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Photo: Australian War Memorial, Canberra.

DERNA 1941

Towards the end of 1940 a powerful Italian Army on the western frontier of Egypt was preparing to advance into the Nile Delta, capture Alexandria and the Suez Canal, and link up with the Italian forces in East Africa.

Although he had available only a fraction of the Italian strength, the British Commander-in-Chief, Field Marshal Lord Wavell, determined to anticipate his opponent's offensive. Early in December, with not much more than one armoured and one infantry division he suddenly pounced on the Italian fortified camps and rolled them up from south to north. 6 Australian Division was then brought forward to play the principal role in the capture of the strong fortresses of Bardia and Tobruk.

Wavell lost no time in launching his pursuit. While 6 Australian Division followed up the retreating enemy along the coast, the few tanks of 7 Armoured Division still in working order moved by an inland route and cut the Italian's line of retreat. This operation, which is rated as one of the most successful pursuits in history, completed the total destruction of the Italian Army in Libya.

The picture shows Australian infantry moving up towards an Italian rearguard position near Derna in January 1941.

THE SOUTH WEST PACIFIC CAMPAIGN

1941 - 1945

Colonel E. G. Keogh, MBE, ED,
Royal Australian Infantry (Retd.)

The Campaign in the South West Pacific 1941-1945 has been set for study in 1965. The principle reference book recommended for study is "South West Pacific 1941-1945" by Colonel E. G. Keogh. His book is being published by Grayflower Publications Pty. Ltd., 123 Collins Street, Melbourne, and it is expected that it will be available early in 1965.

To assist students the author has written a synopsis of the book in the form of a study guide, for publication in the Australian Army Journal. Part I of this synopsis is produced hereunder. Part II will follow in the March issue. — EDITOR.

WARS do not occur in a vacuum. As a rule they result from a set of political or politico-economic circumstances which have developed over a period. To understand the nature of the war or campaign under study it is necessary to know something of the circumstances leading up to it, circumstances which shaped the aims of the contending parties.

The first chapter of the book is, therefore, devoted to a review of events in the Far East and the Pacific from the beginning of the European colonial era in Asia until Japan launched her military bid for hegemony throughout those

areas on 7 December 1941. Before beginning, however, it may be as well to preserve our perspective by bearing in mind that European colonialism in Asia was preceded by centuries of Asiatic colonialism and aggression in Europe. Indeed the two periods widely overlapped. The early years of this century were marked by "wars of liberation" to free south eastern Europe from Asian colonial rule.

Macao to Pearl Harbour

Western commercial and political interest in the Far East began in the middle of the sixteenth century when the Portuguese established a trading post on the Chinese coast at Macao.

The first British traders made their appearance in 1637, but it was 1715 before the East India Company established a permanent station at Canton. By the end of the eighteenth century there were Danish, French and American trading stations at Canton, together with representatives of German, Italian and South American merchants.

Great difficulty was experienced in conducting negotiations with the Chinese Government which took the view that trade was solely a matter for the local authorities. Embassies sent to the Central Government were usually unceremoniously hustled back to Canton.

During the eighteenth century the great trading companies imposed discipline on their representatives and trade was, generally, conducted without much friction. However, with the growth and freedom of trade in the nineteenth century the monopolies of the great companies ended and the China trade was opened to all comers. Disputes with the local Chinese authorities rapidly increased. The Western powers sent gunboats and troops to protect their traders against the pirates and bandits whose activities increased as the Imperial Chinese authority declined.

Eventually the British resorted to force of arms, and after a short war imposed the Treaty of Nanking on the Chinese Government in 1842. This treaty established the system of extra-territoriality

under which foreigners living in Chinese ports were not subject to Chinese law.

While the western European powers and the Americans were establishing themselves on the China coast Russia moved eastward through Manchuria, and by 1860 had secured virtual sovereignty over the province of Manchuria. In 1891 Russia began construction of the Trans Siberian Railway and a few years later secured a lease of the Liao-tung peninsula.

Meanwhile numerous Western attempts to establish trade relations with Japan were thwarted by the Japanese policy of strict isolation.

In 1853 the American Government sent Commodore Perry with a naval squadron to "negotiate from strength" with the Japanese. Under the menace of Perry's guns the Japanese were constrained to open the door to a repetition of events on the China coast, including the grant of extra-territorial rights to foreigners.

Japanese resentment at the turn of events brought about the overthrow of the Shogunate Government, the termination of feudalism and the restoration of the power of the Emperor.

Financed by European and American bankers, the Japanese rapidly changed from an agricultural to an industrial economy. The population increased from 32 millions in 1868 to 45 millions in 1903. Revenue went up by leaps and bounds, half of it to be spent on the armed forces. By the end of the century Japan had accomplished in

a generation what Europe had taken twenty generations to effect. From a medieval society she stepped into the twentieth century a fully equipped military and industrial power.

Japan's rapid expansion, with its emphasis on military power, led to a clash with China and friction with the Western powers bent upon extracting further spoils from the decaying Manchu Empire.

In 1894 Japan went to war with China over a dispute in Korea, and by the terms of settlement secured sovereignty over Formosa and the Pescadores. Soon afterwards Japanese interests clashed with those of Russia and war broke out in 1904. Japan was completely victorious, made important gains in Manchuria and established herself as the dominant power in the Far East.

At this point the Manchu Empire finally collapsed and the revolution that followed threw China into a state of confusion. When World War I broke out in 1914 Japan took advantage of the preoccupation of the Western powers to substantially enlarge her foothold in China.

The peace treaty signed at the conclusion of World War I failed to stabilise international affairs either in Europe or the Far East. In an effort to secure a permanent settlement in the latter area the United States organised the Washington Conference in 1922. Japan's activities during the war had so alarmed Great Britain and America that they made the necessary preliminary moves to

confront her representatives at the Conference with a firm association of Western Powers. Japan was forced to sign agreements by which the powers undertook "to respect the sovereignty, the independence, and the territorial integrity of China". In a supplementary treaty Japan, faced with the threat of a massive Anglo-American naval build-up, was constrained to agree to the limitation of capital ships in the ratio Britain 5, America 5, Japan 3.

By 1925 the Chinese National Government was gradually extending its authority throughout the country and bringing order out of chaos.

In 1929-30 Japan was caught in the economic blizzard of the Great Depression. The widespread losses and distress that followed discredited the liberal elements in Japanese society and placed a militarist government in power. This government saw in China the solution of Japan's economic difficulties — a source of raw materials and a market for her products.

Japan made her first move in 1931 when her army took possession of numerous key points in Manchuria. During the next few months she extended her hold over the whole province and set up a puppet government. China appealed to the League of Nations which did nothing more than pass a vote of censure on Japan. Japan promptly resigned from the League, and in 1935 made new and outrageous demands on China. When these were conceded fresh demands were made.

Things continued on this course for the next two years.

In 1936 Japan signed the Anti-Comintern Pact with Germany and Italy. The immediate effect was the immobilisation of Russia, now faced with the possibility of war on two fronts. This in turn weakened European opposition to Hitler and Mussolini, and virtually gave Japan a free hand in China.

In July 1937 Japan launched a full-scale military attack on China in the expectation that resistance would quickly cease. However, Chinese Nationalist troops fought the Japanese for every yard of ground, their guerillas played havoc with Japanese communications, and the civil population engaged in an heroic policy of passive resistance. The Nationalist Government moved to Chungking, and after three years of costly guerilla war the Japanese found themselves in possession of little more than the ground on which they stood.

The Japanese had carefully studied the possibility of American intervention, and had estimated that the United States was unlikely to take any effective action before the military operations in China had been brought to the expected early conclusion. That was the fatal miscalculation in the grand design — the war in China could not be brought to an early and successful conclusion.

In July 1939, the American Government abrogated the Treaty of Commerce and Navigation with Japan, signed in

1911, with hints of an economic embargo if Japan failed to give increased respect to American rights in the Far East.

When World War 2 broke out in September 1939, Japan declared her neutrality. However, immediately after the defeat of France in July-August 1940, Japan deployed a large fleet off the coast of French Indo-China, and under the threat of force secured the right to station troops in the country. Soon afterwards she signed the Ten Years' Pact with Germany and Italy under which those two countries recognised the right of Japan to establish a new order in Eastern Asia.

America responded by calling up naval reservists and strengthening her Pacific fleet. Japan next placed demands on the Government of the Netherlands East Indies for increased supplies of oil and rubber.

The American Government attempted to check further Japanese expansion by organising economic sanctions. Japanese assets in British, American and Dutch territories were frozen, existing commercial treaties with Japan were denounced, and a complete economic embargo was threatened. At the same time the American Government offered to negotiate new trade agreements in return for a non-aggression pact between the countries concerned, including China.

The Japanese Government found these proposals unacceptable and resolved to settle the issue by war with the United

States. On 7 December 1941, without any warning, they delivered a devastating attack on the American naval base at Pearl Harbour.

The Years that the Locusts Ate

Immediately after World War I the Australian Government appointed a committee of the senior wartime commanders, under the chairmanship of General Sir John Monash, to formulate a policy for the military defence of Australia.

Surveying the international situation, the committee concluded that Japan was the only nation likely to attack Australia in the foreseeable future. From an appreciation of the naval situation they demonstrated that a situation could arise in which Japan would enjoy supremacy in Far Eastern and Pacific waters. From an examination of Japan's military and maritime strength they showed that she could send to Australia an army of 600,000 men, with 100,000 in one convoy.

Looking at the position from the Japanese point of view, the committee was unable to see any profit from a mere raid. If Japan attacked Australia at all she was likely to seek a quick decision. The best way to gain a quick decision would be to bring the Australian forces to battle in defence of an area of vital importance. That area was unquestionably the Newcastle-Sydney-Melbourne-Adelaide industrial area on which the Australian forces would have to depend for munitions. Since Australia could not possibly afford a navy capable of meet-

ing the Japanese, and air power was in its infancy, it followed that the task of defending the vital area would fall upon the army. The committee therefore recommended the development of an army capable of meeting the possible scale of attack. This army was to be raised by universal military service. The strengths recommended were 130,000 in peace and 270,000 in war.

The committee further recommended the development of the capacity of Australian industry to provide munitions for the forces.

Before a decision on the Monash report was taken the Washington Conference took place. The interpretation placed on the agreed 5:5:3 ratio in capital ships assumed that it gave the British Commonwealth naval supremacy vis-a-vis Japan. In fact the ratio meant that the Royal Navy was no longer strong enough to maintain powerful fleets in both European and Eastern waters. Acting on this erroneous assumption, the Government shelved the Monash report and drastically reduced the defence forces.

By 1923 Japanese activities in the Far East began to attract attention. Since it was no longer possible to maintain a "two-ocean" navy, the British Government decided to hold the main fleet in European waters and to build a naval base at Singapore to which a substantial portion of the fleet could be transferred if Japan undertook or threatened an aggressive southward move. At the

Imperial Conference of 1923 the Australian Government agreed to this proposal. The Singapore concept became the principle on which Australian defence rested until it was shattered by the Japanese twenty years later.

The Australian General Staff and the Inspector General of the Forces disagreed with the Singapore concept, and in a series of exhaustive appreciations demonstrated that if Great Britain became involved in a European war it would be impossible for her to despatch a substantial portion of the fleet to Singapore. It was a matter of simple arithmetic but no-one took any notice of them.

During the economic depression which began in 1929, further drastic reductions were made in the defence forces. Universal service was suspended and the Citizen Military Forces passed to a voluntary basis. They were barely kept alive by the devoted efforts of Citizen Force officers backed by the small cadre of regular officers. Training degenerated into a farce.

The rise of Hitler in Germany and Japanese aggression in China brought a slight re-awakening of interest in defence. In response the Government appointed an inter-Departmental committee to make recommendations for the development of Australia's capacity to produce her own munitions. The Committee bogged down in endless discussions, and it was 1938 before the advice of leading industrialists was sought. Although the advisory panel appointed pro-

duced its report in seven days, very little was actually accomplished before war broke out in the following year.

Events in Europe early in 1938 led to public demands for more active preparations for defence. The Government secured the loan from the United Kingdom of Lieutenant General E. K. Squires to advise on army development. Squires arrived in June and in December recommended:—

- (a) The raising of the Citizen Forces to a strength of 60,000 men.
- (b) The establishment of two regular brigade groups.
- (c) The reorganisation of the seven military districts into four Commands.

The Government accepted the recommendations for raising the strength of the Citizen forces and for the Command structure, but balked at the proposal for the regular brigades. In March 1939 they announced that the regular force would comprise only two infantry battalions, instead of the eight recommended, and a field artillery unit, and that it would not be raised until the following year. They did, however, undertake a recruiting campaign for the Citizen Forces and succeeded in raising the strength to 70,000 before war broke out in 1939. However, only an insignificant proportion of this number could be classed as trained soldiers.

When war broke out in September 1939 only the Navy, which had borrowed a few destroyers from Great Britain, was

in any way fit to fight. The Air Force had no modern aircraft. The Army had no anti-aircraft artillery and its field artillery was obsolete. It had no mechanical transport, no modern light machine guns and no tanks. Even if it had been fully equipped its training was so defective that it could not have stood up for a moment to a first class opponent. And Australian industry could not at that time have produced a fraction of the munitions required.

The Fall of Singapore

The day after Great Britain and France declared war on Germany, Japan informed the belligerents that she intended to maintain an independent attitude. This was generally interpreted to mean that for the time being Japan was too heavily involved in China to intervene in the wider conflict. The Australian General Staff pointed out that in the event of severe Allied reverses she might seize the opportunity to intervene, but British authorities played down this possibility.

