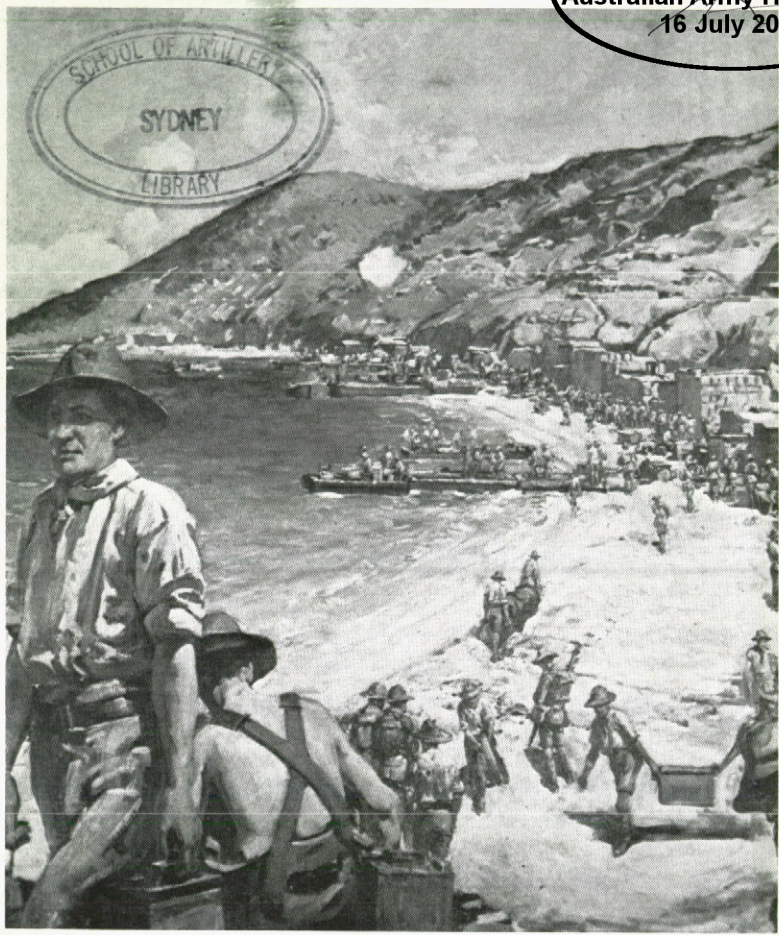


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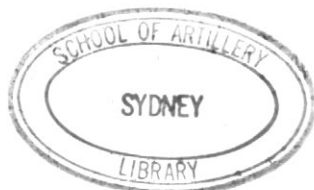
COVER: 'The Beach at Anzac', by Frank Crozier. At the Australian War Memorial.

ARMY JOURNAL

A periodical review of military literature

No. 263, APRIL 1971

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(Australian War Memorial)
Italian tanks captured at Bardia were manned by members of the 6th Australian Divisional Cavalry Regiment during the capture of Tobruk in April 1941



The Battle of Kapyong

AT Kapyong, when the Chinese Fifth Phase Offensive began, Australians were gathering azaleas for Anzac Day wreaths. The rest camp was near the village of Charidae, slightly north-west of Kapyong, in a grove of chestnuts. There were still some patches of snow on the hills but the wild azaleas were already in bloom and the trees were coming out in fresh green leaf. Colonel Ferguson had sent across to the Turkish Brigade, camped a few miles away, inviting a detachment to the Anzac Day Service on 25 April. A flagpole had been erected in the battalion headquarters area and fatigue parties were laying out stone-edged paths ready for a long stay.

'What a life!' wrote Pte E. L. Eyre, of No. 2 Section MMG Platoon. 'We were all having a good time, picture shows and a bottle of beer a day. We'd been there about eight days and it looked like going on forever. I was cracking a few bottles of beer with Bob Simes, Smitty and several others when our platoon commander came up suddenly and called for an O² Group. What's on here? we thought. Maybe it'll be confirmed that we stay another two months. The four section leaders trotted off and we proceeded to finish off the beer.'

From With The Australians In Korea, edited by Norman Bartlett and published by the Australian War Memorial. Reprinted by permission.

'What a lovely five days I had in Japan,' Simes reminisced, 'spent a hundred and thirty quid but, boy, there'll never be another like that. Don't remember the first two days very clearly but on the third I woke up in a Nip house and . . .'

'Break it up, fellers . . .' this from Bluey, our section leader . . . 'prepare to move in one hour!'

That was on 23 April 1951, a fine warm day with a promise of cold at night. There had been persistent rumours that the Chinese were planning a spring offensive. But the 27th British Brigade had no cause to worry. The Argylls were being pulled out to go back to Hong Kong. The Middlesex were due for relief, and the Australians were enjoying a well-earned rest after a long stint of action. The drill, so everybody believed, was that the King's Own Scottish Borderers would replace the Argylls, the 1st King's Shropshire Light Infantry would take over from the Middlesex and the Australians would be incorporated into a new Commonwealth brigade, the 28th, under Brigadier G. Taylor. Meanwhile, the half-dissolved 27th Brigade was 30 miles behind the front lines with a whole division of South Koreans, flanked by battle-tryed American divisions, between them and the enemy.

The Chinese offensive began on the night of 22 April but 27th Brigade Headquarters received no detailed information until next morning. At that stage the enemy had not broken through but, as a precautionary measure, the Brigade was ordered to take up blocking positions across the attack routes from the north. The Australians and elements of the 72nd US Tank Battalion were assigned a position on a ridge covering crossroads and fords over the Kapyong and one of its small tributaries. Three miles to the left the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry held similar high ground covering a ford across the Kapyong River. On the right there was a big gap (estimated at 14 miles) to the nearest American troops. Between the Australians and the Canadians the Middlesex held a reserve position. At this stage the New Zealand Field Artillery were well forward covering the 6th ROK Division.

