of 'boxes' first used by Auchinleck in North Africa in 1941, albeit on a far smaller scale. Each 'box' was a fortified position, held by a brigade with all its supplies, its tactical role being as a block of artillery and anti-tank firepower: if attacked, the 'box' was to halt the enemy with massed artillery, while a reserve of tanks and motorised infantry counter-attacked his flanks and rear.<sup>66</sup> The model of the 'box' and *MTP52* would be developed to Asian conditions both by Lieutenant-General Geoffrey Scoones, commanding IV Corps at Imphal-Kohima, and by Wingate, there being a notable resemblance between the 'boxes', *MTP52*'s defended positions and the 'Strongholds' used on Operation *Thursday*.

Another section of *MTP52* inviting comparison between Wingate's methods and others' is that on the use of 'Local Volunteers and Guerilla Forces'. This conformed largely to the model advanced by MI(R) and G(R), pre-Ethiopia. Specialist officers and NCOs should be attached to existing resistance movements, with members of the local settler population - farmers, planters, forest officers - or Colonial Office officials advising them, in order to provide the resistance with organisation and liaison with regular forces. However, irregulars should not be relied upon; they



tended to fight in their own time and to their own agenda (as Wingate had discovered in Ethiopia) and so the best use for them was as a diversion, harassing the enemy rear areas and forcing him to redeploy troops away from the front.<sup>67</sup> This contrasts with Wingate's belief that the offensive against the enemy rear was the task of regulars, a model he was determined to apply from his arrival in Burma.

*Wingate's first operational model - G(R) and Gideon Force Revisited*

Wingate arrived in India because Amery, his old benefactor, had suggested to the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Field Marshal Sir Alan Brooke, that he might prove useful in the Far East and Wavell, Wingate's other benefactor and now a Field Marshal and Commander in Chief, India, agreed enthusiastically.<sup>68</sup> Upon arrival, Wingate found himself an unattached major, acting lieutenant colonel, with a loose brief from Wavell to see what he could do to organise operations behind Japanese lines, in order to create 'breathing space' to allow conventional forces to reorganize themselves for the re-conquest of Burma.<sup>69</sup> Guerrilla action was once again being used as a substitute for conventional operations, and again because it was one of the few viable options available. As in East Africa, Wingate prioritised imposing a degree of coordination upon the existing Army units, Mission 204 and the BFF, then moulding them into his own model of 'penetration warfare'.<sup>70</sup>

Dennys was killed in an air crash before Wingate could meet him.<sup>71</sup> Consequently, Wingate's first contact with Mission 204 came when he visited the Bush Warfare School on 22 March 1942, where, despite the presence at the School of a number of old G(R) hands who had known Wingate in Ethiopia and almost universally distrusted him, he and Calvert impressed each other greatly and began both a productive professional partnership and a close friendship.<sup>72</sup> Wingate also met with Lieutenant General TJ Hutton, commanding Burma Corps ('Burcorps') the senior British operational commander in Burma, and other senior officers, and three days after visiting Maymyo, he produced his first document, 'Notes on Penetration Warfare, Burma Command, 25/3/42'. Wingate's aim was,

from the beginning, to execute the kind of operations in depth he advocated in his reports on Ethiopia, and therefore did *not* take inspiration from the Japanese, although there were similarities, and he did cite aspects of their doctrine in support of his own proposals. By this time, Mission 204 had been converted into a fighting unit, three squads, made up of Calvert's instructors and trainees, attached to 17 Division in Burcorps for raiding and sabotage operations.<sup>73</sup> Wingate began his 'Notes' by arguing that assigning the Mission 204 squads to divisional-level command, and constraining the depth of penetration attacks to just behind the front line betrayed an ignorance of modern warfare and wasted a precious asset:

Owing to the failure of the Chinese to implement General Denny's Mission, the Contingents have been placed at the disposal of the nearest formation Commanders. These Commanders are admittedly ignorant of the technique of employing such troops, and it is evident that they will become mere raiding parties, implemented for the occasion with what regular troops are required and can be spared.

Such is not war of penetration, and no considerable results can be expected from such employment...<sup>74</sup>

Wingate then presented a new description of Long Range Penetration. As in his Ethiopian 'Appreciation', it consisted of combining specially trained regular columns and local partisan forces to attack targets far enough behind enemy lines to have a 'strategic' effect. LRP's part in 'strategy' hinged on technological advance:

Modern war is war of penetration in all its phases. This may be of two types - tactical or strategical. Penetration is tactical where armed forces carrying it out are directly supported by the operations of the main armies. It is strategical where no such support is possible, e.g. where the penetration group is living and operating 100 miles or more in front of its own armies.

Of the two types, long range penetration pays by far the larger dividend on the forces employed. These forces...are able, wherever a friendly population exists, to live and move under the enemy's ribs, and thus to deliver fatal blows to his Military organisation by attacking vital objectives, which he is unable to defend. In the past, such warfare has been impossible owing to the fact that the control over such columns, indispensable both for

their safety and their effectual use, was not possible until the age of easily portable wireless sets. Further, the supply of certain indispensable materials...was impossible until the appearance of communication aircraft.<sup>75</sup>

The 'Notes' also indicate that Wingate's view of the efficacy of indigenous resistance forces had not changed: such forces could prove effective when pitted against occupiers wary of losses, restrained in their use of force and constrained by a morality which forbade reprisals against the civilian populace. If facing a ruthless opponent, prepared to kill prisoners or destroy property in reprisal for guerilla action, insurgent forces' emotional ties to the populace would place major constraints upon their freedom of action: the Japanese and the Germans were just such opponents.<sup>76</sup> Wingate's answer was to insert columns of regular troops to protect guerrilla forces, to divert enemy attention from them, and to stimulate further revolt by their example:

When opposing ruthless enemies, such as Japanese or Germans, it is wrong to place any reliance upon the efforts of the individual patriot, however devoted. Brutal and widespread retaliation instantly follows any attempt to injure the enemy's war machine, and, no matter how carefully the sabotage organisation may have been trained for the event, in practice they will find it impossible to operate against a resolute and ruthless enemy....All concerned, Military and civilian, should disabuse their minds of the fallacy that there are going to be any guerilla operations in Burma except those that can be carried out under the aegis, and in the neighbourhood of regular columns. Guerillas are born and not made. Essentially a guerilla soldier is a man who prefers death on his own terms to life on the enemy's. Such were the Rifi in Morocco, and the majority of them were killed; such were the Caucasian Moslem insurgents against the Soviet troops...they were mainly exterminated; such were the Ethiopian guerillas, who continued to fight for 5 years after the Italian occupation; they were steadily being exterminated when we intervened....Mere dislike of the enemy does not produce guerillas. Burning hatred based on religion or other ideal [sic] will do so. It is clear, however, that in Burma we need not expect to find guerilla operations, actively carried on by groups favourable to ourselves or hostile to the enemy, without considerable encouragement on our part. Such encouragement will be provided by the creation of long range penetration groups, who...will both take advantage of and sustain the resistance of local patriots.<sup>77</sup>

Direction by such columns could also ensure a degree of coordination with regular forces in theatre, as Gubbins stated in *The Art of Guerilla Warfare* and Wingate in his 'Appreciation', and both

documents agreed it would ensure political coordination, particularly that guerrillas would not pursue their own interests to the detriment of Allied objectives, a major problem in Gojjam.<sup>78</sup>

As to the organisation and direction of LRP operations, Wingate recommended forming a G(R) cell at the headquarters of whatever formation under which the LRPG group would operate.<sup>79</sup> This should consist of officers with 'at least some comprehension and previous experience of the special problems they will be expected to solve.'<sup>80</sup> The best way to produce officers with the appropriate experience would be to use a combination of Calvert's instructors and officers of Mission 204 rotated through his school: 'The object should be to use the instructional side of war of penetration as a means of affording change of occupation to officers on operational duty and also to ensure that all instructors have recent experience of the application of the principles they are teaching.'<sup>81</sup> The cell would oversee a LRP group under the direct command of the corps commander, who would also provide the troops; the LRP group would strike at objectives selected by the corps commander 'the gaining of which will decisively influence the enemy's operations.'<sup>82</sup>

The 'Notes' formed the basis of a series of lectures Wingate delivered to senior British and Chinese officers over the next few days, but events were overtaking him already. On 29 May, a 300 strong penetration force of G(R), BFF and Royal Marines, under Lieutenant Colonel Musgrave of Mission 204, operating on 17th Indian Division's right flank on the west bank of the Irrawaddy, was surprised and destroyed by a larger Japanese force at the village of Padaung. This was precipitated by a combination of Japanese 'hooks' (which Wingate described as 'short-range penetration') infiltration of the village by hostile Burmese and disguised Japanese soldiers, and the abysmal performance of the BFF, many of whom threw away their weapons before the Japanese were even encountered.<sup>83</sup> The Padaung disaster opened Burcorps' whole western flank, and in the following three days, the Japanese penetrated the front of Burcorps in several places, making the Corps unwilling to spare troops or staff facilities to implement Wingate's proposed LRP organisation.

Wingate noted that ‘There is little doubt that the Corps Commander [now Slim] was fully justified in taking this view.’<sup>84</sup>

Upon returning to Maymyo on 2 April, Wingate wrote an ‘Appreciation of chances of forming Long Range Penetration Groups in Burma’, presenting a series of proposals updated and adapted from the ‘Notes’, for the situation developing on Burcorps’ front. Among the factors listed by Wingate as affecting his appreciation, he noted the destruction of the Musgrave force and the unsuitability of BFF troops, but he also emphasised the similarity of Japanese methods to his own:

[T]he Japanese have successfully done what we hoped to do. They have penetrated the Western Hills (using the sympathies of the local inhabitants), with columns of irregular and lightly armed troops who have been allotted the vital role of cutting the communications of our main force....Whether the enemy intends to use this penetration on a large scale, or only on the limited scale we have witnessed, is uncertain. It is, however, certain that he stands to gain very greatly by pushing this penetration northwards as fast, and in great numbers, as possible. The areas he is now entering...are old rebel areas, where he will find enthusiastic support.<sup>85</sup>

Wingate’s view of the failure of the Musgrave force marked his becoming more specific about the objective of LRP operations - to disrupt the enemy’s decision-making process through threatening points of critical vulnerability in his command and logistical infrastructure, or to impose his will upon the enemy, the stated aim of British doctrine in both ‘small’ and major wars. He began by again castigating what he saw as British commanders’ inability to appreciate the value of such depth operations:

Lt Col Musgrave’s force was not used as a force of penetration, but simply as a corps of observation, with the function of observing and delaying the enemy....There was in fact no penetration on our side of any kind, either short range or long range...Lt Col Musgrave’s operation was merely a delaying action.

Small forces cannot prevent large forces from carrying out their plan. They can, if properly used...compel the larger force to alter its plan by creating an important diversion, i.e. by positive and not negative action. Forces which have the role of penetration should never,

therefore be told to prevent the enemy from carrying out some operation, but should be given the task of surprising and destroying some important enemy installation or force, which will have the effect of changing the enemy's plan. They will...thus prevent the enemy from doing what he intended to do, but the means for doing so are purely offensive and not defensive.<sup>86</sup>

Wingate argued that, while appreciating that the situation prevented the immediate creation of penetration forces, failure to create a G(R) cell at Burcorps HQ would result in the existing G(R) assets being squandered like Musgrave's. Such a cell would be responsible for penetration operations, recruitment and training, liaison with SOE, police and civil administration, obtaining currency, and propaganda. As to the type of units to carry out these operations, Wingate recommended the breakup of four infantry battalions - two British and two Indian - to be melded with existing G(R) elements to form two groups of four columns each. Most significantly, Wingate mentioned for the first time resupply by air, the keystone of subsequent operations, demanding 'Communication aircraft, sufficient to deliver 20 tons a week over a carry of not less than 300 miles', and 'R.A.F. Officers of Bomber and Fighter experience allotted to columns and Group H.Q.' as well as wireless sets with a range 'not less than 300 miles.'<sup>87</sup>

Two factors resulted in Wingate's initial concept of LRP operations for Burma being supplanted. The first of these was the collapse of the Allied front in Burma and the subsequent retreat. The second was the hostility of most Burmese to the British Empire, reflected in the large number of spies, partisans and saboteurs recruited by the Japanese. The antagonism between British and Burmese forestalled any attempt to raise a large patriot resistance for Wingate's columns to support, but this was possibly never his main intention. However, the largely Christian northern Burmese hill tribes, the Chins, Kachins and Karens, remained strongly pro-British, and were soon resisting both the Japanese and the *Thakins* fiercely, allowing free passage for any penetration force through the hills of western and northern Burma they inhabited. Indeed, there was to be considerable competition for

the hill tribes' affections among various British special and covert forces.<sup>88</sup> The earliest of these was the Burma Levies, founded in the Chin and Kachin Hills at the behest of the Governor of Burma, Reginald Dorman-Smith (Eric Dorman-Smith's older brother) in December 1941 by Lieutenant Colonel HNC Stevenson, a former Frontier Service official who supported the Kachins' aspirations to independence from the Burmese with the same zeal that Wingate supported the Jews. Stevenson's 2,000 Karen guerrillas were soon receiving SOE resources and training, and were acting in concert with the SOE-led North Kachin Levy (NKL), a force some 600 strong, which provided intelligence on Japanese movements in the area.<sup>89</sup> These forces' activities may have delayed the Japanese advance into the Shan States of northern Burma for two days, and they also protected the flanks of retreating British forces and guided stragglers and civilians to safety. Once Burma was overrun, they were ordered to hide their weapons and await the return of the British.<sup>90</sup> Irregular and penetration forces were therefore active under British command before Wingate's arrival.

The retreat led to Wingate producing a new model of LRP operations more in common with that presented at the end of his Ethiopia 'Appreciation', and, in several ways, a reaction to Japanese military doctrine. This will now be compared with other proposed British answers to the problems posed by Japanese tactical methods.

#### *Different appreciations*

Allied commanders detected two key vulnerabilities in the Japanese Army. Firstly, Japanese logistics were abysmal. Several times in 1942, Japanese operations in Burma and elsewhere were built around limitations of supply even more than the British, and their offensives might have been halted were they not able to use captured Allied supplies and vehicles; during the battle for New Guinea, Japanese troops were ordered to capture supplies post-haste in order for future offensives to be possible.<sup>91</sup> Actual systems of supply were pre-modern: prior to his Japanese 15th Army launching the

Imphal-Kohima offensive in 1944, Lieutenant General Mutaguchi Renya's request for fifty road building companies and sixty mule companies was denied by Southeastern Army Headquarters in Rangoon, and he was reduced to using bullock carts, locally requisitioned cattle and a few motor vehicles to carry his supplies, diverting material away from other fronts in Burma to accumulate the stocks needed.<sup>92</sup> Slim appreciated this early: shortly after taking over XV Corps in May 1942, he consulted a Chinese general (unnamed) who had participated in the Chinese defeat of the Japanese at Changsa, the only victory against them at that time. Thanks to their 'very small administrative margin of safety', the trick, Slim perceived, was to 'lock' the Japanese in battle for the nine days for which they usually had supplies available, prevent them capturing one's own supplies, and counter-attack when they ran out, a model Slim applied against Mutaguchi at Imphal-Kohima in 1944.<sup>93</sup>

It was the other perceived Japanese weakness that interested Wingate, and from it developed a different conception of how to beat them. From jottings in his notebooks<sup>94</sup>, public statements<sup>95</sup> and training pamphlets written subsequent to *Longcloth*, it is evident that Wingate was less awed by *Bushido* than many at the time or since:

The Japanese is as unpredictable as the village pye dog. One moment he will cringe and fawn on the stranger, and at the next he will snap or bolt. This is his natural make up, but his military doctrine and carefully fostered belief in his own national superiority has introduced a predictable quality to his tactics and conduct on the battlefield when things are going well. By exploiting these we can shake his faith in his invincibility and superiority and allow his natural character to come into play.<sup>96</sup>

This was noted by others. As early as 1937, Stilwell and other American observers of the war in China had noted the repetitiveness and predictability of Japanese tactics and the lack of initiative of even senior Japanese commanders.<sup>97</sup> Even 'hook' attacks followed set drills: in *Defeat into Victory*, Slim cited the Japanese divisional commander who squandered an opportunity to destroy the remains of 17th Indian Division by over-rigid adherence to orders; told to bypass Rangoon and attack it from



the west, he established a strong roadblock to cover his flank, on the main road leading north out of Rangoon, trapping British forces there; despite the scale of British attacks against the block indicating the gravity of the situation, once the remainder of the Japanese division had passed, the block was withdrawn, allowing the British to escape.<sup>98</sup> This phenomenon was visible elsewhere: Australian forces in New Guinea reported Japanese troops apparently blindly following orders, and if confronted with an unexpected situation, there would be a noticeable pause as they worked it out, during which they could be hit very effectively with a counterattack.<sup>99</sup> A consensus was emerging among some officers, therefore, that, far from being a force of ‘supermen’, the Japanese Army had flaws which Allied commanders could exploit; where there was disagreement was on how. Slim tended, increasingly, towards tying the Japanese into battles in which superior British firepower could be brought to bear so that they could be induced to sacrifice men and physical resources. Wingate felt, however, that perceived weaknesses in mindset and command philosophy could be exploited through movement and infiltration, his aim being to impose his will upon the Japanese.

*Wingate's second model - Long Range Penetration, supported by air*

Wingate took a dialectical approach to the problem of how to beat the enemy, building his operational theory around how the weaknesses of the Japanese soldier and his commanders - which he saw principally as their lack of initiative and confusion at the unexpected - could be exploited via the strengths of their British counterparts. In an article on *Longcloth* written for the Army Bureau of Current Affairs in late 1943, Wingate argued the best means of bringing ‘Japanese national character’ into play was by attacking the decision-making process of Japanese commanders, freezing them into indecision and denying command to the soldiers, who, lacking personal initiative, needed it more than Westerners:

[T]he Japanese mind is slow but methodical. He is a reasoned, if humourless, student of war in all its phases. He has carefully thought out the answer to all ordinary problems. He has principles which he applies, not over-imaginatively, and he hates a leap in the dark to such an extent that he will do anything rather than take it...On the other hand, when he feels he knows the intention...of his enemy he will fight with the greatest courage and determination to the last round and drop of his blood.

The answer is evidently never to let him know the intentions or strength of his enemy but always to present him with a situation which he does not thoroughly understand....Our own methods, as opposed to those of the Japanese, were always to present him with a new situation which he could not analyse...<sup>100</sup>

Japanese inflexibility and predictability, Wingate reasoned, meant that the salient characteristics of the British soldier, 'firstly, intelligence in action, i.e., originality in individual fighting, and, lastly, on the morale side, great self-reliance and power to give of his best when the audience is smallest', could become tactical advantages.<sup>101</sup> British military effort should be directed in a specific way, summarised in Wingate's training notes for *Longcloth*:

To use a prize-fighting parallel, in the forward areas the enemy's fists are to be found, and to strike at these is not of great value. In the back areas are his unprotected kidneys, his midriff, his throat and other vulnerable points. The targets...may be regarded, therefore, as the more vital and tender portions of the enemy's anatomy. In the nature of things, even when he realises the threat that [we] constitute to his tenderer parts, the enemy cannot provide the necessary protection...except by dropping his fists, i.e., withdrawing troops from the frontal attack against his main adversary.<sup>102</sup>

The main tool would be Long Range Penetration: 'This is strategical as opposed to tactical penetration. It influences not only the enemy's forward troops but his whole military machine, and his main plan.'<sup>103</sup> Whereas *MTP52* advocated penetrating the Japanese front line to attack it from behind, Wingate felt it 'a fatal error' for LRP units to engage Japanese front-line troops.<sup>104</sup> Instead, they should penetrate 2-300 miles behind Japanese lines, to establish bases from which attacks on lines of communication could be launched.<sup>105</sup> From a late 1942 paper on projected LRP operations:

The effect of these attacks will be the allotment of enemy troops to the pursuit and destruction of Columns. Immediately therefore, after the attack on a major objective, the force will split into single Columns each with a suitable role in the L of C Area. Columns will employ the methods taught during training to lead the enemy punitive Columns on a wild goose chase. The diversion they will create in this manner should compel the withdrawal from forward operational areas of very considerable enemy forces for the defence of L of C installations, and pursuit of Columns.<sup>106</sup>

These attacks would not be guerrilla raids, but assaults by regular troops on targets of strategic importance to the Japanese, which might involve them fighting large formations: however, guerrilla methods - dispersal, concealment, superior fieldcraft - would be used to infiltrate defended areas, avoiding combat until necessary: 'Colns [sic] achieve their results by skilful concentration at the right time and in the right place, when they will deliver the maximum blow against the enemy. The essence of LRP is concentration, the method of dispersal is only a means to achieve ultimate concentration.'<sup>107</sup> Killing Japanese troops and destroying supplies was less important than diverting Japanese forces from their main effort: 'The withdrawal of enemy forces from forward areas to protect their long and vulnerable lines of communication from incessant spasmodic attacks by Columns, should compel the enemy to alter materially his plan of operations, and should thus assist the achievement of our own objective.'<sup>108</sup>

LRP forces would require technological help to maintain them so deep inside hostile territory. It was in logistics and communications that Wingate began to depart from prevailing doctrine: *MTP52* still envisaged the British relying on 'orthodox' lines of communication, with supplies being accumulated in the operational area at lorry heads, and then carried forward by animals or porters, hence the continued emphasis on controlling roads. Wingate's forces would be supplied entirely from the air, columns carrying supplies with them by mule, bullock or horse, thereby freeing them from the scarce road network to manoeuvre cross-country.<sup>109</sup> Air support was central to LRP, along with another important innovation of the inter-war years, the portable wireless; according to Wingate:

[LRP] is made possible by two factors comparatively new to war...These factors are firstly, the power of wireless to direct and control small or large bodies of men in the heart of enemy territory, and, secondly, the power of aircraft to maintain such troops with essential supplies; to make physical contact with them where this is necessary; and finally, and most important, to employ them to make its own blow against the widely scattered and invisible enemy effectual.<sup>110</sup>

Supply by air of units with no ground lines of communication was not a new concept, having been used since the Iraq campaign in 1917. Holland and others in MI(R) had discussed resupply of penetration forces by air as early as 1940, as covered already, and Calvert authored a pamphlet - now lost, or not in the public domain - on this subject while with MI(R).<sup>111</sup> Gideon Force had been supplied partially by South African Ju-52s flying into its rear base and SOE was, by 1943, carrying out regular supply flights to resistance forces in occupied Europe. *MTP52* had commented that air transportation 'was not practicable in thick jungle', but parachutes or gliders could be landed in clearings, an assumption shared by Wingate until the latter stages of *Longcloth*.<sup>112</sup> This may have been based on experience gleaned during the later stages of the 1942 retreat, where the British had begun using aircraft to resupply front-line units via airdrop; moreover, from June 1942, when their ground lines of supply were cut by the monsoon, a number of outlying detachments, including Fort Hertz, relied entirely on air resupply and reinforcement.<sup>113</sup> More ambitious use of air supply was made in New Guinea, scene of the first major land victory over the Japanese: Australian troops, retreating across the Owen Stanley Mountains, had been supplied partially by air, while during the Allied counteroffensive of October 1942-January 1943, the 2/126th US Infantry Regiment had been supplied exclusively by air.<sup>114</sup> Recognising the necessity for such a capability, in late 1942, India Command began to raise air supply units from the Royal Indian Army Service Corps (RIASC), the first being ready in time to support *Longcloth*, and Slim at XV Corps was, by 1943, considering the possible use of air supply to support an entire division.<sup>115</sup> Moreover, Allied forces were taking other

steps to reduce their reliance upon road bound logistics. Australian forces in New Guinea used mules for transport from 1942, and the period following the retreat from Burma saw 17th and 39th Indian Divisions begin conversion to 'Indian Light Divisions', consisting of just two brigades rather than the usual three, with only a light scale of jeeps and four-wheel drive lorries, relying mainly upon six Mule Companies of the Royal Indian Army Service Corps (RIASC) for logistical transport and with their engineers and artillery operating entirely on an animal-pack basis, with the intention of removing their reliance upon roads.<sup>116</sup> Air supply and light formations based upon animal transport would therefore have featured in the British effort in Burma without Wingate.

