

Editorial

Monday, Feb. 19, 2018

Sunny side up

The alacrity with which the gloomy and despondent mood of the public in the state gave way to spontaneous celebrations and revelry with the turn of another new year once again demonstrates the innate positivity of the human mind. The loud cheers, the gregarious chatters and magnanimous wishes would have anyone who have been in the state just recently believe that there has been a major shift or quantum improvement in the situation prevailing for the last two months. Unfortunately, but for the buoyant moods, nothing have changed and if the past is any indication, the standoff is set to continue for a lot longer than anyone would have cared to wish. But just for once, leaving the intricacies of solving the protracted and cathartic show of one-upmanship between different players to experienced hands, it would be a worthwhile exercise to count the blessings in disguise the present social development brings to our fore.

Starting on a positive note in keeping with the moods at present, an all-out confrontation between different communities, while being a distant possibility, can be ruled out for the present since there are more than enough individuals and groups on either side of the communal and ideological divide that understand and are capable of comprehending the irreversible damage such conflicts would definitely inflict not only in terms of human lives but on the very identities and traditions each is seeking to protect and propagate. These voices of sanity will broke forth to maintain ties of cordiality irrespective of the differing views and opinions. And hopefully, such initiatives will strengthen the bond of trust amongst the different communities and ethnic groups despite varying ideologies, needs and aspirations so that an enduring arrangement for peaceful coexistence may be arrived at.

Perhaps such escalations of social tensions are healthy indications of the need to change the system or to fix some glaring errors in administration and governance. Parallel may be drawn to the 1950s and 1960s when the entire world was shrouded with the overarching fear of an imminent nuclear war breaking out due to the intensifying cold war fuelled by the increasing stockpiles of nuclear armaments amongst the nuclear powers. Yet instead of the nuclear war that was considered inevitable, the world realized the holocaust such war would cause, and consequently the whole system by which international politics and interactions were conducted underwent a radical change for the better.

Closer home, the present 'siege' by the hill based civil society body has produced some positive outcome in the society. Realization for the need of increasing local production and self-reliance has spurred the people to action and thereby initiating a mini-revolution towards self-sustainability. The lessons in austerity this 'blockade' has enforced on the people of this generally spendthrift society to revise and readjust are just priceless and couldn't have come at a more appropriate time. The public have learnt the value of the things they took for granted all along till now. But most of all, the drastic drop in vehicular traffic has managed to reduce carbon emission as well as fatalities due to road accidents. Alternative means of transport such as bicycles and even walking short distances were seen to be on an increase. Parents were also forced to look into the academic activities of their children thereby strengthening the bond and bringing back the much required attention back to their wards.

Although such outcomes in the society will definitely be unintentional to many, we still owe a big THANKS, being the civilized kind that we are- so THANKS. Now that we are even, life goes on and the celebration continues.

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The Death of Guerrilla General Orde Charles Wingate

By : Yumnam Rajeshwar Singh
General Orde Wingate

General Orde Charles Wingate was a British General of world war second who started the Chindits which made Long range penetration behind the Japanese lines in Burma during the 2nd world war. He was born in India in 1903 at Nainital in the then United Provinces. He was the son of Colonel George Wingate C.I.E. and Mary Ethel Stanley Wingate. Their family went back to England and lived at Godalming in Surrey, and was eventually educated at Charterhouse.

Wingate served in pre-war Palestine where he achieved notable success against the Arab rebellion of 1936 by organizing 'night squads' of Jewish settlers to defend their *kibbutzim*. It earns him a DSO and also a transfer from an area where his pronounced pro-Zionist views were felt to be a political embarrassment, as well as somewhat peculiar in an Army officer. In these operations lie the roots of Haganah, the Israeli force which later fought the British and the Arabs to establish the State of Israel in 1948.

With the entry of Italy into the war in June 1940 his expertise in guerrilla warfare and Sudan Defence Force made him a natural choice for the elimination of the Italians from their conquests in Abyssinia.

Wavell had been impressed by the performance of Gideon Force, and when he became Commander-in-Chief, India, he remembered



The official record stated bad weather as the cause of the plane crash. There arose more many conspiracy theories after he died. Many cited freak weather, engine failure, pilot error etc as the cause of the crash, but because this was Wingate, there was a general reluctance to accept that this was a routine accident, such as had accounted for thousands of airborne combatants in Burma. The official investigation concluded that there had been engine failure and that the pilot had unsuccessfully tried to return to Imphal. Thunderstorms or turbulence were cited as possibilities, but all the pilots in the air that day confirmed that all thunderstorms were local and

the pilot drop the landing gear before impact trying to land the plane. So there is a possibility that the pilot and the crews were alive just before the impact. A crater of 15 feet in length and 5 feet deep is still available to be seen today at the crash site.

From the Villagers account:-

On 24th March evening, the Christian villagers of Thuilon village were having their evening prayer when they saw a ball of fire coming down from the sky. The plane had caught fire in the sky and its falling down can be seen from Tamenglong town also. The plane fall on the western slope of the mountain of Thuilon, some 2.00 Km from their village. Just after the crash, loud sounds of explosions were heard by the village. The pebbles scattered from the explosion reach the village houses. Whole night there was explosion one after another and the area was lighted with the fire from the crash.

