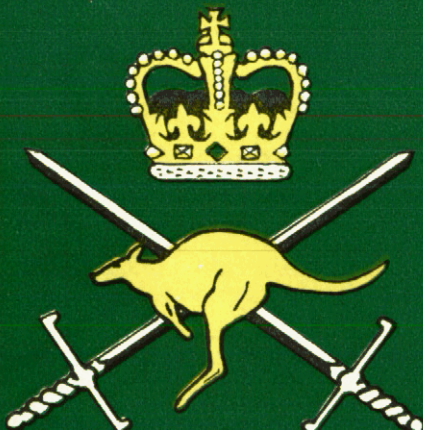


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AUSTRALIAN ARMY JOURNAL



Editor:

A. J. SWEETING

Staff Artist:

G. M. CAPPER

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The views expressed in the articles in this Journal are the authors' own and do not necessarily represent General Staff opinion or policy.



(Australian War Memorial)

Men of the 2/48th Battalion, supported by Matilda tanks, making their way forward to

PRAED POINT BATTERY AT THE RECEIVING END

Major W. G. Botham, DCM
Royal Australian Engineers (Retd)

THE AUGUST edition of the AAJ contained an interesting article about the Praed Point Battery, Rabaul, by the late Colonel Nurse. It was even more interesting to me, perhaps, than to many of your readers because I was OC Fortress Engineers RAE, Praed Point, and was at the battery site during the bombing.

Since I served as a sapper, my friends the gunners might look askance at any comments of

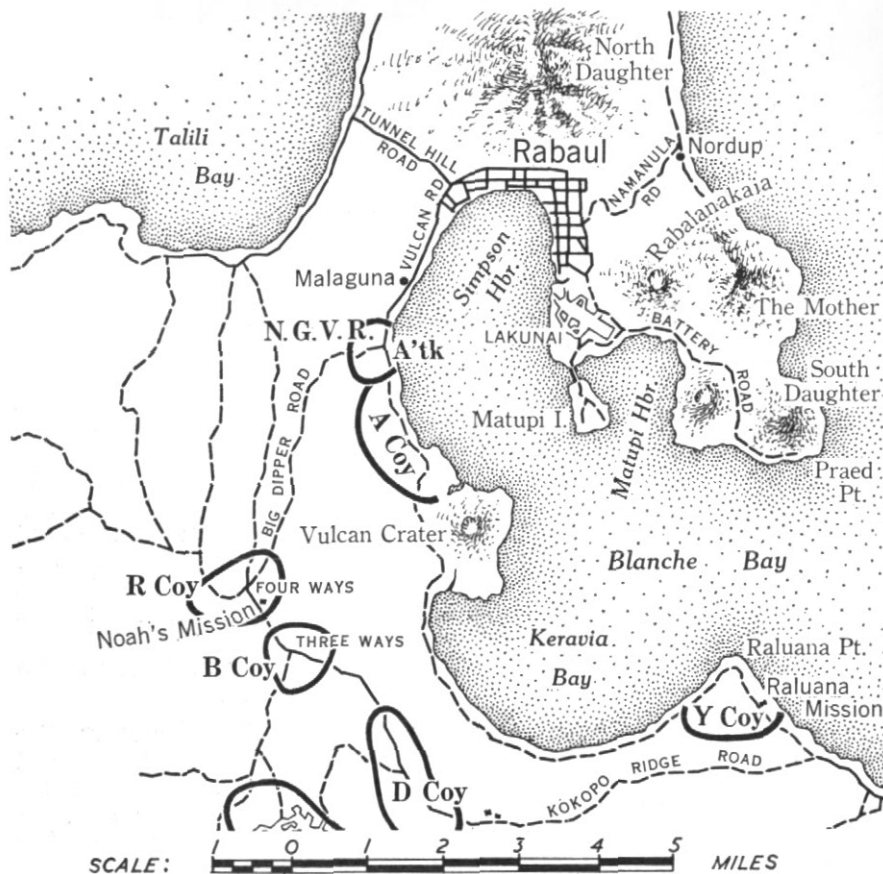
The author enlisted in the Middlesex Regiment in September 1914 at the age of 17. He went to France in February 1915, was wounded in the Second Battle of Ypres in May and after recovery spent a period on the western frontier of Egypt. He returned to France in May 1916 and served thereafter with the 1 Battalion Middlesex Regiment, winning the DCM in mid-1917 during the fighting on the Hindenburg Line. In September he returned to England and after officer training was commissioned in the Bedfordshire Regiment. Later he gained a commission in the RAF, serving as a pilot in No. 80 Squadron in Belgium and Egypt.

He joined the citizen military forces as a lieutenant in 1937, and served as a captain and major in various wartime appointments with RAE fortress engineer units, including OC Fortress Engineers at Praed Point, until placed on the R. of O. in November, 1944.

mine on the gun sites. However, without questioning the ingenious two-level gun-siting arrangement at the Point to meet the tactical position early in 1941, to the men on the spot just a few months later the site did call for a deal of criticism. With such a small force to hold the Rabaul area, we considered we were isolated and very much "out on a limb".

The map shows clearly the road which had been bull-dozed to Praed Point to allow necessary access to the gun site. It skirts Matupi Harbour at the foot of the extinct volcano Rabalanakaia, and then follows the low ground between The Mother and the South Daughter on the one hand and the more or less active crater Matupi on the other.

In June 1941, two to three months after "Lark Force" had reached Rabaul, Matupi, which had been quiescent since the disastrous eruption of 1937, commenced again to erupt. Large volumes of volcanic dust were emitted. The dust was accompanied at times by large rocks which tumbled down the steep



sides of the crater. This volcanic activity was a cause of some uneasiness to the civil administration and military alike. It is quite understandable that the battery commander and all the personnel at Praed Point did not relish their position since the now-active Matupi was so close and our road to Rabaul was around and near its lower slopes. The dust, carried by the then prevailing wind over Rabaul, polluted roof-water catchments, rotted army tents and the like.

Later, with a change of wind, Praed Point was to receive its share. At the time of the bombing there was a heavy layer of the dust on all the tropical foliage growing on the South Daughter, round and above the battery.

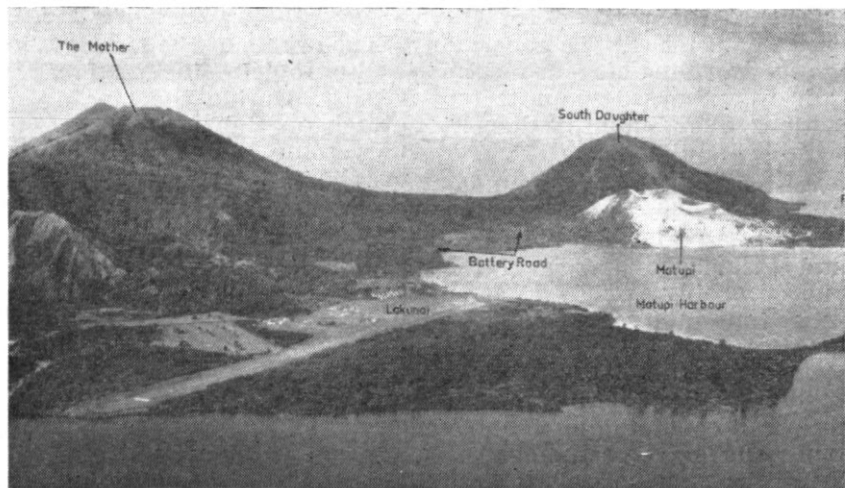
In June 1941 the only route to a safe area away from Rabaul should Matupi again become dangerously active was by way of the Tunnel Hill Road and along Talili Bay. To improve this situation Lieutenant Norden

and sappers of my company sought and eventually found an alternative route from Simpson's Harbour linking with a track to the high ground at Four Ways. The bulldozer which had been used to form the battery road to Praed Point was still at Rabaul with its driver, but was due to be returned to Queensland, from whose authorities it had been borrowed. There remained sufficient time to permit the formation of a steep but passable route before it was returned to the mainland.

The sappers also cleared a route through pumice belt around Vulcan crater and cleared the landslides which had blocked the road around Keravia Bay (the Blue Lagoon) to Raluana Point. Thus valuable — albeit rough — alternative routes were available for civil or military purposes.

Later in 1941 and before Pearl Harbour it had been decided to move the coastal defence guns at Praed Point to Raluana Point on the opposite side of Blanche Bay and near the site of the battery during World War I. Before the Japanese landing many native huts with wooden floors had already been constructed to house at Raluana the artillery, engineers and signals personnel. The huts had been suitably sited for concealment and dispersion. Fabricated steel cruciform mountings had been ordered in Australia for the guns to save time and eliminate the necessity to construct the usual heavy concrete foundations.* I believe the mountings eventually arrived

* The writer may be in error in believing that the constructional work at Raluana was the outcome of a decision to move the Praed Point guns thereto. It seems likely that this work was the outcome of a decision, later abandoned, to develop Rabaul as a fleet base for the US Navy with a greatly expanded scale of equipment.



(Department of Territories)

Looking eastwards across Simpson Harbour, Rabaul,
towards The Mother and South Daughter.

at Port Moresby but by then Rabaul was in enemy hands.

The writer of the August article makes some severe comment about the constructing party for its "fine disregard of all the elementary principles of concealment". To a degree he made his point, but one wonders if he gave much thought to concealment when siting the guns. On a steep forward slope, amid verdant tropical growth, he had sited the guns on different levels to obtain a maximum arc of fire. Accordingly some trees — and they were the minimum since they belonged to the natives at Praed Point and to whom compensation had to be paid — were cut down. Similarly the Battery Observation Post with its Depression Range Finder had to have a clear view to function. I had no great worries in siting the two searchlights — one on each flank of the battery. These were sited as low as possible relative to the positions of the guns. The petrol-driven generating sets providing current for the lights were housed in protected positions along gullies adjacent to the searchlights.

Constructing the gun foundations and moving the guns on to them was a major and more difficult task. The barrels of the guns probably weighed some seven tons apiece, each gun-mounting five tons and each gun shield three to four tons. The weight of the materials for the reinforced concrete gun foundations would have been considerable. It was not possible to drag such weights up the steep slope from the water-line even if it had been possible to transport

them by barge from Rabaul. Therefore suitable access tracks had to be cut into the rather soft and steep sides of the slope to each gun-site. In consequence there was much removal of spoil and subsequent damage to the soft tropical growth. A flat area large enough at each site to allow the gun to function over its wide allotted area, plus the excavation for each gun foundation required much further movement of soil. Later it was found necessary to weld 12-inch wide steel tyres to the wheels of the carriage used to move the gun parts over the soft soil to the gun positions. There was no metal available for surfacing the Battery road or tracks around the battery, and the statement by Colonel Nurse regarding same is incorrect. Some rock off an outcrop alongside portion of the Battery road was available in a very limited quantity and was used to repair wash-aways caused by tropical storms.

The events of the last days are well chronicled in *The Japanese Thrust*. During the massive air attack on Rabaul on 20th January some bombs were dropped on the battery camp by high-level and dive bombers. This resulted in some damage to the hutments and partial blocking of the road to the battery position. The sappers subsequently cleared and repaired the road.

Next day was ominously quiet and free from enemy attack. I spent all of this day on the lower — Lakunai — 'drome with the engineer demolition party, this being the task of the fortress engineers and not "A" Company, 2/22nd Battalion as

recorded in *The Japanese Thrust*. It was warm work sinking the holes for explosives, but by nightfall the charges thus laid had been connected for firing. Many drums of aviation spirit were in dispersed positions around the aerodrome among the coconut palms. These drums were pierced with an axe and were to be rolled onto the runway next day.

A demolition firing party of five with two exploders was left at the 'drome and the remainder of the party returned to Praed Point camp in the unit 30-cwt. truck. It was now my duty as officer commanding electric lights to go to the battery observation post and direct the operation of the searchlights if and as required by Major Clarke, the battery commander. I donned some clean clothes and my full battle dress and fortunately put my emergency rations and some quinine tablets in my haversack. These were to prove most valuable later on the long trek over the Baining Mountains and along the coast nearly to Gasmata. That, however, is another story.

It was hot walking in full kit up the long hill to the battery that night. On the way I had a word to Lieutenant Chandler and his RAE detachment at the No. 1 searchlight and generator positions. It was not usual to have an officer at these positions as the NCO's and sappers were very capable and experienced. With an attack imminent, however, it was desirable to have all officers of the company at the battery.

Having arrived at the B.O.P., I met the battery commander with his assistants and Lieutenant Larkin as searchlight officer with the engineer detachment who had manned the post as usual just before dark. It was a typical warm and quiet tropical night. The searchlight beams were not exposed; this was not considered advisable. Everyone was at the alert, with look-outs doubled. The order to "stand-to" was given about 4.30 in the morning. With the knowledge that the Japanese attacking force was on its way we thought that we could be in action at any time.

The dawn came, then full light quickly, Rabaul being situated only a few degrees south of the equator. To us at Praed Point there was no sign of enemy vessels. All was peaceful and I remember thinking that the view from the South Daughter in the early morning light had never been more beautiful. It was not to remain so for long!