On the outbreak of war the Australian Government advised a policy of "business as usual". A fortnight later they decided to raise an AIF division for "service at home or abroad" and to call up the militia for one month's continuous training. The Government gave little positive leadership in preparing Australia for war.

Recruitment of the AIF division, designated 6 Division, drew many officers and non-commissioned officers from the militia. Since there was no effective re-

serve of officers, these losses from the militia could not be replaced immediately. Further, an unhealthy climate of antipathy was permitted to develop between the AIF and the militia.

Although the Services pressed the urgency of their requirement, Treasury vigorously applied the brake to re-equipment proposals. Most of the equipment that was produced went to the AIF, leaving the militia to carry on as best they could with obsolete and worn out gear.

After much discussion with the British Government, it was decided to send 6 Division to the Middle East and the first convoy sailed on 10 January 1940. A little later the Government agreed to raise another division — the 7th — to join the 6th in the Middle East and constitute an Australian Army Corps. In May the sudden German onslaught on the Western Front overwhelmed the Allies and forced the British to evacuate their forces from Dunkirk. The Australian response to these disasters was a tremendous influx of volunteers for the AIF, sufficient to fill the ranks of the 7th Division, and to form two more AIF Divisions — the 8th, which had already been authorised and the 9th whose nucleus was to be provided by the third convoy, which had been diverted to the United Kingdom and would soon be transferred to the Middle East.

Formation of these additional divisions drew many more officers, non-commissioned and trained men from the militia.

The position at that stage was that Australia had:—

- (a) In the Middle East — 6, 7 and 9 Divisions. AIF.
- (b) In Australia — the newly raised 8 Division AIF. The Militia forces. Arithmetically the militia looked impressive, but it was in fact grossly deficient in competent leadership, poorly equipped and badly trained.

In an appreciation made after the fall of France and the entry of Italy into the war, the British Chiefs of Staff admitted that they could not spare a fleet for Eastern waters, and suggested that Australia should strengthen the Singapore defences by sending a division there. After much discussion two brigades of 8 Division went to Maaya, leaving the third brigade in Australia.

In February 1941 the British Commander-in-Chief at Singapore flew to Australia to brief the Australian Chiefs of Staff on the situation. While admitting that the arrangements for the defence of Singapore left much to be desired, he took an optimistic view of the remedial measures being taken and expressed a rather contemptuous opinion of Japanese capabilities.

On 22 June 1941, Germany launched her attack on Russia. The weight and initial success of the onslaught made it plain that Japan would have nothing to fear from Russia in the Far East. On 14 July she showed that she intended to exploit

the opportunity by demanding the right to occupy bases in the French colony of Indo China. The Vichy Government yielded and soon afterwards Japanese troops moved into the country. By this move Japan secured air fields and naval anchorages within easy distance of Singapore.

The only reasonably well trained and equipped formation in Australia at this time was 23 Brigade of 8 Division. One of its battalions was sent to Rabaul to protect the air field and the other two were sent to Darwin.

From the very beginning British arrangements for the defence of Singapore were characterised by inter-service rivalries, lack of co-ordination and a total absence of sound and methodical planning. At first the Army considered that an overland attack down the Malay peninsula was impracticable. The Air Force considered that the base could be defended by air action alone, and went ahead with the construction of air fields in the north of Malaya without any reference to the Army. When the Army discovered that an overland attack was practicable it found itself committed by the Air Force to the defence of the northern air fields. Strategically the air fields were badly placed and their defence committed the army to a forward deployment in two wings with a mountain range between them and poor communications behind them. Even when Japan moved into Indo China preparations for defence went forward at snail's pace, and there

was much friction between the civil and military authorities.

On the other hand the Japanese made their plans and preparations with abundant energy and great thoroughness. Broadly they planned to win for themselves an empire in the south seas in three phases:—

Phase 1 — The simultaneous conquest of Malaya and the Philippines, to be followed immediately by the conquest of Indonesia and the capture of a strong defensive perimeter around the newly acquired territories. This perimeter ran from the Kuriles through the central Pacific, New Guinea, Timor, Java, Sumatra, Malaya and Burma to the Indian frontier.

Phase 2 — Consolidation and strengthening of the perimeter.

Phase 3 — The interception and destruction of any forces attempting to penetrate the perimeter until the enemy wearied of the effort and recognised Japan's conquests.

Phase 1 was to begin with six simultaneous operations:—

1. A carrier-borne air attack on the American naval base at Pearl Harbour with the object of crippling the American Pacific Fleet.

2. Landings in northern Malaya as a first step towards the capture of Singapore.

3. Air attacks on the Philippines to be followed up with landings.

4. Capture of Guam and Wake Islands to sever American communications with the Philippines.

5. Capture of the Gilbert Islands.

6. Capture of Hong Kong.

All attacks were carefully synchronised in order to secure surprise at all points.

On the night 6/7 December Japanese forces moved stealthily towards their objectives. Complete surprise was achieved at Pearl Harbour where the American Pacific Fleet was caught at anchor and severely damaged. In the Philippines Japanese aircraft caught the American squadrons on the ground wing tip to wing tip. Simultaneously Japanese forces landed in northern Malaya and launched attacks on the Hong Kong mainland defences. Their progress in the next four weeks may be summarised thus:—

- 10 Dec Landings in the Philippines.
- " " Guam and Makin Islands captured.
- " " Prince of Wales and Repulse sunk.
- 12 " British positions in northern Malaya captured.
- 14 " Landings in north Borneo.
- 20 " Davao in southern Philippines captured.
- 23 " Wake Island captured.
- 26 " British positions in central Malaya captured.
- " " Hong Kong captured.
- 3 Jan Manila captured.

Five days after Japan entered the war the British Prime Minister and the President of the United States, attended by their military staffs, conferred in Washington to decide their

strategy for the conduct of the war. The conference decided to concentrate the allied effort on the defeat of Germany before turning against Japan. During this phase only sufficient forces would be maintained in the Eastern theatre to hold vital areas from which an Anglo-American offensive could eventually be launched.

The conference divided the Eastern and Pacific theatres into three commands. China remained under the command of Chiang Kai-shek. The Anzac area included the east coast of Australia and New Zealand. The area to the north and north-west of Australia, including Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaya and Burma, was named the American-British-Dutch-Australian Area (ABDA). Command of this area was given to General Wavell.

Wavell was instructed to hold Malaya, Indonesia and the Philippines, with Australia and Burma as support areas. Reinforcements from various quarters, including 1 Australian Corps of 6 and 7 Divisions from the Middle East, were ordered to the ABDA area.

General Wavell intended to land all reinforcements at Singapore with a view to developing a counter-offensive. However, the Japanese moved much too quickly and crossed Johore Strait to Singapore Island while most of the reinforcements were still at sea. Wavell then planned to land 1 Australian Corps in Indonesia.

At this stage the commander of 1 Australian Corps, General

Lavarack, arrived in Java by air, and quickly arrived at the conclusion that even with the addition of his own troops it would be impossible to hold Indonesia. Accordingly he recommended that the corps be sent on to Australia, which at that time was garrisoned only by the ill-trained and ill-equipped militia. The Chief of the General Staff supported Lavarack's recommendation. At this time the convoy carrying the leading elements of 7 Division was in the Indian Ocean, and the British Prime Minister, Sir Winston Churchill, ordered it to turn northwards to Burma with a view to holding the Japanese thrust against Rangoon. The Chief of the General Staff objected strenuously on the grounds that:—

- (a) The troops were urgently needed for the defence of the Australian mainland.
- (b) The troops and their fighting equipment were in different ships, even in different convoys. The Japanese were approaching Rangoon so rapidly that there would be insufficient time for the division to be "married up" with its fighting equipment and made ready for battle before the city fell.

The Australian Prime Minister, Mr. Curtin, supported his military advisers and in an exchange of telegrams with Churchill insisted that the 7 Division convoys be sent on to Australia. However, one fast ship which had sailed ahead of the first convoy landed a small force of Australians in Java.

By 20 February the Japanese had captured the airfields on Timor, Bali and Sumatra, and Java was virtually cut off from reinforcements. On the 27th the small Allied fleet was destroyed by the Japanese, who landed at two points on Java on the following night. The Allied troops, including the Australian contingent, fought on for a few days but were crushed by superior strength.

While the Japanese were moving down the Malay peninsula 23 Infantry Brigade AIF, the only well trained formation in Australia, was dispersed. 2/22 Battalion was sent to Rabaul, 2/21 Battalion went to Ambon and 2/40 Battalion went to Timor. The roles allotted to these battalions were to protect the airfields and "to delay the advance of the enemy as long as possible".

2/22 Battalion at Rabaul found itself faced with the problem of defending some 23 miles of good landing beach with another beach immediately behind it. Clearly, the position could not be held by one battalion if the Japanese attacked in strength, but no plans or arrangements were made for an orderly withdrawal to the interior. On 20 January Japanese aircraft heavily attacked the area, destroying the anti-aircraft and the coastal batteries and the defending aircraft. Covered by a naval bombardment, their amphibious troops landed at several points on the night 22/23 January and penetrated the scattered positions held by 2/22 Battalion. Before morning they had power-

ful forces ashore. 2/22 Battalion resisted strongly but was soon driven from its positions and broken up. Since no provision had been made for this clearly predictable situation, there were no prepared positions and no ration dumps to fall back on. The battalion broke up into small parties and only some 400 succeeded in escaping.

When Lieutenant Colonel Roach sailed from Darwin for Ambon with his 2/21 Battalion he was not given any precise instructions. He was not told whether he was to hold on indefinitely, fight a delaying action or to include eventual withdrawal in his plans. On arrival he found the Dutch garrison much smaller than he had been led to believe, the supply position uncertain and the whole situation generally unsatisfactory. In response to his perfectly correct request for definite orders and supplies, Army Headquarters sent up another officer to relieve him of his command. On the night 30/31 January the Japanese landed over 5,000 well-equipped troops and quickly overwhelmed the defenders.

Lieutenant Colonel W. Leggatt with his 2/40 Battalion arrived in the Dutch portion of Timor on 15 December 1941. Reconnaissance showed that the combined Australia-Dutch force had no hope of holding the island against serious attack unless strongly reinforced. Army Headquarters arranged for the despatch of reinforcements but the convoy carrying them was heavily attacked by Japanese aircraft and driven back to Dar-

win on 16 February. Three days later the Japanese, employing parachute troops for the first time, landed at several points and overwhelmed the defence after a few days' fighting. Australian commandos fought a guerilla war on the island before being withdrawn twelve months later.

To remove the possibility of air attacks on their convoys during their landings on Timor, the Japanese heavily raided Darwin on 19 February. Both the civil and service authorities were caught off guard and heavy casualties were sustained. The panic that followed reflects little credit on the civil authorities and some of the service elements.

In three months the Japanese had successfully completed Phase 1 of their plan of conquest. The Allied fleets in the Pacific and the Far East had been shattered; the great naval bases of Singapore and Hong Kong were in their hands. Malaya, the Philippines and Indonesia had been won and the defensive perimeter partially built at an astonishingly low cost in men and equipment.

It cannot be claimed that the Japanese achieved their success by surprise. Without a fleet Singapore was worthless as a defence bastion, and the Australian General Staff had demonstrated that a fleet was not likely to be stationed there. The statesmen simply refused to accept the evidence of simple

arithmetic. Nor did the British Government, the Imperial General Staff or the service commanders in Malaya act with anything like the energy required to make Singapore into a strong fortress.

The fall of Singapore destroyed the basic concept on which Australian defence had rested for twenty years. The rapid Japanese advance found her with insufficient military strength to meet the threat to her own shores. In these circumstances no Australian Government could have continued to reject the advice of their own General Staff and consented to the diversion of 7 Division to Burma. Detailed calculations in the full text of the book show that if the division had landed at Rangoon it would have had to fight without much of its equipment, and would have been lost or at best forced into the long retreat to India. In either case it would not have been available to play its vital role in the defence of Port Moresby.

The detachments at Ambon and Rabaul cannot be justified. Neither place was a vital link in the defences or communications. The detachments were not nearly strong enough to impose more than an insignificant delay on the enemy. Timor, however, was an essential link in the air reinforcement route to Java. There it was a case of too little too late.

(To be continued.)

BOLDNESS OR RASHNESS—

SECURITY OR TIMIDITY ?



THE NEED FOR AUDACITY IN BATTLE

Major H. L. Bell
Pacific Islands Regiment

PART 1 — INTRODUCTION

OUR CURRENT thinking is to place great stress on thorough preliminaries to battle. Acquisition of detailed information, secure deployment and dissemination of orders down to the last private soldier are taught as indispensable prerequisites to the successful action. There is, however, some evidence to show that perhaps we have gone a little too far in this direction, and have acquired security at the expense of lost opportunities. A study of recent military history in all except deliberate pre-planned operations shows that the reasonable plan executed immediately is usually more productive than the perfect plan which involves a delay in execution.

Aim

The aim of this paper is to show the need for placing more stress in our tactical training on bold and speedy action.

This is not to say that our procedures, as currently taught, are unsound. Far from it. Our history produces far too many examples of disaster at the hands of ill-prepared and too-hastily executed plans for us to neglect these lessons acquired at so much expense. Nevertheless there has crept in a tendency for our battle procedure to be overstressed to the stage where we fight to avoid defeat rather than fight to win. Not for nothing did the Germans make the accusation that British infantry sought "to occupy ground rather than to fight over it".¹

1. "Struggle for Europe" (Chester Wilmot)
p. 541.