However, Wingate was suggesting what Holland and others had been advocating in 1940, that specialist penetration units, resupplied solely by airdrop, carrying supplies by animal-pack, with close air support replacing artillery and tanks, could penetrate into the enemy rear, wage war on their lines of communication, and evade retribution through carefully timed dispersal and superior mobility. Such columns could also be a vital auxiliary to Allied air offensives: '[F]orces of this nature are better placed than any other ground forces to assist the air arm to direct its strategic offensive, supply it with detailed air intelligence, and exploit on the spot the opportunities created by its attacks.'<sup>117</sup> Consequently, there should be an integrated air-land offensive against Japanese rear areas:

Columns should not be ordered to exploit strategic bombing unless this is in accordance with the general plan of operations of the force. The Columns are the means by which such exploitation is rendered possible, not that by which it is carried out. Provided the force has gained the upper hand over the enemy, such exploitation will be carried out by the Guerilla organisation, which will grow as the Force succeeds in imposing its will on the enemy...i.e. R.A.F. co-operation must be aimed to help the Force win the battle against the enemy L of C organisation.<sup>118</sup>

Wingate also argued that 'It is most desirable that co-operating aircraft should be kept on the job, and not be changed with every action' - for part of the Allied air effort to be dedicated to supporting

LRP operations.<sup>119</sup> Wingate's view of air operations echoed the developing Allied doctrine for tactical airpower, then being shaped in the Middle East by Air Marshals Arthur Coningham, Arthur Tedder and Harry Broadhurst. Most influential was Coningham, commander of the Northwest African Tactical Air Force from February 1943, who demanded that the first priority of a tactical air commander should be to guarantee air superiority via the destruction of enemy aircraft, after which Allied airpower should be massed against enemy reserves and supply columns, close support of the army on the battlefield coming below this on the list.<sup>120</sup> According to Richard Hallion, one of Coningham's keenest disciples was Lieutenant Colonel Philip Cochran, who served as a fighter pilot with the USAAF in North Africa before jointly commanding No.1 Air Commando on Wingate's second LRP operation, Operation *Thursday*.<sup>121</sup> It is unclear whether Wingate was familiar with these developments. However, it is apparent from his papers that Wingate agreed that the best use of airpower was destroying enemy communications and reserves: however, he differed from Coningham in two ways. Firstly, in adding a ground element to the offensive against enemy communications; secondly, in insisting that LRP forces should have organic air support. Coningham was firm that air operations should be controlled at Army or Air Force level, all missions requiring approval from the Air Force Commander, who would cooperate with the Army Commander without being subordinate to him, and would have sole responsibility for setting airpower priorities in the theatre of operations.<sup>122</sup> Wingate was to demand that air elements supporting LRP should be under the LRP commander, presumably an Army officer.

Indeed, Wingate was unequivocal that, to have maximum strategic effect, LRP operations should be directed by a single, specialist commander: from his 1943 LRP pamphlet comes the argument that columns, coordinated by radio, could operate to a 'Master Plan', using superior mobility to concentrate against points of critical vulnerability and, having dealt with them, could disperse into smaller, faster and more elusive elements before moving on:

Brigades operate independently of each other, but under the centralised control by wireless of the L.R.P. force Commander. Similarly columns normally penetrate enemy held territory independently on a wide front but controlled by the Brigade Commander by means of wireless. Two or more columns having individually affected penetration may be concentrated for a particular operation...Having achieved the object they will again separate, thereby retaining their advantages of mobility and elusiveness and preventing the enemy from concentrating superior force and pinning them down.<sup>123</sup>

This would produce the strategic impact Wingate sought:

L.R.P. forces by deploying Brigades from different directions many hundred miles apart, and by dispersing the columns of each Brigade over a wide area, force the enemy to guard every vital point in the whole of his rear areas so he will be weak everywhere and strong nowhere.<sup>124</sup>

*LRP and other penetration forces in Allied strategy, 1942-43*

LRP forces needed to be melded with extant Allied strategy, which opens two issues: how Wingate's proposed organisation would cooperate with the other special and penetration units being assembled in India, and how far they may have departed from the role and status of such forces elsewhere in the British Army at this stage in the war.

To begin with, other penetration forces in Asia. Lieutenant Colonel HNC Stevenson's Burma Levies have been mentioned already. SOE planted agents and stay-behind parties among the hill tribes during the retreat, but did not begin operations in earnest until 1943.<sup>125</sup> Two new forces were also present. The first of these was the American covert operations organisation, the Office of Strategic Services (OSS).<sup>126</sup> OSS agents were also operating in Burma by 1943, but controlled by Stilwell in Chungking, and their activities were not only uncoordinated with, but sometimes duplicated those of British special forces, it was suspected by SOE, with Stilwell's tacit encouragement.<sup>127</sup> The second was 'V' Force, raised by Wavell from the Assam Rifles, a police unit comprised of Gurkhas under British officers, trained by SOE to act as the 'hard core' of a

10,000-strong guerilla force recruited from hill tribes on both sides of the Burma-Assam border and intended to harass Japanese communications when they invaded India – a remit not entirely dissimilar to that of G(R)'s Operational Centres in Ethiopia before Wingate took charge of them.<sup>128</sup> When the invasion did not happen, 'V' Force was switched to covert intelligence gathering and liaison with the local population, operating through a combination of small, irregular tribal units and individual agents.<sup>129</sup> Penetration operations, some not dissimilar to those described by Wingate, were, therefore, already being planned and initiated upon his arrival in Southeast Asia.

That Wingate's LRP units should be separate entities from these 'guerrilla' forces was accepted early. Rough lines of demarcation were set at a meeting chaired by the Director of Military Operations, Burma, Major General Osborne, on 24 April 1942, at which Wingate, Stevenson and Colin Mackenzie, head of SOE's Oriental Mission, discussed 'guerilla operations in Burma.' Osborne opened by encapsulating policy for guerrillas vis a vis LRP units - 'Former mosquitoes, latter regular dets. - Both working in co-operation for common cause' – this 'common cause' being a common plan, made by the commander-in-chief, combining the actions of regular units, LRP and guerrillas.<sup>130</sup> Wingate then explained the role of LRP as it stood at this stage: 'Cols of all arms varying in strength and composition in accordance with each particular situation....say, inf. coy, section of mountain artillery, Sapper and Miner detachment, signal detachment, intelligence and guerilla personnel', each column carrying supplies for three weeks, the remainder delivered by air.<sup>131</sup> Targets would be airfields, headquarters, depots and railheads, the objective 'creation of insecurity in rear areas of L. of C.'<sup>132</sup> Stevenson and Wingate agreed that cooperation between LRP and guerrillas would be essential, and therefore, arming and directing the hill tribes should be a priority.<sup>133</sup> Osborne would recommend to the Commander in Chief, Burma (General Sir Harold Alexander) that a LRP Brigade be formed, suggesting a force based on two battalions supplied by India Command; a LRP training centre should be formed in India, with Mission 204 co-located with it; Wingate



estimated he could train this Long Range Penetration Group (LRPG) in eight weeks, after which it could be deployed to support operations against Akyab or Moulmein, in southern Burma.<sup>134</sup> However, Mackenzie argued that northern Burma provided greater opportunities for cooperation with guerrillas, and it was agreed that Stevenson and SOE should maintain guerrilla activity there until the LRPG was ready for operations.<sup>135</sup> Subsequently, in June 1942, Wingate was appointed acting Brigadier and received authority from the War Office to form his LRPG, to which Mission 204's reinforcements would be directed, effectively marking the end of G(R) as an independent entity.<sup>136</sup> Despite this early cordiality, Brigadier DR Guinness, the Deputy Head of SOE's Oriental Mission, recorded that Wingate 'disliked and suspected' SOE – a sentiment shared with a number of other senior British military officers.<sup>137</sup>

Wingate would eventually be assigned three infantry battalions, formed into 77<sup>th</sup> Indian Infantry Brigade, a cover name, as it contained no Indian troops, other than Gurkhas. That this was intended as a fighting, rather than a raiding force is apparent from its organisation. The Brigade was divided into eight columns, four mainly British and four mainly Gurkha, each commanded by a major and intended to operate independently, and consisting of a column headquarters, an infantry company, a reconnaissance platoon from the Burma Rifles, a support section, with two three-inch mortars and two Vickers machine guns, an animal transport section, with eighty mules or bullocks, an air liaison section, with an RAF officer and wireless operators, a Commando platoon, of personnel from Mission 204, a medical team and a Royal Signals detachment, for communication with brigade headquarters and other columns.<sup>138</sup> As discussed at length previously, such columns had been the basis of 'small wars' operations since the nineteenth century, and, their moves coordinated by wireless, had been the mainstay of actions in Palestine and on the Northwest Frontier in the 1930s; 'Jock Columns' had been used by XIII Corps and then by Eighth Army in North Africa. Where Wingate differed from before was in turning these *ad hoc* formations into semi-permanent units, designed to

attack the enemy's infrastructure, behind his main armies in order to disrupt his planning and preparation before and away from the main battle. This echoes proposals made by JCF Holland in particular in 1940 and also refutes Gordon's claim that Wingate lacked 'operational awareness' – indeed, it may be advanced in support of a claim that Wingate was one of the first British commanders to develop an awareness of a level of war between the strategic and tactical which would later be identified as the 'operational.'<sup>139</sup>

Wingate was perhaps fortunate to still have Wavell's patronage, as the institutional mindset forming the background to his operations in Ethiopia and, indirectly, to LRP, was mutating. As early as January 1942, official misgivings were expressed about the perceived over-use of Jock Columns by Eighth Army in North Africa, to the effect that they could not press home attacks or hold ground and were instilling a 'tip and run' mentality in many officers.<sup>140</sup> When Montgomery arrived to command Eighth Army in August 1942, he decreed that 'The policy of fighting the enemy in brigade groups, Jock columns, and with divisions split up into bits and pieces all over the desert was to cease. In future divisions would fight *as* divisions [emphasis Montgomery's]'<sup>141</sup> At Alamein in October, the objective was to secure breaches in the Axis front line via a series of methodical battles of destruction, and in pursuit of this, Eighth Army fought strictly to Montgomery's 'Master Plan', the basic fighting formation being the division, and control of artillery being centralised at Corps level.<sup>142</sup> Moreover, from mid 1942, as GHQ Far East continued to allow Special Forces commanders to settle a division of labour between themselves, GHQ Middle East created a new branch, G Staff Raiding, to coordinate the actions of the expanding crop of special forces in its region both with each other and with the main armies. Some coordination was necessary. By the end of 1942, David Stirling was presiding not only over the SAS, now at battalion strength, but a French SAS Squadron, the Greek Sacred Squadron, the Folbot Section of the Royal Marines and the Middle East Commando, a total strength of over 1,000.<sup>143</sup> The LRDG had expanded to two squadrons, supported by two privately

acquired Waco aircraft, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Prendergast after Bagnold was appointed an Advisor at GHQ Middle East. From 1943, it also comprised No.1 Long Range Demolition Group, which preferred to be known as Popski's Private Army, after its commander, Major Vladimir 'Popski' Peniakoff, a Belgian of Russian parentage.<sup>144</sup> Alongside these Army-controlled units were the Royal Marines Special Boat Section and various guerrilla and resistance movements organised by SOE.

As to roles, the LRDG retained its primary role of reconnaissance, Hackett, and the official historian of the desert war, Major General ISO Playfair, paying tribute to its Road Watch patrols, which kept a detailed census of all Axis military traffic along the main coastal road from April-November 1942, providing some prior warning of major Axis operations, while Montgomery himself referred to its finding a route through the 'sand sea' to the south of the Mareth line, in December 1942, allowing the New Zealand Division to outflank this position in the battles of the following March.<sup>145</sup> Prior to March 1942, the LRDG had the additional task of scouting for the SAS, and conveying it to its objectives, the latter's role being the destruction of Axis aircraft on the ground and interdiction of supplies. The SAS destroyed 126 Axis aircraft in twenty airfield attacks between December 1941 and March 1942, including 37 in one raid on Christmas Day 1941.<sup>146</sup> In summer 1942, the SAS became independent of the LRDG upon acquiring its own armed jeeps, and by July, had hit every Axis airfield within 300 miles of the front line.<sup>147</sup> During the Alamein battles, the SAS destroyed thirty German aircraft on raids near Sidi Haneish, but after this, Stirling was redirected to Rommel's communications, including ports, ending this period with an expensively unsuccessful raid on Benghazi.<sup>148</sup>

An un-codified British Army 'doctrine' for penetration forces was, therefore, emerging by late 1942. The theatre-level command was to direct them against enemy rear areas in support of the main battle, evident in the deployment of the various British Special Forces in North Africa in 1942 and the

proposed roles for their counterparts in Burma, as agreed by Wingate and the other penetration force commanders in April 1942. However, differences were also apparent: it is clear from contemporary sources that in Europe and the Middle East, special forces were expected to produce 'empirical' results of direct use to the main armies - information gathered, enemy aircraft destroyed or enemy supplies interdicted, for instance.<sup>149</sup> In the Far East, perhaps due to Wavell's influence, the aim remained more esoteric, and as it was in 1940 - to divert and overstretch enemy forces and disrupt their planning process. An illustration of this difference comes from Hackett's recalling the LRDG complaining to G Staff Raiding that SAS raids were disrupting their activities through the large numbers of Germans sweeping rear areas after an SAS attack, forcing the LRDG to vacate those areas - yet a heavy enemy response, leading to forces being redeployed from the front, was Wingate's stated objective.<sup>150</sup> Another difference was also emerging - scale. Whereas the North African forces, V-Force, SOE and the others operated in small units, or covertly, Wingate proposed to insert a brigade-sized force, with some logistic elements and air support, into hostile territory for an extended period.

### *Conclusions*

The first Chindit operation represented an evolution from the model of operations Wingate advocated after Ethiopia, which, in turn, evolved from the doctrine for covert operations devised by Holland and Gubbins in 1940. Wingate's new model differed from what had come before in centring upon regular soldiers, rather than irregular partisans, formed into purpose-designed all-arms columns, to establish a permanent presence on and near enemy lines of communication; there they would carry out harassing attacks upon supplies and communications, using their superior mobility to evade retribution. As such, the Chindits bear a superficial resemblance to the 'Jock Column' model, adapted to the jungle conditions of Southeast Asia. However, they also resemble the frontier columns

used in 'small wars' pre-1939 and, indeed, Callwell advocated directing columns against enemy communications as much for their psychological as their physical effect, as did Wingate, forty years later. As mentioned above, the 1930s had seen the use of wireless to coordinate the action of frontier columns into a single 'Master Plan', experiments in re-supplying them by air, and some use of aerial bombing as a substitute for artillery in their deployment. Wingate was able to observe some of these developments in action in Palestine, and they were carried over into operations against regular forces in North and East Africa in 1940-41, a theatre in which he was involved. It can therefore be argued that rather than being based on any specific theoretical model, the Chindits were an organic development from Wingate's previous experience and from existing British Army and G(R) practice.

As noted above, Wingate was probably fortunate that his old patron, Wavell, was still theatre commander upon his arrival, as not only were there the first stirrings of doubt about the efficacy of mobile, dispersed operations, but this period saw the emergence of the two most successful British Army commanders of the Second World War, Montgomery and Slim, both of whom advocated the use of *concentrated* force to engage in 'decisive battle', fought to a 'Master Plan'. Moreover, while Special Forces formed part of this new model, and were to continue to do so until the end of the war, their role was growingly subsidiary and they were expected to deliver a measurable return for the men and resources dedicated to them. Wingate revised his doctrine in the light of lessons learned from Operation *Longcloth*, and developments subsequent to it. This will be placed in the context of Allied and Japanese operations in Burma in 1944 – Slim's in particular - in the next chapter.

#### NOTES FOR CHAPTER SIX

NOTE: References to 'Boxes I, II, III, IV and V' in this chapter's notes and the next refer to the five boxes of Wingate's and Tulloch's Chindit Papers, held at the Department of Documents of the Imperial War Museum.

1. Fergusson, *Beyond the Chindwin*, p.20

2. Calvert, *Slim*, p.55
3. Fergusson, *Wild Green Earth*, pp.263-265; Masters, *Road Past Mandalay*, pp.133-134
4. Sykes, *Orde Wingate*, pp.32-33, 512, 521
5. BH Liddell Hart, *History of the Second World War* (London: Cassell 1970), p.382; Bidwell, *Chindit War*, p.148; Rossetto, *Wingate*, pp.133, 438-439
6. Gordon, 'Wingate', pp.295-296; Rossetto, *Wingate*, pp.133-135
7. Charles Cruickshank, *SOE in the Far East* (Oxford: OUP 1983), pp.163-167, footnote on pp.169-170
8. Louis Allen, *Burma: The Longest War* (London: JM Dent 1984), pp.4-7; JRM Butler, *History of the Second World War: Grand Strategy, Volume II* [hereafter *OHGS2*] (London: HMSO 1957), pp.328-330
9. 'Note on 204 Military Mission', 7 January 1942, in PRO WO106/2654, p.4; Major General S Woodburn Kirby, *The Official History of the War against Japan, Volume II* [hereafter *OH2*] (London: HMSO 1958), pp.11, 16-18, 20-21
10. CinC FE to WO of 13 April 1941, in PRO CAB121/137
11. Ibid; Calvert, *Fighting Mad*, pp.53-55
12. 'Note on 204', p.4
13. CinC FE to WO of 13 August 1941, in PRO WO106/2629
14. WO to CinC FE of 9 September 1941, in PRO WO106/2629
15. Ibid
16. Calvert, *Fighting Mad*, pp.55-56
17. 'Note on 204', p.4
18. Ibid, p.1, and accompanying map
19. PRO HS7/111, Pt I, pp.1-3, 17-19, 26-27; Cruickshank, *SOE in the Far East*, pp.16, 61-62, 83, 163-164
20. Memorandum by SOE on their Proposed Organisation in India and the Far East, in PRO HS1/202, Para.15; Note by Sir Frank Nelson in PRO CAB121/317; Note on GHQ FE39/2 and draft telegram from MEW to CinC FE, in PRO CAB121/317

21. Cruickshank, *SOE in the Far East*, pp.62, 68-69
22. PRO WO106/2634, Appreciation of the Situation in Burma by General Staff, India on 15th December 1941, Paras.12, 16-18
23. CinC India to CIGS of 26 March 1943, in PRO WO106/3807, Para.6; Allen, *Burma*, pp.7-24; Christopher Bayly and Tim Harper, *Forgotten Armies: Britain's Asian Empire and the War With Japan* (London: Allen Lane 2004), pp.9-11, 29, 82, 98, 164, 170, 244-252; Mike Calvert, *Slim* (Pan 1973) p.48; *OH2*, pp.245-248
24. PRO HS7/111, pp.21-22; Cruickshank, *SOE in the Far East*, pp.167-168
25. For instance, see PRO WO106/2639, 'Some Points from Burma Campaign 1941/2'; Governor of Burma to Secretary of State for Burma of 8 March 1942, in PRO WO 106/2662
26. Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, pp.15-16, 39, 116; Stilwell's diary entry of 12 March 1942, in General Joseph W Stilwell, *The Stilwell Papers*, edited by Theodore H White (New York: Da Capo 1973), p.60
27. *Notes from the Theatres of War No.8 - The Far East, December 1941 - May 1942*, in PRO WO208/3108, p.5
28. *OH2*, pp.8, 439
29. Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, pp.39, 44, 46, 52, 56, 61-63
30. Cruickshank, *SOE in the Far East*, p.68
31. *Notes from Theatres of War No.17 - Far East, April-November 1943 [NTW 17]*, in PRO WO208/3108, pp.3-4
32. *Notes from Theatres of War No.12 - SW Pacific, August 1942-February 1943 [NTW 12]*, in PRO WO208/3108, pp.3-4
33. Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, p.29
34. *Notes from Theatres of War No.15, SW Pacific January-March 1943 [NTW15]* in PRO WO208/3108, pp.3-4; Fergusson, *Wild Green Earth*, p.204
35. Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, p.119
36. *NTW8*, p.5
37. Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, p.119

38. CinC India to GOC Burma of 6 April 1942, in PRO WO106/2663; *NTW5*, p.12; Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, pp.4-7, 41-42
39. *NTW5*, p.12; 'Some Points', Para.B; *NTW8*, p.18, gives credence to the 'handful of rice' claim
40. 'Aquila', 'Air Transport on the Burma Front', *RUSI Journal*, May 1945, p.203
41. Stilwell's diary entries of 15 and 19 April 1942, *Stilwell Diaries*, pp.85, 89
42. Quoted, Mosley, *Gideon goes to War*, p.185
43. e.g. Fergusson, *Wild Green Earth*, pp.206, 209
44. *OH2*, p.382
45. Combined Chiefs of Staff Memorandum for Information No.25 - Japanese Intentions, 8 November 1942, in PRO CAB122/163, Appendix A Para.B; SICTEL No.11 from War Cabinet Offices, 24 June 1943, in PRO CAB122/163, Para.1
46. 'Note by PM and Minister of Defence', Pt.IV, Para.3
47. Churchill to Wavell of 22/1/42
48. *OH2*, pp.379, 387; *OH3*, pp.10-11; Charles F Romanus and Riley Sutherland, *The United States Army in World War II: China-Burma-India Theater, Stilwell's Mission to China* [the American Official History] (Washington DC: Department of the Army 1953) pp.12-13, 20-21, 23, 56-57, 323-324, 357-358
49. D Clayton James, 'American and Japanese Strategies in the Pacific War', in Peter Paret (Editor) *Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age* (Oxford: OUP 1994) pp.709, 721
50. *OH2*, pp.380, 421-424
51. WO to CinC India of 31 March 1942, in PRO WO106/3771; William J Koenig, *Over the Hump: Airlift to China* (London: Pan 1972); Romanus and Sutherland, *Stilwell's Mission to China*, pp.163-167
52. The 'Peanut's' greed, cronyism and fantasizing are the dominant themes of Stilwell's diaries; the Americans wanted to tie Burma and India into a single command to bind him to the defence of Southeast Asia, see British Joint Staff Mission to Washington to WO of 1 January 1942, in PRO WO106/2662 ; SICTEL No.11, Para.5



53. *OH2*, pp.292-293, 295-297, 305-306

54. Records of Chiefs of Staff (India) Meetings of May 1942- February 1943, in PRO WO106/6110; *OH2*, pp.235-237, 297-298, 369-370, 419-423; Admiral the Earl Mountbatten of Burma GCVO KCB DSO ADC, 'The Strategy of the South-East Asia Campaign', *RUSI Journal*, November 1946, pp.26-30

55. Callwell, *Small Wars*, pp.348-373

56. *MTP52*, pp.68-70

57. *Ibid*, pp.3-4

58. *Ibid*, pp.4-5

59. *Ibid*, pp.4-5, 20, 33-34

60. *Ibid*, pp.19, 35-38

61. *Ibid*, pp.7, 19-20, 35-38, 51-52

62. *Ibid*, pp.20-22

63. *Ibid*, pp.8-10

64. *Ibid*, p.23

65. *Ibid*, pp.24-26

66. *Notes from Theatres of War No.10 - Cyrenaica and Western Desert January/June 1942* [*NTW10*] (London: HMSO 1942), pp.9, 13-14; 'Lessons from Operations 14 Sept 41 - 21 Aug 1942, Fixed Defences and the Defensive Battle - Deductions from the Present War' in PRO WO201/538; Barnett, *Desert Generals*, pp.139-141; French, *Raising Churchill's Army*, pp.219-220

67. *MTP52*, pp.6-7; Reginald Dorman-Smith, the Governor of Burma, felt Wingate was mistaken not to include former district commissioners in his LRP force; see R Dorman-Smith to Amery of 3 June 1943, Churchill Archives Amery Papers AMEL 2/3/21

68. Brooke to Amery of 12 January 1942, Churchill Archives Amery Papers, AMEL 2/1/31; Sir Hastings Ismay to Harold Laski of 13 February 1942, IWM Wingate Chindit Papers, Box I, explains why Wingate was sent to Burma; Alanbrooke's Diary Entry of 4 August 1943, *Alanbrooke Diaries*, p.436; Wavell, *Good Soldier*, p.64; Colonel OC Wingate, 'Record of an attempt to organise long range penetration in Burma during April 1942', Box I, p.1; *OH2*, p.243

69. PRO CAB106/46, 'Draft Narrative of Operations of 77<sup>th</sup> Indian Infantry Brigade ("The Chindits") commanded by Brigadier OC Wingate, Burma 1943 Feb-June', p.4

70. Wingate, 'Record', p.1; Colonel OC Wingate, 'Appreciation of chances of forming long range penetration groups in Burma by Colonel OC Wingate at Maymyo on 2/4/42', Box I, p.6

71. See Stilwell's diary entries of 11 and 12 March 1942, *Stillwell Diaries*, pp.59-60

72. Calvert, *Fighting Mad*, pp.67-75 and *Prisoners of Hope*, pp.80-81

73. 'Mission 204', p.1

74. Colonel OC Wingate, 'Notes on Penetration Warfare – Burma Command', Box I, p.1

75. *Ibid*, p.2

76. Accounts of Japanese atrocities are myriad – for a reliable sample, see Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, pp.46, 73, 240, 531; Slim made no secret of using hatred of the Japanese as a means of building British morale.