Normally at full light, with the concurrence of the battery commander, searchlight personnel stand down and return to their quarters to rest. Similarly the BOP detachment RAA and the gun crews stand-down and are relieved later by fresh teams. It was possible that the Japanese force could be approaching from the north towards the South Daughter and just outside our vision at this time. It would have been unwise, however, to have men moving to and from the battery until we were sure of the situation. Accordingly, we were still standing-by when the

drone of planes was heard. With the alarm sounding, the gunners went to their slit trenches or light shelters in the vicinity of the BOP or the guns. Lieutenant Larkin, with the engineer detachment who had been at the BOP, and I went for cover into the shallow gully which was near by. Almost immediately the Japanese commenced their attack on the battery with dive bombers, answered only by two Lewis guns on anti-aircraft mountings sited on the flanks of the battery.

How many aircraft attacked the battery is more than I could say with accuracy, but there were plenty for a task which was well organized and executed. The heat and the all-pervading volcanic dust made the conditions more severe.

Artillery bombardment was no new thing to me. In France, as a front-line soldier during the war years 1915 to 1917, I had been on the receiving end many times, and I had known some machine-gunning of a light nature from the air as well. The savage attack by the dive-bombers on Praed Point and the subsequent machine-gunning gave us the full treatment and to me it was no easier to take than anything I had experienced in World War I.

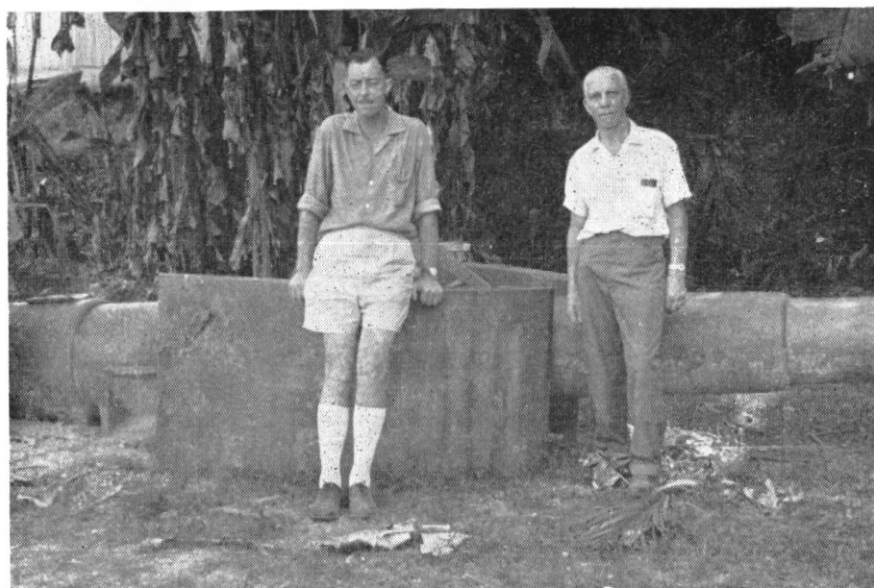
In the strange silence when the sound of aerial activity had ceased, we clambered out of the gully to the higher ground above the site of the BOP. There was no sign of it and the whole area forward to the gun positions was devoid of any of the tropical growth which had been there

before. To us, at this time, the situation at Praed Point was climactic. Was the naval force, then approaching from a point close to but outside our range of observation, about to land, or would the bombers return with another complement of missiles?

With the destruction of the BOP and its range-finder, the damage to the top gun and the utter exposure of the whole area, the battery was no longer operational. The only logical action was to evacuate the position and join the main force — if one could so designate it—in Rabaul. Fortunately the number of casualties was not great and could have been much higher as there were no deep shelters on the site. The RAA had one detachment buried, an RAE corporal and two sappers were killed at the No. 2 searchlight generator position, and two members of the 2/22nd Battalion mortar platoon suffered a similar fate.

In his conclusions the writer of the August article appears to imply that the bombing was ineffective, apparently because the guns did not receive direct hits. That they did not do so is not so surprising even with such a heavy bomb drop. It must be remembered that there were steep banks behind the guns, the ground fell away sharply in front of them and more gradually to each side.

The August article includes the statement: "The damage [i.e. to the guns] might well have resulted from our own aircraft and not been the enemy's handiwork at all". The sugges-



Major D. F. Field, "A" Company, 2/22nd Battalion, and the author at the site of the top gun of the Praed Point Battery. The photograph was taken during a visit of the Battalion Association to Rabaul in 1964.

tion to me seems utterly unworthy.

I had a brief word with the battery commander before he left the site with some of his men. Caked with dust and dirt as they were and having endured the main onslaught of the aerial attack, their condition was not enviable. Colonel Nurse, in his article, has something to say about "raw troops". This is not an expression I would have used, particularly as the men in question were manning the site the colonel had unfortunately chosen for them.

I could not imagine any body of men being any differently affected in similar circumstances. Given any suitable target, the battery before the bombing would have acquitted itself

in a sea attack as well as the two-gun anti-aircraft battery at Rabaul with limited equipment had done against air attack. One can imagine the battery commander's bitter feelings at the time; in retrospect, however, he may feel as I do, that much of value was learnt from the action at Praed Point. Some weeks later, having suffered no little hardship but with much good fortune, I was able to leave New Britain, and after a somewhat precarious sea journey reached the Trobriands and Samarai. Later at the Paga battery, Port Moresby, I saw how the coastal defence guns had been given good protection from the air by steel canopies resting on R.S.J's. The lesson of Praed Point had been well learnt.

But to return to Praed, as it was just after the attack. I gave the orders to the engineer detachments to withdraw to Rabaul and this was done after the equipment had been rendered useless for further operation. At this time the men of "R" Company 2/22nd Battalion, who had the role of infantry screen around the water-line, were also withdrawing.

Sapper Vale, with an excellent sense of duty, arrived at the head of the battery road with the unit's 30-cwt truck and reported to me. He remained with me to perform such demolition tasks as seemed possible in the circumstances. It was not practicable to destroy the reserve of shell — we had no explosives at the battery site, all the supply having been used on the aerodrome the previous day. We ignited the cordite, however, and it went up with a whoop. Proceeding to the battery camp we collected and burnt the papers in the administrative hut, and then the hut itself was fired. The petrol and oil dump was next to burn, and when this was ablaze we wrecked the engine and pump which provided the water supply for the camp. Time now appeared to be short for any further work. Everybody else had departed long since. More than once I had glanced seawards to the Point, a few hundred yards away. It would have been so easy for enemy craft to come round the Point and land at the Battery camp just then. I was to see this happen with tragic results for some of our men at Tol some weeks later. In the can-

teen hut I found a kit bag, and half filled it with biscuits. We tossed these, some spades and an axe into the truck and left the scene to rejoin the remainder of the company at the Lakunai 'drome.

I regretted later that I had not made it my business to see the guns after the action, because I was unable to give definite information about them when I subsequently reached Port Moresby. I was confident that the artillerymen would have removed the telescopes and sufficient of the mechanism to put the guns out of action if the bombardment had not already done so. Since the attacking force, with its cruisers, destroyers and air flotilla could have come and blasted the exposed area to pieces at any time, it was imperative that the site should be evacuated without delay after the bombing to avoid any further loss of life. This was done in a quiet and orderly fashion. I consider that all that was necessary and advisable at Praed Point was done. I stress these points, because I feel that Colonel Nurse has been less than fair to the men who manned Praed Point and of whom so few returned to Australia.

Last year I visited Rabaul and went out to Praed Point along the road which is now so much smoother than in 1942. No smoke from Matupi crater rises now. On the low flat area where the battery camp was situated there are now a native school and a young coconut palm plantation. On the gun site the top gun can

be found fairly easily. The damage to the breech and the deep grooves in the gun shield gouged out by bomb fragments are there for all to see. The muzzles of one Japanese gun and the lower Australian gun can be found if one searches diligently.

I also journeyed to Bita Paka on the Gazelle Peninsula, to see the War Memorial. Two rows of stone columns have been erected in beautiful surroundings. On the columns bronze plaques are mounted, recording the names of all servicemen who died on New Britain and on other islands in the group, or who were lost at sea.

It was very poignant for me to see the army numbers and names of some 80 per cent of my company who did not return. Many of them had served with me in the militia before the war, and on the outbreak had gone to their posts for coastal defence. To a man all the company had volunteered for the AIF yet they were — for some reason unknown to me to this day — never given AIF status. In Rabaul they were very competent and did all they were asked to do — I could not expect more. I believe my sentiments would be shared by those artillery officers who were at Praed Point on the morning of 22nd January 1942.

COMPETITION FOR AUTHORS

The Board of Review has awarded £5 prizes for the best original articles published in the July, August and September issues of the journal to:—

July: Lieut-Colonels J. O. Langtry and C. H. A. East, "The Aboriginal and Defence."

August: Lieut-Colonel R. S. Garland, "Ambush Knoll."

September: Brigadier John W. O'Brien, "The Rushcutter Culverin."

ADMINISTRATION AS A FUNCTION OF COMMAND

Major J. I. Martyn,
Royal Australian Army Service Corps

Introduction

ADMINISTRATION has had a chequered history in the annals of war, and has not always enjoyed the thorough attention that it warrants. The effects of this neglect were not always critical: armies in the past were often small and their requirements unsophisticated. The slow rate at which they moved allowed time to gather their administrative needs locally or recover from the effects of shortcomings. As well,

armies often relied to a great extent for their needs on living off the land, a practice which in itself tended to restrict the size of the army and the regions in which it could operate. In this respect administration, even where few military provisions were needed, had its effect on operations.

The great majority of instances in warfare which have seen the patient and thorough administration of armies are not questioned. Indeed, the consciousness of the importance of administration which grew throughout the 1939-45 War is an integral part of the case advanced in this paper. In that war administration on a tremendous scale became as never before an indispensable aspect of all operations.

The author graduated from RMC in December 1948 and was allotted to the Army Service Corps. He served with 14 NS Trg Bn (1951-52), with 15 NS Trg Bn (1953-54) and as OC 106 Tpt Platoon (1954-56). He attended the RAASC School in 1957-58 and was then for a year attached to the Australian Army Staff in the United Kingdom for S. & T. training. On his return to Australia he spent two years at the RAASC School, which was followed by his appointment as DADST HQ Eastern Command. He qualified at the 1963-64 course at the Australian Staff College, and in December 64 was appointed DADST FARELF, an appointment he still holds.

Aim

The aim of this article is to consider administration as a function of command and to examine some effects that administration had on command

during the 1939-45 War in order to:

- (a) Determine more closely the importance of administration as a function of command; and
- (b) Draw conclusions on present and future likely related problems in the army.

PART I COMMAND AND ADMINISTRATION

Command, as a function of a commander of a national armed force, is defined by *The Oxford Dictionary* as "the power of control, disposal or direction; possession with full power to use."

The functions of command, or the components which constitute the function of command, are not specifically detailed in any one text. *Australian Military Regulation No. 51* prescribes the functions of a formation, etc, commander as:

"... responsible for the command, control, training and administration [of his command]."

Administration is defined by *The Oxford Dictionary* as "the keeping up of . . . a body of troops by the supply of funds or needful provisions." *Field Service Regulations* (1930) Vol I, describes administration as "that function of command which deals with the maintenance of the forces in the field." It should be noted that administration is listed specifically as a function of command.

Logistics is defined by *Websters Dictionary* as "that part of the military art which embraces

the details of transport, quartering and supply of troops in military operations."

Logistics is clearly part of the broader field of military administration, and not a separate pursuit in itself.

Administration as a Principle of War

Administration is a component of command, and an integral part of a commander's duty. The principles of war are guides for the conduct of a commander, gleaned from the experiences and fortunes of commanders in the past. The War Office — now MOD (Army) — appears to be uncertain whether administration is a principle of war or not. In one recent publication¹ administration is listed among the principles of war; in another, issued some 12 months later,² it is omitted.

It was only after the 1939-45 War that administration was singled out from the functions of command to become a principle of war. The principles of war, listed in *Field Service Regulations*, Vol. III (1935), do not include administration. The profound effect that administration had on the conduct of the war was no doubt the reason for its post-war inclusion. This supposed emphasis on administration was short-lived. It is evident that the Ministry of Defence now considers administration a function of command, and not merely a principle for guidance.

¹ *The Land Battle*, Part I—Tactics, 1960, WO Code No. 9637, 19 Aug 60.

² *High Command*, WO Code No. 9738, 3 Oct 61.

PART II

ADMINISTRATION: THE EFFECT ON HIGHER COMMAND

This Part examines the effects that administration had on higher command decisions and global strategy in the 1939-45 War.

