

weakening the legitimacy of the ruling military junta by, for example, withdrawing the regime's credentials from the General Assembly of the United Nations.

In short, Tucker's book is a very personal and partisan contribution to Burma's problems past and present. It mirrors the splits in Burmese politics and in the analysis of this topic and offers no prospect for overcoming the real and analytical fissures except resorting to prayer. But Tucker has omitted at least one important element of Burmese history, the factor of surprise. He did not foresee the talks between the ruling military and opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi that started almost simultaneously with the publication of his two books.

Further travels into hidden Burma/Myanmar are necessary in order to understand Burma's complex problems. Tucker's book can be regarded as an attractive provocation towards such an undertaking.

Hans-Bernd Zöllner

KAZUO TAMAYAMA / JOHN NUNNELEY (eds.), *Tales by Japanese Soldiers of the Burmese Campaigns, 1942-1945*. London: Cassell Military Paperbacks, 2000. 252 pages, £ 7.00. ISBN 0-304-35978-5

The Burmese campaign was one of the bloodiest of the Pacific War. Most of the 305,000 Japanese soldiers participating died in battle of diseases, untreated wounds, or of starvation.

In December 1941, the Japanese military began to move into southern Burma from its Thai bases. As in its successful Malayan campaign, it bypassed and encircled the road blocks of the superior British Indian forces. They usually retreated after incurring first losses without putting up much of a fight. The undersupplied Japanese troops restocked themselves with food, ammunition, weapons and trucks captured from their retreating enemies. By May 1942, all of Burma was Japanese occupied. Often the Japanese were greeted as liberators. A national Burmese government led by Aung San, the father of Nobel Peace prize winner, Aung Suu Kyi, collaborated with the Japanese. Throughout 1943 border raids along the Indo-Burmese mountainous jungle occurred. Japanese appeals through its Indian National Army commanded by Subhas Chandra Bose for the Indians to rise against their colonial masters met with little response. Only a few Indian units deserted to the Japanese.

With increased Allied submarine and air power intercepting supplies to Burma, the Japanese command felt its only chance of victory consisted in an armed advance into Assam to incite an Indian uprising in March 1944. The disastrous Imphal campaign ensued. This time the British Indian army left no supplies to the Japanese invaders. Rather, it took up the fight and, using its superiority in arms and men, repulsed the starving army. Once beaten, the Japanese were pursued and in spite of brave resistance were driven back towards South East Burma until Japan's surrender on 15 August 1945. By July 1947, all of the surviving men and women were repatriated.

The volume contains 62 reports of Japanese soldiers, infantrymen, airmen, engineers, signalmen, medical doctors and nurses, up to the level of captain at most, de-

scribing the concrete experiences of daily survival for the common soldier. They follow the chronological order of events: The advance into Burma during early 1942, the leisurely pace of occupation (1942/43), the combats in the Arakan mountains of South West Burma (1943/44), finally the disastrous battles of Imphal and Kohima (summer 1944), followed by a bloody unending retreat (1944/45). Three good maps help the reader through a largely unfamiliar geography.

A striking feature of all reports is the poverty of supplies reserved. Even during their victorious advance troops lived from little more than rice gruel. Anything better was received from liberated villages or from pillaged U.K. supplies. As UK air supremacy was restored during 1943 and U.S. submarines sank most of the Japanese supply ships, the supply situation became ever more desperate. As losses mounted and the soldiers' stamina weakened, night attacks with bayonets no longer sufficed to resupply with food, medication, fuel, arms and ammunition. After the failed invasion of Bengal, the troops lost most of their equipment and ammunition. Starved from regular supplies they lived on a haphazard diet of yams, bamboo shoots, grass and salted rice. Diseases like cholera, malaria, dengue fever and dysentery spread among the weakened soldiery. The death toll was appalling, as the emaciated defeated troops, wounded and unwounded alike, lost the will to live.

All this human drama, the early victories, the chivalry towards the defeated British enemy, the friendly cooperation with the liberated Burmese, then the ghastly scenes of defeat, retreat and gradual dissolution are described at length, in objective detail and in an astonishingly dispassionate style by those who lived through it and survived. These short tales are well written, keep suspense high, they show a lot of humanity. They are balanced in judgement and there is very little which reeks of propaganda or whitewash. All accounts show respect for the enemy, the defeated as well as for the victorious, for those who in defeat fought to death or for those who surrendered. The Commander of Division 33, General Sakurai, even had a monument built to the Unknown British Indian Soldier.

The reports show all signs of humanity: Not only toughness (against oneself), the readiness for sacrifice, courage and comradeship, the sympathies for a far away country, its inhabitants and its defenders, the readiness to help the people and even its defeated colonial masters, but also the ardent hope of getting home alive, together with their one's comrades and the desire to see the war end soon.

The volume well serves its purpose, to help understanding between the Japanese and the British people, in a difficult, almost traumatising subject matter. With their non-moralizing un-pontificating style the authors and editors have done an excellent job in letting the facts and the subjective recollections of the Japanese participants speak for themselves. The major merit of this book is its humanizing aspect – much needed after Allied War propaganda portrayed the Japanese enemy as semi-humans conditioned to become self sacrificial war machines.

The volume is also so well translated and edited that it makes fascinating reading.

*Albrecht Rothacher*