77. Wingate, 'Notes', pp.2-4

78. See the previous chapter and Wingate's correspondence files in the IWM Wingate Abyssinia Papers

79. Wingate, 'Notes', p.5

80. *Ibid*, pp.6-8

81. *Ibid*, p.9

82. *Ibid*, p.9

83. Wingate, 'Record', pp.1-2; 'Appreciation 2/4/42', pp.1-2; for a more flattering account, see Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, pp.44-46

84. Wingate, 'Record', p.2

85. Wingate, 'Appreciation 2/4/42', p.2

86. *Ibid*, p.2

87. *Ibid*, pp.5-6

88. Cruickshank, *SOE in the Far East*, pp.163, 165-167

89. *Ibid*, pp.68-69; Asprey, *War in the Shadows*, pp.433-434; Bayly & Harper, *Forgotten Armies*, pp.205-206

90. Cruickshank, *SOE in the Far East*, pp.69-70
91. *OH2*, p.176; Tulloch, *Wingate*, p.60; *Notes from Theatres of War No.15, South-West Pacific January-March 1943 [NTW15]* (London: HMSO 1943), pp.3-4
92. Tulloch, *Wingate*, pp.99, 183
93. Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, p.18
94. Wingate's notebook is held in Box I; amongst Wingate's musings are 'Bushido = Samurai' and, the line below 'Never yet been successful soldier without code.' Both p.50
95. From an interview with Wingate in the Report 'Brigadier Wingate's Expedition into Burma', Reuter's New Delhi, 20 May 1943: 'The Japanese are hardworking and methodical, but lacking in imagination. They have a stereotyped way of dealing with situations, rather like the Germans, and they can be caught out...' and in a BBC Telediphone recording from New Delhi of 22 May 1943: 'Although incapable of the sombre and humourless self-immolation of the Japanese, the British soldier can, nevertheless, beat him on his own chosen ground, provided he gets scope for his greater intellectual power and stronger and saner character.' Both from Box I
96. 'LRP Pamphlet', Chapter XV, Para 2(a)
97. Barbara Tuchman, *Stilwell and the American Experience in China 1911-1945* (London: Macmillan 1970), pp.213-214
98. Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, pp.14-15
99. PRO WO106/4837, *Military Training Publication (Australia) No.23 - Jungle Warfare*, Draft Copy, p.29
100. Brigadier OC Wingate DSO, 'Intruder Mission', *War*, No.48, 10 July 1943, pp.7-8
101. *Ibid*, p.5
102. Wingate, 'Training Notes No.1', p.5
103. *Ibid*, p.5
104. '77 Infantry Brigade: ROLE', 22 September 1942, Box 1, File 11, p.1
105. *Ibid*, p.1
106. *Ibid*, p.1
107. *Ibid*, p.1

108. 'LRP Pamphlet', Section 153, Para 1(a)

109. '77 Infantry Brigade: ROLE', p.1

110. Brigadier OC Wingate, *Report on Operations of 77th Infantry Brigade in Burma, February to June 1943* (New Delhi: Government of India Press 1943) p.3; Copy No.27 is held in Box I

111. Calvert, *Prisoners*, pp.10-11 and *Fighting Mad*, pp.46-47. Calvert's papers are held in the Department of Documents of the Imperial War Museum, but begin with his period of service in Malaya in the early 1950s and are sparse before his discharge from the Army in 1955. Even thereafter they consist largely of press cuttings and official documents authored by others, Calvert, apparently, not being a great letter writer. Consequently, for Calvert's experiences in Burma the researcher must rely heavily upon his published works and papers held in other collections, the Wingate Papers in particular.

112. *MTP52*, p.42

113. *OH2*, pp.212-214, 241; *OH3*, p.38. Slim was at pains to point out, in his postwar correspondence, that the use of air supply preceded Wingate's arrival: for example, in a letter to Kirby of 24 April 1959, he pointed out that air supply had been used in India in the 1930s and in Iraq in 1941, and that it was only Japanese air superiority which precluded its use in Burma in 1942; Churchill Archives Slim Papers, File 5/3

114. *NTW15*, pp.24, 29-32

115. 'Some Points', Para.B; correspondence concerning the ordering of jeeps and mules for the Light Divisions is in PRO WO106/2678; *OH2*, pp.241-243

116. *OH2*, p.243

117. Wingate, *Report*, p.1

118. Wingate, '77 Brigade', p.2

119. *Ibid*, p.2

120. *Notes from Theatres of War No.14, Western Desert and Cyrenaica, August/December 1942 [NTW14]* in PRO WO208/3108, pp.40-43; Richard P Hallion, *Strike from the Sky: The History of Battlefield Air Attack 1911-1945* (Shrewsbury: AirLife 1989), pp.171-172; RJ Overy, *The Air War 1939-1945* (London: Europa 1980), pp.67-68; John Terraine, *The Right of the Line: The Royal Air*

- Force in the European War 1939-45* (London: Hodder & Stoughton 1985), pp.361, 370-389
121. Hallion, *Strike from the Skies*, p.172
  122. Ibid, pp.171-172; Overy, *Air War*, pp.67-68; Terraine, *Right of the Line*, pp.379-382
  123. LRP Pamphlet, Chapter II, Para 3(b)
  124. Ibid, Para 3(b)
  125. PRO HS7/111, p.23; WO to GOC Burma of 24 February 1942, in PRO WO106/2662; Cruickshank, *SOE in the Far East*, pp.70, 163-167
  126. Mackenzie, *Secret History of SOE*, pp.388-392
  127. PRO HS7/111, pp.19-20; War Cabinet - Chiefs of Staff Committee, Minutes of Meeting Held in Room 240 Combined Chiefs of Staff Building on Friday 21 May 1943, in PRO CAB121/317; R Dorman-Smith to Amery of 3 October 1942, Churchill Archives Amery Papers, AMEL 2/3/1; Bayly & Harper, *Forgotten Armies*, pp.353-354; Cruickshank, *SOE in the Far East*, pp.269-270; Foot, *SOE*, pp.210-211
  128. *OH2*, p.192; Cruickshank, *SOE in the Far East*, p.85
  129. Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, pp.147-148, 289
  130. Minutes of a Meeting Held in DMO's Office on 24.4.42 to Discuss Guerilla Operations in BURMA, Box I, Paras.1-2
  131. Ibid, Para.3
  132. Ibid, Para.3
  133. Ibid, Paras.3, 4, 6
  134. Ibid, Para.5
  135. Ibid, Paras.5, 9
  136. WO to CinC India of 14 June 1942, in PRO WO106/3771
  137. Cruickshank, *SOE in the Far East*, p.165
  138. Wingate, *Report*, pp.113-114; Tulloch, *Wingate*, pp.63, 73
  139. Gordon, 'Wingate', p.296
  140. *Notes from Theatres of War No.6 - Cyrenaica, November 1941/January 1942* (London: HMSO 1942), pp.3-4

141. Field Marshal The Viscount Montgomery of Alamein, *Memoirs*, (London: Collins 1958) p.101

142. *Notes from Theatres of War No.14 - Western Desert and Cyrenaica August/December 1942* (London: HMSO 1942), pp.23-24; Barnett, *Desert Generals*, pp.275-286; French, *Raising Churchill's Army*, pp.237-239; Montgomery, *Memoirs*, pp.87-90, 116-140

143. Alan Hoe, *David Stirling: The Authorised Biography of the Creator of the SAS* (London: Little Brown 1992) pp.208-210

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146. Hackett, 'Special Forces', p.31; Otway, *Airborne Forces*, p.105

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## CHAPTER SEVEN

WINGATE IN BURMA (2) – OPERATIONS *LONGCLOTH* AND *THURSDAY*, AND THE  
SUBSEQUENT DEVELOPMENT OF LONG RANGE PENETRATION

**We were a well-balanced fighting force, 20,000 or more men, all potential Jap-killers and no hangers-on, going to the hub of the situation in order that we might cut some of the spokes. Then with pressure on the rim, the whole structure might break down.**

*- Brigadier Michael Calvert<sup>1</sup>*

**I found Wingate stimulating when he talked strategy or grand tactics, but strangely naïve when it came to the business of actually fighting the Japanese. He had never experienced a real fight against them, still less a battle. The Japanese, unlike the Italians, were not to be frightened into a withdrawal by threats to their rear; they had first to be battered and destroyed in hard fighting.**

*- Field Marshal Lord Slim<sup>2</sup>*

*Introduction – Operation Longcloth and its impact*

This chapter outlines the impact of Operation *Longcloth*, the first Chindit operation, and subsequent events on Wingate's military ideas through to his death in March 1944. *Longcloth* was planned initially as an attack on Japanese communications along the line of the Irrawaddy river and beyond, supporting a combined British-Chinese offensive into northern Burma, but when the offensive was cancelled, due to a combination of logistical problems and characteristically uncooperative behaviour from Chiang, Wingate persuaded Wavell that the operation should proceed as an experiment to test the ideas summarised in the previous chapter.<sup>3</sup> *Longcloth* duly went ahead, from February to May

1943, 77<sup>th</sup> Indian Infantry Brigade penetrating to the Irrawaddy and beyond, destroying a number of bridges and blowing the railway between Mandalay and northern Burma, the main Japanese supply line to their forces in the north, in more than seventy places.<sup>4</sup> The brigade learnt valuable lessons, perhaps the most important of which was that well-trained and acclimatised British troops had little to fear from the jungle. They learned that there were more types of bush than the simple ‘primary/secondary jungle’ given in official training publications, each providing its own tactical costs and benefits, and provided that noise and camouflage drills – which Wingate enforced rigidly – were respected, a large force could become virtually invisible to air and even ground forces unless at very close range, a notable feature of *Longcloth* being the large number of successful ambushes of Japanese forces. Also noticeable was the apparently growing lack of aggression of the Japanese, who seemed satisfied, in many cases, to confine themselves to shelling positions they thought were held by Chindit forces with mortars and artillery, from a distance.<sup>5</sup> There was a consensus, even among Wingate’s critics, that one of the benefits of *Longcloth* was the irreparable puncturing of the ‘Super Jap’ myth.<sup>6</sup>

Wingate’s faith in the new technology was at least partially vindicated: he was in regular wireless communication with 77<sup>th</sup> Brigade’s parent formation, IV Corps, in Assam, until late March, by which time he was over 170 miles behind Japanese lines, and was also able to coordinate airdrops - at one point, sixteen sorties delivered 70,000 pounds of supplies over a 48-hour period. It was also discovered that, contrary to the protestations of previous training documents, supply drops could be made in thick jungle, meaning that it was no longer necessary to concentrate upon clearings or other obvious dropping zones.<sup>7</sup> *Longcloth* demonstrated that a brigade-sized formation could penetrate over 100 miles behind enemy lines to attack his deep communications, supplied entirely by air, provided it had adequate air support. Such had been forecast by Holland and others at MI(R) in 1940.

The operation was not an unvarnished success, however. 77<sup>th</sup> Indian Infantry Brigade began the



operation in February with 3,000 men, and by the beginning of June, 2182 had returned to India. Of the missing 818, 120 were soldiers of the Burma Rifles – a regiment recruited largely from the hill tribes – who stayed behind voluntarily to organise resistance; 430 had been taken prisoner, and 450 were dead.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, many of those who returned were suffering from malaria, malnutrition, or, in many cases, both, and would be unfit for further soldiering without an extensive period of medical care.<sup>9</sup> Fergusson was unequivocal about the causes of this – the short rations upon which Wingate kept the Brigade throughout the operation: in postwar correspondence with Slim he recounted having to abandon starving soldiers by the trackside, completely unable to help them, and that he had threatened to resign if Wingate did not rectify this problem before any further operations.<sup>10</sup> Another potential resignation issue had been Wingate's alleged 'abandonment' of hill tribes who had helped the Chindits to the retribution of the Japanese.<sup>11</sup> Wingate, therefore, had critics from within his own forces.

At the political level, *Longcloth* strengthened British claims to be playing an active part in the war against Japan, something of growing importance in Britain's politico-strategic dealings with the Americans. The Allied strategic agenda for 1943 was set at the *Trident* conference, in Washington in May 1943. *Trident* saw considerable acrimony develop between the British and Stilwell. Stilwell, believing the Chinese were on the point of collapse and suffering incessant nagging from Chiang and his cronies, pressed for an overland offensive into northern Burma, to re-open the Burma Road, before the end of the year: he was backed in this by his old friend General George C Marshall, Chief of Staff of the US Army.<sup>12</sup> Chiang, under Chennault's influence and with some support from President Roosevelt, advocated building up American airpower in China, Chennault claiming that with 150 fighters and eighty bombers, he could sink 500,000 tons of Japanese shipping in six months, severing their communications with China from the air.<sup>13</sup> Churchill and Brooke opposed this, based on reports from Wavell that no offensive into northern Burma would be possible before at least

November 1943, due to the need to build all-weather roads and railways into Assam, adjacent to Burma, and that re-opening the Burma road could only be expedited by re-taking Rangoon, by sea – Operation *Anakim* - and then pushing northwards, this requiring a buildup of forces for an amphibious landing in southern Burma, not for a land offensive in the north.<sup>14</sup> A compromise was reached by which there would be a buildup of US airpower in India, air supply to China would be escalated to the 10,000 tons per month Chennault estimated would be necessary for his air offensive, there would be limited seaborne operations against Arakan, in southern Burma, and overland offensives from Assam and Yunnan aimed at tying down Japanese forces which might be deployed elsewhere and with the long-term aim of re-opening the Burma Road.<sup>15</sup> It was also decided that a new Allied theatre-level command, Southeast Asia Command (SEAC), should be created to oversee these operations – and, given Churchill's strategic priorities, some wags suggested that SEAC actually stood for 'Save England's Asiatic Colonies'.<sup>16</sup>

Churchill was disappointed by GHQ India's reaction to these proposals. Wavell reported that morale in India was still low, that the rapid expansion of the Indian Army in 1942-43 meant that further training was necessary before any offensives could be contemplated and that communications in Assam and upper Burma were so undeveloped that only those areas of Burma with all-weather roads – almost none - could be re-taken.<sup>17</sup> On 7 July, news reached Churchill of *Longcloth*, and he communicated with Brooke and the other British chiefs of staff comparing GHQ India unfavourably with Wingate ('[A] man of genius and audacity... The Clive of Burma') and suggesting that Wingate, still only an acting brigadier, should take charge of all offensive operations against Burma.<sup>18</sup> Brooke, who admired Wingate but recognised his limitations, moved to head off this outburst of Churchillian enthusiasm, and seems to have dissuaded Churchill from putting Wingate in charge in Burma at a private meeting on 25 July 1943: however, they agreed on the value of LRP operations, and next day, Churchill minuted the Chiefs of Staff ordering 'Maximum pressure [in Burma] by operations similar

to those conducted by General [sic] Wingate, wherever contact can be made on land with the Japanese.<sup>19</sup> Churchill's admiration was strengthened further by his reading Wingate's official report of the operation, and Wingate was summoned to London to meet with Brooke and to make the necessary measures for an expansion of LRP forces. Upon his return to London, Wingate was invited to Downing Street by Churchill, who proposed that Wingate should accompany him to the next inter-Allied conference, *Quadrant*, in Quebec in August, arranging also that Lorna should accompany them. Churchill aimed to show the Americans that the British shared their resolve to defeat the Axis on the European and Asian mainland, also taking along Wing Commander Guy Gibson VC, the commander of the 'Dam Busters' raid (who seems to have taken a major dislike to both Wingates).<sup>20</sup> Wingate was now at the pinnacle of his influence.

Operation *Thursday* was a direct result of decisions made at *Quadrant*, based upon Wingate's presence there, the conference seeing Wingate, invited by Churchill initially for cosmetic purposes, meet with Roosevelt and the Combined Chiefs of Staff and thereby exert major influence over theatre strategy in Southeast Asia. The memorandum and outline plan Wingate produced for the Chiefs of Staff on how northern Burma might be reoccupied during the dry season of 1944 marked a departure from prevailing British opinion, although this was one of the key objectives set by *Trident*.<sup>21</sup> This memorandum does not appear to have survived, which is unfortunate, given all that flowed from it: however, it is summarised in other documents and the *Official History*. Wingate proposed a force of 19,000 British, 7,500 Gurkhas or Africans, 6,000 mules and ponies and 100 jeeps, supported by 12-20 Dakotas.<sup>22</sup> These would form three LRP Groups (Brigades), one to be inserted into northeast Burma from China to attack communications from Mandalay to Bhamo, one to attack the Shwebo-Myitkyina railway and one to operate in central Burma against communications from Kalembo to Kalewa. The intention remained the same as before:

The purpose of [these] operations was to create a state of confusion in enemy-held territory by disrupting his communications and rear installations, which would lead to progressive weakening and misdirection of his main forces, and to indicate suitable targets for the tactical air forces which would enable the strategic air offensive to be driven home. Such operations would inevitably produce favourable opportunities for an offensive by the main Allied forces...<sup>23</sup>

The aim was to enable a major offensive in north Burma, British forces advancing on Pinlebu and Indaw from Assam, and Stilwell's Chinese moving along the Hukawng Valley to take Myitkyina and thereby reopening the Burma Road.<sup>24</sup> *Longcloth* had demonstrated that LRP Groups could not operate for more than twelve weeks without replacement, and so three further Groups would be required: these could also support a further offensive into southern Burma in 1944-45. Wingate also predicted that 'Since the only effective answer to penetration was counter-penetration', the Japanese would respond to the 1944 offensive with an attack on IV Corps' communications in Assam: consequently, two further Groups should be created to strike back at the communications of Japanese forces carrying out this offensive.<sup>25</sup> Wingate also proposed the creation of a LRP Headquarters of corps level - a lieutenant general's command - with two 'wings' of four LRP Groups each; veterans of *Longcloth* would form the nucleus of this force: what was required was to create in India 'a machine for turning out LRP groups at a steady and increasing rate.'<sup>26</sup>

The Chiefs of Staff ordered that Wingate be allocated 70th Infantry Division – which caused enormous bitterness at GHQ India, as it was the only fully trained and equipped British division in the theatre. He also received a brigade of 81st West African Division, and the creation of a force headquarters was authorised by the Chiefs of Staff, with the option to attach the whole of 82nd West African Division at a later date.<sup>27</sup> The Chiefs proclaimed confidence in Wingate's ideas: 'We fully support the general conception of these Long Range Penetration Groups and feel they will be most useful in the war against Japan.'<sup>28</sup> These ideas formed a key part of British proposals made at Quebec, where the British Chiefs of Staff outlined their proposal to raise six LRP Groups, and argued that

Wingate's proposed operation had the potential to re-open the Burma Road - a major departure from their original intent to avoid northern Burma altogether. In subsequent meetings with President Roosevelt and the American Chiefs of Staff - Generals George Marshall and HH ('Hap') Arnold for the Army and USAAF respectively and Admiral Ernest King for the US Navy - Wingate described *Longcloth* and outlined his proposals for a future expansion of LRP.<sup>29</sup> Marshall and Arnold were to have a major indirect influence upon the subsequent development of Wingate's ideas.

*Quadrant* decided as follows:

- There should be a British Supreme Allied Commander, South East Asia, with an American Deputy, presiding over a combined staff and Naval, Air and Army Commanders-in-Chief. Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten was appointed Supreme Allied Commander, with Stilwell as Deputy. British-Indian ground forces allocated to operations in Burma were formed into 11th Army Group, under the Army Commander in Chief, General Sir George Giffard; 11th Army Group comprised the new Fourteenth Army, under Slim, and Eastern Command, a training and administrative formation under the command of Auchinleck as CinC India.<sup>30</sup>

- China was to be kept in the war, and the striking power of Allied air forces in China to be built up, through expanding the air route from Assam to China across the 'Hump'.<sup>31</sup>

- '[O]ur main effort' should be ground operations aimed at re-opening land communications to China.<sup>32</sup> Mountbatten's first task was to study and report on the feasibility of amphibious operations against northern Sumatra, southern Burma and the Kra Isthmus of Thailand and, most significantly for this thesis, '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', dependent upon the state of communications in Assam.<sup>33</sup> By implication, this would involve Wingate's enlarged LRP force, executing operations based on the outline plan he had presented to the

British Chiefs of Staff *en route* to Quebec - in other words, at least eight LRP Brigades being inserted into northern Burma with major Allied ground offensives from Assam and Yunnan to exploit the situation created thereby, leading to the clearing of Burma, north of the 24th Parallel, and the re-opening of the Burma Road. This was emphatically Wingate's interpretation of *Quadrant*: in correspondence covered below he cited *Quadrant* repeatedly - even after developments elsewhere caused its objectives to be modified - in support of demands that the role of LRP, and resources allocated, be preserved and escalated.