The Decision to Invade North Africa in 1942

In May 1942 Mr. Molotov, the Russian Foreign Minister, found the British Prime Minister, Mr. Churchill, non-committal about the establishment of a Second Front in Europe in 1942. President Roosevelt, however, was more optimistic when Molotov visited Washington. "The conversations between these two ended with a declaration . . . which stated that 'a full understanding was reached with regard to . . . a second Front in Europe in 1942.'"³

Shipping and Landing Craft Problems. The President and the US Chiefs of Staff were anxious for ground combat against Germany as soon as possible. Operation SLEDGEHAMMER, for an invasion of Europe in 1942, had been agreed by the Allies in April 1942. However, by early May, the British "were expressing strong doubts that the resources to launch an early cross-channel operation could be found".⁴ The uncertainty was in part "due to the state of the American landing craft production program which was not only lagging far behind schedule but was indefinite as to type and number." Towards the end of April the US Navy's estimates of its land-

ing craft requirements in the Pacific and elsewhere were received. Meyer in *Command Decisions* comments that if these estimates had been "allowed to stand, only about half the Allied needs for SLEDGEHAMMER" could have been met.⁵

In July 1942 the British War Cabinet accepted a report from the British Chiefs of Staff recommending that SLEDGEHAMMER should not be mounted. "They were persuaded by . . . reports . . . from the Minister of War Transport that . . . the operations would tie up about 250,000 tons of shipping at a time when shipping could ill be spared," and one from Lord Louis Mountbatten "which pointed out that, in the absence of sufficient landing craft in the United Kingdom, all amphibious training for other operations . . . would have to be suspended if SLEDGEHAMMER were undertaken". In the United States as well "because of the lag in landing craft production", the Joint Chiefs of Staff realized that "SLEDGEHAMMER was rapidly becoming a forlorn hope".⁶

Agreement on Torch. Roosevelt was "still determined to commit the Western Allies to action against Germany before the end of the year. . . . Unlike his military advisers, he was far from hostile to a campaign in the Mediterranean . . . or elsewhere . . . if circumstances ruled out SLEDGEHAMMER".⁷ The matter was the subject of strong US-

³ Leo J. Meyer, *Command Decisions*, p.180.
⁴ Arthur Bryant, *Turn of the Tide*, pp. 300-1.

⁵ Meyer, p.179.

⁶ Meyer, pp.182-3.

⁷ Meyer, p.183.

British debate at the Chiefs of Staff level in July 1942. The US Joint Chiefs of Staff finally agreed, in late July 1942, to the North African landings (TORCH) as an alternative to SLEDGEHAMMER.

The Decision on D-Day. Landing craft availability, as well as shipping turn-rounds from the USA, continued to affect the planning for TORCH. The Americans, anxious for a landing in August 1942, were willing to accept that only limited objectives be taken. Thus, because of landing craft and shipping shortages, landings were proposed in Morocco, 1,000 miles from Tunisia, which was the strategic prize in North Africa. The British wanted to keep to the original target date of 7th November 1942. This later date would have given time for the assembly of enough shipping and landing craft to allow landings in greater strength and much closer to Tunisia. The final decision was a compromise, but was basically to be the larger invasion force in November 1942, as favoured by the British. "But in the final analysis D-Day would be determined by the time needed to assemble and prepare the necessary shipping" and train for the landings. "It eventuated that by mid-September Eisenhower was sufficiently concerned that his logistical and training problems [were] solved . . . that he set 8th November for the attack".⁸

Summary. The Allied undertaking to launch a Second Front in 1942, combined with the shortage of shipping and landing

craft, had the major parts to play in the cancellation of SLEDGEHAMMER and the mounting of TORCH in 1942. Shipping and landing craft availability and not operational requirements were the deciding factors in determining D-Day for TORCH.

The Scale and Timing of OVERLORD

Amphibious Commitments. The shortage of landing craft to meet Allied requirements has already been discussed. By 1944 major amphibious operations were planned or had been put into effect:

- (a) by the Americans in the Pacific;
- (b) by South-East Asia Command in support of the war in Burma;
- (c) in the Mediterranean, in Italy, against Rhodes and the French Riviera.
- (d) OVERLORD.

It became apparent to the Allies that the scale and timings of these various operations were going to be restricted. The Allied capacity to move men to the coast to be assaulted and in the assault itself, together with the time needed to transfer landing craft between the various theatres, would be the governing factors.

Size and Scope of the Landings. Mr. Churchill, commenting on the task given General Morgan and his Allied Inter-Service Staff in planning OVERLORD, says:

The size and scope of the first assault on the Normandy beaches was necessarily limited by the numbers of landing craft available . . . He (General

⁸ Meyer, p.196.

Morgan) proposed to land three divisions on the coast between Caen and Carentan. He would have liked to land nearer to Cherbourg, but he thought it unwise to divide so small a force. I would . . . have preferred a stronger attack . . . but we could not be sure of having enough landing craft.⁹

Churchill then goes on to record that Generals Eisenhower and Montgomery disagreed with the plan. Both "wanted a first assault of five divisions instead of three".¹ But the major obstacle to a larger assault was the lack of extra landing craft for that purpose.

The Solution. The solution finally agreed to by Eisenhower was "to take the ships of one division from ANVIL . . . the ships for a second division could be found by postponing OVERLORD to the June moon period".² The success of the great OVERLORD operation, threatened as it was by lack of strength in the assault, rested finally on landing craft availability. As well, the solution to the operational problem involved an administrative delay of a month. The resultant postponement of D-Day to June 1944 meant that a month less of the already short European summer was now available to the Allies for ground operations.

Strategy for the Defeat of Germany after the Normandy Breakout

Background. In September 1944 the American and British armies had destroyed the German *Seventh Army* south of the River Seine. The German defence effort in France was so disorganized by Allied successes that Allied advances through

France were not seriously opposed. Nor was it likely that the Germans could recover balance in time to prevent an early Allied advance over the Rhine and deep into Germany before the end of 1944.

Montgomery and Eisenhower differ. Montgomery, on strategy after the breakout from Normandy, says that "my own view was that one powerful full-blooded thrust across the Rhine and into the heart of Germany, backed by the whole of the resources of the Allied armies", would have achieved "decisive results". Such a plan, he continues, would have needed the support of "adequate administration resources".³ Eisenhower, discussing Montgomery's proposals, states: "I explained to Montgomery the condition of our supply system . . . that, without ample railway bridges over the Rhine and ample stockpiles of supplies on hand, there was no possibility of maintaining a force in Germany capable of penetrating to its capital". He comments further that "it was possible, and perhaps certain, that had we stopped . . . all Allied movements elsewhere" Montgomery "may have succeeded . . . in definitely threatening the Ruhr . . . however, at no point could decisive success have been attained".⁴

Administration after the Breakout from Normandy. The speed of the Allied advance after

⁹ W. S. Churchill, *The Second World War*, Vol. V, pp.515-16.

¹ Montgomery, *Normandy to the Baltic*, p.149.

² Montgomery, *Normandy to the Baltic*, p.149.

³ Montgomery, p.149.

⁴ Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe*, pp.335-6.

the Battle of Normandy has been described above. The results on the administrative structure were such that the Allied armies were slowed down and eventually stopped. The following quotations serve to illustrate this point:

"The lines of communication could not be developed at the speed with which tanks . . . were able to race forward. The result was that the [Allied] armies already had used up their operational reserves by the time they reached the Seine."⁵

On 3rd September, 1944, in Belgium "the advance produced administrative problems of great complexity; it had been expected that there would be some pause in operations between Normandy and Belgium [for] the building up of essential stores. There was no pause . . . The consumption of petrol during the pursuit was enormous . . . 8 Corps was grounded and all its . . . transport . . . was switched to the maintenance of 12 and 30 Corps." On 8th September "it was now necessary for the Second Army to make another . . . pause. Administrative difficulties had to be overcome, and . . . stocks built up forward."⁶

"The unbearable supply task that the advance created can best be appreciated by comparing planning with actual development . . . Between 25th August and 12th September" the Allied Armies "had advanced from the D plus 90 to the D plus 350 phase line, thus covering 260 phase line days in 19 days. Contrary to plan therefore . . . greater forces were being maintained at greater distances than contemplated. The net effect of these deficiencies was . . . a limitation in the scale of combat operations" and by early September three US divisions "had been immobilized and their motor transportation used to form provisional truck companies."⁷

The Decision for the Broad-Front Strategy. General Eisenhower considered a number of courses of action in September 1944. His main alternatives were either to concentrate for the

one-thrust strategy, propounded by Montgomery, or to close up to the Rhine on all fronts, prior to an advance into Germany. His administrative problems were so great, however, that, as he realized, he could not adopt either of these courses. He finally decided to close to the Rhine, not on a broad front, but by ". . . a succession of attacks, first by the 21 Army Group, then by the First Army and finally by the Third Army, with supply priorities shifting as necessary".⁸

The Campaign in North Africa

The success which came to British arms at and after the Battle of El Alamein was as much due to long-term administrative planning and build-up of resources as it was to the efforts of the fighting formations. Previous British drives into Libya from December 1940 onward were halted by administrative breakdowns. However "the timely attack at El Alamein was no fortuitous circumstance. It was preceded by months of intensive administrative preparations which . . . enabled the main base to accept" during the advance to Tripoli "the heavy demands made by the forces in the field".⁹

The build up of the Middle East administrative base in Egypt to maintain the Eighth Army's advance to Tunisia is an outstanding example of good

⁵ Roland G. Ruppenthal, *Command Decisions*, p.421.

⁶ Montgomery, *Normandy to the Baltic*, pp.162-3, 165.

⁷ Ruppenthal, pp.420-1, 425.

⁸ Ruppenthal, *Command Decisions*, p. 425.

⁹ H. W. Wilson, *The Second World War, 1939-1945 Army, Administrative Planning*, p.22.

administrative planning. To General Wavell, the Commander-in-Chief Middle East, administration was an important part of his command function. "Administration and logistics", he once remarked, "were the crux of generalship".¹⁰ In February 1941 when Wavell's forces had advanced beyond Benghazi, he was directed to send an expeditionary force to Greece. The resources of the Middle East Command were placed under great strain by this new demand. "At this stage a convoy was being made ready in England for despatch to the Middle East, and the War Office suggested to Wavell that it might carry a complete division instead of the 15,000 troops of the administrative units already allotted. Wavell replied that . . . he would be very glad to have another division but not at the cost of impairing his striking power through insufficient logistic support. This reply greatly displeased Mr. Churchill who . . . seems to have completely failed to understand the relationship between logistics and striking power as applied to the Middle East".¹

The several campaigns in North Africa and the effects that administration had on operations are discussed in Part III below.

Greece 1941

The decision to assist Greece against an impending German invasion in 1941 has been mentioned earlier. Even before the short campaign in Greece began the composite Australian, New

Zealand and British force was doomed to defeat. The strength of the German attack, and the failure of the Yugoslavs and Greeks to hold in their sectors, ensured this. Administratively the campaign was not well planned. Colonel Keogh says that "from the beginning the British force in Greece was beset with formidable administrative difficulties brought about by the long and tenuous lines of communication and the extreme scarcity of transport".² These views are confirmed by War Office records.³

The British were handicapped in the extent to which they could survey facilities in Greece before the campaign by political considerations. However, the basic information on Greek facilities, ports, railways and roads should have been available at the War Office. There is no evidence to the contrary, yet the Expeditionary Force was placed in very difficult circumstances once there in maintaining itself and subsequently withdrawing down the length of the country.

Lack of administrative planning was not the main reason for the failure in Greece. However it undoubtedly contributed to the rigours of the campaign and the losses in men and material which were sustained.

The Landings in Italy

From the outset the Allies had hoped for a rapid collapse of

¹⁰ John Connell, *Wavell: Scholar and Soldier*, p.222.

¹ E. G. Keogh, *Middle East 1939-43*, pp.98-9.

² Keogh, p.137.

³ See *The Second World War, 1939-1945. Army, Maintenance in the Field, 1939-1942. Vol I*, by J. A. H. Carter, pp.156-9.

German resistance in Italy. When the Eighth Army landed in the toe of Italy on 3rd September 1943, resistance was slight and progress rapid. On 8th September, when the armistice with Italy was announced, it was even thought for a while that the Italian Army would assist in evicting the Germans. But "events proved this impossible and we became engaged in a major campaign without a pre-determined plan of action . . . without having made in advance the administrative plans and arrangements necessary to sustain our operations. If then we had had the [administrative] resources to allow us to maintain pressure on the enemy, our superiority in armour and air would have" allowed the capture of Rome before winter.⁴ Rome finally fell in June 1944 after some of the hardest fighting of the war.

It is clear that success in Italy could have been gained much quicker and at less cost than eventually was the case. It hardly seems credible that the Italian landings were made without plans having been made to meet all circumstances, yet this appears to have been true. If no operational plans were made to meet all contingencies, how completely impossible it would be to expect thorough administrative support for operations as they developed. The Sicilian campaign was finished, and "stores convoys . . . for Sicily were diverted to . . . Italy . . . Their arrival at the 'heel' ports did not help the situation; the Eighth Army (based on 'toe

ports) wanted certain things and wanted them badly". Lack of pre-planning also made itself felt in the limited tonnages which could be imported "as the capacity of the ports was strictly limited". The capture of the Foggia airfields in south-east Italy "immediately gave rise to heavy demands for supplies for the Strategic air forces . . . the 'heel' ports . . . could not meet the combined needs of the Eighth Army and the Air Force".⁵ As a result imports into Naples, on the west coast, had to be moved across the grain of the country and the communications system to bolster imports into the south-eastern part of Italy.

The Japanese Advance towards Port Moresby over the Owen Stanleys

Little thought was given in the Australian Army before 1942 to the possibility of an overland attack on Port Moresby by way of the Kokoda track. The official historian, Dudley McCarthy, says that "up to July 1942 Australian military interest in this . . . lonely . . . track . . . was of slow growth". On 2nd February Major-General Rowell, DCGS, signalled Major-General Morris, commander New Guinea Force: "You will probably have already considered possibility of [Japanese] landing New Guinea mainland and advance across mountains" to Port Moresby. However, Morris, with "more likely military possibilities pressing on him, sent [only] a platoon . . . to patrol the north coast".

⁴ Montgomery, *El Alamein to the River Sangro*, pp.150-1.

⁵ Montgomery, pp.152-3.