PART II — FAILURE THROUGH LACK OF AUDACITY

History affords countless examples of golden opportunities being thrown away by lack of audacity on the part of commanders. They may have made the most thorough preparation for battle, delaying for the soundest reasons which are extolled in any text-book on tactics, but they failed because they did not move quickly enough. It takes little perception to see that had they short-circuited some of the battle preliminaries so dear to our tactical theory these same commanders well may have won.

Over-preparation Loses Opportunities

If opportunity beckons, the commander must seize it. No matter how disorganised is his force, any pause is fatal because if he doesn't grasp the chance the enemy will. A typical example of this is the allied landing at Anzio in Italy, 22 January 1944.²

This landing, 30 miles from Rome, was intended to take the Germans in the rear, seize Rome and by-pass the hitherto impregnable defences at Monte Cassino. It was delivered by VI United States Corps under Lucas, with 3rd United States Division, 1st British Division, 504th United States Parachute Regiment plus two more divisions on stand-by in Naples. On the German side, Intelligence advised on the actual night of the landing that "no landing was to be feared in the future."³

Meanwhile, the state of alert ordered in preparation for an allied landing had been cancelled, and the only two German reserve divisions had been committed against the allied 5th Army on the Garigliano. Not surprisingly the VI Corps was unopposed, achieved complete surprise and found the Germans with only two battalions between the bridgehead and Rome.

"By midnight 22nd January no less than 36,000 men and 3,100 vehicles had been disembarked. Despite this the allied troops advanced slowly and with hesitant caution, they lacked that boldness which would have enabled them to go on and seize Rome by a coup de main. Yet all the time the road to Rome was open to them, even though Kesselring was making frantic efforts to block it."⁴ Yet by the 25th Lucas had advanced only five miles despite General Alexander's instructions on "advancing immediately inland with strong reconnaissance forces."⁵ The landing had failed to achieve its aim.

Although dismissed, Lucas had only conformed to our teachings on amphibious landings, i.e., consolidation before driving inland. Yet according to the German General Westphal "On the 22nd and even on the 23rd a single unit thrusting forward without delay and attacking boldly could have

2. "Anzio" (Wynford Vaughan-Thomas) Ch. 4.
3. "Monte Cassino — A German View" (Rudolf Bohmler) p. 187.
4. "Monte Cassino — A German View" (Rudolf Bohmler) p. 189.
5. "Monte Cassino — A German View" (Rudolf Bohmler) p. 192.

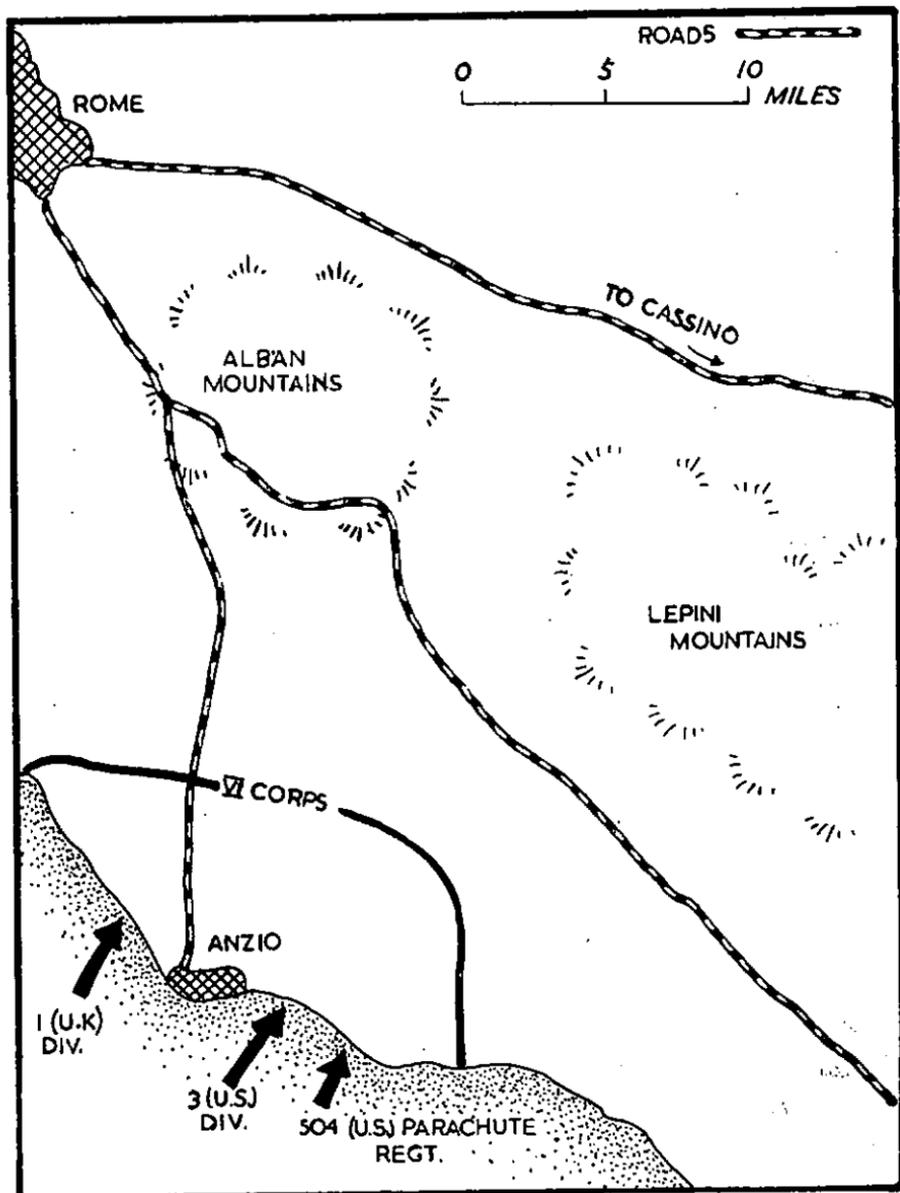


Figure 1. Anzio 22 February 1944.

Lucas' VI Corps lands unopposed. Only two German battalions are between him and Rome. He pauses "to consolidate". When he finally moves it is against a hastily-improvised German Corps. Failure and dismissal for Lucas.

penetrated the open city of Rome without hindrance."⁶ What would have been the risk? The loss of this one unit which would have by no means crippled the VI Corps and would have been a small price to pay for bringing to a finish the campaign in Southern Italy.

Over-preparation Also Warns The Enemy

Sound preparation for battle usually increases the chances of success but its value is somewhat diminished if the time taken to prepare also increases the enemy's chances. History abounds with cases where a commander, on encountering the enemy, halts to prepare for battle, gives the enemy time to prepare, and subsequently loses

more men than if he had taken a chance and quickly attacked with minimum preparation.

Few better examples of over-preparation exist than the action at Dujaila, in Mesopotamia on 7th March, 1916.⁷ General Townshend was besieged in Kut-el-Amara and three desperate attempts had been made to relieve him. The fourth attempt was intended to capture the redoubt at Dujaila, possession of which would have made the besiegers' position untenable. The plan was a difficult march by Tigris Corps across the desert with the main

6. "The Other Side of the Hill" (B. H. Liddell Hart) p. 371.

7. "Mesopotamia Campaign 1914 - 18" (Military Operations — Official History of the War) (Brigadier-General F. J. Moberly) Ch. XXXIII.

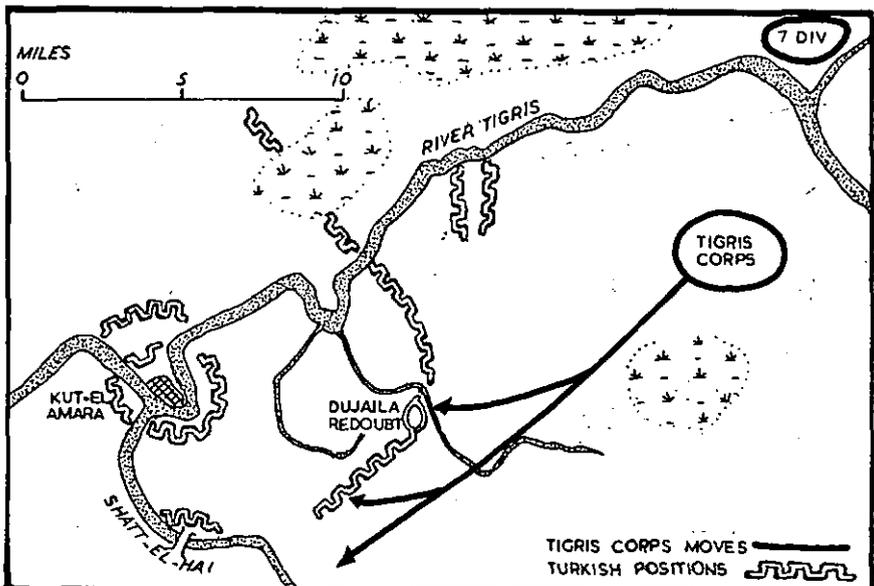


Figure 2. Dujaila Redoubt 8 March 1916.

The garrison of Kut is in desperate straits. A brilliant approach march places Kemball's brigades in front of Dujaila Redoubt at dawn, when it is held by only 200 men. Kemball pauses to prepare. Hali Pasha doesn't pause and reinforces Dujaila. The attack fails and Kut is lost.

effort an assault by two brigades on the redoubt. Unbeknown to the British the Turks had insufficient troops to fully man both the siege-works and the defences covering the siege, so were relying on reserves which could be switched to a threatened spot. This, of course, presumed that adequate warning could be given of a British approach.

The staff work employed to get the assault troops into position was superb. Arriving at the redoubt at 0600 hours the leading battalion commander was convinced that the position was almost empty, so kept advancing. His brigade commander rode up, was also convinced and urged an immediate assault but the column commander (General Kemball) demurred. He already had experience of "unoccupied" positions that suddenly sprang to life. He insisted that brigade and unit commanders must have time to reconnoitre objectives, and insisted that the corps artillery must fire a preliminary bombardment. Meanwhile, what was the position on the Turkish side? Only 200 troops were in Dujaila and the usual primitive Turkish communications failed to inform Halil Pasha of the British approach, which had achieved complete surprise. However, the bombardment removed any doubts and he immediately thinned out the besieging troops and rushed reinforcements to the redoubt. By the time the British attack did go in, at 0945 hours, it was too late. The fourth attempt to relieve Kut

failed and with it the fate of the beleagured garrison was sealed.

When one considers his past experiences it is easy to defend Kemball. Yet, unlike the previous attempts this one achieved complete surprise. "Which goes to show that surprise of itself achieves little; It is the exploitation of the opportunity that matters."⁸ In this action too-zealous preparation nullified the effects of a brilliant surprise, by warning the enemy. The Turks, for their part, although caught off-balance, knew that time counted far more than preparation. Their preparation was to tell the nearest units to march to the sound of the guns and march immediately.

Avoidance of Casualties — Loss of More Later

The doctrine of thorough battle preliminaries is a means to an end. The reduction of casualties achieved by such preparation is also a means to an end. That end is victory. But if victory can best be achieved by going ahead and accepting casualties then a commander must be prepared to push on. Military history shows that over-zealous prudence motivated by fear of casualties will in the long term cost more lives than bold action which achieves results.

The advance of 43rd (Wessex) Division to Arnhem is a classic example of "saving a penny and losing a pound".⁹ On 17th Sep-

8. "The River in the Desert" (Colonel E. G. Keogh) p. 121.

9. "Struggle for Europe" (Chester Wilmot) pp. 517-522.

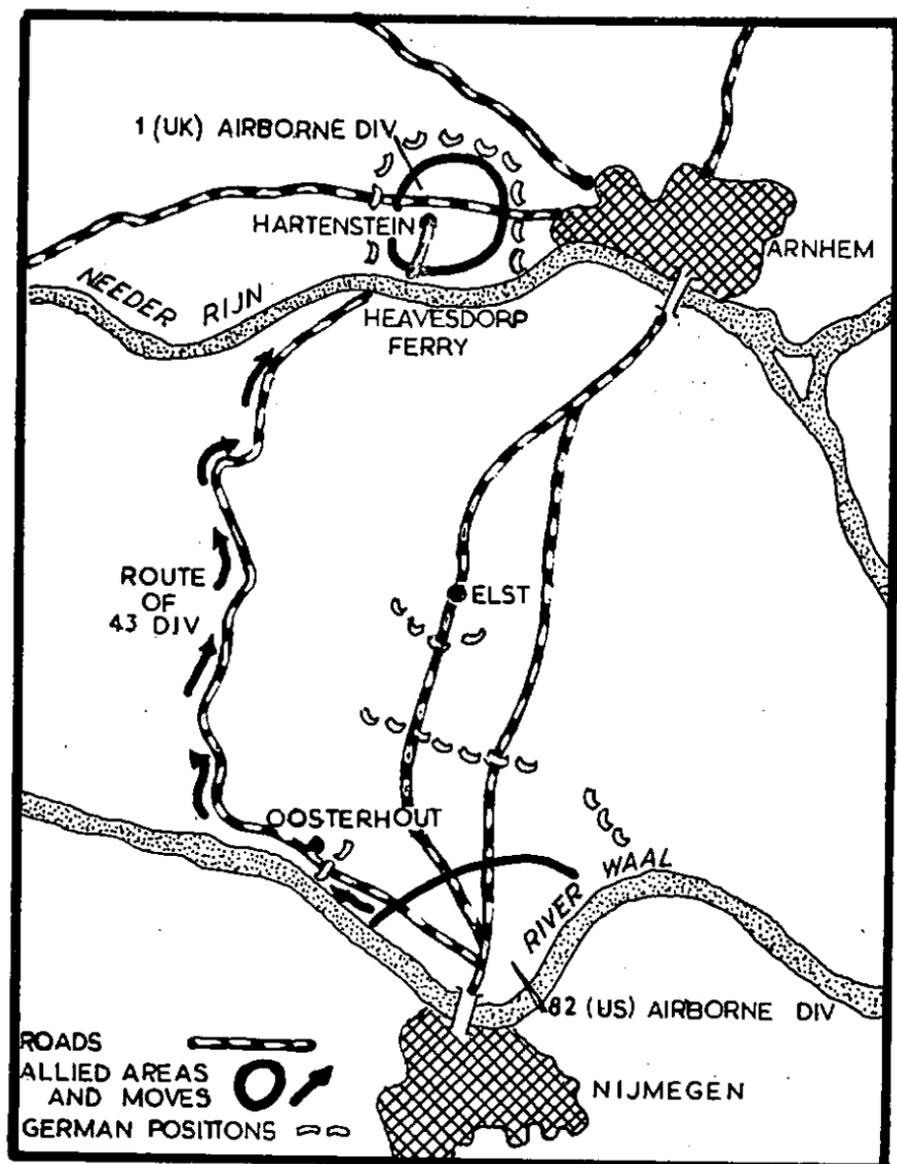


Figure 3. Advance to the Neder Rijn 22 September 1944.