Whatever the misgivings of GHQ India, LRP operations went ahead in northern Burma in 1944, and on a greater scale even than predicted by Wingate at *Quadrant*. This was enabled largely by extensive material support from the Americans, particularly Arnold, who, apparently at Mountbatten's request, created and assigned a specialist unit of the USAAF, No.1 Air Commando, under Colonels John Alison and Philip Cochran, to provide dedicated air support for future Chindit operations.<sup>34</sup> Further indication of the investment the Americans put into Wingate was the scale of equipment they supplied his expanded LRP organisation: Lee Enfield rifles and Sten Guns were replaced by American Garands, communications were enhanced by American 'walky-talky' hand-held radios and, perhaps most fondly remembered by former Chindits, Wingate's favoured diet of dried fruit and Shakapura biscuits was replaced by American K-Rations.<sup>35</sup> They also committed a brigade-sized American Army unit, Brigadier General Frank Merrill's 5307th Provisional Infantry Regiment, codenamed *Galahad* but known more widely under its newspaper propaganda nickname, 'Merrill's Marauders'. *Galahad* consisted of 3,000 volunteers, including many Pacific veterans, and was intended to form the basis for three American LRP Groups; it formed in the USA in September 1943 and arrived in India in late October to begin training in Wingate's methods; accordingly, it had 700 mules allocated and USAAF pilots attached to coordinate air resupply and act as forward air controllers.<sup>36</sup> Interestingly, Wingate never accepted *Galahad* was a LRP unit, because it had not

trained under his direct supervision, had not made use of his training literature and was only under his command for one exercise.<sup>37</sup> *Galahad* never served under Wingate operationally, and was to be used by Stilwell as a short-range penetration force, performing 'hooks' around Japanese forces in his advance down the Hukawng Valley in February-June 1944 before acting as conventional infantry in the final battles around Myitkyina, the main objective of the offensive.<sup>38</sup>

Indications of London's support for Wingate included the breakup of 70th Division and the lobbying for other British, Commonwealth and Allied forces to be assigned to the LRP role. In September 1943, the Vice Chief of the Imperial General Staff, General Sir Archibald Nye, suggested that an Australian brigade should be re-organised and retrained for LRP - whether it would be deployed to Burma is unclear - while in early 1944, Chiang assigned 200 Chinese troops to go to Silchar to undergo LRP training, an arrangement aborted by Wingate's death.<sup>39</sup> Wingate had previously announced he would resist attempts to set up LRP Groups with 'untrained, untested...troops from China' but was more enthusiastic about another proposal, agreed between Churchill, Brooke and Mountbatten at Quebec, that three Commandos, under Lord Lovat, should be assigned to SEAC as an amphibious LRP Group under his training and command.<sup>40</sup> Churchill's support was key throughout this period, and such was Churchill's enthusiasm for Wingate that when the latter was struck with typhoid upon his return to India in October 1943, Churchill ordered daily reports on his health from the GOC India, General Auchinleck, something, it might be surmised, that he might not have required for most other major generals.<sup>41</sup> Such high-level backing possibly explains why Wingate was able to bypass both GHQs India and Fourteenth Army with the frequency and alacrity which he did over the following months.

The political-strategic context for Wingate's ideas had, however, evolved by March 1944, and the launch of *Thursday*. Upon arriving in India in October 1943, Mountbatten flew to Chungking to confer with Chiang, who agreed that two Chinese Armies would participate in the *Quadrant*

operations, one operating from Ledo in northern India under Stilwell, the other from Yunnan; however, he made his support contingent upon an amphibious operation, supported by an Allied battle fleet occurring concurrently somewhere in Southeast Asia - as usual, his reasoning was opaque, but this demand was to have consequences.<sup>42</sup> In November 1943, Chiang reiterated this demand at *Sextant*, the conference of Allied leaders and the Combined Chiefs of Staff in Cairo: Mountbatten was promised a battle fleet and sufficient sealift for three divisions, and in late November, Chiang agreed that all Chinese forces in India should be assigned to SEAC.<sup>43</sup> Yet, in December, the combined Chiefs of Staff ordered that all SEAC's amphibious assets return to Europe, pending Operation *Overlord*.<sup>44</sup> Chiang, accusing the Americans and British of 'breach of faith', cancelled the Yunnan offensive.<sup>45</sup>

The only operations left available to SEAC were less ambitious than those decided at *Trident* and *Quadrant*:

- Maintaining supplies across the 'Hump' at 10,000 tons per month, with the priority being supporting Chennault's US 14th Air Force in its offensive against Japanese shipping in the China Sea.<sup>46</sup>

- An overland offensive in Arakan, by the British 15th Corps of Fourteenth Army.<sup>47</sup>

- An offensive from Ledo by Stilwell's Chinese Army, with the intention of clearing the Burma Road as far as Myitkyina. Stilwell's Chinese American Taskforce (CAT), known also as Ledo Force and consisting of two American-trained Chinese divisions, began its advance in December 1943, with several thousand troops from the US Army Corps of Engineers constructing a new road (the 'Stilwell Road') and a pipeline behind it. By the end of the month, Mountbatten was complaining in official communications about the slowness of the CAT's advance and its 'bad tactics' against the Japanese; by February 1944, it was trying to advance through the dense 'creeper country' of the Hukawng Valley against strong resistance from the elite Japanese 18th Infantry Division, slowing it further.<sup>48</sup>



- Operation *Tarzan*, the dropping of the recently formed Indian Parachute Brigade on the vital Japanese airfield and supply centre of Indaw, with 26th Indian Infantry Division then being flown in to exploit.<sup>49</sup> This, and the Yunnan and CAT offensives were intended to be mutually supportive, and the slowness of the CAT advance led General Sir George Giffard, the Commander in Chief 11th Army Group and SEAC's overall ground force commander, to decide, by the beginning of December, 'that the operation as planned is no longer feasible' although operational instructions were still issued.<sup>50</sup>

- An advance across the Chindwin from Assam by IV Corps, to pin Japanese forces that might otherwise face Stilwell.<sup>51</sup>

- Most pertinent to this thesis, operations in the Japanese rear by Wingate's LRP Groups, with the intention of easing Stilwell's advance down the Hukawng Valley and creating a situation that the IV Corps offensive from Assam could exploit.<sup>52</sup> December 1943 saw Mountbatten send Wingate to Chungking to persuade Chiang - unsuccessfully - to renew the Yunnan offensive, which would now consist of a limited Chinese advance to exploit action by 77th Brigade, inserted by air into northeast Burma around Bhamo, planning proceeding on this presumption into 1944.<sup>53</sup> Consequently, throughout late 1943 and early 1944, LRP assets in India were built up to six brigade-sized groups - fewer than the eight mandated at *Quadrant* and considerably fewer than the possible sixteen that would have resulted from the various proposals for Allied and Commando LRP Groups - formed into a double-strength division, given the cover name of 3rd Indian Infantry Division but referred to officially as Special Force. Special Force consisted of 14th, 16th, 23rd, 77th, 111th and 23rd West African Brigades, supported by the Air Commando, with Wingate, now promoted major general, in overall command. Major General WG Symes, the former GOC 70th Infantry Division, was appointed Deputy Commander, and Derek Tulloch was Brigadier, General Staff. For operational and logistical purposes, Special Force formed part of Fourteenth Army and were under Slim's orders

for *Thursday*, the military-strategic implications of which will be examined below.

Therefore, the political and military-strategic context for Wingate's ideas, as of late 1943, was shaped partially by him. It centred, increasingly, upon an overland offensive in northern Burma to either reopen the land route to China or, more realistically, pre-empt and spoil Japanese moves against India. This was the scenario upon which Wingate had predicated his LRP operation, as presented at Quebec. Moreover, the Combined Chiefs of Staff authorised a massive expansion of LRP forces, including American, Commonwealth and Chinese troops, to participate in these operations. Therefore, far from being an 'outcast', at the military-strategic level of the war, Wingate was now closer than ever to achieving his aim of creating what he viewed as a new form of warfare, or, at least, a new type of unit. Among those expressing reservations about an overland offensive were Giffard and Slim: a review of their alternative plans and operational models provides a good illustration of differences between Wingate's ideas and those of other senior Army commanders in Southeast Asia in 1943-44.

*Giffard, Slim and 'Tactical Overmatch'*

In a review of projected operations, written in December 1943, Giffard, as Army Group Commander, expressed pessimism about the ability of LRP brigades in northern Burma to draw off sufficient Japanese forces to speed Stilwell's advance, and argued that logistics would slow the advance of IV Corps to the point where the Japanese could re-deploy to meet any threat posed. He was also dismissive of a proposal to reinforce the Chinese-American Task Force with British or Indian troops, pointing out that India command could spare just one division and that moving even this would require a major logistical effort involving the redirection of at least two air transport squadrons from elsewhere.<sup>54</sup> He proposed an alternative plan involving an advance by IV Corps from the Kabaw Valley to capture and drive through a road to Kalewa, a town on the River Chindwin, combined with

continuous operations by LRP Groups in northern Burma, with the intention of forming a firmer base for Allied offensives in 1944-45 while inflicting maximum casualties upon the Japanese.<sup>55</sup> What is interesting about this plan is that Giffard seems to have envisaged a major offensive role for the Chindits, possibly even seeing them as a surrogate for the CAT advance.

Slim was more ambivalent, both about an offensive into northern Burma and the role of LRP. Indeed, given the importance of *Defeat into Victory* in shaping postwar perceptions of Wingate, and their respective roles in 1944, as commander of the main army facing the Japanese and originator and commander of the major offensive effort in northern Burma for that year, it would be pertinent to the thesis to compare and contrast Slim's and Wingate's proposals for defeating the Japanese in some detail. Sources are available for a survey of Slim's military thought, but are limited. Slim's papers are held at the Churchill Archives at Churchill College, Cambridge, but consist largely of private correspondence, most of it post-war, and notes for post-war lectures on the war in Burma, many of them consisting of little more than prompts or headings. Contemporary papers from Slim's period in command of Fourteenth Army are limited to orders of the day – morale-building or congratulatory messages to the troops. Not only does this raise the issue of upon exactly what Anderson and Lyman have based their assertively-worded accounts of Slim's military ideas, but it means that those who wish to research these ideas for themselves must rely upon a combination of *Defeat into Victory*, passages in Slim's postwar correspondence – in particular that with Kirby, who consulted him regularly during the writing of the *Official History* – documents held in other collections and observations of Fourteenth Army in action.

From Slim's correspondence, it emerges that the literature – including *Defeat into Victory* and the *Official History* – has played down the acrimony between Slim and Wingate. In actuality there seems to have been a deep animosity, personal and mutual, which, in Slim's case, appears to have hardened in the decade after Wingate's death. Writing to Giffard in April 1956, Slim commented of *Defeat into*

*Victory* that he had been ‘a little too kind’ to Wingate, and in April 1959, told Kirby, in reference to the *Official History*, that he was being ‘too generous’ to the Chindits in assessing their contribution to the Imphal battles – and, as discussed in the literature survey, neither of these works is notably charitable to Wingate or the Chindits in their published form.<sup>56</sup> He was even more pungent in a letter to Bernard Fergusson (who agreed broadly with his assessment): ‘Personally I doubt if [Wingate] was a genius except for short intervals, even though he had what most people consider a qualification for the role in that he crossed the border line of lunacy...more than once.’<sup>57</sup> In a private note on Sykes’ biography of Wingate – which was critical of Slim – Slim expressed a belief that Wingate was lying when he claimed that he had a direct right of appeal to Churchill, and even if he had, it was ‘subversive’ of his command of Fourteenth Army; the impact of *Longcloth*, moreover, had been blown out of all proportion as ‘propaganda’.<sup>58</sup> In earlier correspondence, he dismissed Wingate’s argument that LRP could be the main offensive arm in Burma as ‘a nonsense’ and played down Wingate’s role in the development of air supply, commenting that the model of air supply applied by Fourteenth Army in the ‘Admin Box’ battle in Arakan in February 1944 was actually that applied subsequently, not that used on the Chindit operations.<sup>59</sup> This vitriol did not all go in one direction: in a 1970 interview, following Slim’s death, Fergusson recounted that Wingate had ‘no confidence’ in Slim, spread ‘anti-Slim propaganda’ among the officers of Special Force in the buildup to *Thursday* and even referred to Slim as a ‘stupid ass’ in front of others.<sup>60</sup> This probably explains the approach to Wingate taken in their published works not only by Slim, but by Kirby, who leaned heavily upon Slim’s version of events. It might, therefore, be easy to see the differences between Wingate and Slim as arising simply from a clash of egos rather than ideas, but, while this was undoubtedly a factor, even a cursory survey of Slim’s approach to defeating the Japanese shows there were profound intellectual differences as well.

Slim’s priority throughout 1943-45 was to defeat the Japanese Army in Southeast Asia as

cost-effectively as possible. Units making up Fourteenth Army had known nothing but defeat for nearly two years, and whatever the impact of *Longcloth* on morale at home, their confidence was low. Consequently, 1943 saw Slim and Auchinleck instigate a programme of major re-organisation and training emphasising jungle tactics, survival skills and aggressive patrolling, culminating in a succession of large scale raids and shallow thrusts into occupied Burma in late 1943 and early 1944. The intention of this was not only to harden the British Indian Army to jungle warfare, but also to kill off the 'Super-Jap' myth for good.<sup>61</sup> Slim and Lieutenant General Geoffrey Scoones, commanding IV Corps, evidently intended to do this via avoiding anything resembling a 'fair fight', applying such overwhelming numbers and firepower in these operations that the Japanese simply would not stand a chance. This began even before *Quadrant* and the creation of Fourteenth Army: on 10 July 1943, a company of Lincolnshire Regiment - approximately 100 men - attacked a Japanese machine gun post - probably fewer than ten; on 17 August, a company of 1/10 Gurkha Rifles, supported by artillery, attacked another Japanese machine gun post.<sup>62</sup> As the summer progressed, the raids escalated into major spoiling attacks summarised by Slim as 'attack[ing] Japanese company positions with brigades fully supported by artillery and aircraft, platoon positions by battalions.'<sup>63</sup> The aim was to build confidence: '[W]e could not at this stage risk even small failures. We had very few, and the individual superiority build up by successful patrolling grew into a feeling of superiority...We were then ready to undertake larger operations.'<sup>64</sup> Slim was also unequivocal that tanks should be used 'in the maximum numbers available', even in jungle warfare, on the basis that 'The more you use, the fewer you lose', this becoming an unofficial motto for the whole of Fourteenth Army.<sup>65</sup> This principal was to be applied to major operations in 1944: during the second Arakan operation of February 1944, Slim deliberately built up his numerical superiority in ground forces to five-to-one over the Japanese because, he claimed, once again, Fourteenth Army could not afford another defeat.<sup>66</sup> Slim's aim, therefore, was to apply overwhelming force at the battlefield level in order to ensure the tactical defeat

of the Japanese.

Logistics, a previous major British weakness, were also evolving. Partially at Mountbatten's behest, resupply by air was practiced by all units in the hope of reducing reliance on ground lines of communication and the size of logistical echelons of combat units, with General Arnold creating specialist USAAF Combat Cargo Groups to complement this new arrangement.<sup>67</sup> Not only were LRP units trained and organised to carry out offensive operations supplied purely by air, but so were two brigades of 81st West African Division, one of which was assigned to Wingate, the other serving with its parent formation in the Kaladan Valley, covering the flank of XV Corps' offensive in Arakan in January-February 1944.<sup>68</sup> At one point during the Imphal-Kohima battles of February-June 1944, eight divisions were supplied purely by air, and six were moved largely by air also.<sup>69</sup> This was air supply on a scale that even Wingate had not envisaged.

As 1944 opened, British forces in Southeast Asia prepared for larger-scale operations. Slim argued consistently that the war in Burma could be resolved only by the destruction of the Japanese armies in battle, entailing the concentration of the utmost force against their main fighting formations.<sup>70</sup> His stated aim in building up the five-to-one advantage in the second Arakan operation was to 'smash' the Japanese offensive and so build British confidence.<sup>71</sup> Likewise, at Imphal, his aim was to 'smash' the attacking Japanese armies, not hold or seize territory.<sup>72</sup> The aim of attacking Meiktila in February-April 1945 was to 'bring the Japanese to a decisive battle.'<sup>73</sup> As of the beginning of 1944, the wish to fight a battle of destruction shaped Slim's plans for the impending battle at Imphal. Appreciating the Japanese skill in short range penetration and that in a country as vast as Burma, static lines of defence could always be turned, Slim and Scoones adapted the 'box' concept to Southeast Asia. Fortified 'boxes' would be established along the Japanese line of advance, giving them no option but to attack or leave their own lines of communication open to counter attack by mobile forces operating from the 'boxes' or from neighbouring areas. Upon taking command of Fourteenth

Army, Slim ordered that all forward units, upon finding their lines of communication threatened or cut, should stand fast and dig in for all-round defence, whereupon they would be supplied exclusively by air, and ordered his logistical staff to intensify training in air supply accordingly.<sup>74</sup> As it became apparent that the Japanese were about to launch an offensive into Assam via the Imphal plain, the defensive plan adopted by Slim and Scoones - IV Corps held the main front in that area - put these orders into practice:

The plan for what we knew would be the decisive battle was first for Imphal plain to be put into a state of defence. This entailed the concentration of the scattered administrative units and headquarters into fortified areas, each of which would be capable of all-round defence...The two all-weather airfields at Imphal and Palel, vital to the defence both for supporting air squadrons and for air supply, became the main strong-points or 'keeps' in the defence scheme. The garrisons of these fortified areas and keeps were to be found mainly by the administrative troops themselves, so that the fighting units and formations would be free to manoeuvre in an offensive role.<sup>75</sup>

The four Indian divisions in IV Corps would carry out a fighting withdrawal from the edge of the Imphal plain while these strong-points were built behind them. Two of these divisions would then combine with the Indian Parachute Brigade and an independent tank brigade to form a mobile striking force, which would be reinforced by two or three more divisions arriving by rail and air from other fronts.<sup>76</sup> The objective was to weaken the Japanese through defensive firepower before counterattacking utilising concentration of force: 'The Japanese would...be allowed to advance to the edge of the Imphal plain, and, when committed in assaults on our prepared positions, would be counter-attacked and destroyed by our mobile striking forces, strong in artillery, armour and aircraft.'<sup>77</sup>

The difference between Slim's concept of operations and Wingate's was summed up eloquently by the American official historians, Romanus and Sutherland: Slim wanted to draw the Japanese forward onto ground of his choosing in order to destroy them, Wingate to force them back by a threat

to their rear.<sup>78</sup> Wingate's Strongholds bore some resemblance to 'boxes', as will be discussed below, but were to be used as part of an offensive, their main aim being to divert enemy strength away from the main advance through threatening their lines of communication: the prime purpose of Slim's boxes was to draw the enemy into battles of destruction. Moreover, Slim's assumption was that the Allies, at least initially, would be on the strategic defensive, enunciating in 1942 that:

The surest way of quick success in Burma is not to hammer our way with small forces through jungle when the Japanese has every advantage, but to make him occupy as much area as possible, string himself out until he is weak, and then, when we have got him stretched, come at him from sea and air. By luring him northwards...we get a better chance to get in behind his forward troops.<sup>79</sup>

It would be necessary to lure the Japanese forward in order to bring Slim's intentions to fruition. This was not incompatible with Wingate's ideas - he had, after all, predicted a Japanese offensive into Assam at Quebec - and he was to view the Imphal offensive as an opportunity to turn *Thursday* from a supportive to a decisive operation, as will also be covered below. However, a major difference soon emerged as to *where* the decisive blow against the Japanese should be struck, by IV Corps in Assam or by Special Force in northern Burma. Slim's view was that the Chindits were 'strategic cavalry', but, unfortunately, he did not present his views on what the role of cavalry in general should be.<sup>80</sup> However, it is apparent from *Defeat Into Victory* and his postwar correspondence that he was supportive, with qualifications, of Wingate's original concept, a lightly equipped force harrying Japanese communications in support of a general offensive.<sup>81</sup> Another illustration of Slim's view of the role of penetration forces were the complaints he sent to Mountbatten in June and September 1944 to the effect that, for all the different penetration forces then operating in Burma - SOE, OSS, the Secret Intelligence Service, Army Intelligence Corps, Royal Marines and others - he was receiving little or no intelligence from inside Burma.<sup>82</sup> However, from late 1943, Wingate's view



was that air supply and support meant that LRP Groups were now capable of striking decisive blows against Japanese main forces with Allied main forces advancing to occupy territory cleared thereby; Wingate's Chindits would, therefore, be the main 'strike arm', with the rest of the Army reduced to support. This concept must now be described, beginning with the role of the Air Commando, before moving on to look at the role of Strongholds before investigating how Wingate's ideas compared with those for similar operations in Burma.

### *The Air Commando*

It was the attachment of No.1 Air Commando that seems to have begun the process by which *Longcloth* evolved into *Thursday*. No.1 Air Commando consisted initially of:

- 13 C-47 (Dakota) Transports
- 12 Norseman C-64 Light Transports
- 150 Waco (Hadrian) Gliders
- 100 L-1 and L-5 Light Aircraft
- 6 YR-4 Helicopters - the first helicopters to be deployed on any operation
- 30 P-47 (Thunderbolt) Fighters.<sup>83</sup>

By the commencement of *Thursday*, the Air Commando was supplemented by a squadron of 15 B-25 Mitchell medium bombers and its Thunderbolts were replaced by P-51 Mustangs. The Mustang's 2,000 mile range had already allowed it to escort USAAF bombers from Britain to Berlin, changing the course of the air war in Europe, and it now bestowed similar depth, in theory, to LRP operations.<sup>84</sup> The Commando's air-ground potential was enhanced, prior to *Thursday*, by a US Army combat engineering company with air-transportable bulldozers, tractors and other digging and construction equipment.<sup>85</sup> Moreover, four Dakota squadrons of the RAF, and two of the USAAF, supported Special Force at various times.<sup>86</sup>

According to its joint commanding officer, Colonel John Alison, the Air Commando's missions were:

- A) To increase substantially by gliders and light transport, potential capacity of the R.A.F. and 10th U.S. Air Force to maintain L.R.P.G.s by air
- B) To increase actual mobility of columns themselves by providing air lifts over difficult terrain where no tactical advantage in surface penetration.<sup>87</sup>

Once its gliders and transport elements had placed Special Force behind Japanese lines, the Commando's primary role would be battlefield close air support, and, from late 1943, the Air Commando trained and exercised with Special Force, with particular emphasis upon this role.<sup>88</sup> There was also practice of glider landings and supply drops, and it is interesting to note that Alison saw his mission as improving the mobility of the Chindits, just as Wingate was moving towards the more positional approach of the Stronghold.