Then "at the end of March the Combined Operations Intelligence Centre . . . suggested the possibility of . . . an overland advance on Port Moresby". McCarthy's comment, from his research into this campaign, is that "little serious consideration seems to have been given to this suggestion".⁶

Resultant Problems. The failure to foresee the likelihood of fighting on the Kokoda Trail, and so to lay plans for the movement and maintenance of forces, almost resulted in the enemy capture of Port Moresby. When the Japanese landed at Buna, on the north coast of Papua, in July 1942 the track was "a primitive foot track . . . few passed over it — only the bare-foot natives, or occasionally . . . a patrolling officer of the Administration".⁷ The track climbed and fell through jungle for 80 miles over seemingly endless ridges up to 6,500 feet high and deep ravines. The Australians found great difficulty in moving units forward to meet the Japanese advance, for the track would only sustain small numbers over any great distance. Commenting on the shortage of native porters, the lack of supply dropping aircraft, and of information on the location of likely dropping zones, McCarthy says: "This brought to a head at a most critical time the greatest single problem of the campaign in the Owen Stanleys — supply". With native porters unable to sustain a brigade past Myola and still no supply aircraft available "the entire Australian operations . . . would bog

down completely unless effective alternative . . . means of supply could be found".⁸

The death knell of Australian plans to stop the Japanese at Kokoda was sounded by this lack of administrative foresight and planning. Of the 7th Australian Division, only the 21st Brigade was sent up the Kokoda track because of supply problems. The brigade commander, Brigadier Potts' "initial orders had been for offensive action. . . ." ⁹ When he reached Myola on 21st August, however, he found that there were no dumps of rations, despite assurances that these would be dropped there. Because of this "Rowell ordered . . . that there could be no question of sending the third battalion of the brigade" beyond Myola "until the supply situation was secure". This situation "undermined Potts' position even before he met his enemies. . . . Immediately, by causing his role to be changed from an offensive to a defensive one, it lost him the initiative; it reduced his force below the minimum he required and to a strength, he claimed, inferior to that of the Japanese opposing him; it delayed his arrival in the actual battle area . . . at the crucial time".¹

Air Supply. It is interesting to note that General MacArthur was completely unaware of the implications of the situation at Myola. He wrote to General Blamey on 24th August that "there are available in Australia

6 Dudley McCarthy, *South-West Pacific Area: First Year*, pp.110-11.

7 McCarthy, p.108.

8 McCarthy, pp.196-7.

9 McCarthy, p.197.

1 McCarthy, pp.198-9.

only thirty transport planes (at 50 per cent availability). . . . Air supply must necessarily be considered an emergency rather than a normal means of supply . . . every effort should be made. . . . to develop other means".²

Japanese halted. Fortunately for the Allied cause, by the time the Japanese had crossed the mountains and come within about 30 miles of Port Moresby, they "were losing some of their aggressiveness, no doubt . . . handicapped by the extension of their own supply lines". When the Australian counter-offensive started at Ioribaiwa on 28th September 1942 "the Japanese and abandoned their positions and much equipment. . . . It seemed now that all the factors which had operated so adversely against the Australians at the beginning of the mountains campaign were now operating against their enemies".³

Summary—

Effects of Administration on High Command and Strategy

The major conclusions derived from the campaigns examined above are:

- (a) In a major war the problems of the movement of forces to a desired point of conflict, and their sustenance once arrived, can be decisive in the framing of national policy.
- (b) The timing and scope of any major campaign will almost always be limited by the capacity of the administrative system. The commander of a modern army, even when

he is opposed by few enemy forces, will in most cases find his own administration to be his limiting factor.

- (c) To launch a prolonged campaign against a substantial enemy, and to gain success, major administrative planning and preparation are essential. Campaigns entered upon at short notice will very often founder on the rock of insufficient planning. When to a commander operational success seems certain, inability to plan and provide for the maintenance of the forces concerned may well rob him of that success.

PART III

THE EFFECT OF ADMINISTRATION ON OPERATIONS IN THE FIELD

This part examines some effects that administration had on the conduct of operations in the field. The examination has been limited to the North African campaigns of the British Eighth Army and the German *Africa Corps*, and to Australian Army campaigns in the South-West Pacific Area, 1942-1945.

North African Campaign

Administration had a limiting effect on all operations throughout the several campaigns in North Africa. It was a constant problem for both sides. Some of the more pertinent examples are set out below:

² McCarthy, p.199.

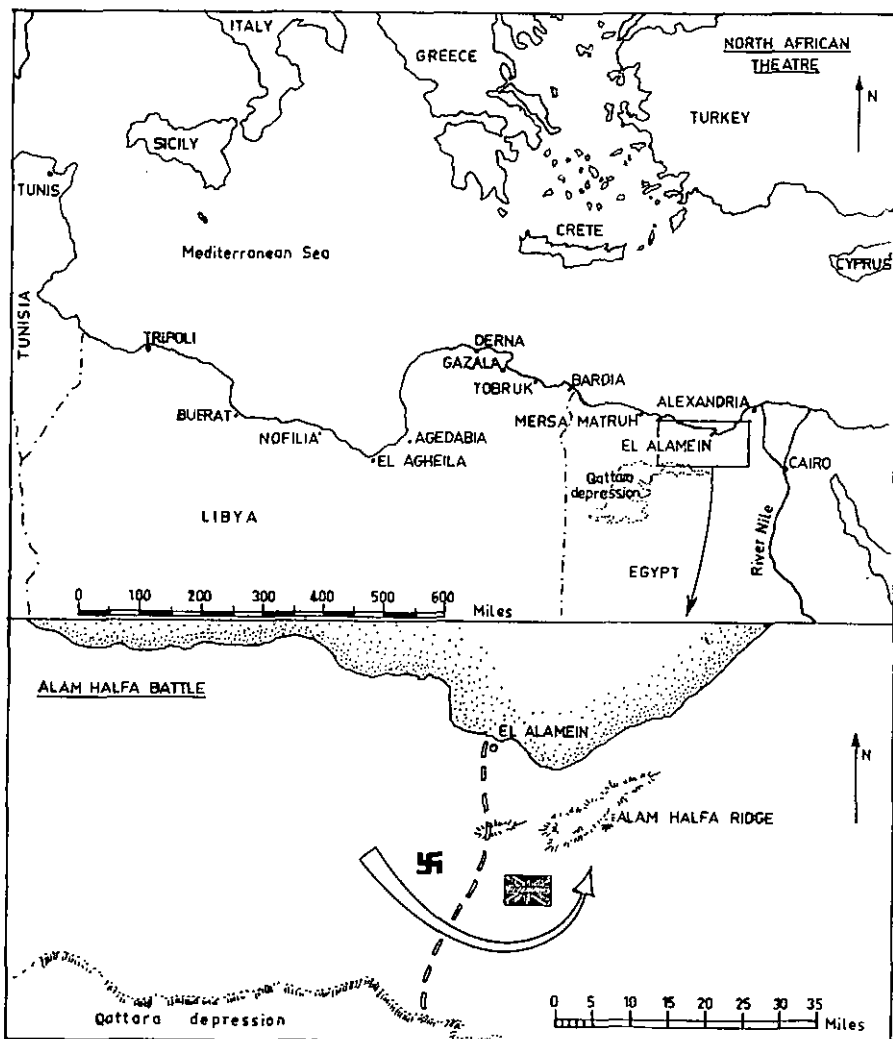
³ McCarthy, pp.224, 246.

November 1941-April 1942: The plans for the Eighth Army's offensive against Rommel's Africa Corps in November 1941 had "included the logistical arrangements necessary for an immediate pursuit. However the battle . . . was . . . protracted . . . and [administrative] reserves in the forward area had been so

heavily depleted that insufficient remained to enable large forces to be kept moving. The 24 hours delay thus imposed enabled Rommel" to escape once the offensive began.⁴

When General Ritchie's Eighth Army finally closed with Rommel in December 1941 he

4 E. G. Keogh, *Middle East 1939-43*, p.242.



established a new line at Gazala. Keogh's assessment of the German position is that "Rommel had as many logistic problems as Ritchie. He had no tank replacements, was short of ammunition and petrol" and "decided he would have to make a clean break".⁵ Rommel stated in an official report that "the fighting power of the *Africa Corps* . . . is showing signs of flagging, all the more so as the supply of arms and ammunition has completely dried up". As the Germans retreated British armour strove to cut them off by a hook from the south but did not succeed. General Bayerlein comments: "It remains a mystery why the British did not outmarch us through the . . . desert and cut off our retreat at . . . Agedabia".⁶ However, Liddell Hart, referring to Bayerlein's comment, says that "the British follow-up was greatly handicapped . . . as the line of supply became increasingly stretched. In consequence, the follow-up forces not only had to be reduced, but dwindled as the advance continued. The . . . main armoured element was twice held up for lack of petrol".⁷ Keogh confirms this view.

Rommel's position at El Aghaila stopped the Eighth Army's advance. Ritchie realized a major attack was needed to take this position, but administration was to be his undoing. Keogh comments that Ritchie's "supply position was now so precarious that it was clearly impossible to concentrate in the forward area the troops and stores for a further effort before the middle of February. . . . In order to allow the stores to be

accumulated, only light forces could be maintained in the forward area."⁸

Rommel's offensive from El Aghaila in January 1942 drove the Eighth Army back to the Galaza line. After a large build-up by both sides the German attacks in April resulted in the destruction of the bulk of the British armour. Keogh comments that "it was clear that in a very short time the Germans would cut the supply lines of the two forward divisions. The supplies for these divisions would last for only a few days, and in that time it was quite impossible to reconstitute a strong force of British armour in the battle area. Ritchie had no alternative to withdrawal."⁹

August-September 1942. Rommel, held by the Eighth Army at El Alamein, was at the end of a protracted land supply line. His build-up for his planned offensive to take the Suez Canal was under severe British naval and air attack. He realized that the Eighth Army was being built up at a faster rate than his *Africa Corps*. He states that "during . . . August the supplies we received barely covered our daily requirements . . . a build-up was out of the question".¹ He continues: "On the British side we had to expect a large convoy . . . over 100,000 tons . . . would arrive in Suez at the beginning of September". He "was therefore insistent on launching the attack before that date. Because of the

⁵ Keogh, p.243.

⁶ Bayerlein, in *The Rommel Papers*, p.176.

⁷ B. H. Liddell Hart, *The Rommel Papers*, p.176.

⁸ Keogh, p.244.

⁹ Keogh, p.258.

¹ *The Rommel Papers*, p.266.

general shortage of supplies, planning had to be limited to [breaching] the Alamein line and taking . . . Alexandria and Cairo. But the . . . attack had to be postponed again and again for it depended on the arrival of . . . petrol and ammunition". Rommel knew that he had to attack before the arrival of the British convoy "in the certainty that, if we did not act during this full moon, our last chance of an offensive would be gone."²

Once he had penetrated the British minefield at El Alamein on the night 30th-31st August, Rommel was held at Alam Halfa. Rommel relates that on 31st August "the *Africa Corps* petrol stocks were soon badly depleted and at 1600 hours we called off the attack" for the day. Field Marshal Kesselring had promised deliveries of petrol by air but "still no drop of the promised petrol had arrived in Africa. That evening the Panzer Army had only one petrol issue left". Rommel's last major attack in North Africa was defeated. "I decided to call off the attack and retire. . . . My reasons were the serious air situation and the disastrous state of our supplies".³ With Rommel's defeat went German hopes of linking the *Africa Corps* with their armies in the Caucasus, and so to conquer the oil lands of the Middle East.

Rommel had now to decide whether he should hold at El Alamein, knowing the Eighth Army was building up for an offensive, or to withdraw to shorten his lines of supply. "The supply situation", he says, "had

attained crisis proportions . . . we had received . . . only 40 per cent of our absolute minimum needs".⁴ Keogh comments that withdrawal would have helped "the supply and re-equipment of his army" but "Rommel accepted the risk and strove . . . to get the reinforcements and supplies he needed".⁵ Rommel's decision to stand at El Alamein was to ensure his defeat when General Montgomery attacked.

The Battle of El Alamein. The Battle of El Alamein, joined on the night 23rd-24th October, resulted in the defeat of the *Africa Corps*, and the eventual advance of the Eighth Army to Tunisia. Keogh comments that "administrative support for the pursuit was planned and prepared in great detail to avoid the delays usually entailed by hasty improvisation".⁶ Rommel was bitter about the failure of the "Quartermasters" to see to the logistic support of his army. He comments that on 26th October "the supply situation was now approaching disaster. The tanker . . . we had hoped would bring some relief had been bombed and sunk outside Tobruk. There was only enough petrol left to keep the supply traffic going . . . two or three days . . . without counting the needs of the motorised forces."⁷

As Montgomery's attacks strengthened in the north of the El Alamein line, Rommel realized that "to take forces from the southern front was unthinkable,

2 *The Rommel Papers*, pp.269-70, 274-5.

3 *The Rommel Papers*, pp.278, 280.

4 *The Rommel Papers*, p.287.