The villagers told that next morning, ie. On 25th March 1944, a small plane landed just adjacent to the crash plane. From there two pilots came out. One had a broken leg. There were medicines and other items with the crash plane. There was presence of parachute containing medicines and other food boxes with the parachute. The two persons from the plane told the villagers to collect all the pieces of bodies scattered around the crash site. The villagers collected the bodies piece by piece and bury them in a mound near the village. The villagers took them (the two pilots) to their village and serve them. Next day they were transported by making a wooded palanquin. The villagers of Thuilon took them to Npangkang village, the Npangkang villagers

team from the crash site. The L-5 loses power due to carburetor icing which was flying at 5000 ft. So the pilot made a forced landing adjacent to the crash site.

The Occupants of the B-25 Mitchell Bomber:-

The occupants of the ill fated plane as per records were:

1. Maj General Orde Charles Wingate, DSO
2. Captain George Henry Borrow, MC
3. Brian Floyd Hodges, 1st Lt. Air Corps
4. Stephen Albert Wanderer, 2nd Lt. Air Corps
5. Vernon A McIninch, S SGT Air Corps
6. Frank Sadoski, T SGT Air Corps
7. James Walton Hickey, T SGT Air Corps
8. Stuart Emeny, War Correspondent, The News Chronicle.
9. Stanley Wills, War Correspondent, The Daily Herald.

When the villagers reach the crash site next morning, the bodies were scattered around the crash site. All bodies were mutilated beyond recognition. They were in pieces. Some were hanging on trees. Another death dog was also at the crash site. There are chances that other unrecorded person was also on board that day. This needs further research for confirmation. In April 1947 some human remains (20 pieces of bones weighing 3 pounds) of the crash, were moved to a common grave on the then British Military Cemetery in Imphal. On December 18, 1949, the grave was opened by the United States Army and the contents transferred to Manila in the Philippines pending final disposition. In November 10, 1950 all the remains collected from Imphal War Cemetery (previously British Military Cemetery) were reinterred at Arlington National Cemetery, Virginia, USA.

Future of the crash Site:-

The villagers of Thuilon have agreed to commemorate 24th March every year as the death anniversary of General Charles Orde Wingate. The road from Tamenglong HQ to Thuilon is hardly 40 km, but due to the bad road condition it took 4 hours to reach the village from Tamenglong HQ. At present there is no electricity in the village as the only transformer is not functional since last year. There are chances that in the near future the road from Tamenglong town to Thuilon Village gets widen and gets bitumen layered. Once the road is



Wingate. Deeply perturbed by the declining morale of the British Army in the Far East, Wavell summoned Wingate to see what chestnuts unorthodox warfare could save from the fire that was consuming Burma is 1942.

Wingate's idea was to put soldiers behind the Japanese lines to sow confusion amongst their lines of communication and also to strike back at them at a time when they were carrying all before them. His "Chindits," or "Wingate's Raiders," a brigade of British, Gurkha, and Burmese guerrillas, harassed much stronger Japanese forces in the jungles of northern Burma (now Myanmar) during World War II.

The plane crash:-

General Wingate died in a plane crash on 24th March 1944 near the village of Thuilon in Tamenglong District. On 24th March 1944 Wingate flew into Broadway in a B-25 Mitchell bomber (43-4242) from 1st Air Commandos. From there he visited the White City and Aberdeen Strongholds. After returning to Broadway he flew on to Imphal (Koireng) to meet Air Marshall Baldwin and from there at 8.00 pm, he set off back to Lalaghat. Wingate's plane crashed on the return journey in the hills around Tamenglong. All on board were killed including a number of war correspondents. (Broadway, White City and Aberdeen are code named wartime airfields in Burma) The crash site is located near village Thuilon in Tamenglong District, Manipur. The crash site is around 1.5 km at the south west of the village. The coordinates measured by GPS is N 24°59'17" and E 93°23'27". The elevation reads 740 meters above sea level.

Cause of the Crash:-

could easily be circumvented. General William Slim opted for extreme turbulence, even though the pilots' testimony also ruled that out.

When I reach the village (on 10th Feb 2018), I found that the crash site is on the reverse side of a ridge, so it is not possible that the aircraft had flown into the hill. It can be substantiated by the fact that the B-25 started from 770 meters ASL from Koireng and the crash site is at a much lower altitude of 740 meters.

The plane was on fire on air that night as seen by the villagers. The plane on fire was also seen by people from other neighbouring villages. The B-25 was carrying cluster bombs, which might broke loose from the bays, rolled into the fuselage and detonated. A lot of fuel onboard must also have ignited on impact.

Physical evidence:-

Two engines were found at the crash site initially. One engine was taken by the 30th Assam Rifles from the village on 30th May 1989 and is kept at the Assam Rifles office at Shillong. The other engine is now kept at the village church. This engine is broken into two pieces. Non ferrous metals in the engine show sign of extreme heat exposure. Whereas the engine with the Assam Rifles is in one piece and in good intact shape, it is pertinent to state that the engine with the village hit the ground and was broken into two pieces.

The Radical Engine at the village Church.

The impact of the fall was so forceful that the iron in front landing gear was also torn. There is a great possibility that



transported the two pilots till Atengba Village. The Atengba Villagers took till the Chingka village. The Chingka villagers took them till Nungka village. The Nungka villagers took them till Oinamlong. From there the military vehicle pick them and taken back to Silchar.

Upon research it is found that the plane that crash next morning is an L-5 Stinson and piloted by Sergeant Lloyd Samp and co piloted by Sergeant Bill Walters. It was arranged by Colonel Cochran to pick up message pouch strung between two poles by the Captain Barnes ground

developed, many tourists will access the crash site. The village wants a Wingate memorial park to be constructed at the crash site. The local elected ADC member is trying to put up this project with the Government.

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