#### *The Stronghold and its consequences*

The attachment of the Air Commando inspired Wingate to develop the LRP concept further. Having to infiltrate the Japanese front, then following this with a long and arduous march to Japanese areas of critical vulnerability, might now be avoided. The Air Commando's gliders might now land advance parties of engineers deep in occupied Burma, there to construct airstrips on which transport aircraft could fly in LRP forces. The idea seems to have grown from a short-lived plan to insert 77th Brigade to Paoshan, in northern Burma by air; Wingate had planned for the rest of Special Force to infiltrate into northern Burma on foot, as on *Longcloth*, but in January 1944, it was discovered that the Japanese were covering all the crossings of the Chindwin, in order, the British believed, to prevent this very thing.<sup>89</sup> Mountbatten then ordered Wingate, Slim and Major General GE Stratemyer, commander of Eastern Air Command, responsible for air operations over Burma, to devise a plan for

the aerial insertion of a LRP force; it was calculated that Troop Carrier Command, SEAC, and the Air Commando had sufficient aircraft to lift two LRP brigades into northern Burma in early March 1944 and another two later in the month, meaning that just two brigades would have to march in.<sup>90</sup> Consequently, *Thursday* became an airborne operation - the largest of the war so far - aimed at establishing air-supplied Strongholds from which Chindit columns could attack Japanese communications.

This was not an original concept. As discussed already, Holland and others at MI(R) had theorised on such operations nearly four years before, and Gideon Force had been part-supplied by air. OSS had established several permanent airstrips for supply, reinforcement and casualty evacuation in Japanese-occupied Burma by the end of 1943.<sup>91</sup> However, as with air supply in general, Wingate parted from previous practice in intent and scale, arguing that such bases could be pivots for large-scale offensive operations. The Chindits might now be capable of establishing a permanent presence in the Japanese rear, deepening the main battle, with close air support providing the main offensive punch and divisional sized forces being flown in to exploit.<sup>92</sup> According to Tulloch, such operations would hinge upon five conditions:

1. An operational area in which LRP...formations could move swiftly and undetected in the dry season.
2. Air superiority over the Japanese but not at his stage amounting to complete air supremacy (...Monsoon conditions...would immediately preclude regular supply by night)
3. An enemy whose supply lines were known...and which were so sited as to be vulnerable to a degree, since the country across which they ran did not permit deviation from the main supply routes.
4. Reliable and accurate support by bomber and fighter aircraft available which would replace the artillery support accorded to normal formations. (This could *only* be relied on during the dry season)
5. Last, but not least, an assured supply line virtually impregnable during the dry season....The vital common factor was '*in the dry season*'. In monsoon conditions Long Range Penetration Forces lost their mobility and their fire power, while regular supplies could not be maintained [Italics Tulloch's].<sup>93</sup>

Consequently, to allow LRP operations to continue during the monsoon, Wingate intended to create safe harbours behind enemy lines from which smaller-scale raiding operations could be continued during the rains; during his discussions with Mountbatten in London in summer 1943, Wingate proposed to create Dakota-capable airstrips in the jungle around Indaw, an area he had surveyed during *Longcloth*.<sup>94</sup> The attachment of gliders and transport aircraft now meant that the concept of the air-supplied offensive base could now be applied.

The basis of future LRP operations would now be the 'defended airport' – Wingate's initial terminology - or *Stronghold*. As with many other concepts in Wingate's military thought, the origins and intent of the Stronghold concept have divided opinion. To Kirby, the Strongholds began as simple defended airstrips supplying Chindit columns, which evolved into fortified strong-points, which the Japanese could then be induced to attack, following Wingate's discussing IV Corps' plan of defence with Scoones, a view shared with, and probably inspired by Slim.<sup>95</sup> Otway, the official historian of British airborne forces, viewed them as pivots for offensive operations by LRP columns.<sup>96</sup> John W Gordon contended that Wingate's aim was to establish a permanent presence in the Japanese rear, sustained by air supply, and thereby 'engender paralysis', a more radical and ambitious intent than that viewed by other authors.<sup>97</sup> Royle saw the Strongholds as pivots, 'well defended safe haven[s] which would provide a secure garrison from which...columns could attack and harry the Japanese forces.'<sup>98</sup> John Bierman and Colin Smith perhaps came closest to Wingate's concept, describing the Strongholds as 'semipermanent operational bases...inserted by airlift deep inside enemy territory', but then, characteristically, undermined themselves with spurious anecdotes of dance bands flown in to entertain the defenders.<sup>99</sup>

Most authors have been satisfied to simply muse upon the origins and perceived tactical role of the Stronghold and, indeed, much of what they say is corroborated by Wingate's papers. However,

a reading of these papers indicates that Wingate had a role for the Strongholds beyond that of a mere 'base': they were to lie at the heart of an entire new operational model and military strategy for defeating the Japanese. This becomes apparent from Wingate's much-quoted and reproduced memorandum on Strongholds, which began by outlining their tactical and logistical functions:

The Stronghold is an asylum for L.R.P.G. wounded.

The Stronghold is magazine of stores.

The Stronghold is a defended airstrip.

The Stronghold is an administrative centre for loyal inhabitants.

The Stronghold is an orbit round which Columns of the Brigade circulate. It is suitably placed with reference to the main objective of the Brigade.

The Stronghold is a base for light planes operating with Columns on the main objective.<sup>100</sup>

Each Stronghold would be established by two columns of a LRP brigade, either marching in or landed by glider, securing a suitable area of flat, cleared ground. Engineers would then fly in and prepare an airstrip, upon which the rest of the brigade would be flown in and the position would be fortified with the addition of artillery, anti-aircraft guns, and at least one line infantry battalion as garrison troops. Once completed, each Stronghold would consist of a fortified area, incorporating earthworks and minefields, large enough to hold a battalion or two columns, two troops of artillery, and a rest area for up to 200 personnel. An adjacent airstrip would be cleared, with taxiways into the Stronghold itself; while the strip should be Dakota-capable, it would be used primarily by light aircraft to deliver small amounts of supplies and evacuate wounded, Wingate suggesting that ten such aircraft should be dedicated to each Stronghold. The bulk of supplies would still be delivered by air-drop in or around the Stronghold.<sup>101</sup> Wingate recommended that Strongholds should be as inaccessible as possible to Japanese forces, being built in the centre of approximately thirty square miles of broken country, not well served by roads or trails and only passable to pack animals, but with friendly villages in the area.<sup>102</sup>

Part of the reason for this was that Wingate had another purpose for the Stronghold more ambitious than a simple raiding base: carrying the 'box' concept into the enemy rear. The objective now would not just be to divert Japanese forces away from the front, but to lure said forces into situations where they could be destroyed in detail:

The Stronghold is designed to fulfill [sic] a definite function in the employment of L.R.P.G.s; a function which has hitherto been neglected. In all our recent contacts with the Japanese it has been apparent that any dug-in defended position sited in remote areas where it is almost impossible to assemble a concentration of artillery and extremely difficult to make accurate reconnaissance without heavy losses is capable of a most obstinate and prolonged defence against greatly superior force....From this I draw the inference, firstly, that it is foolish to direct attacks against defended enemy positions if by any means he can be met in the open, and, secondly, we should induce him to attack us in our defended positions. It is obvious that columns of L.R.P. have an unrivalled chance of meeting him in the open and that, therefore, they should even more rarely need to attack him in his positions. In fact, it may truly be said that they should do so only when the position concerned has already been isolated by the action of Columns for a considerable time, or there is other reason to suppose that the position will put up a weak resistance. We wish, therefore, firstly to encounter the enemy in the open and preferably in ambushes laid by us, and secondly to induce him to attack us only in our defended Strongholds.<sup>103</sup>

Wingate understood that LRP attacks upon Japanese lines of communication would result in the Japanese trying to locate and destroy the columns' own source of supply. Each Stronghold, therefore, would have at least two 'floater columns', patrolling the surrounding countryside out to a few thousand yards with the intention of detecting and slowing down any approaching Japanese force.<sup>104</sup> These would drive off any Japanese reconnaissance patrols which would, hopefully, provoke the Japanese to commit a larger force, of around regimental strength; this probably would not have the benefit of tanks or artillery support, as the country in which the Stronghold was located meant that only ordnance which could be man or mule-packed could be brought in, and any attempt to build roads would provide a prime target for attack by floater columns.<sup>105</sup> Upon this force approaching, the Stronghold commander should reinforce his floater columns:

In this way, the enemy is met under ideal conditions; making an approach whose route can be foreseen [sic] through country with which we are more familiar than he, and compelled to move slowly to cover his road construction. Under these conditions, two Columns should find little difficulty in cutting up a regiment.<sup>106</sup>

Should the Japanese reach the Stronghold, they would have to attack its fortifications under attack from behind by floater columns.<sup>107</sup> However, the main 'killing instrument' would be airpower, delivered upon Japanese forces concentrated for attack upon the Strongholds, principally by the Air Commando's Mitchells and Mustangs, the latter doubling as light bombers and ground strafers; Special Force also had a squadron of RAF Vengeance dive bombers train with it, although this was reassigned elsewhere by *Thursday*, despite Wingate's protestations.<sup>108</sup>

In December 1943, Wingate stated to Mountbatten his belief that future war would hinge upon the close air support of infantry on the ground, and that the Chindits were forerunners of this.<sup>109</sup> Unlike the RAF, whose doctrine still emphasised pre-planned attacks, USAAF pilots had trained in battlefield close air support, 'on call' from troops on the ground, since 1941; their aircraft carried HF radios allowing direct communication with ground troops, unlike the VHF radios used by the RAF, meaning that the Air Commando's Thunderbolts or Mustangs could provide faster and more flexible response than the RAF, with the Mitchells being held back for pre-set attacks on areas targets such as supply dumps or large troop formations.<sup>110</sup> During *Thursday*, Wingate ordered that priority in the use of the Mitchells should be given to bombing the heavy Japanese concentrations around the 'Broadway' Stronghold and the 'White City' block established by Calvert's 77th Brigade astride the main Japanese lines of communication, with the secondary role of breaking up Japanese formations assembling for counter-attacks, providing some evidence that Wingate was seeking to use these positions to lure the Japanese into destructive battle.<sup>111</sup> In an operational order for *Thursday*, Wingate referred to '[The] Development of close support aircraft...in close co-operation with

columns in order to give the latter the equivalent of artillery and armour support, thus raising the potential of the 3rd Indian Division to that of an abnormally active Army Corps' and that the attachment of the Air Commando was 'unique in conception and should help us to apply revolutionary methods.'<sup>112</sup>

Strongholds, with airpower support, would leave the Japanese with no option but to commit a large force, of divisional size or above, with considerable air assets of their own in support, all of which would have to be diverted from elsewhere.<sup>113</sup> The Brigade commander then might recall columns from other LRP operations in order to reinforce the Stronghold or the floater columns, but this should not be at the expense of threatening Japanese lines of communication, so drawing in further Japanese forces to protect them.<sup>114</sup> The Strongholds were intended, therefore, to remove Japanese from the front line and tempt them into combat in their own rear areas, under conditions where their own reinforcement and resupply would be difficult. Japanese operational and tactical strengths would be rendered irrelevant; in particular, air supply would deny them the opportunity to defeat British forces through short-range penetration. There were other benefits for the British: air supply and movement also meant that problems of terrain became less important, as Bernard Fergusson stressed in a lecture to the RUSI in 1946.<sup>115</sup> There is a detectable resemblance between the Strongholds and the pattern for the defence of the Imphal Plain devised by Slim and Scoones, Wingate also hoping to force the Japanese into 'killing zones', in his case by using the air route to establish fortified positions on or near their communications then, once they were lured in, defeating them through battlefield airpower and counterattack from the rear by mobile forces. Slim noted caustically: 'Scoones must have been amused to find this [the boxes] appear as a new Wingate method of defence' and it is not unreasonable to see Wingate's tactical inspiration laying in Slim's and Scoones' plans for the decisive battle against the Japanese.<sup>116</sup>

However, the Strongholds also supported the model of LRP Wingate had been advocating since



1941. One of the aims of *Thursday* was to raise a revolt among the Kachins, Lieutenant Colonel DC Herring being ordered by Wingate to recruit, train and then command Kachin guerrillas against Japanese lines of communication; consistent with Wingate's Ethiopia reports, and his directives and memoranda of 1942, this was to happen only in areas where Chindit columns could support and protect them, with a Stronghold to be established in Kachin country from where these could operate, something which apparently led to a clash with SOE, who had agents operating in the same area and to a similar mission.<sup>117</sup> Fergusson added a further role to the 'Aberdeen' Stronghold from which his 16th Brigade operated on *Thursday*, a permanent - so he thought at the time - centre of British government and administration, protecting the local tribespeople from the Japanese and distributing food and medical supplies flown in from India.<sup>118</sup> The aim throughout, however, was to use the air route to establish a permanent presence on and around enemy lines of communication, which would consist of specialist penetration forces cooperating with local partisans, the type of operation that MI(R) were speculating upon in 1940. LRP now also contained a major airborne element, and it would therefore be appropriate now to compare and contrast Wingate's new LRP concept with the projected use of other airborne forces in Southeast Asia.

#### *Thursday as an airborne operation*

*Thursday* differed radically in both scale and intent from other airborne and air-mobile operations planned for Southeast Asia, as can be illustrated by a brief overview of *Tarzan*, Operation *Mailfist*, the planned seizure of Bangkok and Singapore set for November 1945, and the actual use Slim made of air-portable units in Fourteenth Army's offensives of 1944-45. One obvious difference is that *Tarzan* and *Mailfist* made extensive use of parachute troops. In June 1941, the Commander in Chief India, had been authorised to form an airborne brigade, but a shortage of gliders meant that only a parachute brigade – 50th Indian Parachute Brigade, a largely Gurkha formation - was formed. In

November 1943, following a visit by Lieutenant General Sir Frederick Browning, the overall commander of Britain's airborne forces, Mountbatten proposed to form an Indian Airborne Division, which would consist of one Indian and one British airborne brigade and an Indian glider borne brigade, this being approved by the Chiefs of Staff, provided it could be met from manpower from within India; Major General Ernest Down was appointed commander.<sup>119</sup> Although not dwelt upon in any documents or literature, it would appear that Wingate and Down were competing for scarce trained manpower and even scarcer aircraft in the same period. In December 1943, Wingate complained to Mountbatten that the Parachute Brigade was using 60-70 transport aircraft he felt should be his, even though 'Parachutists are becoming obsolete...'<sup>120</sup>

As noted already, Wingate was nicknamed 'Tarzan', and it is possible that the plan was named, mockingly, after him, as, according to the *Official History*, he was unequivocal that the plan to drop 50th Indian Airborne Brigade on Indaw derived from the Memorandum he wrote for the Chiefs of Staff at *Quadrant*.<sup>121</sup> *Tarzan* was to support the offensives from Ledo and Yunnan: as with *Thursday*, Indaw was the major objective, and it was also planned for air supply to maintain 50th Indian Parachute Brigade and 26th Indian Infantry Division inside Burma, astride a major Japanese supply node, throughout the monsoon.<sup>122</sup> Similarities with Wingate's concept are, therefore, apparent.

*Mailfist*, planned for the summer of 1945, would have involved one of the largest and most ambitious airborne operations of the war. In October 1944, it was decided to proceed with the raising of the 44th Indian Airborne Division, consisting of two brigades, one parachute, one gliderborne.<sup>123</sup> This would form in Rangoon with 6th Airborne Division, which had spearheaded the Normandy landings and the Rhine crossings of March 1945, to form a SEAC Airborne Corps under the projected command of Lieutenant General Sir Richard Gale, who had commanded 6th Airborne Division in 1944-45.<sup>124</sup> *Mailfist*, interestingly, bore some resemblance to Wingate's concept in that

it hinged upon taking a major objective purely by airborne attack, but was also similar in concept to *Tarzan*. Don Muang airfield, to the northwest of Bangkok, would be seized by the glider brigade of one division, after which the remainder of the division, another infantry division and corps elements would be flown in; two parachute brigades would be dropped to the north of Bangkok to prevent its reinforcement while the other two divisions attacked the city, defended, it was projected, by just one Japanese division.<sup>125</sup> Rather than carry out an extended campaign against Japanese communications, aimed at destroying Japanese units inside their own territory as Wingate intended, airborne units would seize a major strategic objective.

The above operations were hypothetical: in reality, 50th Indian Parachute Brigade first saw action as conventional infantry during the Imphal-Kohima battle, and its one combat drop was made against a mere thirty Japanese at Elephant Point, outside Rangoon, on 1 May 1945.<sup>126</sup> Historically, the offensives of late 1944-1945 saw Fourteenth Army use airborne troops of a very different type, one brigade each of 5th and 17th Infantry Divisions being reorganized and re-equipped to be completely air-portable, the other two being fully mechanised. Each of these divisions was intended to advance with a mechanised or armoured group forward, tasked with seizing an airfield or a suitable site for one; airfield engineers would fly in to prepare the site, followed by the air-portable brigade, which would secure the airfield as a pivot for the next bound or reinforce the advancing mechanised troops as the situation demanded; Fourteenth Army aimed to have at least one such airfield every fifty miles.<sup>127</sup> Mountbatten and Slim both wrote enthusiastically of this technique's application in 17th Division's attack from the Irrawaddy to Meiktila in March 1945, and IV Corps' rapid advance from Mandalay to Rangoon the following month.<sup>128</sup> This close integration of ground and airmobile operations is different from Wingate's concept, in that the aim was to use the air route to reinforce a ground advance by large formations, although the use of airfields as pivots of manoeuvre is a common idea between the two.

It is interesting to note that some thoughts were being expressed on Wingate's 'place' in British military thought and practice already, by some of his colleagues. In a memorandum of November 1943, Calvert ruminated upon a detected similarity between LRP and the strategy applied by the Duke of Marlborough in the Low Countries in the 1700s. Seventeenth century warfare, Calvert argued, hinged on fortified supply bases and therefore tended to revolve around sieges; Marlborough had upset this by forcing his enemies to fight him in open battle, after which their bases fell rapidly.<sup>129</sup> Likewise, in North Africa, armoured forces defeated Axis forces in the open desert, allowing infantry divisions to move up to assault their forts.<sup>130</sup> Calvert also saw the Chindits delivering decisive blows against the Japanese, their role being to defeat Japanese forces in the field, then contain them in their bases, allowing heavier forces to advance and besiege them.<sup>131</sup> However, this required changes in tactical doctrine: columns would infiltrate into Japanese rear areas, whereupon they would concentrate as brigades astride lines of communication, forcing the Japanese to attack them under unfavourable circumstances.<sup>132</sup> Calvert's objective, therefore, was to use LRP to draw the Japanese into battles of destruction in their own rear areas; this came some time before Wingate presented his Stronghold concept and a Calvert influence cannot be discounted, although, as usual, Wingate credited nobody but himself for his ideas and there is no documentary evidence of any link. Almost at the other end of the scale was Brigadier WDA ('Joe') Lentaigne, who commanded the Chindit 111<sup>th</sup> Brigade on Operation *Thursday* and who would succeed Wingate in overall command of the operation following his death. According to his brigade major, John Masters, Lentaigne was horrified by the expansion of Special Force to nearly two divisions in strength and Wingate's intent to go after large Japanese formations, a sentiment he repeated to Tulloch, post-*Thursday*.<sup>133</sup> Two brigades, as was planned, pre-*Quadrant*, he argued, were sufficient to pin larger numbers of Japanese forces but this needed to accompany offensives by the main armies both to allow and exploit this. Although Special Force had six brigades, Lentaigne believed they had insufficient firepower to be able to fight

major battles and the only way for it to have this would be to divert air assets away from the main front.<sup>134</sup> Upon learning of the Air Commando, Lentaigne conceded it might ease this problem, but not to the extent that Wingate hoped.<sup>135</sup> Although Lentaigne left no memoirs, from Masters' account it appears that the prevailing view in 111th Brigade was that the Chindits should be a guerrilla force aiming at battle *avoidance*.<sup>136</sup>

Wingate, therefore, parted company with his colleagues in SEAC in several ways. Most obviously, as of 1943-44, was his advocacy of the use of airborne and air-portable troops to carry the battle into the enemy rear. While this resembled the 'box' defences used in North Africa and by Fourteenth Army in Arakan and at Imphal-Kohima, Wingate intended to use air movement to turn this from a defensive to an offensive method by placing his 'boxes' on or near Japanese lines of communication in such a way that the Japanese would have to counter-attack under unfavourable conditions. Given the scale and intent of his post-*Quadrant* LRP forces, and the way in which Special Force fought the Japanese during *Thursday*, it would be inaccurate to describe Wingate, as of 1944, as a commander of guerrillas or Special Forces. The next section reinforces this conclusion further by reviewing how his ideas were evolving even in the final period of his life, the period of Operation *Thursday*, February-March 1944. The salient characteristic of this period is, as his command and apparent ambition grew, so did Wingate's conviction that LRP forces were evolving from a supportive role to being the main 'strike arm' in modern warfare, and his determination to use *Thursday* to demonstrate this.

#### *Thursday as 'decisive operation'*

A common theme running through Wingate's correspondence in the buildup to *Thursday* was his objection to another limited operation.<sup>137</sup> There were also complaints about inadequate support from GHQ India and Fourteenth Army for Special Force's training programme, the limited scale of troops

Slim was willing to spare to garrison the Strongholds, and the perceived lack of ambition of the proposed exploitation of *Thursday*. These illustrate the very different views of Wingate, Mountbatten and Slim towards the strategic role of LRP in general and *Thursday* in particular.

This began in December 1943, when Giffard was asked to comment on the feasibility of large-scale LRP operations in northern Burma. In an Aide Memoiré of 28 December, Giffard stated that the prognosis was not good for the operation *Thursday* was supposed to support, Stilwell's advance down the Hukawng Valley. The plan to reinforce Stilwell with a British brigade foundered on the only two brigades available not yet having animal transport, and, moreover, their redirection would reduce SEAC's reserves further. As far as flying in troops to reinforce the Chindits, either the objective would have to be within a few days' march of the front line, or they would need to secure an all-weather airfield, or the force would have to be extricated before the monsoon; the minimum force should be a brigade, anything smaller being liable to being 'mopped up'. This, and supporting aircrew, would have to be retrained; finally, airborne forces might take excessive losses from Japanese air defences. Giffard concluded that 'I do not...consider that this is a feasible operation this spring.'<sup>138</sup> Wingate's response to Giffard, his commander-in-chief, was characteristically pungent: the Chinese would not, in his view, fight alongside Indian troops anyway; a British brigade could have another's mules assigned to it; garrison troops would not require retraining, nor would aircrew, who would simply be ferrying them between airfields; Wingate closed by accusing Giffard of opposing any kind of LRP operation, along with GHQ India and Fourteenth Army.<sup>139</sup>

Wingate's feud with these headquarters continued into January 1944, even as preparations for *Thursday* advanced. In a memorandum - possibly not circulated - of 9 January 1944, he reviewed the impact of developments since *Quadrant* on the proposals he had made there. His main argument was that without any large-scale Allied offensive to follow up, the Japanese could concentrate against the Chindit brigades, who would then be left with no option but to break up and retreat. He devised the

Stronghold concept partially as a precaution against this, but with the absence of a general offensive, their object, to attract Japanese attention away from the front, would be defeated before the operation even began.<sup>140</sup> There were also regular complaints about the non-cooperation of the RAF, too frequent and repetitious to be cited in detail.<sup>141</sup>

Wingate's mood improved on 11 January 1944, when intelligence was circulated, for the first time that the Japanese 15th Army was concentrating east of the Chindwin for their Imphal offensive, the brainchild of 15th Army's commander, Lieutenant General Mutaguchi Renya. Wingate's brigade commanders, surveying potential crossings of the Chindwin, had already found them all blocked by Japanese troops.<sup>142</sup> Wingate predicted an offensive similar to that he foretold at Quebec, an attack on IV Corps' lines of communication, developing into a possible counter-penetration against Stilwell's communications.<sup>143</sup> In response, he urged upon SEAC an airborne counter-penetration aimed at 77th and 111th Brigades establishing fortified blocks along the railway between Mohnyin and Mawlu and destroying railways south of Wuntho – Mutaguchi's main lines of supply - while 16th Brigade seized the airfield and communications node at Indaw and destroyed Japanese supplies and communications in the surrounding area. The Stilwell offensive would continue, and one brigade of IV Corps would cross the Chindwin to exploit the Chindit landings: 'Such an operation...will defeat the enemy's main effort, and even bring his plan to a disastrous end.'<sup>144</sup> All that was required was for Special Force to be given priority use of 500 gliders and sixty Dakotas.<sup>145</sup> Wingate, therefore, believed he had found a means by which LRP could defeat the Japanese at theatre level.