5 Keogh, p.275.

6 Keogh, p.278.

7 *The Rommel Papers*, p.307.

with the petrol situation so bad . . . for our armour could never have returned to the south if the British attacked there".⁸ But as British attacks continued, he decided "to bring the . . . 21st Panzer Division up north, although I fully realized that the petrol shortage would not allow it to return". Rommel, in retrospect on the battle, says that he was defeated by the failure of the Axis supply system and Allied air superiority.⁹ Keogh summarizes by saying that "since logistics is an integral part of military operations . . . the British inflicted a crushing defeat on their adversaries".¹

Pursuit after El Alamein. On 6th November one of Rommel's two armoured divisions was halted in its retreat near Mersa Matruh. Insufficient petrol had been delivered. About 1000 hours a large British armoured force "launched an attack with 60 tanks against the almost completely immobilised 21st Panzer Division. The division defended itself desperately". Petrol columns despatched to aid the division were destroyed. Then "the enemy launched attack after attack . . . until finally, in the afternoon, the division destroyed all immobilized tanks where they stood and fought its way westward with wheeled transports".² The Eighth Army strove, by sending long southern hooks through the desert, to cut off and destroy Rommel's army. However, Montgomery says, "heavy rain interfered" and "on 7th November the force was bogged in the desert with its petrol and supplies held up some miles behind".³

Advance to Tunis. Throughout Montgomery's advance and Rommel's withdrawal, the supply situation decided the day. Both Montgomery and Rommel were unable to move beyond El Agheila for petrol shortages. Rommel then found his logistic situation to be so precarious that he could not hold against a British attack at El Agheila, so far from his base at Tripoli. He withdrew to Buerat. Montgomery was again halted at Nofilia and then Buerat with administrative resources exhausted. His subsequent long southern hook towards Tripoli so prejudiced Rommel's supply line that he was forced to withdraw from Buerat. Tripoli fell to the Eighth Army shortly afterwards. Rommel commented that "the speed of the retreat was . . . dictated solely by the enemy and our petrol situation."⁴

Summary

Conditions of war in North Africa, involving movement of large mechanised formations over hundreds of miles were a logistic nightmare. From the few examples provided, one can see that battles were won or lost by administration; advances made or withdrawals forced by administration; and attacks mounted, delayed or prevented by administration. These statements are not intended to detract from the major part that training and fire power played in deciding the final outcome in

⁸ *The Rommel Papers*, p.308.

⁹ *The Rommel Papers*, p.327.

¹ Keogh, p.288.

² *The Rommel Papers*, pp.340-1.

³ Montgomery, *El Alamein to the River Sangro*, p.29.

⁴ *The Rommel Papers*, p.350.

North Africa. Although the Eighth Army had the advantage of these at El Alamein and afterwards, the chroniclers prove again the limitations that administration imposes.

The Australian Army Campaigns in the SWPA 1942-45

Owen Stanleys Campaign, 1942. The logistic limitations under which Brigadier Potts' 21st Brigade had to operate have been discussed earlier. The official history spends a number of pages in examination of the supply problems during the Japanese advance over the mountains, July - September 1942.⁵ It is apparent that administration was the main problem during this stage of the campaign. As the Australians pushed the enemy back over the mountains, General Blamey said in a report to MacArthur on 5th October: "The object of New Guinea Force is to drive the enemy out of south-eastern New Guinea and Papua. The capacity of the force to do this is limited mainly to

- (a) Communications to permit the movement of the necessary troops;
- (b) Supply."

Blamey continued: "For the moment air supply is paramount . . . difficulties of supply and communication make it impossible to coordinate the advance in three directions" and so priority was given to one direction.⁶

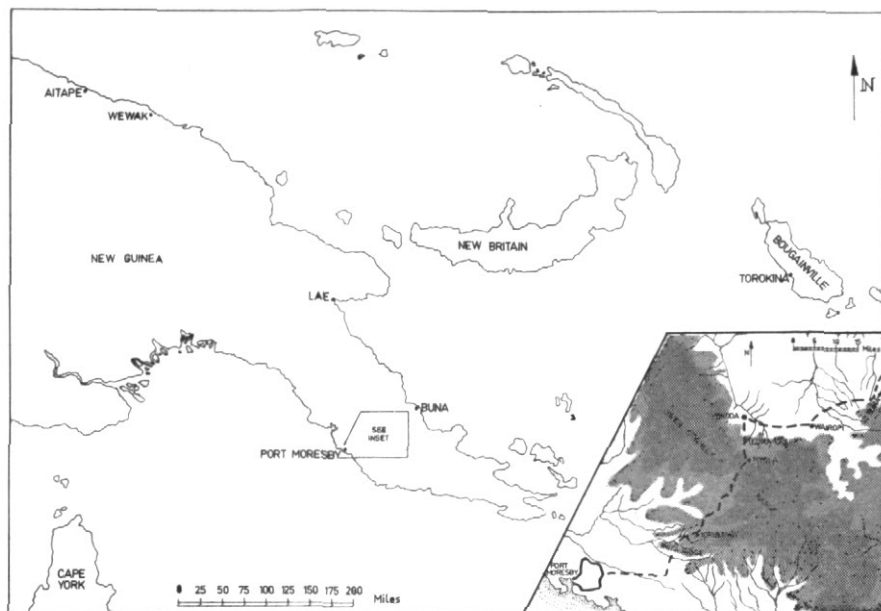
In signals despatched on 7th and 8th October, General Allen, GOC 7th Division, told HQ New

Guinea Force that "my outline plan . . . is designed to capture Kokoda as soon as possible . . . the most serious opposition to rapid advance is terrain. The second is maintenance of supplies [by] native carrier". Referring to the newly-implemented air dropping programme and the New Guinea Force intention to build up reserves of supplies and ammunition in his area, Allen said: "This is quite impossible as supplies etc dropped during first two days of programme" have been "less than 50 per cent of requirements for daily maintenance only. Unless supply etc dropping . . . is assured, complete revision of plans will have to be made" [for capture of Kokoda] "and a large proportion of troops withdrawn to Imita Ridge".⁷ Later in October Allen had not captured Kokoda, as he was held up by a Japanese position at Eora Creek. General MacArthur, in Melbourne, was caustic in his signals to Allen. He signalled on 22nd October: "Operations reports show that progress on the trail is not repeat not satisfactory . . . with forces superior to the enemy we are bringing to bear in actual combat only a small fraction of available strength". Allen replied on 23rd October that "the difficulties of operations in this country are not fully realized . . . my available carriers forward of Myola [the dropping zone] are far below requirements . . . it was never my wish to site a brigade defensively in rear but the supply situation owing carrier shortage

5 Dudley McCarthy, *South-West Pacific Area: First Year*, pp.194-200.

6 McCarthy, pp.260-1.

7 McCarthy, p.268.



has forced it".⁸ Kokoda finally fell to 7th Division on 2nd November.

General Allen was unable to concentrate sufficient strength forward on the trail for an overwhelming attack. He could neither move more troops forward nor maintain them there. In retrospect, the administrative backing afforded the Australian operations, in particular maintenance by air, was far less than needed. Operations suffered as a result. This theme is repeated below in discussion of the campaigns in Bougainville and northern New Guinea.

The Bougainville Campaign: II Aust Corps (3 Div, 11 Bde and 23 Bde) relieved XIV American Corps (three divisions) on Bougainville in September and October 1944. The Australian

corps commander, General Savage, set about "the preparation of a plan for the total reduction of the Japanese forces on Bougainville".⁹ These operations, lasting until August 1945, cannot be traced here. They were very often limited by administrative factors, an example of which follows. In April 1945 the Japanese launched a major counter-offensive which came to an end after three weeks bitter fighting. Then "General Savage and General Bridgeford (GOC 3 Div) agreed that no attacks should immediately be launched . . . the timing of any Australian attacks depended on ability to deliver supplies from the Torokina base. Because of the difficulty of supply Savage directed that "no man who was

⁸ McCarthy, pp.290-1.

⁹ Gavin Long, *The Final Campaigns*, p.100.

not 'absolutely essential' was to be employed forward" of the advanced base. "Savage confirmed on 19th April that Bridgeford should continue to employ only one brigade forward. . . ." After gaining success in his first phase of operations "Savage issued new instructions" in early May. "Again only one brigade group would be maintained in the forward zone, its northern battalion being supplied by air dropping."¹

The Campaign to capture Wewak. Between October and December 1944 6 Aust Div relieved XI American Corps (three divisions) at Aitape on the north coast of New Guinea. Opposing them, and based on Wewak, some 70 miles eastward along the coast, was the XVIII Japanese Army of three weakened divisions. General Stevens, GOC 6 Div, commenced operations against Wewak. He soon found his operations limited by his administration for "the port [at Aitape] was unsuited to the steady maintenance of a large force . . . the anchorage offered practically no protection from the [north-west monsoon] . . . there was a heavy swell and a surf . . . 6 feet high" and "no jetties, and all off-loading or loading had to be done by landing craft. . . . While the American Corps was at Aitape it had control of 150 landing craft . . . but as the American force departed the number of landing craft diminished. By 27th December . . . it was evident that if unloading could not be hastened, supplies ashore would be exhausted" early in January.² This situation limited the

development of the 6th Division's operations to the east.

On 6th January Stevens informed HQ I Aust Corps that "by the end of January . . . he would have to discontinue the eastward advance because of maintenance difficulties. . . . If, however, 'additional maintenance facilities and air support' were provided it would be possible" to destroy "the enemy forces in the Wewak area". He submitted three different proposals for operations aimed at the destruction of the enemy. Each of these proposals involved additional maintenance support, both by landing craft and aircraft. None of his proposals was approved, and the 6th Division was ordered to "continue its advance along the coast towards Wewak within the limit of its own resources".³ The conditions of administrative hardship under which the 6th Division had to fight are summarized by Gavin Long: "During the exacting fighting of February, March and April 1945 the Australian troops became increasingly convinced that the campaign was not worth their blood and sweat; and the fact that they had been allotted inadequate shipping, transport aircraft, and heavy engineering equipment tended to reinforce this conclusion". He also quotes an observer as saying in March: "Among the 16th Brigade battalions the tale is: 'We could go straight through to Wewak if we had the equipment; a few LSTs and enough aircraft to drop or land the supplies we

¹ Long, pp.177, 186.

² Long, p.281.

³ Long, *The Final Campaigns*, pp.294-5.

need'.⁴ Wewak and the immediate coastal plain finally fell to the 6th Division on 15th May 1945.

Summary

The conduct of campaigns in New Guinea and the islands was to a large extent governed by administration. The early Australian reverses on the Kokoda trail were largely attributable to logistic failures, while the campaign to recapture Kokoda was limited in strength and speed by administrative factors. Both on the Kokoda trail and in Bougainville, Australian commanders were limited in their combat strength by their inability to maintain any greater strength forward. In all three campaigns the condition and poor capacities of roads and tracks severely limited operations. Insufficient air maintenance, and at Wewak insufficient coastal maintenance, limited operations even more severely.

PART IV

PRESENT AND FUTURE RELATED PROBLEMS

Sea

The Australian Army's sea-borne administrative problems are concerned with moving and maintaining an expeditionary force overseas. Problems for the present and the future are:

- (a) The extent to which we have enough of the right types of vessels under Australian control to move a force overseas and maintain it there. The movement and off-loading of heavy equipments, includ-

ing tanks, is of particular importance. The naval protection of a sea move has not been considered herein.

- (b) The availability of the correct types of landing craft to move and maintain our forces.

Our present capacity to move and maintain ourselves by sea is limited. We have HMAS *Sydney*, but our other ships are in limited numbers only. In time of war the demand on shipping and losses at sea will multiply. This aspect was found to be critical during the 1939-45 War and would most probably be critical again.

We have four LSMs, with some smaller landing craft, and can hardly rely on the few British LSTs and LCTs at Singapore. They need these themselves. If we are to be maintained over a beach, in a port with insufficient lighterage, or along a coastline, we need a good capacity in landing craft. This applies particularly for the movement of our tanks and heavy equipments. The 1939-45 War showed how difficult it is, with the heavy demands on industry, to quickly assemble any considerable number of ships and landing craft. We must exercise the clearest foresight in these matters, and provide now for our future requirements.

Air

Our problems in the air are also those of movement and maintenance. Our initial deployment overseas would be by air, with complete air maintenance,

⁴ Long, p.327.

until ships arrived. Deployment and maintenance forward within a theatre would most likely be by air. We have a certain capacity for air movement and maintenance overseas by both RAAF and civil aircraft. This will be improved by the publicised plans to purchase more C130 aircraft and the recent introduction of jet aircraft into our civil airlines.

Movement and maintenance within the theatre is also receiving attention at present. The C130s have their role in this, as have the Caribou aircraft which we are buying. One cannot foresee the extent to which we would have American assistance in air transport within the theatre. The campaigns reviewed in Part III of this paper should have taught us the risks of having to depend on our Allies in this respect. To attempt to bargain from a position of weakness is to have little bargaining power at all. Our formations must be able to rely on our own national capacity to move and maintain them.

The army must have the full flexibility that aircraft can give. Admirable though the Caribou is, a heavy-lift helicopter appears to be the missing link in our present air-lift capacity. The Iroquois, or bigger craft, may be the answer. In an army as small as ours, it is not desirable that multi-passenger or load-carrying aircraft be army-operated. The essential thing, in war, will be that we have our own national airlift capacity. Again, foresight is essential to meet our needs.

Army Problems

Long-term planning, on a realistic scale, would have obviated many of our early administrative worries in the 1939-45 War. To prevent our being caught unprepared again our planning must remain well advanced, be flexible, and give full emphasis to administration. Operation plans based on unsound administrative premises will almost certainly fail.