43rd Division is to break through on the 22nd and relieve the hard-pressed 1st Airborne. They set out at 0830 hours but the advanced guard spends all day fighting one company at Oosterhout. Disaster for 1st Airborne.

tember 1944, Operation "Market Garden" launched the great allied airborne offensive with three airborne divisions seizing in one blow crossings over the three rivers running parallel across Holland. 30th (United Kingdom) Corps was to drive through and link up the crossings. The two United States airborne divisions succeeded and were joined by 30th Corps, this operation being greatly aided by the seizure of the Arnhem bridge by 1st British Airborne Division, which prevented German reinforcement south of the River Neder Rijn. However, by the 21st the Germans had retaken the bridge and 1st Airborne was reduced to a desperate situation, with 30th Corps having some ten miles still to go. At 0830 hours on the 22nd, 43rd Division set out to reach the Neder Rijn.

7th Battalion The Somerset Light Infantry were the advanced guard supported by a tank squadron, four field batteries, a troop of 17-pounder anti-tank guns, a mortar platoon and a machine-gun platoon. At 0930 hours on reaching Oosterhout the leading platoon was "held up by fire from a tank and some infantry".¹⁰ This platoon was extricated and a company with tanks was sent round a flank but was "held up by mortar fire".¹¹ By mid-afternoon a battalion attack was launched which completed the task at 1700 hours. The German garrison was supported by one tank, one 88-millimetre gun and five small anti-aircraft guns. In the entire day's fight-

ing the Somersets lost 19 men wounded. During this time the situation at Arnhem sharply deteriorated. "By nature Thomas (the divisional Commander) was extremely thorough in the organisation of attacks — so thorough that his battalions had come to believe that they could not advance without overwhelming fire support".¹²

A study of the Somersets' time-table discloses a striking similarity between their actions and the leisurely procedures of advanced guards as depicted in many of our training exercises. Should we congratulate their commander on a well-organised performance which yielded 140 prisoners, and only 19 casualties to his own men? No, we must condemn him for laying 1st Airborne Division open to disaster. A more costly but quicker attack by the Somersets could have brought 43rd Division to the Neder Rijn in time to have retrieved the situation.

PART III — SUCCESS THROUGH AUDACITY

Before quoting examples of success through bold action it is well to admit that a perusal of any military history can usually discover cases of failure resulting from the same boldness. The acid test perhaps, is — if the successful examples had been failures, was the commander justified in his action? A close study indicates the affir-

10. "The Story of the Seventh Battalion The Somerset Light Infantry" (Captain J. L. J. Meredith) p. 73.

11. "Struggle for Europe" (Chester Wilmot) p. 518.

12. "Struggle for Europe" (Chester Wilmot) p. 518.

mative; that the resultant prize to be won and the later casualties its achievement would save, justified the risks involved even if it meant the risk of disaster.

Success through boldness can be achieved in many ways. A suggested creed for the commander in a confused battle situation could well be the following points, all of which could be amply illustrated by drawing from military history:—

- (a) Act boldly on contact.
- (b) If the situation is confused do something, do anything, but do it now!
- (c) If opportunity beckons, seize it whatever the risk.
- (d) If the stake is worth it, then a gamble is justified.
- (e) Battles can sometimes be won without prior detailed knowledge of the enemy.
- (f) Battle can also be won even when all troops are not "in the picture".
- (g) The unexpected immediate action usually achieves surprise.
- (h) When the battle hangs in the balance quick decision is more likely to swing it in our favour than a deliberate appreciation and plan.

Bold Action on Contact

Rarely elsewhere is boldness more justified than in initial contact. No less an expert than Rommel has written "I have found again and again that in encounter actions the day goes to the side that is the first to plaster its opponents with fire.

The man who lies low and awaits developments usually comes off second best. This applies even when the exact positions of the enemy are unknown, in which case the fire must simply be sprayed over enemy-held territory. It is fundamentally wrong simply to halt — or to wait for more forces to come up and take part in the action".¹³

An outstanding example of bold action on contact is the advance of the Israeli Parachute Brigade to Mitla Pass in the Sinai campaign of 1956.¹⁴ The role of this brigade was, on outbreak of hostilities, to drop one battalion at the vital Mitla Pass. Possession of this feature would cut off any Egyptian reinforcement of Sinai from Suez, freeing the bulk of Israel's forces for operations against the main Egyptian army. The other two battalions of the brigade were to advance by road from Giraffi, 130 miles away over a very bad road, and attempt to reach Mitla Pass before the Egyptians could overwhelm the air-dropped battalion.

Crossing the border at 1600 hours on 29th October the brigade fell on the Egyptian company at the border post of Kuntilla. Firing from their half-tracks the leading companies made a mounted head-on charge, overrunning the post with the loss of one man. At 0400 hours the next day the Israelis reached the strongpost of El Thamad, a

13. "The Rommel Papers" (edited by B. H. Liddell Hart) p. 7.

14. "Sinai Victory" (Brigadier-General S. L. A. Marshall) Ch. 2.

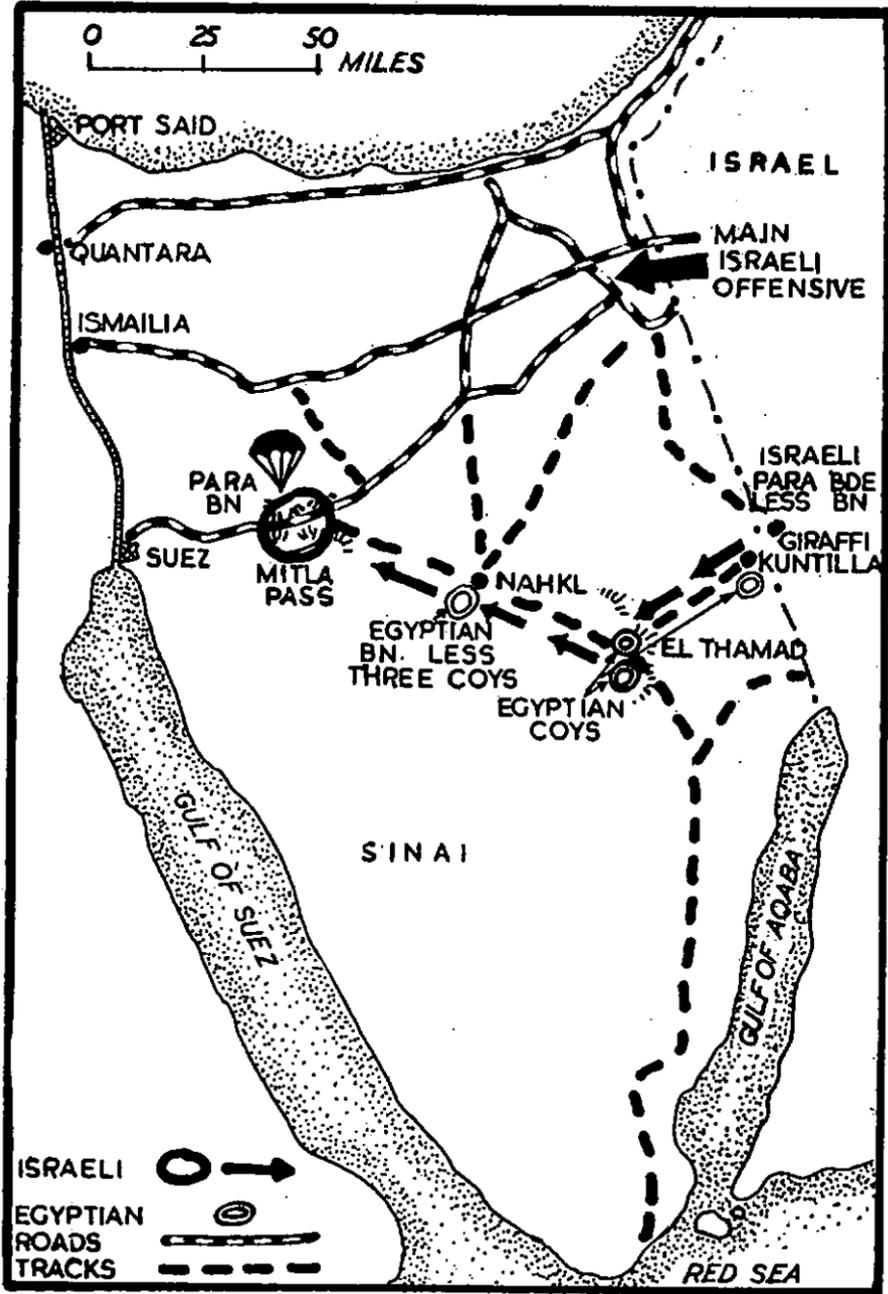


Figure 4. Advance to Mitla 29/30 October 1956:

The Israelis drop a parachute battalion at Mitla Pass, to prevent Egyptian troops from Suez influencing the main battle to the north. The rest of the brigade advances to the Mitla Pass by road and covers the 130 miles in 28 hours.

two-company position astride the road leading over an escarpment, to which there was no other way round. The leading battalion deployed two companies in half-tracks astride the road, with the remainder following in lorries. The whole battalion then charged forward firing from their vehicles. With a loss of nine casualties they killed 60 Egyptians and overran the post. By 1700 hours the brigade came up against the remainder of the Egyptian battalion, at Nahkl, and repeated their charge. At 2200 hours the Mitla Pass was reached after an advance of 130 miles in 30 hours.

One could perhaps say that this operation could have only succeeded against Egyptians. "Nevertheless it is important to realise that the (Israeli) plan was based on an accurate assessment of the Egyptian Army. If the enemy had been better the plan would not have been the same. Nor the tactics".¹⁵ Could one imagine the reception given to an officer who at a TEWT suggested such a plan, even against the most inefficient of enemies? But these Israelis actually carried out this plan, and they won.

Do Something and Do It Now

A common charge directed by Germans against their former British opponents is the slow British reaction to sudden changes in the situation. "Rigidly methodical techniques of command, over-systematic issuing of orders down to the last detail, and poor adapt-

ability to the changing course of battle were also much to blame for the British failures."¹⁶ In the fog of war of a confused situation "the side that waits for accurate information before it moves will invariably be out-classed by a more audacious opponent. Quick reaction in such an action will usually catch an enemy 'off-balance' more than counter-acting any defects in the tactical plan."¹⁷

A quick reaction in a changing situation was the Australian counter-attack at Villers Bretonneux on 4th April 1918.¹⁸ The massive Ludendorff offensive of the Germans in March 1918 had shattered the already weakened British 5th Army and on 4th April, 9th Australian Brigade was placed in reserve at Villers Bretonneux, behind the tottering line. At 0930 hours the Germans attacked and broke through to the north, only to be stopped by 9th Brigade which took over the line. When all seemed quiet the Germans suddenly struck again at 1600 hours, to the south. Soon stragglers began to stream past and the 35th Battalion on the brigade's right started to lose cohesion and fall back. It seemed that nothing could save Villers Bretonneux. Realising that the only faint hope of stopping the Germans was to throw them off-balance by attacking, the Australian commander ordered Lieutenant-Colonel Milne of the

15. "One Hundred Hours to Suez" (Henriques) p. 80.
16. "The Rommel Papers" (edited by B. H. Liddell Hart) p. 212.
17. "The Rommel Papers" (edited by B. H. Liddell Hart) p. 184.
18. "Anzac to Amiens" (C. E. W. Bean) p. 423.