Tulloch provided further evidence in support of this with his testimony that Wingate, secretly, devised a 'Plan A' and a 'Plan B' for *Thursday*. 'Plan A' was the original plan, to support Stilwell's attempt to re-open the Burma Road; 'Plan B' involved doing this *plus* committing two LRP brigades against Japanese 15th Army's communications as it attacked Assam.<sup>146</sup> 'Plan B' would require LRP forces to operate during the monsoon, and Tulloch claimed that Wingate devised the Stronghold

concept partially in response to this need.<sup>147</sup> A problem for the historian is that there is little corroboration of a complete and explicit 'Plan B' of the type Tulloch describes from any of Wingate's papers, or, apparently, in any other contemporary document, even the 'Stronghold' memorandum, although this latter implied that the Chindits might be committed against heavier Japanese forces than hitherto. However, that Wingate might have planned a 'decisive' operation, rather than a supportive one, emerges from his operational orders. In his Operational Order for *Thursday* of January 1944, Slim issued the following instructions to Special Force:

1. COMMAND

You will operate under my command in accordance with the following instructions....

3. ROLE

Your role is to create a situation which will:-

- a) Assist the advance of Combat Tps (LEDO Sector) [Stilwell]
- b) afford a favourable opportunity for YOKE force to advance [in the hope of getting Chiang to change his mind] and
- c) provide opportunities for exploitation for 4 corps [sic]

*Of these tasks the most important is to assist in the advance of Combat Tps (LEDO Sector)* [Italics Mine].<sup>148</sup>

Compare this with Wingate's Operational Order of 2 February 1944, his stated intention being 'to compel the enemy to withdraw from all areas in BURMA north of the 24th Parallel' a similar, but far more ambitious remit to that given him by Slim.<sup>149</sup> He would obtain this by seizing Indaw; Bernard Fergusson, whose task this would be, agreed that Indaw was the point of critical vulnerability of Japanese forces in Upper Burma:

It was the last and northernmost centre of communications possessed by the Japanese. Roads radiated from it north, south, east and west; the Myitkyina railway ran through it from south to north, and the subsidiary spur line to Katha...Around and in it was a cluster of important dumps, supporting the whole force opposing General Stilwell in the north, and capable also of supplying the divisions opposing our army on the Chindwin.<sup>150</sup>

Neutralising Indaw would disrupt severely the communications of the Japanese 18th Infantry



Division, then slowing Stilwell's advance down the Hukawng Valley, and of the Japanese 31st Infantry Division on the Chindwin and would, it was hoped, compel the Japanese to alter their plans for northern Burma. This perhaps explains Wingate's design for *Thursday*, his language not suggesting a guerrilla operation but something more akin to the ideals of *Field Service Regulations*:

16th Infantry Brigade, 77th Indian Infantry Brigade and 111th Infantry Brigade will converge upon the focal point of INDAW in such a manner and with such timing as to cut effectually the enemy communications with 31st and 18th Divisions. The governing principle of the operation is concentration at the decisive point. The decisive point for operation "THURSDAY" consists of a circle 40 miles radius whose centre is INDAW within which therefore I intend to concentrate twenty-four columns....Towards the end of the operations it will become a battle of wills. We will stay where we belong at INDAW...<sup>151</sup>

Calvert, now commanding 77<sup>th</sup> Brigade, was even more explicit, stating his aim in the 'Intention' paragraph of his operational orders for his battalion commanders:

By the cutting of his L. of C. and by inflicting as much damage as possible on his men and material, to gain such moral and material ascendancy over the Japanese in this area that he will be forced to withdraw his remnants south of parallel 24 [degrees] in defeat and rout.<sup>152</sup>

The Imphal offensive began in late March 1944, and brought the Japanese onto ground of Slim's choosing, onto IV Corps' boxes and away from Stilwell's advance in the north. Mountbatten commented that 'our hopes were considerably raised by this Japanese offensive [but] the situation was at times to prove extremely dangerous for us.'<sup>153</sup> Now that the offensive was developing, Fourteenth Army was reluctant to commit more troops or aircraft to *Thursday*; in particular, it needed every available Dakota to supply IV Corps' 'boxes', and to airlift in 5th Infantry Division from Arakan following the defeat of the subsidiary Japanese offensive there.<sup>154</sup> Special Force had begun flying into northern Burma on 5 March, and within three weeks, three Chindit brigades – 77<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup> and 111<sup>th</sup> – were operating against Japanese communications, two Strongholds ('Broadway' and

‘Chowringhee’) had been established over 100 miles inside Japanese controlled territory, with another (‘Aberdeen’) under construction, and Calvert’s 77<sup>th</sup> Brigade had constructed the ‘White City’ block right across the railway, and was under fierce Japanese attack. The literature refers to Wingate’s desire to fly in two more LRP Brigades to attack Mutaguchi’s lines of communication (the ‘Plan B’ described by Tulloch), and his subsequent request, direct to Churchill, for four more Dakota squadrons to be diverted to India from elsewhere so they could fly in: however, this is usually done either to illustrate differences of opinion and style between Wingate and Slim, as done by Kirby and Slim himself (who does not mention the message to Churchill) or as a sign of Wingate’s strategic prescience, as by Tulloch himself.<sup>155</sup> The documents tell a more intricate story, illustrating the real strategic aims of both commanders at this time, and providing some contemporary evidence for Wingate’s ‘Plan B’ and a desire to use the Chindits to inflict a strategic-level defeat upon the Japanese.

This originated with a conversation Slim had with Tulloch on 8 March, wherein Slim stated that he might need the Chindit 14th and 23rd Brigades, Wingate’s designated reserve, to reinforce Imphal, and – yet more evidence for their difficult personal relationship - allegedly told Tulloch not to inform Wingate.<sup>156</sup> An ensuing meeting saw Slim agree that if the two brigades were inserted into Burma within the first twelve weeks of *Thursday*, before they were due to relieve the first three brigades, then they would operate under Wingate’s command; Tulloch also claimed Slim agreed they should be used against the rear of Japanese 15th Army.<sup>157</sup> This now, apparently, became a priority for Wingate. On 12 March, he sent a memorandum to Mountbatten - which has not, apparently, survived - outlining his ‘Plan B’, based on inserting the two brigades across 15th Army’s communications at Meiktila and Pakokku.<sup>158</sup> On 15 March, Tulloch signaled Wingate, reporting a discussion with Colonel Bert Lyons, the US Army Liaison Officer at HQ Fourteenth Army, concerning Wingate’s intent to keep five brigades inside northern Burma throughout the monsoon; this would require a greater scale of air transport than hitherto and, given the need to maintain supplies over the Hump, a request should be

made for two or three Dakota squadrons to be diverted from another theatre.<sup>159</sup> On 16 March, Wingate replied, expressing astonishment at the move by air of 5th Infantry Division from Arakan to Assam, and that the aircraft used ‘would be better employed on exploiting victory’; the move should not divert Special Force from introducing 14th Brigade into Burma forthwith.<sup>160</sup> On 17 March, Tulloch reported that ‘some staff’ were urging Slim to attach 14th Brigade to IV Corps, Slim agreeing with Tulloch that this would be a ‘gross misuse’ of a LRP Brigade. Tulloch felt that ‘the more Japs cross the CHINDWIN the better, as if our plans succeed they should never return’; 14th and 23rd Brigades should be inserted into northern Burma, as ‘they will be worth ten times as much to 4 Corps placed BEHIND the enemy than they would be placed in front.’<sup>161</sup>

Corroboration for ‘Plan B’ came from Fergusson, perhaps the most measured and reliable source from this time:

Wingate told me all this at Aberdeen [16<sup>th</sup> Brigade’s Stronghold] on the 23rd of March, and confided also that the situation might affect his famous Plan. Already, he said, he was being urged to keep his two remaining brigades, the 14th and 23rd, under his hand, in case they were needed to help repel the Japanese advance. This he was determined not to do. His was an offensive move, as opposed to the defensive strategy to which we had so long been thirled, and which irked intolerably his fiery spirit. Rightly or wrongly...he foretold that the Japanese effort would overreach itself, and that *pourvu que ça tienne*, the Jap armies would eventually starve. To remove his remaining Brigades out of reach of the High Command, he proposed to commit them both forthwith, before his right to do so had been abrogated.

14 Brigade was to come in first...and they would co-operate with me against Indaw, working south from Aberdeen and then threatening against Indaw from the west. 23 Brigade would follow, but *Wingate had not made up his mind where to send them*. [Italics mine - 23rd Brigade would eventually be used in the Imphal-Kohima battles in a short-range penetration role, as Wingate and Tulloch feared].<sup>162</sup>

On 21 March, Wingate apparently bypassed Slim, sending a signal to Mountbatten for direct communication to Churchill. Wingate saw the Imphal offensive as a major Japanese mistake ‘which...can be made [to] prove fatal to them.’<sup>163</sup> All that was required was for Churchill to direct four more squadrons of Dakotas to India for Wingate’s use and to give him his ‘full backing’; although

Wingate made no direct link between *Thursday* and Imphal in this signal, his attitude can be inferred:

Success of THURSDAY means no more hump and the destruction of four Japanese divisions  
 (.) Get Special Force four transport squadrons now and you have all Burma North of  
 twenty-fourth parallel plus a decisive Japanese defeat (.) But get use these four squadrons and  
 let the truth be told about what has happened and is happening (.) General SLIM gives me his  
 full backing (.)<sup>164</sup>

This was not the view of Wingate's colleagues. Mountbatten passed on the signal to Churchill, but appended his comments: while SEAC could never have too many transport aircraft, he and Giffard were mystified as to why Wingate needed these extra squadrons, and he had asked Air HQ SEAC 'to investigate this question as a matter of urgency'; he also commented upon the 'hysterical' tone of Wingate's communication and told Churchill that Wingate was 'showing signs of strain' – according to Slim.<sup>165</sup> Moreover, Giffard had returned from the front, where he had discussed the situation with Slim: they had agreed that the expulsion of the Japanese from west of the Chindwin and then from northern Burma would be a slow process, and they would have to be defeated on the Imphal plain first; however, more transport aircraft would speed the process, and so they supported the request for additional Dakotas - albeit with a different agenda from Wingate's.<sup>166</sup> Slim's attitude was summed up in two communications to Giffard of 22 and 23 March. He opened the first by outlining what he saw as the essentials of jungle warfare, 'well trained, tough infantry and Air Transport'; he felt vindicated by the advance of Stilwell's forces, the February 'Admin Box' battle in Arakan and 'the promising situation of the Special Force behind the enemy lines.'<sup>167</sup> The Japanese 15th Army was not only committed against IV Corps, but under pressure from Stilwell to the north and Wingate from behind; Slim felt that with enough aircraft to fly in reinforcements to Imphal, 'we can, within the next month, smash the enemy forces West of the CHINDWIN [and] be presented with an opportunity whose exploitation might easily lead to a really major victory.'<sup>166</sup> However, more air transport was needed urgently, in order to supply Allied forces without ground communications, but

also to allow 'reinforcing formations, e.g. *additional LRP Brigades or other formations can be flown in behind the enemy*. [Italics mine].'<sup>169</sup> Slim was already having to request aircraft be diverted from the 'Hump', and so desired not only four additional RAF Dakota squadrons, but five USAAF, also.<sup>170</sup> On 23 March, Slim repeated his argument, reporting that he did not have enough aircraft to support either IV Corps or Special Force, but with sufficient aircraft, he would have the opportunity to win a major victory.<sup>171</sup> This would depend upon 'the employment of all Special Force and elements of 4 Corps East of the CHINDWIN'; consequently, Slim backed Wingate's request for further aircraft.<sup>172</sup> That same day, Churchill sent a reply from London to the effect that he did not think that the tone of Wingate's message was 'hysterical', that he intended to broadcast the success of *Thursday* to the British people, and that he was prepared to make direct representation to President Roosevelt to get the Dakotas required.<sup>173</sup> Wingate's influence still went high, and Tulloch claimed that as a result of Wingate's signal, five USAAF Dakota squadrons and one RAF were diverted from the Middle East to India, but these figures are closer to those in Slim's request than Wingate's.<sup>174</sup>

It can be argued, therefore, that operational differences between Slim and Wingate were subtler than previous authors have allowed for. Slim, apparently, wished to increase the scale of Special Force's operations behind Japanese 15th Army, but as a means of supporting Stilwell's advance, which, along with *Thursday* and Imphal, Slim saw as one great battle for Assam and northern Burma, to be won via overstressing Japanese strength and then defeating it in extended fighting. Wingate's aim was to win a rapid, major victory *inside* northern Burma: the Imphal offensive drew Japanese forces forward and away from his area of operation, giving him an opportunity to exploit. In the event, Slim allowed Wingate to fly 14th Brigade into Burma on 21 March, and the fly-in of 14th Brigade and 3rd West African Brigade (the latter designated as Stronghold garrison troops) was completed by 12 April and in an operational instruction issued on 27 March, three days after Wingate's death, 14th Brigade was ordered specifically to cut road and rail communications behind Japanese 31st Division,

forming the northern pincer of Mutaguchi's offensive, suggesting that Wingate's intention, at the time of his death, *was* to shift to a counter-penetration aimed at defeating the Japanese offensive.<sup>175</sup> This was the only operational order issued by Wingate linked to the 'Plan B', as described by Tulloch, but it is compelling evidence for this plan.

However, the most compelling evidence for Wingate's envisaging LRP as a new and decisive form of warfare is a series of memoranda he sent to Mountbatten shortly before his death, in which he outlined his vision for LRP, post *Thursday*. On 10 February 1944, he wrote to Mountbatten arguing that Fourteenth Army should build its entire offensive doctrine around LRP forces; in doing so, he revealed again the intent behind *Thursday*:

It does not seem to be realised that if Operation 'THURSDAY', which is being carried out by unsupported LRP Brigades, succeeds in driving the Japanese out of Northern BURMA, the superiority of LRP to normal formations in a normal operation...will have been abundantly proved, and there will no longer be any grounds for claiming that normal Divisions have any function in South East Asia. They should instead be broken up into LRP Brigades (Airborne), Assault Brigades, and Airport Garrison Brigades, organized into larger formations corresponding to divisions and corps but with rather different scope and functions...<sup>176</sup>

These forces, Wingate argued, would form a viable alternative to Operation *Culverin*, the proposed amphibious invasion of the Dutch East Indies (which Mountbatten purportedly preferred to an overland offensive in Burma). Should *Culverin* be abandoned, Fourteenth Army should launch an overland offensive towards Hanoi and Bangkok, LRP Brigades leap-frogging from Stronghold to Stronghold:

In the van will be the deeply penetrating columns, a mass of enemy between them and the territory occupied by us. The operations of these columns will progressively force the enemy to withdraw. In territory from which he has withdrawn, normal communications may be built up, and garrisons living in fortifications introduced. At certain distances behind the forward wave of penetration will come defended airports. In the van with the LRP Brigades will be Strongholds with their Garrisons...The capture of BANGKOK and HANOI may well result in the giving of an amphibious role to India Command (Nov. 45) and the LRP thrust would

then continue to carry a chain of defended airports across CHINA to the coast where it would meet up with seaborne forces.<sup>177</sup>

Wingate detailed the tactical role of these forces in another paper, of February 1944:

The process of conquest would probably follow the lines which are to be worked out in Operation 'THURSDAY', i.e. severing of communications, establishing Strongholds in areas inaccessible to wheeled transport, introducing Garrisons into areas evacuated by the enemy, which will become defended airports, and this way gaining control of the whole territory.<sup>178</sup>

It can be concluded, therefore, that Wingate viewed *Thursday* as a test of a new form of warfare in which LRP forces would be the decisive arm. The objective would be strategic victory via airborne invasion, either by forcing the Japanese to fall back from occupied territory by threat to their communications, or destroying their forces by forcing them to contest control of vital territory on unfavourable terms. What had begun, in early 1942, as a series of proposals for supplementary guerrilla operations had returned to the vision that Wingate had presented in his post- Ethiopia papers, of LRP being used to bring hostilities to a conclusion. The final part of this chapter will describe what happened in reality, post-Wingate's death, and will bring the investigation of differences between his military thought and that of his peers to an end.

#### *After Wingate – 'All Chindits Now'?*

There was almost universal agreement in SEAC that *Thursday* had demonstrated the efficacy of air supply to troops engaged at the front. According to 'Aquila', writing on the Burma campaign in the *RUSI Journal* in 1945, air supply '...has enabled us to achieve great economies in manpower, in motor transport and in the provision of road-making material, and has given our forces a flexibility which has allowed them to overcome all the disadvantages with which we were faced in the initial stages of the Japanese war.'<sup>179</sup> During the Allied offensives into Burma in 1944-45, Fourteenth

Army received nine-tenths of its supplies by air; at the operational level, two divisions were able to continue their advance through the Kabaw Valley in August 1944 thanks to air supply, and the outflanking move during Slim's victory at Meiktila in February-March 1945 was sped by both air supply and air reinforcement.<sup>180</sup> Slim consulted Fergusson about air supply prior to these operations<sup>181</sup> and Mountbatten was unambiguous on how the technique originated:

[N]o one would claim that Wingate invented Air Supply because it was well known. But what he did was to prove that military ground forces could operate with no other form of supply at all, other than air supply. And these lessons were taken up with practically the whole of the 14th Army on air supply, of which Wingate was the pioneer.<sup>182</sup>

So, far from 'inventing' a new form of warfare, Wingate had synthesized existing ideas and had demonstrated their effectiveness. This point was emphasised again at a lecture to the Royal United Services Institute in May 1945, by Air Marshal Sir John Baldwin, Deputy Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief, India, who commented that:

I consider that the air is the key to any operations across northern Burma. Burma is a sea of tropical jungle and has in itself been regarded as a barrier to any movement from West to East in so far as ground troops are concerned, but it does afford the shortest and quickest route by which we have a chance of hitting the Jap where it hurts most...I feel that the lessons we have learned in the Wingate operations have shown us how it is possible to overcome this...barrier and to develop a combined air and ground attack against the Japanese.<sup>183</sup>

However, while certain techniques used by Special Force became standard in subsequent SEAC operations, there was less enthusiasm about the concept of Long Range Penetration itself. Slim's and Kirby's misgivings have been cited already, but there was criticism at the time. A memorandum prepared by Headquarters, 11th Army Group, on Special Force, post-*Thursday*, noted that: 'In general, the Long Range Operations of 3 Indian Div from March to May had a comparatively limited effect compared to the effort deployed.'<sup>184</sup> But, it noted, the actions of *Galahad*, on Stilwell's flank, and 23rd Brigade at Imphal 'both paid considerably greater dividends by directly assisting the advance



of the main forces, which alone are capable permanently of securing the advantages gained by LRPGs.<sup>185</sup> It went on to describe the perceived shortcomings of LRP Groups:

LRPGs, which could more logically be called "penetration groups", are detachments; their use therefore should accord with the same principles applicable to other detachments i.e. sufficiently strong and mobile to avoid defeat in detail, but otherwise their strength should be kept to a minimum....Their reliance on mobility forbids their use where the enemy has good communications. Lack of heavy weapons makes them unsuitable for attack on fortified positions or for prolonged operations in any one area against growing enemy opposition.<sup>186</sup>

The Chindits, should, therefore, be limited in future to 'medium range penetration operations in conjunction with the main forces for limited periods', tasks including harassing enemy communications, protecting the flanks of larger formations, seizing or constructing airstrips for air transit troops, and attacking key enemy installations or headquarters.<sup>187</sup> This is a far cry from the decisive role Wingate envisaged for them, and the emphasis upon 'mobility' suggests misgivings about operations based upon Strongholds.

Lentaigne and Tulloch were aware of these feelings. In a letter of 13 April 1944 to Major General CE Wildman Lushington, the Assistant Chief of Staff at SEAC, Lentaigne commented that there was a 'definite feeling' at GHQ Delhi that LRP Brigades should be attached to normal divisions 'to be used in a parochial manner as Divisional Cavalry'; Lentaigne argued that 'We are, I feel, essentially GHQ troops and should never be grouped at a level lower than an Army.'<sup>188</sup> Likewise, in September 1944, Tulloch also expressed the view that 11th Army Group was planning to de-centralise control of LRP Groups to corps or divisions, this arising from over-emphasis in assessments of 'lessons learned' from the 1944 battles upon 23rd Brigade and, indeed, Tulloch did not help his case with GHQ India or Fourteenth Army by referring to Imphal-Kohima, which had seen three Japanese divisions destroyed, and was described by Mountbatten as the 'Thermopylae' of the Burma War, as a 'strategical success' and a 'tactical victory' for the Japanese on the basis that no ground had been

taken by the British.<sup>189</sup> This suggests either that Tulloch had misunderstood Slim's intentions entirely or that he was viewing the battle through the filter of his own agenda. Tulloch proposed that all troops in India should be trained to operate under air supply - which they were, largely, by the time he wrote this letter - with Special Force being kept 'for more ambitious roles' and was confident that Slim backed him in this.<sup>190</sup>

The reality is that there were no more LRP operations, and in January 1945, surviving elements of Special Force were absorbed into the newly-raised 44th (Indian) Airborne Division.<sup>191</sup> Mountbatten proclaimed 'There is no more need for Chindits. We are all Chindits now'<sup>192</sup>, and an argument could be presented that the extensive use of air supply and air movement by all formations of Fourteenth Army had relieved Special Force of its 'special' nature, thereby rendering it redundant.

#### *Conclusions - Thursday in context*

Operation *Thursday* marked the end of an evolving body of military thought and operational practice that can be traced back to Sudan and pre-1939 'small wars'. The operation took the existing concept of LRP and enhanced its aerial element: not only were LRP columns supplied by air, but now they would use the 'vertical flank', being delivered by air to near key points on the enemy's communications, to establish long-standing, air supplied bases, the aim being to force the enemy into attacking them under unfavourable circumstances, adding to the attrition of his armed strength. Moreover, close air support would enhance the lethality of LRP formations to the point where they could engage large enemy formations with a real chance of defeating them. That Wingate intended to use this method to inflict a theatre-level defeat upon the Japanese is suggested by what Tulloch described as his 'Plan B' for intervention in the Imphal-Kohima battles. It can be inferred from documents and contemporary testimony that Wingate hoped that, with Japanese 15th Army committed comprehensively against IV Corps in Assam, he could direct the bulk of Special Force,

including the two reserve brigades, against its rear, not only cutting the main Japanese supply arteries but their lines of retreat, also, forcing them to divert forces away from the Assam front to be destroyed by hurling themselves against his Strongholds.