Within the army our means of movement and maintenance must be the best we can develop. Some of the problems which we faced between 1942 and 1945 to our north and which will confront us again are:

- (a) The difficulty of moving, by other than aerial delivery, the maintenance, reserves and operating stocks needed in combat. Without these, or when on bread-line quantities, our fighting formations become impotent.
- (b) The need for engineers and their equipment, to build and maintain tracks, river crossings, air strips and dropping zones.
- (c) The certain expansion of our army in wartime, and the strains this would impose. In particular our ability to move and maintain a large army in South-East Asia would be seriously limited.

PART V CONCLUSIONS

Administration is an integral part of command. An examination of global strategy during the

1939-45 War, and of the conduct of the major campaigns, emphasizes this fact. Administration, to a commander in the field, is the ammunition he fires, the fuel that moves his vehicles, and the roads on which they move. It is the strength and morale of his soldiers. Administration is a major weapon of war.

Australia must ensure, through her current planning and production, that her war effort in any future war is not hamstrung by administrative shortcomings. In developing contingency plans to meet various eventualities in war, thought also must be given to the administrative support of these plans. It will often happen that administrative preparation

for an operation will take longer than operational planning.

We have gone part of the way towards solving our possible future administrative problems. We have purchased some landing craft, and the R.A.A.F. have Iroquois helicopters, the Caribou and C130s. But we have insufficient of any of these for a prolonged war. It is doubtful whether we have enough, particularly of LSMs, for our needs in a limited war. We must not, and cannot, rely on American and British help in seeing to the movement and maintenance of our field forces. From our own national administrative resources we must be able to ensure the strategic and tactical independence of our army.

HANDOVER IN KOREA

To Whom it May Concern: This is to certify that Kowang-san, Feature 355, otherwise known as Little Gibraltar and attached real estate has been handed over complete, slightly worse for wear and tear, but otherwise defensible.

Time 2138 hrs
Date 1 Nov 52

P. R. Bingham, Lt-Col, 1 RCR
M. Austin, Lt-Col, CO 1 RAR

— *War Diary 1 Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment.*

THE TUMBLING TERROR

AN EXPOSURE

Major D. K. Atkinson
Royal Australian Infantry

THE STATEMENT that "this rifle can kill by shock alone at ranges up to 300 yards" is typical of recent press reports circulating wildly exaggerated claims on the casualty inflicting capabilities of the 5.56-mm (.223 in) round, particularly that fired from the Armalite M16 rifle. Such statements as "a hit in the hand would break every bone in a man's arm, a ballistics expert said" have been bandied about and have led to angry letters to editors and columnists demanding the banning of this "horror weapon". Unfortunately most officers lacking access to official comment are inclined to accept these press statements and, by their acceptance, add credence to this rather inadmissible hearsay evidence. This

article is designed to clear the air by giving some facts on the current 5.56-mm weapons and some thoughts on their employment.

The most common misconception is the tumbling round idea. Far from being a deliberate design feature, Mr. Eugene M. Stoner, the designer of the 5.56-mm round, increased the twist of the rifling in later models of the Armalite to obtain better round stability. Even the layman, with some thought, will realize that a tumbling round must result in inaccuracy, lack of penetration, and a rapid loss of velocity and energy. However it is true that the light weight of the projectile does mean that its stability is marginal and the round does commence to yaw at relatively short ranges. This yaw does not greatly affect the round at ranges up to 5-600 metres.

The shock effect of the round is based on the combination of high velocity and marginal stability. Under certain circum-

The author is a 1956 RMC graduate. He served with 1 Recruit Trg Bn (1956-58), 1 PIR (1958-60), and commanded 35 Cadet Bn (1960-62). He spent about six months with 1 RAR in Eastern Command before taking up his present appointment as Senior Instructor at the Infantry Centre in January 1963.

stances the round may yaw on impact and create what wound ballistics experts refer to as an explosive wound. This wound may cause considerable tissue damage, damage adjacent bones and organs and cause much shock. However the circumstances under which this will occur are limited, and under similar circumstances the 7.62-mm NATO round could cause a similar wound. British and U.S. trials on hitting power and probabilities of incapacitation agree that at short ranges the 7.62-mm and 5.56-mm rounds are comparable, and if anything the NATO round is slightly more potent.

The Intermediate Round

The idea of an intermediate round is not new. Why use two types of round when one type may do both tasks? Does the soldier, who is trained that the "battle range" of his rifle is 300 metres, need a round capable of killing at 3,000 metres? Is a weapon that is not effective at ranges in excess of 100 metres really economic? Cannot a

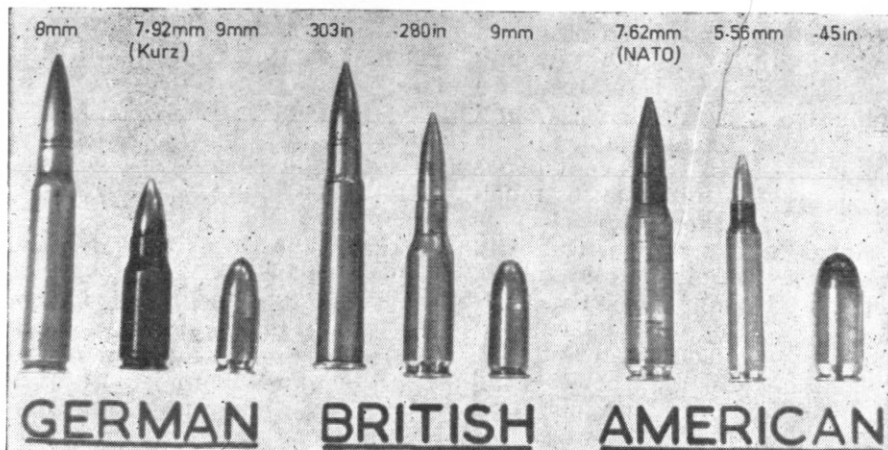
round be produced that will be efficient for the rifle but still be controllable when fired from a light automatic weapon? These questions have been asked since as long ago as 1932. The first practical attempt at answering them was made by the Germans in 1942 when they developed the "Kurz" cartridge.

The 7.92-mm "Kurz" cartridge was about midway in size and power between the 9-mm pistol and machine carbine round and the standard German 8-mm rifle round. The resultant weapons were the MP 43, MP 44, and STG 44 assault rifles. These weapons proved popular with troops and most effective. Never slow to recognize a good thing, the Russians by 1943 were developing an intermediate round.

After the war several countries worked on designing intermediate rounds and weapons. The most notable developments were the Russian 7.62-mm AK, the German and Spanish 7.92-mm CETME, the Swiss 7.5-mm Model 57, and the British .280-inch EM-2. However, in 1957 after considerable controversy



An early intermediate round weapon.



The intermediate round concept as developed by three major world powers.

the NATO nations agreed to standardize on the full power United States 7.62-mm round. Some intermediate round weapons were dropped while others were rechambered for the NATO round and thus lost their most valuable assets. The development of intermediate rounds and weapons virtually ceased in the Western world. On the other hand the current Russian AK-47 is considered by many to be the finest weapon of its class in the world, and is now becoming the principal shoulder weapon of the Soviet Army.

In 1960 the American weapon designer, Eugene Stoner, utilizing light alloys, plastics, and modern production methods had the first Armalites produced by the Fairchild Engine and Airplane Co. There were two models, the AR-10 firing 7.62-mm NATO and the AR-15 firing .222-inch Remington or .224-inch Winchester rounds. Stoner later moved to Colts Patent Firearms Manufacturing Company

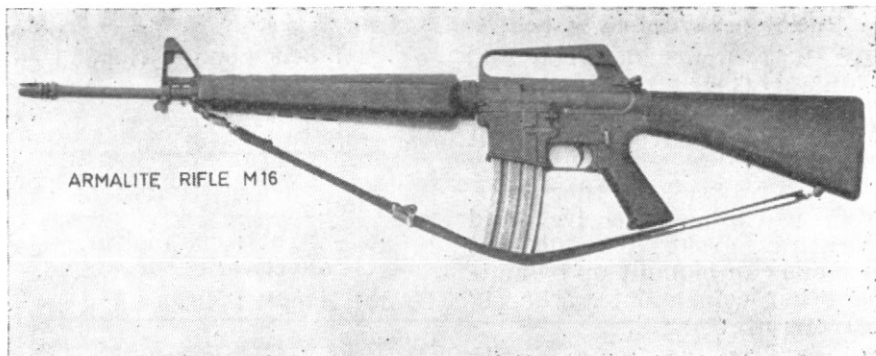
where he designed the 5.56-mm round and the Armalite as we know it today was born.

The Armalite AR-15 and M 16

The 5.56-mm Armalite rifle was first produced as the AR-15 and underwent trials by the United States Army. As a result of these trials some minor modifications were made before the United States Army adopted it for special roles as the M 16 rifle. Although the M 16 rifle is used extensively by Special Forces, Military Advisory Group personnel and other units, the M 14 rifle (7.62-mm NATO) is still the Army's basic weapon. M 16 rifles are also used by the United States Marine Corps and Air Force. They are used extensively by both sides in Borneo where they are proving to be popular and effective.

The basic characteristics of the M 16 rifle are:

Weight: 7.1 lbs (loaded 20 rounds).
Calibre: 5.56-mm.



This particular weapon is fitted with a 30 round magazine. As with the Stoner, the flash hider is constructed to also act as a grenade launcher.

Muzzle

Velocity: 3,300 feet per sec.

Magazine

Capacity: 20 or 30 rounds.

Range —

Sights: 600 metres.

Range —

Effective: Not conclusive but between 400 and 600 metres.

Over-all

Length 39 inches.

Operation: Gas; semi or fully automatic.

The most obvious advantage of this weapon over the 7.62-mm NATO-type weapons is its weight. It is a major step forward in the quest to lighten the individual rifleman's load. The lighter weapon weight and lesser recoil also materially assist in the weapon handling aspects. It is quicker to the shoulder and it is easier to engage a series of targets with this lighter weapon. Tests have proved that the rate of accurate fire is four times as many hits per minute at ranges up to 300 metres compared with

a NATO cartridge rifle. It can be effectively fired in bursts from the shoulder.

Another important but frequently ignored factor in relation to weight, is the weight of the 5.56-mm round. This is about half the weight of the NATO round. A soldier carrying the M 16 rifle loaded with 20 rounds plus 100 additional rounds carries slightly less weight than the soldier with a fully loaded SLR. In terms of logistics and particularly resupply by air the enormous advantages are obvious.

The chief limitation of the weapon is the rapid loss of energy of the light round, leading to doubtful accuracy and penetration at ranges in excess of 5-600 metres. In the rifle role this limitation is of minor importance as the average rifleman cannot effectively engage individual targets in excess of 300 metres. People supporting the need for longer ranges are also inclined to overlook the fact that the SLR sight is only graduated to 600 metres.

The Stoner Weapons System

In 1963 Stoner designed and Cadillac Gage produced the Stoner 63 Weapons System. A brilliantly conceived system, it almost certainly points the way for future weapon designers. From a common receiver and operating group six distinct weapons can be built up by adding other components. The six weapons are:

Assault Rifle

Carbine

Magazine-fed machine-gun

Belt-fed machine-gun (bipod)

Belt-fed machine-gun (tripod)

Fixed-mount machine-gun
(fired electrically).

All six are lightweight, ruggedly constructed, simple, accurate and reliable. An important design feature is the simplicity and economy of production. Consisting mainly of sheet steel stampings the Stoner system requires no special production tooling other than rifling equipment. Any well-equipped machine shop could produce the weapon and no special training is necessary for shop workers. Economy is also achieved by 81.3 per cent of assemblies being common to two or more weapons. Once manufactured the only tool required to convert from one weapon to another is the 5.56-mm cartridge.

The basic characteristics of the Stoner Assault Rifle are listed below. As the characteristics of the other weapons in the system are generally similar to those of the rifle only the weights are given for the other weapons.

Assault Rifle.

Weight: 8.35 pounds (loaded — 30 rounds).

Calibre: 5.56-mm.

Magazine capacity: 30 rounds.

Muzzle velocity: 3,400 feet per second.

Range - sights: 600 metres.

- effective: As for M 16.

Overall length: 40.25-inches.

Carbine

Weight: 8.15 pounds (loaded — 30 rounds).

Magazine-fed machine-gun

Weight: 11.45 pounds (loaded — 30 rounds).

Belt-fed light machine-gun

Weight: 14.65 pounds (loaded — 100 round belt in bandolier).

Tripod-mounted machine-gun

Weight-Gun: 12.75 pounds (loaded — 100-round belt in bandolier).

Tripod: 19 pounds (a lighter tripod is being designed).