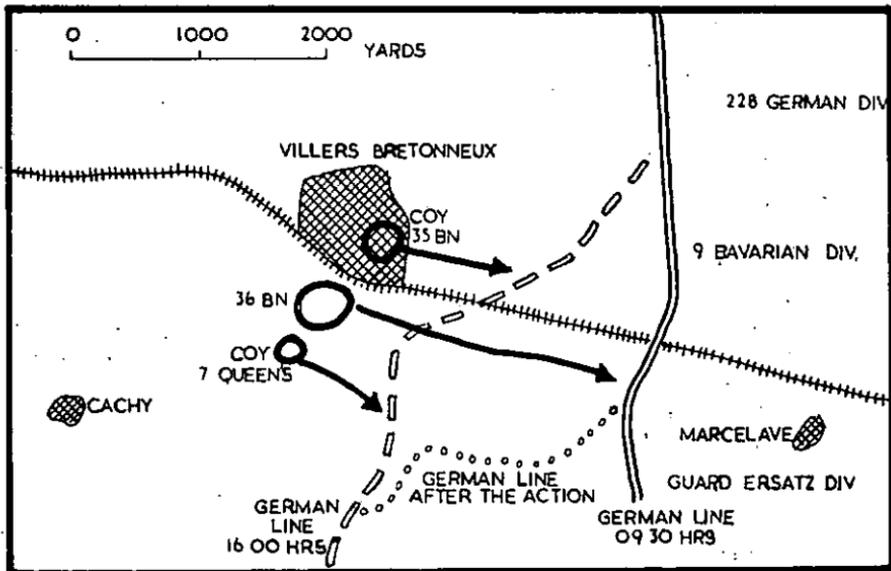


Figure 5. First Villers Bretonneux 4 April 1918.

Two German divisions shatter the 18th Division leaving Villers Bretonneux open. Knowing that his one reserve battalion can only halt the enemy by attacking, the Australian Commander orders the 36th to attack. Within a few minutes it attacks straight into the German attack, driving it back one mile and saving Villers Bretonneux.

36th (New South Wales) Battalion to carry this out.

Milne, who had deployed his battalion for such an event, gave a set of orders which illustrate the handling of a first-class battalion (which the 36th was) at its best. "The enemy has broken through in our immediate front and we must counter-attack at once. Bushelle, your company will be on the left. Rodd 'B' Company will be in the centre. Tedder, 'C' Company will take the right and I shall send immediately to the C.O. of the Queen's and ask him to co-operate. Bushelle, your left flank will rest on the railway embankment. The 35th are on the other side. Attack in one wave.

'D' Company under Captain Gadd, I shall hold you in reserve here in the sunken road. Get ready. There's no time to waste."¹⁹ Bushelle asked "How far will we go?" Replied Milne, "Go till you're stopped." In a few minutes the 36th moved off at a jog-trot followed by some rallied men of the 35th and the 7th Queen's. Taken completely by surprise, the Germans broke and fled for a mile. The 36th halted, dug in, and re-established the line. Villers Bretonneux was saved at a loss to the 36th of 150 men.

Although deployed for an attack, Milne had absolutely no idea of the enemy strength or

19. "The A.I.F. In France 1918" (Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-18) (C. E. W. Bean) p. 340.

dispositions, and little enough of his own side's; all he knew was that by attacking into the enemy attack he might disrupt and halt it. Had he taken so much as 20 minutes to prepare, the Germans would have reached him, outflanked him, and had an unopposed run to the English Channel.

Another fine example of immediate action despite the "fog of war" is the action of the Turkish commanders at Gallipoli on the morning of the British landing of 25th April,

1915.²⁰ Their actions must be considered in the light of the primitive Turkish staffs and communications. Near Anzac Cove there were two formations, part of the 9th Division under Khalil Sami and the newly-formed 19th under Kemal Atatürk, both four miles by cross-country route from the landing beach.

When the Anzacs landed at 0430 hours they were opposed by only one company and

20. "Anzac to Amiens" (C. E. W. Bean) Ch. VIII.

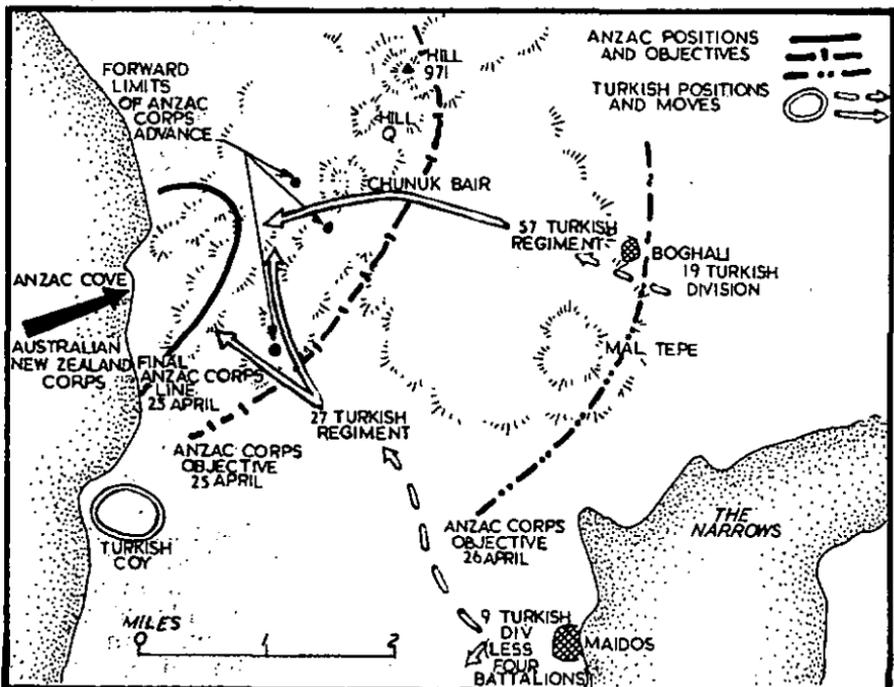


Figure 6. Anzac 25 April 1915.

The British land at 0430 hours. At 0445 hours Khalil Sami orders two battalions to Anzac and three to Helles. At 0630 hours Kemal gets word of the Australian advance to Hill 971. Although having no authority to commit his troops (the Turkish Theatre reserve) he immediately leads his men to Hill 971. Driven back to a perimeter the Anzacs never do get to Hill 971.

pressed on to seize the hill complex around Hill 971, possession of which would have sealed the fate of the Turkish defences on the Narrows. Although disorganised they advanced with great dash. Meanwhile Khalil Sami on hearing of the landing at about 0445 hours immediately ordered his five battalions to march, three south to meet the British landing at Helles and two to strike at Anzac by the shortest route. At the same time he got a message through to Kemal at 0630 hours, asking him to intervene. Although he had no authority to commit his division, the theatre reserve of the Turkish commander, Kemal set out immediately at the head of his only reliable regiment (the 57th). "Kemal instantly conjectured that if his opponents were making for Hill 971 the attack was no mere feint but a major offensive."²¹

Neither Khalil's two battalions nor Kemal had any idea of the forces opposing them or their precise location. What they did know was that in a few hours possession of Hill 971 would give victory to the British, who were already half-way to their objective when the Turks made contact. Yet these Turkish counter-attacks drove the Anzacs back for more than a mile, reducing them to digging a defensive position instead of triumphantly marching to Constantinople. Had Khalil Sami or Kemal waited for accurate information they might well have waited for two days thanks to Turkish communications. Instead they both realised the

need for immediate action, any action, because in a few hours the position would have been irretrievable. As Kemal said "The moment of time that we gained with this one,"²² as his leading battalion swept the Australians off the slopes of Chunuk Bair.

If Opportunity Beckons Seize It

As has been stated in Part II of this paper, he who hesitates to seize opportunity is committing the gravest of errors. Firstly, if an enemy mistake creates an opportunity, we are fools not to exploit it. Secondly, if by our own efforts we create an opportunity failure to seize it is a waste of the lives lost in its creation. And, as opportunities are usually fleeting, only the audacious commander who reacts instantly will reap their benefits.

The enemy certainly created a golden opportunity at Remagen, on the Rhine, on 7th March 1945.²³ The final Allied offensive into Germany was under way and the great Ludendorff Bridge over the Rhine at Remagen had been heavily prepared for demolition. As the leading elements of III United States Corps reached the bridge the Germans blew the demolition. To everyone's amazement the great structure, rocked but settled intact on its damaged supports. To Brigadier-General Hoge, in command of the leading Americans, this was too good a chance to miss so "he

21. "Anzac to Amiens" (C. E. W. Bean) p. 115.

22. "Gallipoli" (Alan Moorehead) p. 138.

23. "Crusade in Europe" (General Dwight D. Eisenhower) p. 413.

weighed his decision cold-bloodedly. He would lose no more than a battalion if the Germans blew the bridge and cut off the first men who crossed. He would lose no more than a platoon if the Germans chose to blow the bridge while his men were on the way across."²⁴ He immediately ordered the leading company across. The troops, expecting the bridge to collapse at any minute, swept by fire from the

Germans still on the bridge and with little effective fire support, pressed on with great dash and the day was won. Had Hoge paused for the briefest of preparation the opportunity created by enemy inefficiency might have been thrown away.

Another equally dramatic example of seizure of opportunity, this time created by our own side, was the action of

24. "The Bridge at Remagen" (Ken Hechler) p. 128.

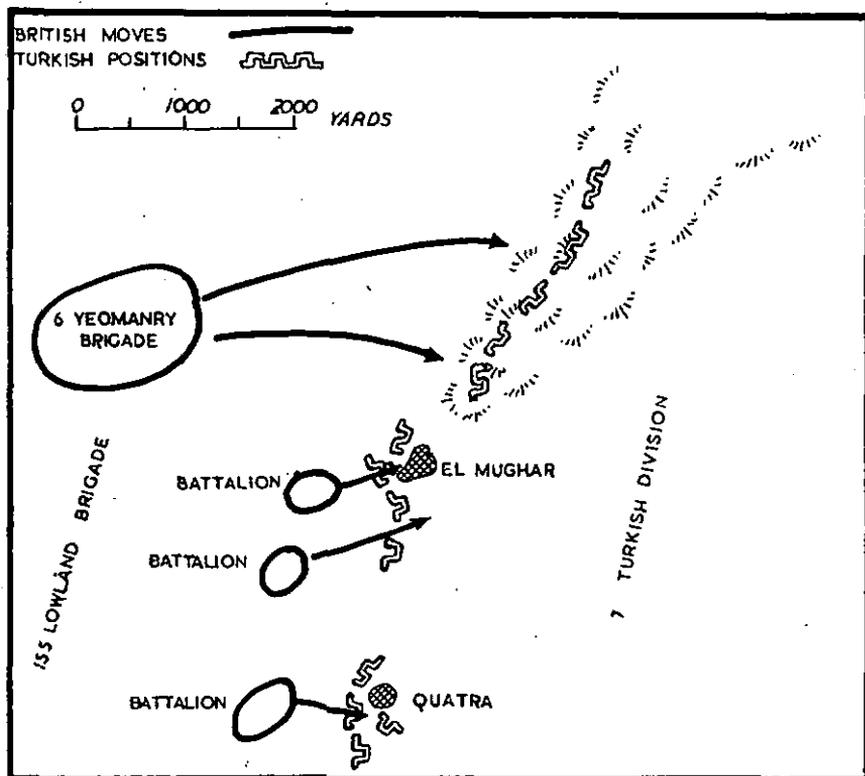


Figure 7. El Mughar 13 November 1917.

155th Brigade has been pinned down in front of its objective for three hours. At 1500 hours the Yeomanry charge the Turkish flank, drawing their fire. Seeing his chance the Brigadier runs in front of his troops and waves them on. In a few minutes the brigade takes all its objectives and inflicts over a thousand casualties. No preliminary orders here, just one field signal.

155th Brigade at El Mughar in Palestine on 13th November, 1917.²⁵ In the British advance on Jerusalem 52nd (Lowland) Division was given the task of clearing the Turkish defences around El Mughar. 155th Brigade was to clean the defended villages of El Mughar itself and Quatra. Attacking at 1130 hours the brigade soon found the villages more strongly garrisoned than they had first believed, and were halted and pinned down under heavy shrapnel and machine-gun fire. Meanwhile the Yeomanry Mounted Division came up to the 52nd, and on being asked to assist ordered their leading brigade to attack the Turks from the flank. At 1500 hours they launched their attack with great spirit.

As the Yeomanry attack gained momentum it drew the Turkish fire from the battered 155th Brigade. The 155th's Brigadier, up with his forward troops, saw his chance and took it. Seizing a rifle he ran out into the open and gave the field signal to advance. With no further orders than this the leading battalions swept forward, overran Quatra and broke into El Mughar. By 1600 hours the objectives were secure, 800 prisoners had been taken and several hundred Turks killed. The brigade sustained 480 casualties, most during the three hours they had been pinned down.

These two examples clearly illustrate the value of instantly exploiting opportunity. In both instances pausing to co-ordinate would have thrown away the

chance. As has been said of the 155th Brigade commander, "opportunities like this are fleeting but that brigadier did not miss a moment of it. He had his troops on their feet and sweeping forward in a matter of minutes — those men knew their business."²⁶

Gambles Are Justified If the Stakes Are Worth It

Only an irresponsible commander will run unnecessary risks. But a commander who tries to run no risks is equally irresponsible in that he may be throwing away the chances of victory. We will examine two examples where commanders were deliberately prepared to gamble and risk the destruction of their attacking force, because they calculated that the results to be achieved were worth it.

By 7th January 1942, the Japanese in Malaya had driven the battered 11th Indian Division to a position in the Slim River area.²⁷ The division, now reduced to two brigades, deployed 12th Brigade astride the Japanese axis with its three battalions echeloned. Meanwhile the 28th Brigade were in the process of moving up to a position in the rear. Apart from the 2nd Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, the troops were somewhat dispirited and their anti-tank resources were few.

At 0400 hours, in bright moonlight a Japanese motorised

25. "Egypt and Palestine" (Military Operations — Official History of the War) (Captain Cyril Falls) pp. 164-172.

26. "Suez to Aleppo" (Colonel E. G. Keogh) p. 176.