*Thursday's* 'place' in Wingate's military thought is therefore as a final evolution of the concept of LRP that he presented in his reports on the Ethiopia campaign. LRP had begun as a strategic method involving inserting teams of specialists to form the 'hard core' of an offensive waged by partisans against enemy communications, a more aggressive development of the doctrine for such operations devised by Colin Gubbins in 1940 and applied by Wingate in Ethiopia. Circumstances in Burma prevented the creation of any large partisan resistance for Wingate's LRP columns to support, so the technique centred upon regular troops trained in guerrilla tactics. The attachment of a large air support element drove this process further, allowing Wingate to conceive of his LRP columns defeating large enemy forces in pitched battles. This also marked the apotheosis of the British Army's use of specialist forces to wage war in the enemy's rear, a practice visible in the 'small wars' of the early part of the century and which had been attempted in major wars by Lawrence, MI(R) and G(R), and the military culture in which Wingate had been nurtured.

#### NOTES FOR CHAPTER SEVEN

1. Calvert, *Prisoners of Hope*, p.14
2. Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, p.218
3. Wingate, *Report*, p.2 and 'Intruder Mission', p.5; CinC India Sitrep of 15 February 1943, in PRO WO106/3807, Para.3; *OH2*, pp.294-295, 300-303, 309-310; Tulloch, *Wingate*, p.64
4. Wingate, *Report*, pp.28-29
5. *Ibid*, pp.28-29; *MTP52*, p.3; Fergusson, *Beyond the Chindwin*, p.87 and *Wild Green Earth*, pp.149-169
6. Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, p.163; Sykes, *Orde Wingate*, p.442

7. Wingate, *Report*, pp.24-25; PRO CAB106/46, p.17
8. Louis Allen, *Burma: The Longest War* (London: Phoenix 2000), p.167
9. *Ibid*, p.167
10. Fergusson to Slim of 11 April 1956, Churchill Archives Slim Papers File 5/1c; see also Fergusson's *Wild Green Earth*, pp.186-190
11. Fergusson to Slim of 11/4/56; Fergusson, *Wild Green Earth*, p.95
12. Stillwell's summary of the conference is in the *Stillwell Diaries*, pp.204-206, Brooke's in the *Alanbrooke Diaries*, p.404
13. *OH2*, pp.379-381
14. Summaries of Chiefs of Staff Meetings of 9 May 1942 and 10 February 1943, in PRO WO106/6110; Brooke's diary entries of 14-15 May 1943, *Alanbrooke Diaries*, p.403-405
15. *OH2*, p.381
16. Mountbatten, *Report*, Section 1, Para. 1; Brooke's diary entry of 21 May 1943, in *Alanbrooke Diaries*, p.408
17. Summary of Chiefs of Staff Meeting of 28 July 1943, in PRO WO106/6110; *OH2*, pp.382-387
18. Sykes, *Orde Wingate*, p.445
19. The issue of Wingate as commander in Southeast Asia is covered in Brooke's Diary Entry of 25 July 1943, in *Alanbrooke Diaries*, p.433; see also Summary of Chiefs of Staff Meeting of 26 July 1943, in PRO WO106/611; Brooke to Amery of 12 January and 21 July 1942, Churchill Archives Amery Papers, AMEL 2/1/31 and 2/1/35
20. Brooke's diary entry of 4/8/43.
21. *OH2*, p.399
22. *Ibid*, p.400; *OH3*, pp.53-66
23. *OH2*, p.399
24. *Ibid*, p.400
25. *Ibid*, pp.400-401
26. *Ibid*, p.401; 'War Cabinet, Joint Staff: Long Range Penetration Groups - Report by the Joint

Planning Staff, Box II, Para.1

27. 66689/COS 19 August 1943, in PRO WO106/6110; 'Report by the Joint Planning Staff', Paras.3-8, 11, 13-15; *OH2*, pp.401-403; in a letter to Kirby of 14 December 1959, Slim expressed the view that 70<sup>th</sup> Division intact would have been worth 'three times its number in Special Force', Churchill Archives Slim Papers File 5/3

28. 'Report by the Joint Planning Staff', Para.14

29. *OH2*, p.421; Brooke's diary entry of 17 August 1943, *Alanbrooke Diaries*, p.443

30. Mountbatten, *Report*, Section A, Paras.1-3, 31, and 'Strategy of the Southeast Asia Campaign', pp.470-471; *OH2*, pp.424-426

31. Mountbatten, *Report*, Appendix A, Paras.21, 40; Appendix I to PRO WO106/6110, Para.44; *OH2*, pp.422-423

32. PRO WO106/6110, Appendix I, Para.4; PRO WO203/1536, Paras.1-2; *OH2*, p.422

33. PRO WO106/6110, Para.37

34. HH Arnold, *Global Mission* (Blue Ridge, PA: Tab Books 1989), p.442; Mountbatten, *Report*, Section A, Para.6, and 'Strategy of the Southeast Asia Campaign', p.472; *OH3*, p.38

35. OC Wingate, Major General Commanding Special Force, 'Considerations affecting the employment of LRP Forces Spring 1944', Box II, Part 5; 'Notes for Supreme Commander 11/1/44', Box II; John Masters, Brigade Major of 111th Brigade on *Thursday*, recalled in his memoir of *Thursday*, 'Equipment - mainly American - descended upon us in torrents...walkie-talkie radio sets, VHF radios, and, blessed above all, K-rations', *The Road Past Mandalay* (London: Michael Joseph 1961) p.139; In his August, 2000 interview with the author, Mr. FJ King, who served as a muleteer in the headquarters of the Chindit 16<sup>th</sup> Brigade on Operation *Thursday*, recalled that most of 16th Brigade HQ carried American M1 carbines; see also Tulloch, *Wingate*, pp.128-129

36. Mountbatten, *Report*, Section A, Para.73; Section B, Para.51; Charles F Romanus and Riley Sutherland, *United States Army in World War Two, China-Burma-India Theatre: Stilwell's Command Problems* (Washington DC: Department of the Army 1956), pp.34-36; *OH3*, p.38

37. 'Directive to Colonel Davidson-Houston', Box II

38. Mountbatten, *Report*, Section B Para.51; *OH3*, pp.225-226, 227-229, 292, 295, 399,

401-402

39. Note from Wingate to Mountbatten of 2 September 1943, Box II; Letter No. AC 05 from GE Wildman [Lushington] to Wingate of 2 February 1944, Box II

40. 'Note on Development of LRP Force for use of LRP Representatives at COHQ 11 September 43, Box II, Para.3(d); Wingate's Note to Mountbatten of 2/9/43; Letter 'Welfare 332' of 23 August 1943, summarised in PRO WO106/6110

41. Correspondence held in Churchill Archives Chartwell Collection, File 20

42. Mountbatten, *Report*, Section B, Paras.5-8, and 'Strategy', p.473; *OH3*, pp.11-13

43. Mountbatten, *Report*, Section B, Paras.14-16, and 'Strategy', p.474; *OH3*, pp.54-56

44. Mountbatten, *Report*, Section B, Paras.21-25; *OH3*, p.61

45. Supreme Commander's Personal Minute No. P.27 of 28 December 1943, Box II, Para.1; Mountbatten, *Report*, Section B, Para.23, and 'Strategy', p.475; *OH3*, pp.62, 64

46. Mountbatten, *Report*, Section B, Para.28(a), and 'Strategy', p.475; *OH3*, pp.66-67

47. Mountbatten, *Report*, Section B, Paras.26, 33-41

48. Mountbatten, *Report*, Section B Paras.49-50; Personal Minute No.P-27, Para.1(b)

49. Mountbatten, *Report*, Section B Para.12; *OH3*, pp.8-9, 61-62; Headquarters Air Command South East Asia Operational Directive No.2, to Major General George E Stratemyer, US Army, Air Commander, Eastern Air Command, in PRO WO203/3299, Para.4(ii)b

50. 'Headquarters South East Asia Command SAC (43) 109, Note by CinC 11 Army Group, Review of Operations in Upper Burma 1943/44, 5 December 1943', in PRO WO203/3299, Para.1

51. Mountbatten, *Report*, Section A Para.26; 'Review of Operations by CinC 11 Army Group', Para.4

52. Supreme Commander's Minute P-27, Para.1(c); 'Review of Operations by CinC 11 Army Group', Para.4

53. Supreme Commander's Minute P-27, Para.1(a); *OH3*, p.65; 'Operational Directive No.2', Para.4

54. 'Review of Operations by CinC 11 Army Group', Paras.5, 15-20

55. *Ibid*, Paras.21, 25-26

56. Slim to Giffard of 19 April 1956, Churchill Archives Slim Papers, File 5/1c; Slim to Kirby of 24 April 1959, Churchill Archives Slim Papers, File 5/3
57. Slim to Fergusson of 19 April 1956, Churchill Archives Slim Papers, File 5/1c
58. Handwritten note in Churchill Archives Slim Papers, File 5/5
59. Slim to Kirby of 24/4/59; Slim to unknown of 14 July 1952, 'commenting on book on Ghurkas [sic]', Churchill Archives Slim Papers File 13/2
60. Transcript of interview with Fergusson held in Churchill Archives Slim Papers, File 13/2
61. Mountbatten, *Report*, Section B, Para.44; Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, pp.188-189
62. CinC India Sitrep of 10 July 1943, CinC India to WO of 17 August 1943, both in PRO WO106/3810
63. Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, p.189
64. Ibid, p.189
65. Ibid, p.142
66. Kirby to Slim of 27 February 1959, Churchill Archives Slim Papers File 5/3
67. Mountbatten, *Report*, Section A, Paras.53-56
68. John AL Hamilton, *War Bush: 81 (West African) Division in Burma 1943-1945* (Wilby: Michael Russell 2001), pp.60-164, 197-233, 362-363; Mountbatten, *Report*, Section B Para.89
69. 'Precis of talk to Royal Empire Society on February 6<sup>th</sup> 1946', Churchill Archives Slim Papers, File 3/2
70. Lewin, *Slim*, pp.185, 200-202
71. Slim to Kirby of 24/4/59
72. Handwritten lecture notes for 'Press Club', Churchill Archives Slim Papers, File 3/2
73. Untitled manuscript lecture notes in Churchill College Slim Papers, File 3/2
74. *OH3*, pp.128-127
75. Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, pp.292-293
76. Ibid, pp.293-294; Mountbatten, *Report*, Section B Paras.71-72, 105
77. Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, p.294
78. Romanus and Sutherland, *Stilwell's Command Problems*, pp.196-197

79. quoted, *OH2*, p.351
80. Minutes of Conference held at HQ Fourteenth Army and Air HQ Bengal, 3 Dec 43, Box II, Para.3
81. Slim's letter of 14/7/52, 'commenting on book on Ghurkas'; Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, pp.217-218
82. Cruickshank, *SOE in the Far East*, pp.169-170
83. Letter AX.866 from the Air Ministry to AHQ India, 22 September 1944, Box IV; Minutes of Conference held at HQ Fourteenth Army and Air HQ Bengal, 3 Dec '43, Para.8
84. Richard Overy, *Why the Allies Won* (London: Pimlico 1995), pp.123-124
85. Bierman & Smith, *Fire in the Night*, p.346
86. Letter AX.866; HQ 14th Army to HQ 3rd Indian Div of 3 March 1944, Box II, Para.8; Otway, *Airborne Forces*, p.361
87. Alison's Foreword to Tulloch, *Wingate*, pp.5-6
88. Tulloch, *Wingate*, pp.156-159
89. Mountbatten, *Report*, Section B Para.56
90. *Ibid*, Section B Paras.56-57
91. Ian Dear, *Sabotage and Subversion: SOE and OSS at War* (London: Cassell 1996), pp.111-112
92. *OH3*, p.70; Mead, *Orde Wingate and the Historians*, p.41
93. Tulloch, pp.192-193
94. Mountbatten, *Report*, Section A Para.54
95. *OH3*, pp.169-171; Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, pp.220, 256
96. Otway, *Airborne Forces*, p.359
97. Gordon, 'Wingate', pp.292-293
98. Royle, *Orde Wingate*, pp.280-281
99. Bierman & Smith, *Fire in the Night*, pp.340-342
100. Brigadier OC Wingate, 'Special Force Commander's Training Memorandum No.8, "The Stronghold"', Box II, p.1



101. Ibid, p.2
102. Ibid, p.2
103. Ibid, p.1
104. Ibid, p.3
105. Ibid, p.4
106. Ibid, p.4
107. Ibid, p.5
108. No.1 Air Commando Close Support Forecasts - period 14/25th March 1944 - Note by Special Force Commander, Box II; Signal 11, undated, from Mountbatten to General Sir Henry Pownall, COS SEAC, Box II; 'Meeting at Air HQ, 17/1/44'
109. Wingate to Mountbatten of 27 December 1943, Box II; see also 'Notes for Supreme Commander, South East Asia on LRP Force by Force Commander', Box II, Para.2, wherein Wingate demands RAF officers as forward observers for close air support.
110. Mountbatten, *Report*, Section A Para.5; 14 Brigade Operational Instruction No.1, 27 Mar 44, Box II, Para.19; PA to BGS, Special Forces Op. Memo No.44, Box IV; Hallion, *Strike from the Sky*, pp.163-179
111. 'Close Support Forecasts'
112. Wingate's Operational Order to Special Force of 2 February 1944, Para.11
113. Wingate, 'Stronghold', p.5
114. Ibid, p.16
115. Fergusson, 'Behind Enemy Lines', p.357
116. Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, p.220
117. 'Directive to Lt.Col Herring, Commanding DAH Force, of 29 February 1944', Box II; Cruickshank, *SOE in the Far East*, pp.164-165
118. Fergusson, *Wild Green Earth*, pp.92-95
119. 'Notes for Airborne Corps Commander, South East Asian Command', in PRO WO203/3736, p.5
120. Wingate to Mountbatten of 17 December 1943, Box II

121. *OH3*, pp.169-170
122. *Ibid*, pp.8-9
123. 'Notes for Airborne Corps Commander', p.5
124. PRO WO203/185, 'Airborne Forces including 44 Indian Airborne Division: requirements'; PRO WO203/3369, 'Airborne Forces operations against Bangkok: outline plan'
125. PRO WO203/3369
126. Mountbatten, *Report*, Section B Para.545; Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, pp.299-300, 506; *OH3*, pp.187, 200, 197, 203-204, 237-238
127. Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, pp.386, 497, 543-546
128. *Ibid*, pp.412, 441, 454, 497; Mountbatten, *Report*, Section B Paras.437-439
129. Calvert to HQ Special Force (A Wing) of 18 November 1943, p.1
130. *Ibid*, p.2
131. *Ibid*, p.2
132. *Ibid*, pp.2-3
133. Masters, *Road Past Mandalay*, pp.139-140; Lentaigne to Tulloch of 28 July 1944, Box II
134. Masters, *Road Past Mandalay*, pp.139-140
135. *Ibid*, pp.143-145
136. *Ibid*, pp.157-158; Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, pp.217-218
137. *OH3*, pp.170-171
138. Aide Memoiré for CinC 11th Army Group Reference Supreme Commander's Personal Minute No.P27 of 28 Dec '43, Box II
139. Comment by Commander Special Force on Aide Memoiré by Commander-in-Chief, 11th Army Group No.10012/OPS/1, Subject:- OPERATIONS IN BURMA SPRING 44, Box II
140. Major General, Commanding Special Force, 'Considerations Affecting the Employment of LRP Forces, Spring 1944', IWM Wingate Chindit papers, Box II; *OH3*, pp.170-171
141. For example, Wingate to Mountbatten of 27/12/43; 'Notes for Supreme Commander, 11/1/44'; 'Notes for Supreme Commander by Commander Special Force'; 'Notes for Supreme Commander on Army Commander's Conference, 4/1/44'

142. OC Wingate, Major General, Commanding Special Force, 'Appreciation of Situation in NORTHERN BURMA by Commander Special Force', Box II, p.1
143. Ibid, p.1
144. Ibid, p.1
145. Ibid, pp.3-5; see also *OH3*, p.171
146. Tulloch, *Wingate*, p.194
147. Ibid, pp.194-195
148. Slim's Operational Instruction to Wingate of January 1944, Box II, Paras 1, 3, 6
149. Wingate's Operational Instruction of 2 Feb 1944, Box II, Para.9
150. Fergusson, *Wild Green Earth*, p.75
151. Wingate's Operational Instruction of 2 Feb 1944, Paras.10-11
152. Calvert, *Prisoners of Hope*, p.27
153. 'Review of Special Force Ops Feb-May 1944', Box III, Para.8; Calvert, *Prisoners of Hope*, pp.105-119, 292; Mead, *Wingate and the Historians*, p.256; Mountbatten, *Report*, Section B Para.125; Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, p.267; *OH3*, pp.207-208
154. Mountbatten, *Review*, Section B Para.127
155. *OH3*, pp.208-210; Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, p.268
156. Tulloch, *Wingate*, pp.209-210
157. Ibid, p.210
158. Ibid, pp.211-212; *OH3*, pp.208-209, 219
159. BGS to Commander of 14 March 1944, Box II
160. Wingate to Tulloch of 16 March 1944, Box II
161. BGS to Commander of 17 March 1944, Box II
162. Fergusson, *Wild Green Earth*, p.98
163. Rear HQ 3 Indian Div to SACSEA 21 March 1944, for transmission to PM, IWM Wingate Chindit Papers, Box II
164. Ibid
165. Message from SACSEA to Adv 3 Ind Div, 23 March 1944, Box II; Personal Telegram from

Mountbatten to Churchill of 23 March 1943, Churchill Archives Chartwell Collection, File 20/160

166. Ibid

167. GOC in C Fourteenth Army to CinC Army Group, 22 March 1944, Box II, p.1

168. GOC in C Fourteenth Army's of 22/3/44, pp.1-2

169. Ibid, p.2

170. Ibid, p.2

171. Signal from Slim to Giffard of 23 March 1944, Box II

172. Ibid

173. Prime Minister to Admiral Mountbatten of 23 March 1943, Churchill Archives Chartwell Papers, File 20/160

174. Tulloch, *Wingate*, p.225

175. Mountbatten, *Report*, Section B Para.126-127; *OH3*, p.219; 14 Bde Operational Instruction No.1, 27 Mar 44, Box II, Paras. 3-3A, on Wingate's intention and enemy lines of communication, states clearly that 14th Brigade should attack Japanese 31st Division's lines of communication.

176. Major General OC Wingate, 'Appreciation of the prospect of exploiting Operation Thursday by Commander Special Force at Imphal on 10 February 44 For Supreme Commander', Box II, pp.3-4

177. Ibid, p.4

178. 'Note by Major-General OC Wingate on LRP Operations against Siam and Indo-China, 11<sup>th</sup> February 1944, Box II, Para 3(b)

179. 'Aquila', 'Air Transport', p.206

180. Lewin, *Slim*, pp.179-183, 199-200, 216-217, 222-224, 228-229, 233; Sykes, *Orde Wingate*, pp.528-529

181. Transcript of interview with Fergusson in Churchill Archives Slim Papers, File 13/2; Lewin, *Slim*, pp.193-194

182. Quoted, Mead, *Orde Wingate and the Historians*, p.193

183. Air Marshal Sir John Baldwin KBE CB DSO, 'Air Aspects of the Operations in Burma', *RUSI Journal*, May 1945, p.189

184. Main HQ Army 11 Group SEAC, 'Note on Special Force, 27 July 44', in PRO WO203/1495, Para.1
185. Ibid, Para.2
186. Ibid, Paras.3-5
187. Ibid, Paras.8-9
188. Lentaigne to Wildman Lushington of 13 April 1944, Box II
189. Tulloch to Perowne of Sep 44, Box III
190. Ibid
191. PRO WO203/3736, p.5
192. quoted, Royle, p.318

## CHAPTER EIGHT – CONCLUSIONS

**I was never aware of any ‘Wingate way in war’, nor did I ever hear him talk about one.**

*- Sir Douglas Dodds-Parker<sup>1</sup>*

*Wingate’s ‘Place’ in British Military Thought*

Orde Wingate presented a body of military thought which evolved organically throughout his career. This began in the Sudan Defence Force, with his patrols against the *Shifra*, which informed the techniques he applied with the Special Night Squads in Palestine. From this, he began to argue that specially organised, selected and trained military units, penetrating areas which the enemy thought ‘safe’ to attack key enemy vulnerabilities, were the ideal means of imposing British ‘will’ upon enemy commanders and shaping the situation to British advantage, a theme running through his papers and correspondence to the latter days of his career, in Burma in 1944.

He developed this idea further in Ethiopia in 1941, where, although inheriting an operation devised by G(R), a covert warfare organisation hoping to use local irregulars for this role, his experiences brought him to the view that such irregulars were, at best, of limited effectiveness and,

at worst, totally unreliable and driven by their own agenda. Consequently, guerrilla warfare in the enemy's rear should centre upon units of purpose-trained regular troops with local partisans assisting them. This argument was presented in two key papers – his 'Appreciation of the Ethiopia Campaign' and his official report on the operation, and he designated this method Long Range Penetration. He hoped to apply this model in Burma in 1942-43, but was precluded from this by the situation there, in particular the large-scale collaboration between the Burmese majority and the occupying Japanese. Instead, he devised his penultimate model for operations, which centred upon all-arms columns of wholly regular troops, 'Chindits', penetrating through the jungle at least 100 miles to the Japanese rear to attack critical nodes in their logistical infrastructure and, in doing so, disrupt their planning and preparation and create a strategic situation the Allied main armies in Southeast Asia could exploit. The Chindits themselves would rely upon air supply for their own logistics and close air support, in lieu of artillery, for their heavy firepower. Operation *Longcloth*, the first Chindit 'expedition' of 1943, was intended to demonstrate the efficacy of this method, and taught the British Army a number of valuable lessons in jungle warfare, the most important being that air supply of units engaged in mobile offensive operations in jungle country was possible; this was to become common practice in British forces in Southeast Asia in 1943-45. It was also successful enough to bring Wingate to the attention of the Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, who took him to the Quebec conference in August 1943, where he met, and equally impressed, President Roosevelt and the American Chiefs of Staff. On the strength of these meetings, not only did Wingate's Chindit forces expand in size tenfold, with their own organic air support, courtesy of the USAAF, but Long Range Penetration became an important element in Allied strategy in Southeast Asia, which, in 1943-44, centred upon an offensive in northern Burma to re-open the Burma Road and land communications with China; indeed, it emerges from contemporary documents that, had certain proposals made by other senior officers been enacted, Wingate's forces would not only have

been even larger than they eventually were, but would have included LRP units from many Allied nations also.

The addition of an aviation element led Wingate to become more ambitious, and to advocate air-landing Chindit columns in the enemy rear to establish permanent bases not only from which they would carry out an extended campaign of harassment of Japanese communications with generous close air support, but which would induce the Japanese into battles of destruction by forcing them to attack these bases. Operation *Thursday*, the second Chindit operation of 1944, was intended by Wingate not only to demonstrate this model of operations, but prove to the world that this was a new, and potentially decisive form of warfare which could inflict a theatre-level defeat upon the Japanese on its own. Hence, Wingate's different interpretation of the aims of the operation from his peers – they envisaged a supportive operation, intended to help the 'conventional' forces of General Stilwell forward onto their objectives, while his aim was to force the Japanese to 'rout' from northern Burma due to the destruction of their communications. At the time of his death, Wingate was envisaging a continent-wide victory arising from airborne offensives by LRP forces, with conventional forces reduced to holding territory they had cleared.