Fixed machine-gun

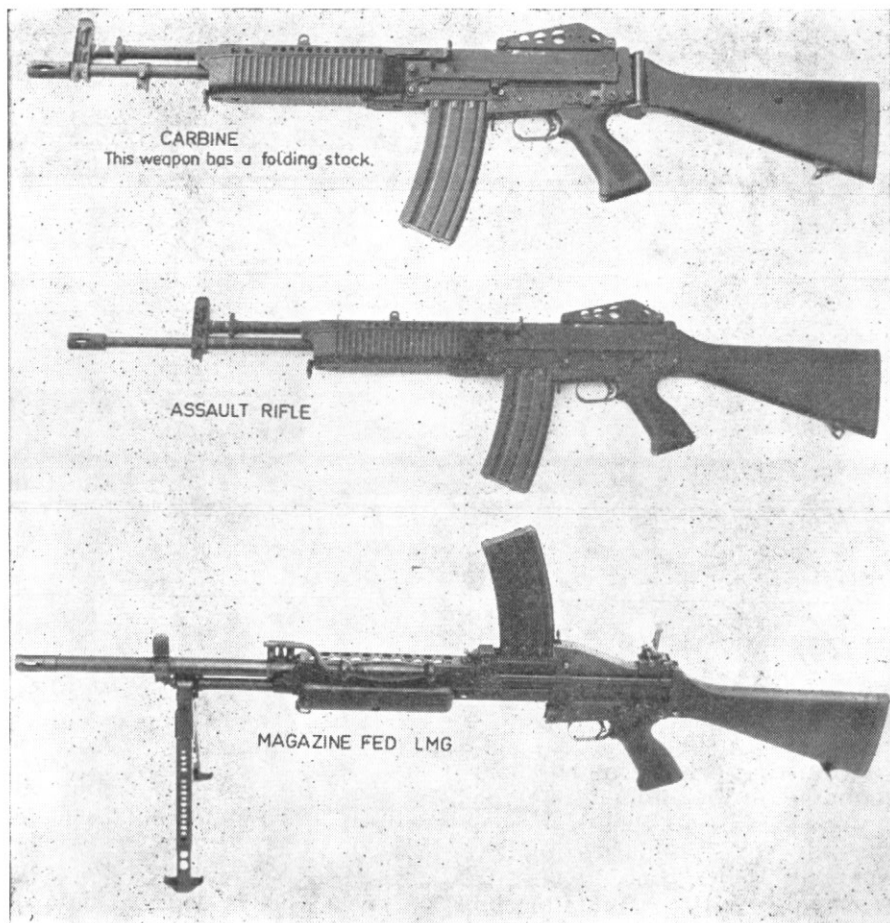
Weight: 10.4 pounds (unloaded).

The advantages and limitations of the M 16 rifle also apply to the Stoner 63 Weapons System. However, as this weapon is more than just a rifle, several other factors become pertinent. The most apparent advantage is its flexibility. Although it is obvious that each soldier does not carry a full system, but only the type of weapon with which he is allotted, it is also obvious that as the operating and receiver groups are common to all weapons, less important weapons can be cannibalized to keep other weapons firing.

Resupply of spares and technical backing are also greatly facilitated. Armourers' spares are generally common to all or most weapons, and the training time for both users and technicians can be greatly reduced. Most of the maintenance of the weapons can be done with a small combination tool which comes with each weapon.

Although the weight of the belt-fed light machine-gun at

14.65 pounds loaded compares more than favourably with the 30 pounds of the GPMG in a similar condition, it is in the field of machine-guns that the Stoner system has its main limitations. Firstly, although the machine-gun configurations are sighted to 1,100 metres the round is probably effective only to about 600 metres. This may be adequate for a section's requirements but to classify the



The Stoner System.



The Stoner System.

tripod-mounted version as a medium machine-gun appears optimistic. A second short-coming of the Stoner machine-guns is the short length of their beaten zones and grazing fire compared with the GPMG M 60. It is apparent that units or sub-units fully equipped with Stoner weapons will require some

medium (7.62-mm) machine-gun support.

Other manufacturers, notably Colt, are endeavouring to compete with the Stoner system by producing "families" of weapons with certain parts, particularly operating groups, common to more than one weapon type.

Individually these weapons may or may not be better than an individual Stoner weapon; no other system at present, however, displays the same degree of inventive genius as that shown by Mr. Stoner in this system.

Employment

Extensive trials are still being conducted on these 5.56-mm and other weapons and the information gained from these trials will influence the final decision. At the time of writing the United States Marine Corps are impressed with the Stoner system with some reservations. The Army appears interested but reluctant to commit itself. Several countries, including Australia, have purchased limited quantities of 5.56-mm weapons, particularly Armalites, and the weapon is rapidly winning the confidence of users. There is no doubt that an immediate replacement of 9-mm weapons — machine carbines and pistols — with a 5.56-mm weapon would result in greatly improved fire-power efficiency.

The characteristics of the Stoner-type weapon system indicate that it could replace all weapons now employed in a rifle platoon with the exception of the M 79 grenade launcher if and when it comes into service. It offers us a far more effective carbine, a light accurate rifle and a very light sustained-fire machine-gun of adequate range, remembering that the battle range of the bipod-mounted GP-MGM60 is 600 metres. Of the six weapons which can be produced by the Stoner system, the most desirable from the rifle platoon

point of view are the carbine, assault rifle, magazine-fed light machine-gun and the belt-fed light machine-gun. The flexibility of the design is such that, given the parts, a belt-fed weapon most desirable for static operations can be converted to a magazine-fed light machine-gun in less than two minutes for more fluid situations.

Apart from the considerable saving in the soldier's personal load and generally improved weapons, the idea of every soldier in the platoon using the same basic weapon type has numerous other advantages. Training time is reduced as all weapons are only variations of the rifle configuration. Production is economical and logistic support greatly simplified and lightened. Ammunition and magazines are common to all the magazine-fed configurations. Weapons can be cannibalized to keep vital weapons firing.

The shortcomings of this system lie not within the platoon but more with the support elements of our organizations. Since the dropping of the machine-gun platoons from our infantry battalions many people have propounded the need for their re-introduction. This requirement would probably be increased by the introduction of a Stoner-type system to allow, among other things, effective mutual support between companies. One possibility other than the re-forming of the machine-gun platoon may be machine-guns (7.62-mm) to supplement the Carl Gustavs in the company support section.

The Future

Though economic and political considerations may forestall a decision for some time, and the Stoner system itself may not meet field user trial requirements, these weapons represent a turning-point in weapon design. Even the current developments of new projectiles and multi-purpose weapons, though they may change the finally accepted weapon type, do not seem likely to contradict the two major features of Stoner system. It is certain that the round will be light and of medium power in the intermediate round concept — regardless of what the projectile may be. It is also certain that the weapon will utilize economical production methods — particularly metal stampings and plastics — and that parts will be readily interchangeable.

Most of the developments above are only on drawing boards or early prototypes at this

stage. Many also are special weapons not intended for issue to every soldier, but only to selected individuals. The projectiles are generally of 5.56-mm calibre. This would indicate that there may yet be a requirement for the Stoner-type weapon for several years to come.

Unfortunately small arms in this era are becoming like aircraft in that by the time the drawings are complete the weapons are obsolescent, and by the time they are taken into service, obsolete. Already designers are claiming better and more advanced weapons than the Stoner system. The time has arrived to take stock, to stop, think, test and decide. Both Britain and the United States are currently evaluating various weapons systems including 5.56-mm weapons. As their decisions will undoubtedly influence the future of Australian weapons, the results of their deliberations are awaited with interest.

INSURANCE

Warrant Officer P. J. Hutchison,
Royal Australian Education Corps

IN OCTOBER, 1963, the activities of insurance agents, at the Infantry Centre, Ingleburn, became so singular that all insurance company representatives were banned from entering the area.

The ban was imposed because of the behaviour of some of the representatives. Their blatant business methods, conducted at all hours and in all parts of the camp, from the canteen to the barrack-rooms of the individual soldiers at any time of the day and night, had caused great inconvenience. Other methods employed led to a great deal of discontent, especially the practice of cornering a soldier and badgering him into a state where to get rid of a salesman, he signed away anything from two to six shillings a day on some policy quite unrealistic to his requirements. The result was that after a few weeks the soldier would cancel the policy and forfeit the money paid. Complaints became common and no place appeared to be safe from these high-pressure salesmen, leading to the general disrepute of insurance and the loss of its true benefits in the mud of money-minded policy pushers.

Early in 1964 a system was started at the Infantry Centre which attempted to look after the needs of the individual soldier, and at the same time prevent any high-pressure sales

techniques. There were teething troubles but after three or four months the following pattern emerged.

Trainees on marching into the Depot Company of the Royal Australian Regiment now receive one lecture on the value of insurance; this lecture is followed by a period in which the soldier may ask questions or buy insurance from the insurance representatives.

The lecture is given by an insurance representative selected for his general approach and ability. The lecture shows the benefits which may be derived from the purchase of insurance, either for a short term as a savings plan, or the long-term policy, which is of especial value to the married member. Other points brought out in the lecture are the surrender value, loan value, and the possibility of changing the terms of the policy. During the lecture no mention is made by the lecturer of any particular insurance company; he is introduced as Mr. ———, an insurance representative, but given no opportunity to advocate the special claims of his own company. The lecture is supervised by the unit insurance officer and any of the agents of the various companies are at liberty to attend — which in fact they do. At the end of the lecture the unit insurance officer asks all the insurance representatives

and the lecturer to leave the lecture room. He then asks the soldiers to complete a form which asks them the following questions:

- (a) Has the lecture been of any value to you?
- (b) Do you wish to ask any questions about any existing policy you hold?
- (c) Do you wish any insurance for yourself?

If the soldier desires to have an interview with a representative, he indicates this on the form; if he wishes to see a particular company he includes the name of the company on the paper. (In the event that a company is mentioned that is not one of the five companies allowed into the area, the unit insurance officer attempts to solve the problem or arranges for an interview with one of the company's representatives, after working hours, and outside the camp area.) For those soldiers who wish to see one of the representatives and do not indicate a company, a company is selected from the five companies present, in a strict order of rotation, so that no company gets more prospective clients than another, a record being kept for reference and for examination by the representatives. After the forms are collected those who have no desire to see a representative are marched off. The remainder are introduced to the various agents, who are then allowed to

carry on any business they may wish, within certain limits. These limits are: long term policy, maximum two shillings a day; short term, 10 years, three shillings a day maximum. If a soldier wishes to take out a policy which is higher than the limits set, he may do so only after an interview with the adjutant who makes certain that the soldier is fully aware of the position in which he is placing himself.

WF12s are filled in by the agents and forwarded to the unit pay representative. WF12s are kept by the unit insurance officer and distributed to the agents as required.

Apart from these lectures and the controlled selling periods, the representatives are not allowed into either the camp area or the canteen. Any questions which the representative may have are passed to the unit insurance officer for reply.

The general benefits accrued from this system are that the soldier is no longer pestered in his quarters and no longer is the area invaded at all hours by insistent and persistent salesmen. Now the soldier can have his beer or game of darts in peace at the canteen. Also it eliminates any suspicion of unfair competition as insurance representatives are all invited to be present at the lectures which they watch extremely carefully to see that nothing to their disadvantage is mentioned or done by other members of the tribe.



SOUTH WEST PACIFIC, 1941-45,
by Colonel E. G. Keogh, (Gray-
flower Productions, Melbourne,
1965, 52s. 6d.).

Reviewed by Gavin Long OBE, General Editor Australian Official War History, and author of To Benghazi, Greece, Crete, and Syria, and The Final Campaigns in that series.

In this book Colonel Keogh, who has already published concise accounts of operations in the Middle East 1939-43 and Malaya 1941-42, describes and examines the proceedings in the South-West Pacific Area 1941-45.

The work is in part a synopsis of the story told in four volumes of the army series of the Australian war history, and in part a commentary on the state of the army in those years and on its operations in the SWPA. Colonel Keogh has read and thought — and felt — deeply about many problems involved, and is well qualified by his experiences as soldier and scholar to make judgments. Those who do not agree with all his assessments will nevertheless find all of them interesting, and some of them challenging.

Instead of opening his story with the formation of General MacArthur's South-West Pacific Command, Colonel Keogh wisely gives an account of the Australian Army that was absorbed in that command, its shortcomings

and the reasons for them. In his chapter entitled "The Years That the Locusts Ate" (1914-39), he rightly emphasizes the failure of the government to build up adequate departments for studying external affairs and strategic policy. The Department of Defence, though in existence since federation, "had not developed an independent outlook, and in its higher echelons tended to be a mere reflection of British views"; in particular the intelligence organizations "were all embryo establishments which, with the staffs and money available, were incapable of carrying out the studies essential to success in this field". The wonder is that they did so well, and some of them, particularly Naval Intelligence, did very well indeed.

He deplores the failure to train reserve officers between the wars. In 1939-40, after the AIF had taken away to the Middle East most of the best militia officers, reserve officers, many of whom had not served since 1918, were called upon to fill staff posts and to command "companies, battalions and even brigades"; and, Colonel Keogh says, "militia soldiers of all ranks were being promoted without the training or experience necessary to fit them for their appointments".

Perhaps this paints too dark a picture. For example, in the first militia brigade to go into action as a brigade (at Milne Bay) one commanding officer was a regular and the other two had been lieutenants in the 1st AIF and had served between the wars, one with a break from 1934-40, the other with a break from 1924 until mid-1939. And if the reserve officers were out-of-date surely there was time in 1940-41 for a strenuous programme of schooling for officers of all ranks. But apparently the Military Board of 1940-41 and the divisional commanders did not take effective steps to train the leaders of its army of seven divisions still within Australia; perhaps they indolently regarded themselves as being in a back-water and militia training of minor importance.

The author's detailed study of operations begins a few weeks before the fall of Singapore, when the northern approaches to Australia were already under attack. He is critical of decisions concerning the defence of Rabaul at both strategical and tactical levels. Either Rabaul should have been abandoned — it was evident that it could not be held against the sort of attacks the Japanese had been launching along their front — or arrangements should have been made for a fighting withdrawal within New Britain. He supports his contention that an orderly withdrawal would have been feasible by reminding us that after the disorderly withdrawal some 400 of the 1,400 troops at Rabaul escaped to the mainland. He criticizes Army

Headquarters and the 8th Military District (Port Moresby) for failure to amend the original orders to the garrison commander to stay put, and the garrison commander for not having prepared for organized withdrawal, and for announcing, when defeat was inevitable, that "it is now every man for himself". "There is no such order in the book", Colonel Keogh writes.