27. "The War in Malaya" (Lieutenant-General A. E. Percival) pp. 202-206.

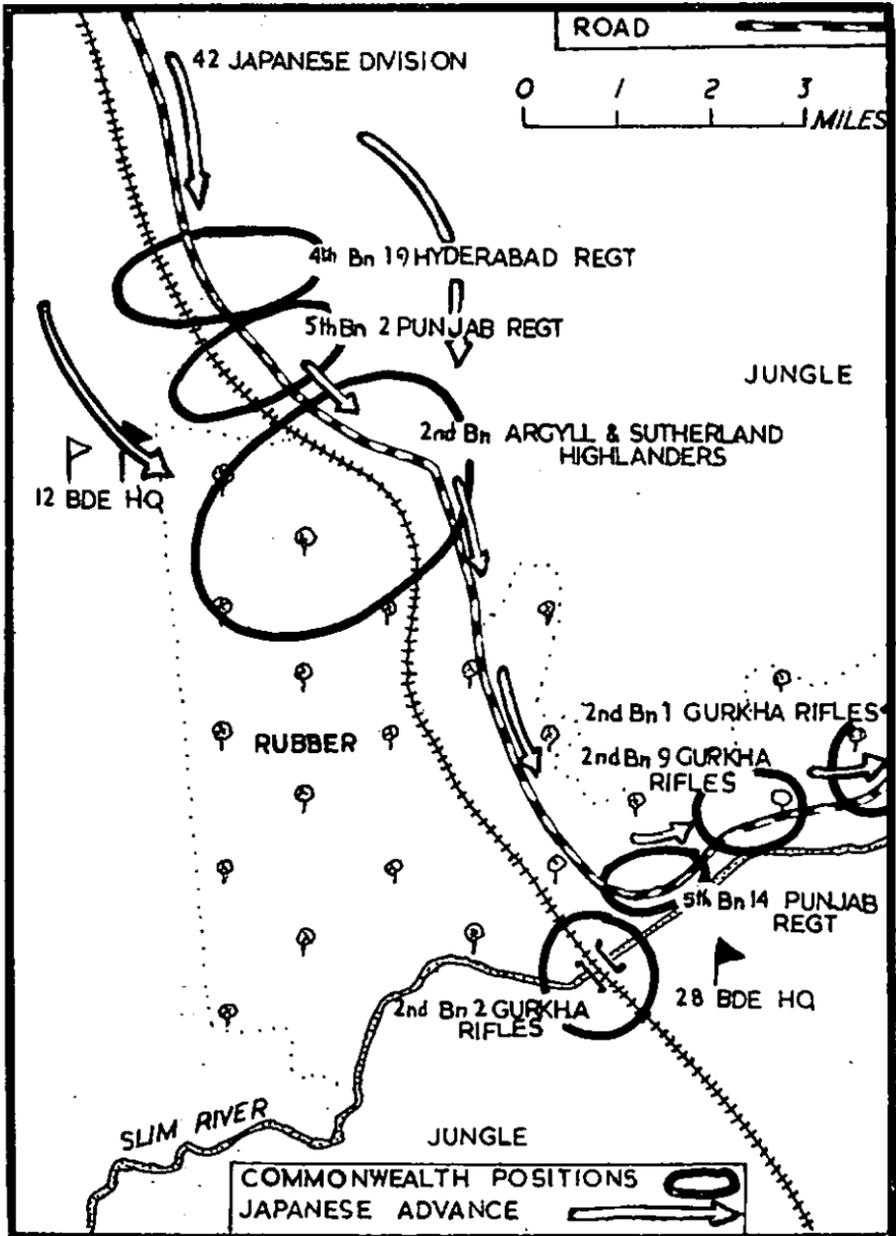


Figure 8. Slim River 7 January 1942.

Attacking at 0400 hours 42nd Japanese Regiment moves around the flanks. One battalion and a tank company charge down the main road. Communications are shattered, headquarters overrun, gun positions lost and the 28th Brigade is dispersed as it marches up the road. It only remains for 42 Regiment to mop up.

column with tanks drove straight into the forward battalion 4/19th Hyderabad, easily penetrating its defences. Pressing on down the main road it was strongly resisted by 5/2nd Punjab but broke through, ignoring the Indian positions away from the road. The Argyll gave the Japanese a tough fight, delaying them for two hours, but once again the enemy broke through the road and pressed on.

The damage had been done. Communications were disrupted, headquarters overrun and gun positions lost. Caught marching along the road as they moved up, 28th Brigade were scattered to the far winds. Pressing on the Japanese seized the road bridge over the Slim River, 15 miles from their starting point. Finally at 1000 hours the action of an enterprising howitzer

crew, who knocked out the leading tank, brought the Japanese column to a halt. The Japanese main body then mopped up the bypassed positions. The victory had been won by "a tank company, an infantry battalion in carriers and lorries, and some engineers."²⁸ Only 1100 Indian infantry returned to the British lines, and all transport and two field batteries were lost. "11th Division had ceased to exist as a fighting formation."²⁹

Another gamble was the German parachute operation at Maleme in Crete.³⁰ The Germans, on 20th May 1941,

28. "The Japanese Thrust" (Australia in the War of 1939-45) (Lionel Wigmore) p. 196.

29. "The Japanese Thrust" (Australia in the War of 1939-45) (Lionel Wigmore) p. 197.

30. "Greece, Crete and Syria" (Australia in the War of 1939-45) (Gavin Long) pp. 228-233.

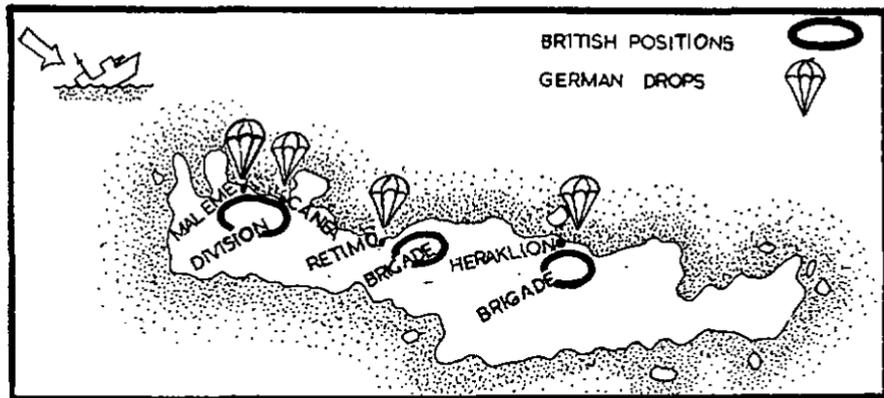


Figure 9. Crete 20 May 1941.

At the end of the day the German invasion is in a grim state. Three landings have been defeated and the fourth at Maleme is in danger. No paratroops remain and sea reinforcement has failed. The 5th Mountain Division is then crash-landed in transport planes. Crete is won by Germany.

dropped paratroops at four locations. By the end of the day the Germans had lost more than half of their men and at all dropping-zones except Maleme were faced with certain defeat. Only two parachute companies were available and the prospects of sea reinforcement were not bright, with the Royal Navy on the watch. However, the 5th Mountain Division was still on hand, in Greece. It was then that the German commander "had to make a momentous decision. I decided to use the reserves for the final capture of Maleme airfield".³¹ 5th Mountain Division was to be flown in by crash-landing transport aircraft onto the beach and a dry river-bed and by attempting to land aircraft on the no-man's land of Maleme airfield. "It seemed utter madness to attempt the landing, for the airfield was swept by the fire of nine field guns and a platoon of machine-guns. Then the thing that couldn't happen happened. At 0810 hours (21st May) a transport touched down, rolled to a stop, disgorged its troops and took off again — all within 70 seconds".³² Despite heavy losses in both men and aircraft, by the end of the day the scales had been tipped and Crete was won for Germany.

Both successful commanders gambled and won. Were they justified in taking these risks? The commander of the Japanese 42nd Regiment stood to lose a tank company and a battalion at Slim River. But he knew his opponents' weaknesses, and at worst his battalion, if lost, would make things easier for

the rest of the regiment which was attacking on the flanks. As for the tanks, they could only be employed along the main road so better to lose them trying than retain them by not using them. The German commander was even more justified. He had already lost more than half of Germany's trained parachutists and stood to lose the rest. It was worth it to try the air-landing of 5th Mountain Division. The additional casualties, had the initial attempt failed, would hardly have been significant when compared to those already lost.

Battles Can Be Won Without Waiting For Detailed Information

Detailed knowledge of enemy dispositions is rightly considered an important battle preliminary. Yet how easily could the delay caused by acquisition of information cost more casualties than a speedily-executed plan based on the little knowledge we have plus an "intelligent guess"? In any case, while we acquire this information the enemy may have had time to re-deploy.

The action at Sanananda, in New Guinea, on 20/21 November 1942, was an example of success achieved by quick decision despite inadequate information.³³ The Australians were pursuing the Japanese to the sea and as Japanese sea re-

31. "The Other Side of the Hill" (B. H. Liddell Hart) p. 241.
32. "The Middle East 1939-43" (Colonel E. G. Keogh) p. 153.
33. "South - West Pacific First Year — Kokoda to Wau" (Australia in the War of 1939-1945) (Dudley McCarthy) pp. 387-391.

inforcement was expected time was critical. At 0830 hours the 2/1st (New South Wales) Battalion was passed through as vanguard when a few minutes later it struck heavy small arms and artillery fire. Believing this to be a delaying position only, the commander ordered two companies (now down to a combined strength of 91), under Captain Catterns, to move to the left around the enemy rear and settle astride the track. While the battalion, and then the whole brigade deployed, Catterns hacked his way through the jungle. Coming in to where they believed the Japanese rear

to be, Catterns' force came upon the unsuspecting enemy at dusk, watching them cooking their rice at only 50 yards distance. This was no delaying position, they had found the main Japanese defences.

"The Japanese were obviously occupying main positions and were therefore in strength. The Australians had no communications to their battalion — they had no means of getting the wounded away —. It was obviously a situation that called for complete withdrawal or boldness of the most calculated kind. Therefore they would

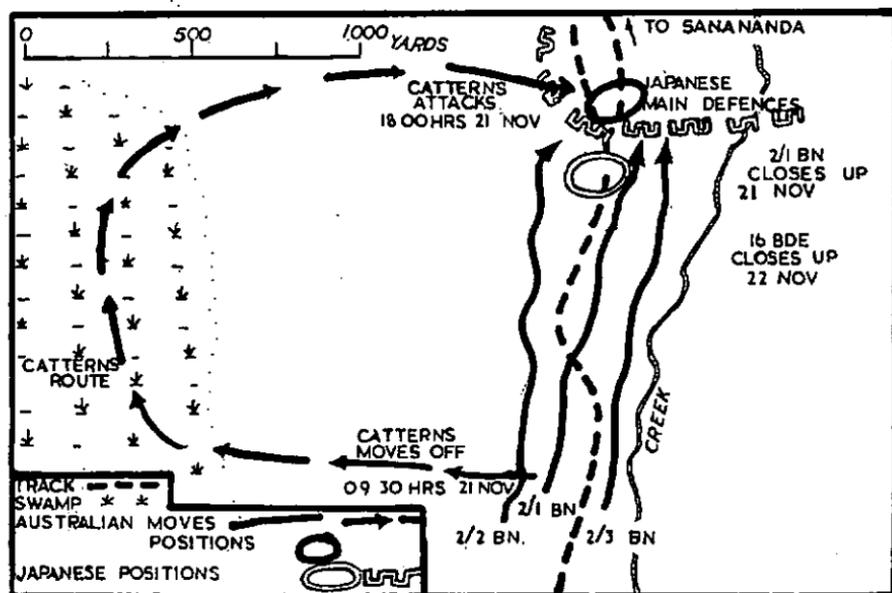


Figure 10. Sanananda 21/22 November 1942.

2/1st Battalion comes under heavy fire. Catterns with two weak companies is ordered to move around to the rear of the enemy delaying position. Catterns reaches the Japanese, finds that they are in main defences but still attacks. He kills 80, sits astride the enemy communications, silences their guns, repels counter-attacks, causes evacuation of the Japanese covering force and breaches the main defences. He does all this with 90 men.

attack".³⁴ Quietly deploying, Catterns' companies went straight into the assault killing 80 Japanese and scattering the rest. Digging in, they discovered that they were astride the main Japanese track. After repelling closely-pressed counter-attacks, Catterns' force was relieved on the night of the 21/22nd. Although they lost 31 killed and 36 wounded out of 91 men, this little force inflicted heavier casualties on the enemy, silenced their artillery, caused the withdrawal of their covering troops who had delayed the whole brigade and accurately fixed the limits of the long-sought main Japanese defences.

Was Catterns reckless in attacking when he knew nothing of the enemy? Perhaps so, but he saved many casualties that would otherwise have been lost later on and gained time which was, at that stage of the Pacific War, of vital importance. Also, had he tried to withdraw when only 50 yards from the enemy his own casualties may well have been just as heavy.

Battles Can Be Launched With Minimum Dissemination of Orders

In the Australian Army an almost sacrosanct principle is that all troops must be "in the picture" before being launched into battle. No-one would dispute this, particularly with Australian infantry from whose ranks leaders invariably come to the fore no matter how many officers and non-commissioned officers become casualties. This

principle, however, is a means to an end, victory, and if victory can be won by speedy action which brooks no time for prolonged orders then we must accept short-cutting of our procedures.