A study of the development of Wingate's ideas, based upon his own papers and contemporary documents and testimony, and placed in the context of the development of British Army doctrinal thought and practice of his time – 1922 to 1944 – indicates that there was no one 'master source' for his ideas, nor is placing him within any particular 'school of thought' as easy as Kirby, Slim, Rossetto, Heilbrunn and, to a lesser extent, Bidwell and Lyman, have implied. He can be seen to have fitted into a number of doctrinal 'currents', some long-term, others less so. The official British Army doctrine, *Field Service Regulations*, editions of which were authored by Fuller and Wavell, centred upon the need for British commanders to impose a 'master plan' coordinating all their subordinates towards the single aim of enforcing their will upon the enemy; an emphasis upon



breaking the enemy's will to fight and 'attacking his plan' is visible throughout Wingate's career, as is emphasis upon working to a single 'Master Plan' – witness his use of wireless to attempt to control widely dispersed forces in both Ethiopia and Burma. *Field Service Regulations* propounded also the need to engage and destroy enemy forces in battle – as did Wingate in Palestine, Ethiopia and on *Thursday* – but also envisaged a role for forces which would penetrate the enemy rear to attack his 'administrative arrangements.' Wingate, therefore, did not deviate as far from the 'official' doctrine as might be supposed.

Other methods associated with Wingate were established operational practice in 'small wars' fought outside Europe – the very arena in which Wingate obtained all his operational experience. The British Army had been using all-arms columns to surround and cordon off insurgent forces and dominate areas for decades, and, by the 1930s, not only were the actions of these columns being coordinated by wireless, but experiments were being carried in supporting these columns by aircraft in lieu of artillery, and re-supplying them by air, also. Such columns formed the basis of British operations in Ireland in 1919-22, various counter-insurgencies in the Middle East and India in the 1920s and 30s, and in Palestine, where Wingate served as an intelligence officer and with the SNS, in 1936-39. These methods were carried into operations against conventional forces in British offensives in the Middle East and East Africa in 1940-41, operations carried out by forces and commanders with extensive experience in 'small wars'; in particular, much use was made of 'Jock Columns', all-arms ad hoc formations, organised as much for mobility as for fighting power, to harry Axis communications. Wingate's use of such columns, with similar intent and similar means of command and control, is therefore perhaps not as surprising or as 'heretical' as some authors might claim.

Another long-standing practice from 'small wars' and, indeed, one still visible today, is the use of specialist 'penetration' forces to infiltrate and wage war inside enemy-controlled territory. The

British Army had been using locally-raised units of 'scouts' and 'skirmishers' in colonial operations at least since the nineteenth century, and by the early twentieth, these were being used either to establish a British presence within certain designated areas – as with the 'Auxies' in Ireland – or for 'ambush work' along favoured enemy routes of movement and supply, as with the Gurkha Scouts on the Northwest Frontier. Wingate's Night Squads therefore fit into a pattern: they included locally-recruited volunteers under British training, for 'ambush work', and their role developed eventually to extending the British presence within a deeply hostile area of Palestine. Again, this practice was continued into the Second World War, with forces such as the Long Range Desert Group and, later, the Special Air Service, the latter of which was revived, post-war, as a counter-insurgency and counter-terrorist unit. The Chindits in particular have been identified as part of this trend by Heilbrunn and John W Gordon, and, again, Wingate can be seen as part of his time and place, not departing from them.

The period after 1940 saw Britain, unable to do anything more directly, adopt a strategy for prolonging the war based on blockade, aerial bombing and encouraging sabotage, subversion and guerrilla warfare inside Axis-occupied territory, an approach extended to the Japanese in 1941-42. The encouragement of resistance was tasked to a number of covert warfare organisations including MI(R) and its Middle Eastern offshoot, G(R), with the aim of using indigenous partisans as locally produced penetration forces, waging extended guerrilla warfare inside enemy territory culminating in major attacks upon his communications in support of offensives by Allied regular forces. A doctrine for the raising and use of such forces had been authored in 1940 by Colonel Colin Gubbins, then with MI(R) and later the Director of the Special Operations Executive; this centred upon inserting teams of regular British personnel, trained guerrilla warfare specialists, into enemy-occupied territory to liaise with and train local guerrilla forces, provide them with a degree of planning and technical support, and ensure they were directed to British strategic aims. The

application of this doctrine is visible in G(R)'s planning for guerrilla operations inside Ethiopia, which Wingate took over late in their development.

Wingate – for reasons unclear from his papers or those of any other – escalated the role of these teams – by then known as Operational Centres - from liaison, training and advice to that of fighting units, intended to wage war on enemy communications deep in their rear and to inspire a mass uprising by their example. Wingate expounded this model in his 'Appreciation' and official report on the Ethiopia operation, where they formed the basis of his new doctrine of Long Range Penetration. He hoped to apply this model upon his arrival in Burma in 1942, but circumstances described already drove him towards greater 'regularisation' and the Chindit concept. LRP, therefore, might have been derived, indirectly, from the ideas of Gubbins as from any other individual, and, indeed, MI(R) were propounding similar concepts as early as 1940.

Another theme running through Wingate's military thought is that warfare is human-centred and dialectical, centring upon matching the 'national characteristics' of British soldiers against those of the enemy. Hence, Wingate, arguing that Arab guerrillas favoured warfare based upon 'hit and run', advocated tactics based upon ambush and decisive close-quarter action involving cold steel (an idea shared with his commander in Palestine, Brigadier John Evetts), while the Japanese soldier was brave but obtuse, necessitating that he be fought using methods which emphasised ambiguity and setting a tempo he could not cope with. These methods, Wingate argued, would build upon British strengths – superior training, initiative and aggression – and advantages derived from superior intelligence (in both the military and general sense of the term) and technology. Such ideas were commonplace in 'small wars', and, indeed, Charles Callwell and Charles Gwynn both presented similar arguments in their theoretical works in this field. They can also be found in other contemporary works relating to the war in Burma. The cultural strengths and weaknesses of the Japanese soldier, and how to exploit them, were themes in training pamphlets and, indeed, in the

memoirs of Field Marshal Lord Slim, the leading, and most respected British field commander in that theatre. Wingate can again, be seen as a product of his times.

Yet, it was with Slim that the most major differences emerged between Wingate's ideas and those of others. Prior to 1943, Wingate could rely at least upon a sympathetic hearing from his senior commanders – Evetts, Wavell and Haining in Palestine, Wavell again in East Africa and the early stages of his Burma operations, and Mountbatten later. Wingate received support from these personages mainly because he offered viable solutions to strategic dilemmas they faced, and, at least, in Wavell's case, because Wavell himself was an enthusiast for mobile and penetration warfare, expressed in the patterns of operations he adopted in Palestine, in the Middle East in 1940-41, and his proposed operations against Japanese-occupied Burma in 1942. As noted in the chapter on Palestine, there seems to have been a considerable interchange of ideas between Wingate and Evetts.

However, in 1943, Wingate came under the operational command of Fourteenth Army, whose commander, William Slim, held ideas on beating the Japanese fundamentally different from his. Both men aimed to engage the Japanese in battles of annihilation, but differed on how to achieve this. Wingate hoped that his Strongholds, and Chindit columns issuing from them to attack Japanese communications, would force the Japanese to attempt a counter-offensive in which they would have no choice to attack the Strongholds in hostile terrain and with their flanks and rear under attack from other Chindit elements; if they concentrated for an attack, they could be pulverised from above by attached airpower. At levels above the battlefield, threats to their communications would force the Japanese into retreat.

Slim's method, at least for the period he had Wingate under command, also hinged upon luring the Japanese into battles on unfavourable ground, but, on the defensive, this involved inducing them to come forward into the open country of the Imphal Plain to attack IV Corps' 'box' defences, whereupon they would be pounded by Fourteenth Army's superior air and firepower. On the

offensive, rather than Wingate's technique of mobility and dispersal, Slim aimed at applying overwhelming numbers and firepower in order to avoid a 'fair fight' and ensure the Japanese did not stand a chance. Slim certainly had a role for the Chindits, but this was to weaken Japanese forces at the front by attacking targets in their rear, denying them vital supplies and forcing them to keep troops from the front to protect their communications. Slim was also to use air-portable units in his offensive into southern Burma in 1945, but these were used to reinforce a rapid ground advance, the opposite of Wingate's vision for them. 'History is written by the winners': Slim was able to demonstrate his model of victory whereas Wingate was not, and their differences of opinion were expressed lucidly in Slim's memoirs, a major source in the literature.

The major conclusion of this thesis, therefore, is that the 'Wingate model of warfare' was of its time, had multiple sources and enjoyed multiple institutional and cultural influences, and found a degree of acceptance from Wingate's peers and superiors until the end of his career. Even Slim accepted that there was a role for LRP, albeit not on the scale that Wingate envisaged. LRP seems to have grown organically from British practices in 'small wars' and the doctrine for covert operations devised by Colin Gubbins in 1940. It was adapted by Wingate to meet the strategic situations faced in Ethiopia and Burma, filtered through his own agenda and a number of factors arising from British military culture of the early to mid twentieth century.

### *The Literature Reassessed*

In the light of these findings, a number of previous works claiming to 'place' Wingate in one school of thought or the other can be seen as manifestly over-simplified. Indeed, as implied in the introduction, they might be viewed as polemics for their time, merely using Wingate as a 'case study' in support of whatever set of ideas they are enthusing about. The most obvious, and egregious, example was Wilfred Burchett, who tried to present Wingate as a fellow revolutionary, fighting the

good fight, but some investigating Wingate's *military* ideas fall into this trap also. Elliot-Bateman wrote in the 1960s, against the background of Malaya and Vietnam, and Wingate was presented as an exemplar of 'people's war'. Heilbrunn's and Rossetto's works come from the same period, but their emphasis is upon how penetration forces may be used to defeat larger regular forces, an echo not only of Vietnam, but of the prevailing scenario of a Soviet invasion of Western Europe. Lyman and Atkins wrote in the late 1990s and early 2000s, against the background of the post-1970s American and British Army's rediscovery of 'manoeuvre warfare', and so Wingate and Slim were presented as forerunners of this. To many authors, Wingate has been what they wanted him to be.

Other authors can be seen as approaching more closely the model emerging from Wingate's own papers and other testimony from the time. John W Gordon correctly placed Wingate in the context of the enthusiastic use of special and penetration forces by the British Army in the Second World War, while Shelford Bidwell, as cited in the introduction, summarised Wingate's claim to have no peer or inspiration, although he implied that there was an unacknowledged Liddell Hart influence. Among Wingate's most prominent critics, Kirby and Slim can be seen as focusing upon one particular aspect of Wingate's operational thought and practice and criticising it: Kirby was not incorrect in criticising Wingate as a guerrilla leader, nor was Slim in citing him as part of his case against Special Forces, but both were inaccurate in implying that these particular aspects of his ideas were all that he was about. In all cases, attempts to analyse and 'place' Wingate's ideas were hampered by the inaccessibility of his papers until Lorna's death in 1995, this thesis being the first extended work to be based upon them. Orde Wingate and the literature about him need, therefore, to be re-assessed in the light of his papers' availability and this work is the first step in this direction.

#### *Avenues for further research*

These papers can be the starting point for further research not only on Wingate, but on military

operations of his time. One theme touched upon throughout this study, but only incidental to the central thesis question, is the possible inspiration for Wingate's ideas. It has been established that he shared ideas with Evetts, met with Liddell Hart and derived elements of LRP from Gubbins' doctrine for covert operations, but there seems to have been little grounding in theory derived from reading the works of others. Wingate seems to have been familiar with Lawrence's *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* and was widely read in English literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries<sup>2</sup>, and a survey of works of military literature he had in his possession followed by comparing and contrasting them with his own thought and practice might clarify issues raised in this thesis further, as well as allowing a more thorough assessment of previous literature about him.

Another theme is the extent to which the controversy surrounding Wingate was based upon his presenting a form of warfare his peers found unacceptable. Again, this has been touched upon in this thesis, particularly in terms of Wingate's relationship with Slim and GHQ India, but there is also plenty of implication in the literature that he had his critics in Palestine and Ethiopia.<sup>3</sup> There is extensive correspondence between Wingate and others in his papers, not all of it cited in this thesis, but some of it concerning his approach to operations and some of this extremely heated; an entire alternative thesis might be written on the origins of the animosity towards Wingate, which must now be reassessed in the light of the findings of this one, that his ideas, when placed in their context, were perhaps less radical than supposed hitherto.

A third possible subject for investigation, following from the findings of this thesis, is an assessment of the effectiveness of Wingate's operations, a common theme in the literature, but again, hampered by the unavailability of Wingate's papers and other contemporary documents. Calvert, Tulloch, Thompson and Mead all discuss this issue at great length, but now it might be possible to match Wingate's intent, as derived from his papers, with their interpretations of it; it might also be feasible to compare this with assessments of Wingate in other collections and contemporary

documents. A reassessment of Kirby's and Slim's views of Wingate might also be possible.

Moving beyond Wingate, as noted above, the history of MI(R) and G(R) remains unwritten, apart from summaries in histories of SOE. Wingate's papers, combined with the PRO papers cited in the chapters on Ethiopia and Burma, would be a major source for such a work, in that they cover the largest and most important action carried out by these organisations.

Consequently, it can be concluded that although this thesis has advanced the body of knowledge about Orde Wingate, and presents a better-balanced understanding of certain aspects of his relationship with the British Army of his era, he remains an interesting, controversial and sometimes enigmatic figure with much work still to be done on him.

#### NOTES

1. Interview with the author of 23/8/2004
2. See, for instance, Sykes, *Orde Wingate*, pp.40-41, 335-336, 498-499
3. In his interview with the author of 23/8/2004, Sir Douglas Dodds-Parker opined that Wingate's Distinguished Service Order for Palestine was won 'not entirely honourably.'



## GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

**Airborne Forces** – Military Forces arriving on the battlefield, or in their area of operations, by air, either by parachute or glider.

**Amhara** – The majority ethnic group in northern and western Ethiopia and the ruling ethnic group in the whole of Ethiopia. They are Christian and probably originated on the Arabian peninsula.

**Auxiliaries (Auxies)** – The Auxiliary Cadets of the Royal Irish Constabulary, special armed units formed of ex-British Army officers, formed during the Irish ‘troubles’ of 1919-1922.

**Axis** – Germany, Italy, Japan and their allies in the Second World War.

**Bedu** (Arabic) – Bedouin. Arab nomads or those descended from them living in settled communities.

**BFF** – Burma Frontier Force.

**Bimbashi** (Sudanese) – Acting Local Major in the Sudan Defence Force, commander of an Idara (qv).

**Black and Tans** – Former British soldiers, recruited into the Royal Irish Constabulary during the Irish ‘troubles’ of 1919-1922. The origins of the name are unclear, but are attributed variously to their mixed police blue and army khaki uniforms, or to a pack of foxhounds in County Limerick.

**Bushido** (Japanese) – The philosophy and ethic of the Samurai.

**Chief of Staff** – Officer responsible for planning, logistics and coordination of activity within a military formation. It is the principal role of the Chief of Staff to turn his commander's proposed actions into workable plans, and supervise their execution.

**Chindits** (Corruption of Burmese) – The Long Range Penetration Forces raised, trained and commanded by Orde Wingate in India and Burma in 1942-44. The word comes from Wingate's mispronunciation of *Chintheys*, the stone griffon-like beasts which stand guard outside Buddhist temples throughout Southeast Asia, a half-lion, half eagle with spiritual overtones being seen as an appropriate symbol for combined air-ground operations in a strongly Buddhist country. The mispronunciation is said to have annoyed Wingate considerably.

**CIGS** – Chief of the Imperial General Staff. The most senior officer in the British Army, the Prime Minister's military chief of staff (qv) and the Cabinet's main advisor on military matters. The post was held by a Field Marshal.

**Commando** (Afrikaans) – Sea-going raiding forces formed by the British in 1940, drawn from the British Army and the Royal Marines. The word soon came to be a generic term for all Special Forces (qv).

**Dakota** – Military transport version of the Douglas DC-3 airliner, known as the C-47 Skytrain in USAAF service and the DC-3 Dakota to the RAF.

**Firquat** (Arabic – 'Company') Irregular counter-insurgent forces, consisting of ex-communist guerrillas defected to the government and trained and commanded by British soldiers of 22 SAS (qv), formed in the Dhofar region of Oman during the insurgency of 1962-1975.

**FSR** – *Field Service Regulations*, the officially approved British Army tactical and operational ‘doctrine’, published in four editions between 1920 and 1935.

**Gaijin** - (Japanese – ‘Hairy Foreigner’) Derogatory term for Westerner.

**Galla** – The majority ethnic group in southern Ethiopia. Muslim, unlike the Christian Amhara (qv), but believed to have a similar origin in South Arabia.

**GHQ** – General Headquarters – the headquarters of British Army forces within a theatre, region or district.

**GOC** – General Officer Commanding. A British officer, of the rank of major general or above, in command of all British Army forces within a formation, theatre, region or district.

**GOCinC** – General Officer Commanding in Chief

**G(R)** – Staff Branch within General Headquarters, Middle East, responsible for encouraging, supporting and steering armed resistance in Axis-occupied territory. Offshoot of MI(R) [qv]

**Guerrilla** (Spanish – ‘Little War’). Form of warfare generally interpreted to involve irregular forces, operating in small units, opposing the regular forces of either foreign occupiers or an oppressive political regime, which they combat through sabotage, ambush, assassination, hit and run raids on vulnerable points, etc, while avoiding decisive military encounters through superior mobility, greater knowledge of local geography, and the support of the local population. For reasons unknown, the word is often spelt ‘guerilla’ in British publications of the period under investigation, including those by Lawrence and Gubbins.

**Gurkhas** – Members of the Gurung, Limbu, Magar and Rai tribes of Nepal, recruited into the British Indian Army from 1816 onwards.

**Haganah** (Hebrew – ‘Defence’) – The Jewish underground militia, formed in Palestine in 1920, and which every able-bodied Jewish man in Palestine was expected to join. Its existence was illegal, but tolerated by the British until 1939.

**Haj** (Arabic) – The pilgrimage to Mecca, which every Muslim must perform at least once during his lifetime.

**Hump** – The Himalayas or the air supply route established over them by the USAAF in 1942-45, to carry supplies to China from India after the cutting of the Burma Road by the Japanese.

**Idara** (Sudanese Arabic) - A company of the Sudan Defence Force.

**IDF** – Israel Defence Forces.

**Insurgency** – Guerrilla (qv) campaign or movement.

**IRA** – Irish Republican Army, the military arm of the Irish Republican movement, which waged an insurgency against British rule in Ireland from 1916 to 1922.

**Irgun Zvai Leumi** (Hebrew) – The militia of the Revisionist Zionist Movement, which argued that peaceful coexistence between Jews and Arabs would not be possible unless the Jews built an ‘Iron Wall’ of invincible armed strength.

**Irregulars** – Armed forces other than those fighting in uniformed and permanently organised armies, navies or air forces.

**Jock Columns** – *Ad hoc* formations formed by the British Army to harry enemy lines of communication and carry out hit-and-run attacks on advancing enemy forces in North Africa in 1940-42, named after Lieutenant Colonel Jock Campbell, VC, who first devised them.

**JSP** – Jewish Settlement Police.

**LRDG** – Long Range Desert Group. A British Special Force, formed by Major Ralph Bagnold in 1940 and consisting of long-range motor patrols reconnoitering and attacking Axis airfields and lines of communication and supply.

**LRP** – Long Range Penetration.

**MI(R)** – Military Intelligence (Research). Cover name for branch of the War Office responsible for encouraging, supporting and steering armed resistance in Axis-occupied territory, particularly that by guerrillas (qv). Absorbed into the Special Operations Executive in July 1940.

**Mitchell** – US B-25 medium bomber aircraft, named after General William J ‘Billy’ Mitchell, viewed commonly as the ‘father’ of American air power.

**Mohmands** – Muslim tribesmen of the Northwest Frontier of India

**Moplahs** – Muslim tribesmen of south-west India, of Omani descent.

**Mustang** – P-51 fighter aircraft, made by North American and used by both the USAAF and the RAF in large numbers from 1942 onwards.

**OSS** – Office of Strategic Services. The US covert warfare organisation, responsible for sabotage, subversion and the support of armed resistance in Axis-occupied territory.

**Pathans** – Muslim tribesmen of the Northwest Frontier of India.

**RAF** – Royal Air Force

**RIASC** – Royal Indian Army Service Corps.

**RMCC** – Royal Military College of Canada.

**RUSI** – The Royal United Services Institute, founded in 1832 by the Duke Of Wellington in

order to study and disseminate the lessons of military history and recent operations. Based in Whitehall.

**SAS** – The Special Air Service. A British Army Special Force (qv) formed by Captain David Stirling in the Middle East in 1941. Re-formed by Brigadier Michael Calvert as a counter-insurgency force in Malaya in the early 1950s, and forming part of the current British Army as 22 Regiment SAS.

**SDF** – Sudan Defence Force. Locally recruited regular force, under British officers, responsible for border control and internal security in Sudan.

**Shifita** (Amharic) – Ethiopian bandit

**Sinn Fein** (Irish Gaelic) – ‘We Alone’, the political arm of the Irish Republican movement

**SNS** – Special Night Squads, the Anglo-Jewish counter-insurgent units formed by Orde Wingate in Palestine in 1938.

**SOE** – Special Operations Executive. Branch of the Ministry of Economic Warfare responsible for sabotage, subversion and the encouragement and support of resistance in Axis-occupied territory. Formed 1940, dissolved 1946.

**Special Forces (UK) and Special Operations Forces (US)** – Military units, consisting of carefully selected and specially trained personnel, usually operating in small units (less than 100 individuals) yet intended to obtain results out of proportion with their numbers through careful targeting of high-value objectives, surprise, advanced or unusual weaponry and their superior training and aggression. Used extensively by the British in the Second World War in the form of the Army and Royal Marine Commandos, the Long Range Desert Group, the Special Air Service, Popski’s Private Army, etc. There is some question as to whether the Chindits (qv) constituted a form of Special Force.

**SSO** – Special Service Officer. British military officer responsible for gathering intelligence within a specific district.

**Terrorism** – The use of violence, or the threat of violence, in order to change the political behaviour of the target in directions desired by the perpetrators. May be used in insurgencies (qv) as a substitute or supplement for guerrilla action (qv).

**Thunderbolt** – P-47 fighter aircraft, produced in the USA and used by the USAAF and RAF in 1942-45.

**Thakins** (Burmese – ‘Young Masters’) – The traditional Burmese ruling elite, who figured prominently in resistance to British rule in Burma and collaboration with the Japanese.

**USAAF** – United States Army Air Force

**Wahhabi** (Arabic) – Fundamentalist form of Sunni Islam, and the majority faith in Saudi Arabia.

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Special Operations Executive:

HS1, HS3, HS7, HS8

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