

Forgotten Ally: China's World War II, 1937-1945

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An Economist Book of the Year
A Financial Times Book of the Year

"A book that has long cried out to be written." - Observer (UK), Books of the Year

In 1937, two years before Hitler invaded Poland, Chinese troops clashed with Japanese occupiers in the first battle of World War II. Joining with the United States, the Soviet Union, and Great Britain, China became the fourth great ally in a devastating struggle for its very survival.

Prizewinning historian Rana Mitter unfurls China's drama of invasion, resistance, slaughter, and political intrigue as never before. Based on groundbreaking research, this gripping narrative focuses on a handful of unforgettable characters, including Chiang Kai-shek, Mao Zedong, and Chiang's American chief of staff, "Vinegar Joe" Stilwell. Mitter also recounts the sacrifice and resilience of everyday Chinese people through the horrors of bombings, famines, and the infamous Rape of Nanking.

More than any other twentieth-century event, World War II was crucial in shaping China's worldview, making *Forgotten Ally* both a definitive work of history and an indispensable guide to today's China and its relationship with the West.

"In the manner of David McCullough, [Mitter] creates a complex history that is urgently alive." - Kirkus Reviews

The epic, untold story of China's devastating eight-year war of resistance against Japan

For decades, a major piece of World War II history has gone virtually unwritten. The war began in China, two years before Hitler invaded Poland, and China eventually became the fourth great ally, partner to the United States, the Soviet Union, and Great Britain. Yet its drama of invasion, resistance, slaughter, and political intrigue remains little known in the West.

Rana Mitter focuses his gripping narrative on three towering leaders: Chiang Kai-shek, the politically gifted but tragically flawed head of China's Nationalist government; Mao Zedong, the Communists' fiery ideological stalwart, seen here at the beginning of his epochal career; and the lesser-known Wang Jingwei, who collaborated with the Japanese to form a puppet state in occupied China. Drawing on Chinese archives that have only been unsealed in the past ten years, he brings to vivid new life such characters as Chiang's American chief of staff, the unforgettable "Vinegar Joe" Stilwell, and such horrific events as the Rape of Nanking and the bombing of China's wartime capital, Chongqing. Throughout, *Forgotten Ally* shows how the Chinese people played an essential role in the wider war effort, at great political and personal sacrifice.

Forgotten Ally rewrites the entire history of World War II. Yet it also offers surprising insights into contemporary China. No twentieth-century event was as crucial in shaping China's worldview, and no one can understand China, and its relationship with America today, without this definitive work.

RANA MITTER is a professor of modern Chinese history at the University of Oxford and the author of several books including *A Bitter Revolution*. He is a regular contributor to British television and radio. His writing has appeared in the *Financial Times*, the *Guardian*, and elsewhere.

Other Books

Aluminum Alley, After the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, Asia became an important theater of World War II—and because the Japanese had boxed in China, a key U.S. ally, and blocked the Burma Road out of India, the United States began looking for other ways to supply the war effort in China. In April 1942, the first American flights out of India launched in order to supply gasoline and other materiel to Allied fighting forces over the Himalayas and into China. Mountains over ten thousand feet. Unpredictable weather. Devasting crashes. Long odds. Perhaps the worst assignment for American pilots during World War II. For the next forty-two months, pilots—men including Gene Autry and Barry Goldwater—flew The Hump despite the difficulty of the terrain, the conditions, and the weather, throwing an important lifeline to the war in China, which helped bog down more than a million Japanese soldiers in China and kept them from the Pacific islands where the main American war effort was focused. By war's end, some 5,000 American airmen delivered more than 650,000 tons of materiel to Chiang Kai-Shek's Chinese forces and to the U.S. forces in China. This is the story of how a group of inexperienced pilots flew through some of the most challenging conditions in the world—and helped win World War II. *Aluminum Alley* is based on interviews with the last survivors of The Hump, oral histories, photos, reports, and other firsthand resources. It is a narrative with the immediacy and intimacy of memoir but the big-picture analysis of the best military history.

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