There is one instance where a decisive victory was attained by troops who not only were not "in the picture" but were deliberately kept that way. In Normandy the 43rd (Wessex) Division was given the task of capturing the key position of Mont Pincon, on 5th August 1944.³⁵ This feature was 1,200 feet high, very steep and defended by strong forces and minefields at its foot. An attempt was made by 43rd Division on the south but was bloodily repulsed. On the 6th, 129th Brigade was to attack from the west with two battalions and the tanks of the 13/18th Hussars. Attacking at midday the brigade was stopped with crippling casualties. However, at 1500 hours the Hussars broke through and gathering the 60 surviving riflemen of the 5th Wiltshires seized a position behind the German lines. Seeing a track leading up the face of the mount the enterprising Hussar commander ordered two tank troops up the feature. To their surprise, and to that of the bewildered Germans on the mountain, the tanks reached the top at dusk. The Divisional commander immediately ordered his reserve battalion to pass through the gap and get up

34. "South - West Pacific First Year — Kokoda to Wau" (Australia in the War of 1939-45) (Dudley McCarthy) p. 390.

35. "The 43rd Wessex Division at War" (Major-General H. Essame) pp. 64-69.

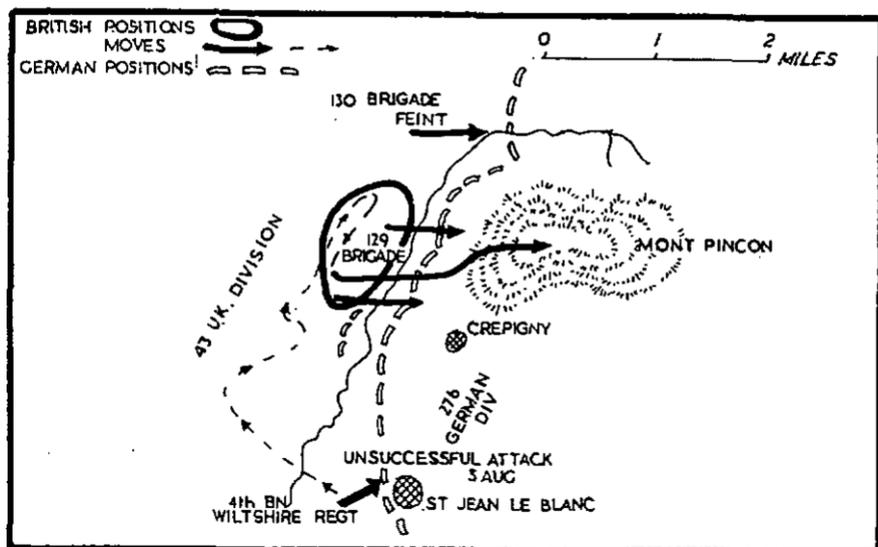


Figure 11. Mount Pincon 5/6 August 1944.

43rd Division attacks at St. Jean on the 5th, without success. They try again on the 6th with 129th Brigade. The assault is decimated but the tanks cut a gap in the German defences. The division rushes in its reserve battalion. Thinking they are moving up to occupy a hill already taken the battalion climbs Mount Pincon with great speed. At dawn it is secure and the Germans have to retreat.

onto Mont Pincon before German reinforcements could occupy it.

The reserve, the 4th Wiltshires, were in a bad state. Heavily battered in the previous day's attack on the south, they had just marched on foot seven miles, suffering 50 casualties from shelling on the way. Passing through the gap as it turned dark they moved up the mount in single file "expecting to find ourselves surrounded at any moment. The sergeant commanding the leading platoon very resourcefully told his men that they were not doing an attack, but were going up to relieve another unit already there. This materially assisted the speed of the advance."³⁶ By

dawn they had eliminated stray Germans on the feature, dug themselves in and made untenable the position of the whole 5th Panzer Army.

The Unexpected Achieves Surprise

As Rommel has stated, the ponderous deployments of British forces into battle are usually predictable and the enemy can take advantage of this failing. Deliberate deviation from our normal procedures are warranted if the surprise achieved outweighs the risks of hasty preparation.

One example of surprise achieved by instant decision was the New Zealand and Aus-

36. "Struggle for Europe" (Chester Wilmot) p. 409.

tralian charge at 42nd Street on Crete, 27th May 1941.³⁷ During the night 26/27th the 5th New Zealand and 19th Australian Brigades were withdrawn to a line along the road known as "42nd Street". Out of touch with their divisional headquarters, the two weak brigades, thoroughly exhausted, arrived in position with the mistaken belief that a force was covering their rest and reorganisation. By 0800 hours some of the battalion commanders started to suspect that perhaps all was not well. The commander of the 28th (Maori) Battalion contacted his

neighbours (2/7th [Victorian] Australian and 21st New Zealand Battalions) who agreed that if attacked they would hold their fire until "the enemy came to close quarters — open fire and then charge".³⁸ As they had no heavy fire support and the enemy was supported by mortars and dive-bombers they considered that a "normal" defence was quite out of the question.

37. "Crete" (Official History of New Zealand in the Second World War) (D. M. Davin) pp. 374-379.

38. "Greece, Crete and Syria" (Australia in the War of 1939-45) (Gavin Long) p. 251.

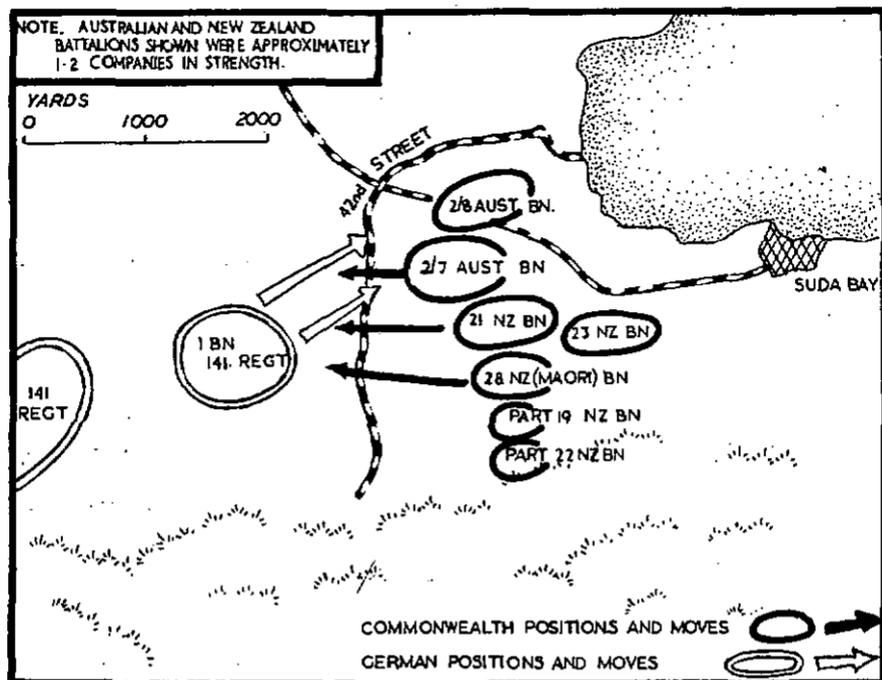


Figure 12. 42nd Street 27 May 1941.

Believing themselves to be "in reserve", and out of touch with their Headquarters, the battalion commanders of 21st, 28th and 2/7th Battalions agree to counter-attack if any German attack develops on their front. They do not wait long. A German battalion crosses their front on its way to Suda Bay. The opportunity is too good to miss. The Battalions charge and 1st/141st Mountain ceases to exist.

Meanwhile the German 141st Mountain Regiment was working its way towards Suda Bay, its 1st Battalion leading, blissfully unaware that 42nd Street was held. At 1100 hours this battalion appeared in view, fully deployed, moving obliquely across the front of the three Anzac battalions. Seeing their chance, the forward company commanders gave the word, and almost as one man the three battalions, joined by stray soldiers from their neighbours, swept forward. In a few minutes the German battalion was driven back 600 yards leaving behind 350 dead, and was "virtually finished in its first action".³⁹ The Anzac troops lost 73 casualties. Not surprisingly the 141st Mountain Regiment halted its advance, and so spared the Anzac brigades which could not have possibly withstood an organised attack. The immediate and unexpected had paid off.

A simple but telling example of sudden departure from normal procedures is the action of the 2/33rd (New South Wales) Battalion in the Ramu Valley of New Guinea on 9th October 1943.⁴⁰ Japanese had been reported on the 4100 Feature overlooking an important track. The 2/33rd was ordered to clear the feature which was very high and extremely precipitous. Major McDougal's company was to lead the battalion up the mountain and set off at 1600 hours. The enemy, who could not see the lower slopes, were being kept quiet by air attack. When night fell McDougal's company was still climbing and

far from the top. The brigadier and battalion commander had to make a quick decision and made it. The troops were to push on and attempt the almost unheard-of feat of a night attack in New Guinea. With no idea of the enemy's dispositions McDougal's men continued and "moved straight towards the highest point to try their luck against whatever opposition was there".⁴¹ At 2130 hours the Australians finally reached the top. Completely surprised, the Japanese fired a few shots, broke, and then fled. The position which should have held for days was taken in a few seconds.

The decisions taken in both examples would be regarded as ludicrous if presented as a solution in a training exercise. Yet they succeeded because the surprise effect gained far outweighed the disadvantages of departure from normal procedures.

Quick Decision is More Likely To Tip The Scales Than A Deliberate Plan

In most hard-fought battles, and particularly in those where the opponents are not too unevenly matched, there comes a time when the issue hangs in the balance. One last effort by the attacker or one last desperate stand by the defender and the scales are tipped one

39. "Crete" (Official History of New Zealand in the Second World War) (D. M. Davin) p. 379.

40. "The New Guinea Offensives" (Australia in the War of 1939-45) (David Dexter) pp. 574-576.

41. "The New Guinea Offensives" (Australia in the War of 1939-45) (David Dexter) p. 575.

way or the other. At this stage in the battle the original orders and plan have largely ceased to be operative and the unit commander is now "playing by ear". It is here where bold decision will count and where time-consuming battle procedures are merely likely to surrender the initiative.

Such an occasion was Rommel's crossing of the River Meuse on 13th May 1940.⁴² The 7th Panzer Division had reached the river during the night, and working to a pre-arranged decision, crossed the river at three places, despite the fact that their artillery had not yet

caught up. 7th Motor-cycle Battalion crossed at Houx, 6th Rifle Regiment at Leffe and 7th Rifle Regiment at Dinant. Urgency was the keynote as French tanks were known to be in the vicinity and the building of tank pontoons had to be started as soon as possible. At 0400 hours Rommel toured the crossing places. 7th Motor-Cycle Battalion was across but badly pressed and vulnerable to tank attack. The 6th Rifle Regiment had established a small bridge-head but most of their boats were destroyed and the crossing

42. "The Rommel Papers" (edited by B. H. Liddell Hart) pp. 6-7.

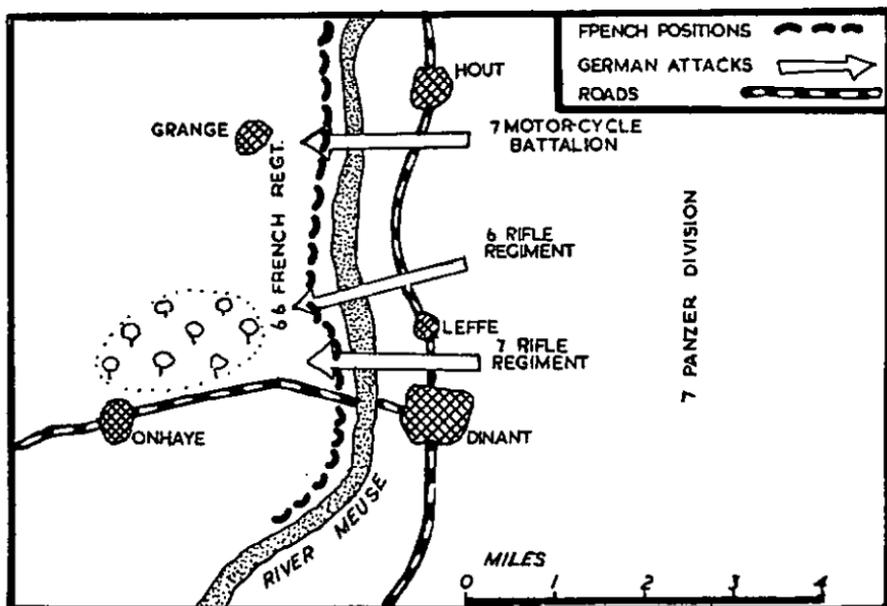


Figure 13. The Meuse 13 May 1940.

7th Panzer Division is crossing the Meuse but all crossings have stopped. Rommel collects every available weapon at Dinant and concentrates their fire on the enemy. Taking personal command of the 2nd Battalion 7th Rifle Regiment he reactivates the crossing. 7th Panzer gets across and has a clear run to the Bay of Biscay.

had come to a standstill. However, at Dinant real disaster threatened. Only one company of 2nd Battalion 7th Rifle Regiment was across, and it was cowering under the heavy fire from "the stout resistance of the French 66th Regiment".⁴³ Almost all the assault boats were sunk and the troops badly shaken. The die was cast.

Rommel acted immediately. He first contacted his corps commander and urgently requested that the artillery be pushed forward. Then going direct to the 7th Rifle Regiment at Dinant, where he knew some tanks to be positioned on the near bank, he took over personal command of the luckless 2nd Battalion. Collecting every available tank, anti-aircraft weapon, anti-tank gun and machine-gun he concentrated their direct fire onto every possible French position overlooking the crossing. Then gathering some damaged assault boats he started to ferry across the rest of the battalion. Hardly one of the procedures we consider essential to the well-ordered river crossing were followed but the battalion crossed and subdued the French resistance. With the pressure taken off them the other two crossings were able to proceed.

