



# Jiang Jieshi - 蔣介石 (1887-1975)

CHINA 1943 BY ANTONY BEEVOR

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In the spring of 1943, Roosevelt and Marshall had consolidated their strategy for China. Preferring an air offensive, they continued to reject Stilwell's arguments that Allied land power should be developed in China to defeat the Japanese there. Their chief priority was to build up Chennault's Fourteenth Air Force on the Chinese mainland. It was to expand its role to attacks on Japanese shipping in the South China Sea, and raid Japanese supply bases to help the US Navy in the Pacific. But there was a flaw to their plan. Chennault's successes were bound to provoke a Japanese reaction, and without sufficiently strong Chinese forces to defend his airfields the Fourteenth Air Force's campaign would collapse. Chiang Kai-shek's Yunnan armies were to be reinforced for this purpose, but they received little weaponry. The bulk of the first 4,700 tons of supplies was earmarked for Chennault, and Roosevelt's promise that air transport flying over the Hump of the Himalayas would then deliver 10,000 tons a month was over-optimistic to say the least.

In May the Japanese launched their fourth offensive against Changsha in Hunan province, with an amphibious landing on the shore of Lake Tungting. Another attack from southern Hupeh suggested that this was an encirclement operation to seize an important rice growing area. B-24 Liberators from Chennault's Fourteenth Air Force raided Japanese supply bases and trains with reinforcements. The Liberators and their fighter escorts accounted for twenty Japanese aircraft, boosting the morale of the Nationalist troops on the ground.

Although Nationalist losses had been far greater than those of the Japanese, Chiang Kai-shek's forces checked the attack from Hupeh and forced the Japanese back. In Shantung province, south of Peking, a Nationalist Chinese division far behind Japanese lines found itself being attacked both by the Japanese and by Chinese Communist formations.

The Nationalist government in Chungking had broken off relations with Vichy France, while the Wang Ching-wei puppet government declared war on the United States and Britain. The Vichy regime was also forced to concede France's concessions in China to Wang Ching-wei. The large White Russian community in Shanghai, which had co-operated closely with the Japanese, had become increasingly depressed since the Soviet victory at Stalingrad. The hated regime in the Soviet Union looked stronger than ever, and the war both in the Pacific and on the eastern front was now going in a very different direction to the one they had envisaged. The idea of a Communist Shanghai was becoming a distinct possibility. The Japanese had left Mao Tse-tung's forces to the north-east relatively undisturbed, and if the Red Army arrived after the defeat of Germany, then the Chinese Communists would take power.

(Antony Beevor, *The Second World War*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2012)