The deployment of a battalion group on Ambon and another on Timor was the outcome of an offer made by Australia early in 1941, apparently in an effort to encourage togetherness with the Dutch. Strategically the offer was quite irrational: if the Japanese were halted north of the southernmost islands of the Indies such garrisons would not be needed; if the Japanese penetrated so far it would mean that they commanded the sea and air and could isolate such outposts and mop them up at their leisure. The Australian commander on Ambon, Colonel Roach, sent frank signals to Melbourne describing the situation of his force and was replaced for his pains, an unjust measure, as Colonel Keogh points out. The forces on Ambon and Timor were overwhelmed, except for an Independent Company on Timor which remained in being, harried the Japanese for months, and was successfully withdrawn. The lesson the author draws from Timor is that it illustrated the result of failing to maintain a sufficient reserve of trained staff officers. Surely a more important lesson, in 1965, is that it is perilous for governments to deploy

their forces in ways which seem desirable from a diplomatic or public relations point of view, but which do not make military sense.

It is evident that the author is far more deeply interested in the events of 1942 and early 1943 than in those of the often-fruitful years of campaigning that followed. He reaches the fall of Singapore at page 132, and devotes the next 150 pages to the fighting in New Guinea that culminated in January 1943; the campaigns of 1943-45 are described on a far smaller scale and compressed into about 170 pages.

It is after the defeats at Rabaul, Ambon and Timor that General Blamey appears on the scene and the author begins to develop what is one of the main themes of his book: searching and persistent criticism of the Australian Commander-in-Chief. He is emphatic that Blamey was in error in accepting appointment as Commander, Allied Land Forces, when he was already Commander-in-Chief, Australian Military Forces. "In undertaking to carry out these two divergent roles simultaneously", he writes, "General Blamey attempted to wear two pretty big hats at the same time, a feat rendered all the more difficult by the geography of the theatre". When he changed the name of his headquarters to Headquarters Allied Land Forces it was "clearly implied not only that General Blamey intended to fight the battle wherever it might take place and conduct the multitudinous affairs of the AMF at the same time, but that

he expected his Principal Staff Officers, and their staffs, to perform similar divergent feats. In fact, from the time General MacArthur moved his headquarters to Brisbane in July, Headquarters Allied Land Forces in Melbourne played no significant operational role. Its energies were concentrated almost exclusively on the administration of the AMF, but the fictional name was retained until the end of the war."

In his general review at the end of the book Colonel Keogh returns to this criticism: "The issue at stake is not only a clear-cut principle of command, but a matter of downright common-sense". He implies that Blamey should have seen to it that one of "a number of other Australian officers, qualified by rank, training and experience" was appointed to command Allied Land Forces. If this had been done "in all probability most, if not all, of the unfortunate incidents and misunderstandings that occurred would probably have been avoided."

On the other hand the textbook solution is not always the right one. The retention by Blamey of both hats resulted in the Australian Government having one senior military adviser and the Australian troops having one commander with no other commander able to dispute his authority. With the air force a different policy was followed: there was a Chief of the Air Staff responsible for administration, supply and training, and an independent RAAF Command containing most of the

fighting formations. The upshot was a series of disputes between the two senior officers concerned and malaise throughout the whole force. And when the Ministers could find no other solution they sought a suitable officer, from overseas, who would have occupied a similar position in the air force to Blamey's in the army. MacArthur vetoed this proposed solution, perhaps because his air force commander preferred not to have to deal with a single strongly-situated Australian air force leader.

In any event the presence of an Australian in effective command of Allied Land Forces would not have been tolerable to the Americans once American divisions outnumbered Australians in the SWPA and presumably, by 1944 at the latest, the Australian officer appointed to ALF, whoever he was, would have become merely one of MacArthur's several army commanders. There is no reason to believe that the friction that would have occurred if General Blamey had been, in effect, Chief of the General Staff in Melbourne and General Lava-rack commander of all Australian forces in the field with responsibility only to MacArthur would have been any less painful than the friction between the two air force leaders, Jones and Bostock. Blamey was indeed in a difficult appointment and he solved his problem adroitly by good choice of his two chiefs of staff: the tactful but firm Northcott at home and the thrustful Berryman at his advanced headquarters.

Colonel Keogh finds Blamey entirely to blame for the events that culminated in the replacement of General Rowell as commander of New Guinea Force by General Herring in September 1942. In brief, Blamey was ordered by MacArthur and the Prime Minister to go to New Guinea (which he had recently visited) and take command. Blamey unwillingly went forward with virtually no staff, and tried to make an arrangement with Rowell whereby he commanded the force through Rowell's staff, Rowell being his deputy. Tensions developed and Blamey relieved Rowell of his command, and afterwards supported this action by quite unfair criticism of Rowell. Colonel Keogh sums up the circumstances fairly and fully but there is no doubt from the outset what his verdict will be: Blamey guilty. The "evil results", he declares, flowed from Blamey's retention of divergent responsibilities.

Yet after Rowell's departure the arrangement Blamey sought worked fairly smoothly for two years and a half.

Blamey comes under fire again for the "blistering and utterly unrealistic" signals he sent forward to General Allen, urging him to press on faster to Kokoda in 1942. Again one receives the impression that in the author's view, except in the field of administration within Australia, Blamey could do no right. The only one of MacArthur's signals that is mentioned (but not quoted) is described merely as "expressing dissatisfaction". Yet Blamey's signals were in fact

mild compared with MacArthur's. And Colonel Keogh accepts MacArthur's statement made more than a year after the event, when the tide had turned, that he decided immediately after arrival in Australia that the key to the Brisbane-Melbourne area lay at Port Moresby. Yet no additional infantry were sent to the "key" point until the 14th Brigade began to arrive in May, and the decision to send this ill-prepared brigade forward was not MacArthur's as Colonel Keogh seems to imply but primarily Blamey's. MacArthur did not visit New Guinea until October 1942, and some of his senior staff remained ignorant of the conditions there and of the terrain for far too long.

Few will disagree with Colonel Keogh's contention that the offensives on Bougainville and at Aitape-Wewak in 1945, for both of which Blamey was responsible, "served no useful purpose". But the operations in Borneo in 1945, which MacArthur approved, are open to criticism on similar grounds. Tarakan, Brunei Bay and Balikpapan were not, in 1945, worthwhile strategical objectives. Colonel Keogh considers it "perhaps fitting" that the 7th and 9th Divisions should finish their war by participating in such well-planned and smoothly-executed operations; but the prizes won were not wanted: the airfield at Tarakan was not useful, the British Pacific Fleet did not need Brunei Bay, and the wreckage that had been Balikpapan was of no value to any-

body except the scrap-metal traders.

I feel that Colonel Keogh has rather damaged his case *against* Blamey and *for* SWPA by the persistence and repetitiousness of his attack on the one and the gentleness of his criticism of the other. Long before the author's final onslaught on Blamey the reader is likely to mutter to himself "Fair go, mate."

It is regrettable that this valuable book did not find a more accomplished publisher and printer. The typography is unattractive and there are a distracting number of misprints and small errors. Even more unfortunate is the absence of an index, an essential tool in a work of military history whether it be a full-scale study or a textbook condensation for readers who wish to cover much ground in a little time.

ESCAPE: A THOUSAND MILES TO FREEDOM,
by Mrs. M. Murray. (Rigby Limited, Adelaide, 1965.)

The homely phrase, "left like shags on a rock", contained in the last message to Port Moresby from a group of civilian escapers isolated outside Kavieng in February, 1942, seems to echo the anger and frustration of the many other groups of civilians scattered throughout the Mandated Territories during this period of swift Japanese advances.

Who was to blame? The 1st Independent Company, commanded by Major J. E. Wilson, had been stationed at Kavieng

since July of the previous year. Should that unit have assumed responsibility for the civilians' evacuation? Was it the task of the civil administration? Was the Administration's painful decision to evacuate only the women and children of European stock — leaving behind the half-caste and Chinese women and children — the correct one or was there an alternative? Were the European males themselves not partly to blame for their predicament? Would they have gone earlier if ordered to do so, leaving behind property and possessions that had taken half a life-time of development? What happened to those civilians who remained in New Ireland, optimistically expecting that the Japanese would allow them to carry on with peacetime pursuits as before?

In *Escape: A Thousand Miles To Freedom*, the wife of Harry Murray, a first-war digger and storekeeper and planter of New Ireland who later became a coastwatcher, poses some of these questions, but on the whole leaves them unanswered. Hers is largely the success story — in a melancholy and little known period of Australian history — of a group of resolute civilians, left behind by the departure of the Independent Company, yet determined to win their own way to freedom. The story — an exciting one, of risks taken and hardships overcome — is briskly told and historically important. Mrs. Murray, basing her account on her husband's and other escapers' recollections, and on those of people who remained on New Ireland dur-

ing the three years and a half of Japanese occupation—mainly nuns, Chinese and half-castes—corrects some of the misconceptions contained in earlier published accounts and adds a little to our knowledge of the last days of the Independent Company.

In outline the Independent Company's story is well established. The company left New Ireland after the Japanese invasion, but the *Induna Star*, in which they were travelling, was intercepted, bombed and disabled, and later towed into Rabaul by a Japanese destroyer. Most of the men perished within a few months when the *Montevideo Maru* in which they were being transported northwards was sunk by an American submarine in the South China Sea.

Mrs. Murray, obedient to civilian tradition, has a few digs at the army. For example, she believes that the Independent Company, in compliance with its last instruction from AHQ Melbourne, should have remained on New Ireland where they would have been "able to inflict damage on the enemy by scattering throughout the island in small groups and planning a campaign of guerilla warfare." The O.C. of the Independent Company believed otherwise. His reasons are set out in his report — a report free, incidentally, of the rancour that characterizes many of the accounts of this period — which was published in the October issue of the journal. Wilson's reasons as commander on the spot seem cogent

and must surely be taken at face value.

Mrs. Murray feels also that Major Wilson should have offered passage in the *Induna Star* to the small group of civilians (ten in all) at Kaut. There was ample accommodation in the vessel for all, she maintains, but there is no way of proving the point. It must be remembered, too, that the original intention was not so much to escape as to link up with the 2/22nd Battalion and carry on the fight in New Britain. Had that happened the presence of the civilians might have proved an embarrassment. Also Wilson may have considered that it rested with the civilians — once he had announced his intention of departing — to press their own claims for passage in the *Induna Star*. More concerned, evidently, with trying to tell the rookie Wilson how to run his own show, the civilians, most of whom were old soldiers, failed to do so. However, in view of the ultimate fate of the men of the Independent company, it seems irrational now to attempt to argue a case for the inclusion in the *Induna Star* of the civilians. Their exclusion seems in retrospect to have been part of the long and happy run of good fortune which played a major part in their escape.

One other point of criticism concerns the destruction of the civilian wireless set. Mrs. Murray maintains that the wireless was not destroyed on 30th January as stated in Major Wilson's report. Since a message was

transmitted by the civilians after the departure of the Independent Company, it seems that here Wilson was either misinformed or his memory was at fault.

On another point of criticism, directed at the Civil Administration, Mrs. Murray appears herself to be astray. She writes that Sister Dorothy Maye, a devoted nursing sister in charge of the Kavieng European Hospital, had been evacuated from Kavieng with the rest of the European women and children, but on arrival at Rabaul "had received orders from the medical officer . . . to return to her post at Kavieng." According to the Assistant Government Secretary of the time, Sister Maye, on arrival at Rabaul, had expressed a wish to return to Kavieng. He had informed her that there was no real need for her to do so, but her insistence appears to have led to a return passage to Kavieng being arranged in quick time.

It is profitable, particularly for soldiers, to ponder this book in order to be reminded of the kind of problems that beset not only the army but the civilian population of these exposed territories in the event of invasion. There the transition from peace to war was far more rapid and dramatic than in mainland Australia, and may be so again. Was that fact fully appreciated in pre-war planning? Is it appreciated today? As all should know, Angau was established in 1942 and found to be the solution to utilizing to best advantage the wealth of local know-

ledge and experience available. Angau, however, was not the outcome of any wise and far-sighted pre-war planning. It grew out of the needs and emergencies of the time, and was not really a going concern until a few months after the outbreak of war. In the interregnum, for lack of guidance, many good men were lost. There is perhaps a need to ensure that for want of a plan — one acceptable and understood by the citizens of the territories beforehand; there may not be time to promulgate it afterwards — that they are not lost again.

As mentioned, this book mainly concerns a successful escape. The role of Harry Murray in the escape is shown to be that of leader. The fate of the civilians who chose to remain

on their plantations in New Ireland is not revealed. What happened would have provided an interesting though gloomy postscript, for the facts are not widely known. After a time most of the European men, including some German nationals, were rounded up by the Japanese and placed in an internment camp near Kavieng airfield. In March, 1944, the Japanese, fearing invasion, secretly executed them. The manner of their disposal was macabre and spine-chilling; the secret well kept. The penetration of the Japanese "conspiracy of silence" — a major piece of crime detection — by a relentless Australian War Crimes officer, long after the end of the war, may perhaps one day form the subject of another book.

— A.J.S.