PART IV — THE REMEDY

If bold action can produce results then why is it that our training methods tend to stress the opposite, that detailed, thorough and time-consuming battle procedures are indispensable? There are five main reasons:—

- (a) "We generally assume that organisations are well-trained and at full strength, that subordinates are competent, that supply arrangements function, that communications work, that orders are carried out. In war many or all of these conditions may be absent".⁴⁴ This quotation aptly sums up the main fault of almost all our training.
- (b) "Officers assume that exercise intelligence in war is necessarily entirely accurate and entirely complete, whereas intelligence in war seldom pretends to be either".⁴⁵ In all our exercises we are supplied with detailed knowledge of the enemy the like of which rarely occurs except in the long-planned deliberate operation. In addition, we invariably know where all our own people are which is also just as unreal. In short, the "fog of war" is missing.
- (c) In the attack, for example, we study at great length the deployment, the plan, the orders, the administration and the reorganisation. How often do we study the fight on the objective? Almost never, and this is a great defect. We spend too much concentration on preparing for battle but not enough on the conduct of it.

43. "The Battle of France 1940" (Colonel A. Gcutard) p. 159.

44. "Infantry in Battle" (Infantry Journal, United States) p. vii.

45. "Battle Preliminaries" (Major-General Bozert) (Reprinted from Canadian Army Journal in Australian Army Journal, July 1964) p. 9.

So the unexpected, the hazards of the battle and the instant decision are neglected. Our training battles are invariably well-ordered and tidy affairs!

- (d) The element of time is seldom stressed except when written in to impose restrictions on long, detailed and often most unrealistic appreciations. But we are rarely likely to study realistic time problems where, say, we are given 15 minutes to site a rearguard position for a battered battalion and five minutes to issue the orders. Such problems would soon convince people that full implementation of our battle procedures are desirable but often unattainable.
- (e) "The British employed teamwork and symposium methods in their officers' training schools, up to and including Staff College. — But this system served first of all the development of science-oriented thought, rather than training of leaders".⁴⁶ Our methods tend to encourage "rule by committee" rather than quick personal decision.

The Argument For Our Present Methods

There are, of course, arguments against the downgrading in training of the importance of thorough battle preliminaries. These are:—

- (a) Tactical training, especially TEWTs, are used to teach principles. Therefore we should use standard organi-

sations and procedures and not cloud the lessons with too many imponderables.

- (b) Our battle procedures are a basis from which to work. Actual battle experience will enable commanders to short-cut procedures.
- (c) Realistic portrayal of the "fog of war" is difficult to achieve.

Tactical Training. The argument on tactical training is easily refuted. True, a "teaching" TEWT should use standard organisations and unconfused situations. But we seem to serve until retiring age having attended none other than "teaching" TEWTs. What we need are "practise" TEWTs where truly realistic situations and quick decisions are presented to officers who already should have mastered the basic principles. And if it is true, as often alleged, that our knowledge of basic principles is weak then the answer is more TEWTs. At least one regular battalion in the last decade went three years without conducting a single officers' TEWT.

Battle Experience. This argument is also invalid. Firstly, we are most likely to be involved in limited war where personnel will be relieved after one year in action. By the time our commanders have the experience to decide for themselves they will move on, to be replaced by reinforcement officers imbued with the leisurely tactical habits of the peace-time Army.

46. "Notes on the Practical Conduct of War Games" (General Leo Freiherr Geyr Von Schweppenburg) (Australian Army Journal September 1963) p. 22.

The "Fog of War". This last argument is the most telling. Yes, the realistic portrayal of the "fog of war" is difficult to achieve. In the one-sided exercise, the best of all tactical training, it demands a well-organised "enemy" and extremely capable umpires, two commodities not readily available in our small army. The TEWT is a somewhat easier proposition but even here a confused "fog of war" will demand really good Directing Staff. However these problems, given the will, are capable of solution.

The Need For Training In Quick Battle Decisions

So far this paper has quoted examples drawn from "conventional" non-nuclear warfare. How do these ideas apply to other types of war? In nuclear war there can be no question that the confused situation and the need for instant reaction to meet it will be normal. What, then, of counter-insurgency? The difficulty, in guerilla warfare, of bringing the enemy to battle is so well-known that once having contacted an enemy we simply cannot afford to let him break contact. This will create situations where units will have to immediately attack with the briefest and crudest of battle preliminaries — probably a few sentences on a radio. And such situations in a war similar to that in Vietnam will involve whole battalions or more. Even in the Malaya-type emergency against small bands the need for bold-

ness will still be vital. Does the patrol commander attack the enemy camp straight away and be certain of killing some but at a possible cost to himself? Or does he bring up the rest of his force to carry out the perfect operation which might only capture a vacated camp?

Conclusion

The need for injecting audacity into the tactical thinking of our commanders is vitally necessary. To this end we could:—

- (a) Create more realistic and confused situations in training exercises.
- (b) Conduct more "practice" instead of "teaching" TEWTs.
- (c) Ensure realistic "enemy" representation and thorough umpiring in exercises with troops.
- (d) Lay more stress in the conduct of battle than on the preparations for it.
- (e) Discard as far as practicable, the "syndicate" method of tactical training and start demanding that officers do their own thinking and made their own decisions.
- (f) Above all, cultivate an attitude where an officer who makes mistakes is to be preferred to the one who never makes one by always "playing safe".

What we really need are good quick plans in preference to perfect slow ones.

SOME THOUGHTS ON PROFESSIONALISM

Martin Blumenson

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U.S. Army Command and General Staff College,
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IT TOOK American career officers about 150 years to have their status as professionals accepted by their countrymen. Although the opening of the United States Military Academy at West Point in 1802 made evident general recognition that the military calling was a profession requiring not only specialised knowledge but also special education, the American people have, throughout most of their history, been loath to give career soldiers the respect that members of other professions have commanded.

This is a strange phenomenon, for the pages of American history are full of military exploits and military leaders — from George Washington, through Andrew Jackson and Ulysses S. Grant, to Dwight D. Eisenhower — who have been accorded the highest honour and responsibility a grateful nation could offer. Despite the fact that the Army made possible, to an extent still largely unappreciated, the westward expansion of the Nation — by guarding the frontier, exploring

and establishing routes of communication, and maintaining law and order — most Americans regarded the soldier as being somehow outside the confines of normal society. War, to most Americans, was an aberration, to be done with as rapidly as possible so that the Nation could return to peace — and normality.

Part of this was due, I think, to the nature of the military profession itself. A relatively small group throughout most of the 19th century, Army officers

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served in some isolation on the periphery of the national life — on small western posts and in large coastal fortifications. In a narrow environment, they were outside the mainstream of American development, and many West Point graduates departed the service to build the bridges, roads, canals, and railways that seemed much more important to the national existence than did military life.

Part of this feeling seems to have come about because of the officers themselves who, with some significant exceptions, were not particularly professionally minded.

Early in the 20th century, and for a variety of reasons — the consequences of the war with Spain which thrust the United States into a position of World prominence; the disappearance of the frontier; the impact of European military thought (particularly the revolution wrought by the German General Staff); and the emergence of the new industrial weapons — the US Army began to display a modern attitude toward the problems of warfare.

Modern Attitudes

The so-called Root reforms, the major one being the creation of the general staff, as well as the establishment of additional schools of training and of higher education, began to give Army officers a broad professional outlook. The problems encountered during the course of World War I contributed to the enlarged professionalism of the officer corps by making rele-

vant such matters as industrial mobilisation, manpower utilisation, large-scale troop movements, and the deployment of large units in combat.

In the desuetude of the post-World War I period, a handful of officers maintained their professionalism and were thus able to be ready for the new problems imposed by World War II, a coalition struggle fought on a global scale. In the same way, Army officers on active duty today are preparing themselves to meet the problems of the future.

World War II was a watershed in the relations between the American public and the military services. Since that time, the American people have come to understand the precarious equilibrium of our world and the necessity for maintaining a large Military Establishment. Officers are no longer outside the mainstream of American life, but perform a vital function in protecting and conserving it. They are now recognised as professionals in the full sense of the term, not only as the opposite of amateurs, but as having a knowledge acquired by study and experience.

Continuous Study

This brings me to my main point. An officer's career is shaped by a variety of influences, mainly his assignments and his formal schooling in the Army's educational system. But to attain professional status is not the same as retaining it. A high level of proficiency is required at all times.

It is inconceivable to me that a physician can practice medicine, particularly in these days of rapid developments and startling discoveries, without referring continuously to the literature of his profession.

In the same way and for the same reason, military careerists who are interested in preserving and advancing their professional status must read works pertaining to their field of endeavour. The world has become so complex and the role of the soldier in that world so important and difficult that an officer who expects to make a significant contribution in his calling must continue to study throughout his career.

Military history offers one of the best opportunities for individual self-improvement. In the annals of the past can be found instruction on all phases of the military profession, unless it be on the detailed method of how to operate a piece of equipment in current use. Problems of command, logistics, tactics, strategy, and morale, for example, can be examined in the context of military history, not from a theoretical viewpoint, but from a strictly pragmatic position. In the experience of armies and commanders and staffs is to be found guidance for action in the present and future.

Cautions

There are certain cautions to be raised. Not all written history is good history. Some of it, perhaps a great deal, is inaccurate for one reason or another. Historians may not

have looked at aspects of past experience that are particularly relevant today. Some historians incorporate a special plea in their writing, and their work takes on the nature of an apologia. And, of course, some history is simply dull and unreadable.

A reader must be selective in his choice of material. There is so much good history available, so much readable history being written, that it is unnecessary for a reader to be bored.

Reading may be done in a variety of ways. One is for the sheer enjoyment of learning about people and events in the past without giving much thought to the meaning of that experience.

Another form of reading is serious in motivation. It requires a running dialogue between reader and author. Since the writer is speaking through the printed page, the reader has the responsibility for initiating and continuing the conversation. The conversation, therefore one-sided, might go something like this: "Is this fellow right here?" "Has he presented the whole picture?" "Has he omitted information because he didn't know, or has he done so on purpose in order to make a point which would not otherwise be valid or hold up under scrutiny?" "What is the author driving at?" "What is he trying to say?" And so on.

Serious reading is instructive. It is instructive if the reader remains somewhat sceptical and difficult to convince. It is meaningful if it is related to

the concerns of the reader. If the subject is military history and the reader is a career officer, what more direct relationship, what greater relevance of one to the other can be imagined?

New Requirement

It is sometimes said that the nuclear arsenal has eliminated the validity of all historical examples before 1945. Or, because of the tremendous and profound changes imposed on warfare by the creation of nuclear weapons, there is no longer any reason to look to the past for guidance. Everything, it is said, has changed.

This is not so. The development of nuclear weapons has imposed a new requirement on military thinkers. A doctrine for using these new weapons must be formulated. Would it not be reasonable to suppose that the experience of earlier military thinkers, who had to grapple with the then revolutionary implications of gunpowder, might have relevance to what is essentially the same problem today?

Furthermore, despite the development of the new weapons of our age, man himself has changed little. His basic needs and fears, his fundamental motivations, remain much the same. The functions of leadership and morale are what they have always been.

What is more, the pushbutton weapons of terror have in our time been replaced, for the moment at least, by an underground warfare of terror. Yet, the guerilla wars that absorb

our attention today are not so altogether different from — to choose but one of many examples — the fighting waged in 1902 by the Boers in South Africa. How the British Army won the Boer War can be instructive to our generation of careerists facing somewhat the same problems.

Variety

It might be well here to raise another word of caution. If anyone expects the solutions of the past to fit exactly the problems of the present, he is going to be disappointed. If he tries to make them fit, he is foolish.

For one of the great teachings of history is the infinite variety of life and experience. Situations in the past may resemble situations we are acquainted with today. But never exactly.

Therefore, there is no such thing as "lessons" of history, lessons to be lifted out of context and applied to problems besetting us. Similarities exist. But so do differences. And it is important for the reader who is studying the past in order to find guidance in the present to be aware of the differences as he is of the similarities.

What history teaches is scepticism. What it gives is wisdom. Out of wisdom may come faith and hope, tempered by a sense of reality.

It has become cliché to say — as Aristotle, Moltke, and Santayana have said in their various ways — that a man who does not profit from his mistakes is condemned to repeat them. But the fact remains —

a man who does not learn from the experience of others is foolish indeed.

A careerist in the military service may spend virtually a lifetime preparing for action. Inexperienced when his opportunity to perform in a time of crisis arrives, a novice when the time comes for him to carry out the precepts of his training

and knowledge, he will be better ready to do his duty if he has benefited from the experiences of those who have preceded him.

A tremendous storehouse in the literature of military history awaits the curious, the interested, and the professionally minded career officer. Choose well.

I heartily concur in the ideas expressed in the article entitled "Some Thoughts on Professionalism".

Military history presents a method by which career officers can keep their professionalism up to date. In this complex world of ours, maintaining professional proficiency is a difficult and vital task; one to which every forward-looking officer must give constant attention and effort.

More than ever, military history is playing an important role in the formulation of doctrine and plans. Never before has the Department of the Army staff called so often upon the Office of the Chief of Military History to furnish background papers and historical studies on problems of current interest and importance. An account of how these problems were or were not solved in the past offers significant signposts for those who are grappling with the increasingly complex problems that challenge us today.

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