Early on the morning of 23 April, Lieutenant-Colonel Ferguson met his company commanders at the village of Chuktun-ni about seven miles north of the battalion rest area at Charidae. They made a recon-

* An 'O' Group consists of subordinate commanders of a military formation, irrespective of size, plus the formation or unit etc. commander. It is called together so that the commander can issue his orders to his subordinates.

naissance of the country-side and found that the Australian sector covered the junction of two roads and two rivers. The rivers were the Kapyong, coming in from the north-west, and a small tributary flowing from the north-east. Chuktun-ni village straddled a road junction near the river junction. Just below where the roads joined (one from the north-west and the other from the north-east) a ford crossed the Kapyong. Several miles further down the river there was another ford near the Middlesex battalion's position. The Canadians, on the left,



(Australian War Memorial)

The Kapyong Valley, where the 3rd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment won its Presidential Citation for 'extraordinary heroism and outstanding performance' in stopping the Chinese offensive of April 1951.

were primarily responsible for the road from the north-west whereas the Australians' task was to cover the road junction and the first ford. 'A', 'C' and 'D' companies were allotted high ground east of Chuktun-ni village, guarding the approach to the ford and overlooking the road coming in from the north-east, while 'B' Company was assigned a long, scrub-covered island feature between the road and the smaller of the

two rivers. In effect, 'B' Company's position was a small natural fortress, flanked on both sides by paddy fields, standing in what was likely to be one of the main streams of the Chinese advance from the north.

Some, at least, of the company officers weren't happy about the position. They had a battalion to hold a two-battalion front. There were gaps, no matter how thinly they spread out the platoons. The officers were confident enough that their men would dig in, fight and stay put as long as necessary. But there was nothing on the flanks to prevent the Chinese, if they came in big enough numbers, from rushing through these gaps and closing round behind the Australian positions. In the past, the Chinese had failed several times to envelop the whole UN Army. They either did not have the colossal number of men required to achieve this classic war aim or they could not keep them supplied in the field. But, once they broke through the front line, their local superiority in numbers would be ample to flood around the thinly spread British Commonwealth Brigade in the Kapyong Valley. The Brigade task, therefore, was not to stop the Chinese but, if the front line broke, to stem the break-through long enough for the Americans to consolidate the rear defences.

The Australian front faced north-east, up the river valley and road. This was the direction from which the Chinese were expected to come — if they came. 'B' Company (Captain D. Laughlin), on the left of the road, had a loop of the river on its left flank, the road and paddy fields to the right. With 'B' Company on this island feature were a platoon of tanks from the 72nd Heavy US Tank Battalion, a machine-gun section and fire observer officers from the US Independent 4.2 Chemical Mortar Battalion. Another platoon of tanks from the US tank battalion was forward from 'B' Company in flat country watching the road running in from the north-east.

'A' Company, under the command of Major B. S. O'Dowd, was in the centre position dug in along a high rocky spur. 'D' Company (Captain W. N. Gravener) was responsible for important high ground to the right of 'A' Company and 'C' Company (Captain R. W. Saunders) was in mobile reserve along a spur slightly west and to the rear of 'A' Company. Battalion headquarters, with the pioneer platoon and the Bren-gun section from the machine-gun platoon, was about a mile south-west of the company positions against some small hills 100 yards west of the road and south of Chuktun-ni village.

About six o'clock in the evening of 23 April, a Monday, the companies were in position. Darkness fell to the sound of digging as the men prepared their gun pits and made themselves comfortable for the night.

Already a growing trickle of South Korean soldiers had begun to move into the battalion area. That something serious had gone wrong up at the front was becoming rapidly obvious. About 5 o'clock advance elements of the 6th ROK Division set up a Divisional HQ near the Chuktun-ni and Sergeant C. McGregor, of the Australian battalion's Intelligence Section, went over to find out what was happening. Battalion orders were that the Australian headquarters should set up a check point south of the road junction, in liaison with the 6th ROK Division HQ, to act as a steadying influence on the retreating South Koreans.

'The ROK HQ consisted of the GOC, a few of his staff officers and an American Korean Military Advisory Group colonel, plus some miscellaneous troops and equipment,' wrote Sergeant McGregor, describing the scene. 'There were two telephones, which seemed to be in constant operation and as I watched the map staff continually moved the positions of friendly troops further south and replaced them with red arrows showing the Chinese Communist Force advance. Even at that time the position in the valleys seemed to be chaotic. The American told us that a line could be run from our switch to keep us informed. My last glimpse of the situation map showed that two brigades were approximately six miles north of the battalion position. The ROK Division HQ did not remain in position very long.'

Over on the isolated left flank 'B' Company had dug in comfortably enough. The battalion mail arrived just on dusk and the company cooks served a welcome hot meal. Captain Darcy Laughlin and his acting second-in-command, Lieutenant J. H. Young, settled into company headquarters, a large Australian Army pattern tent, and sampled a couple of bottles of beer. They could not rest because of the noise made by the retreating ROK's in the valley below. At 8 p.m. Captain Laughlin sent a message by platoon runners to his platoon commanders which said: 'There is nothing to worry about but step up security fifty per cent.' The chink and clink of picks and shovels sounded from the section positions as the forward platoons improved their defensive front.

'A' Company, in the centre, had the most difficult ground and worked hard to prepare sangars and trenches before dark. The company's position was a long, low ridge which rose sharply to a com-

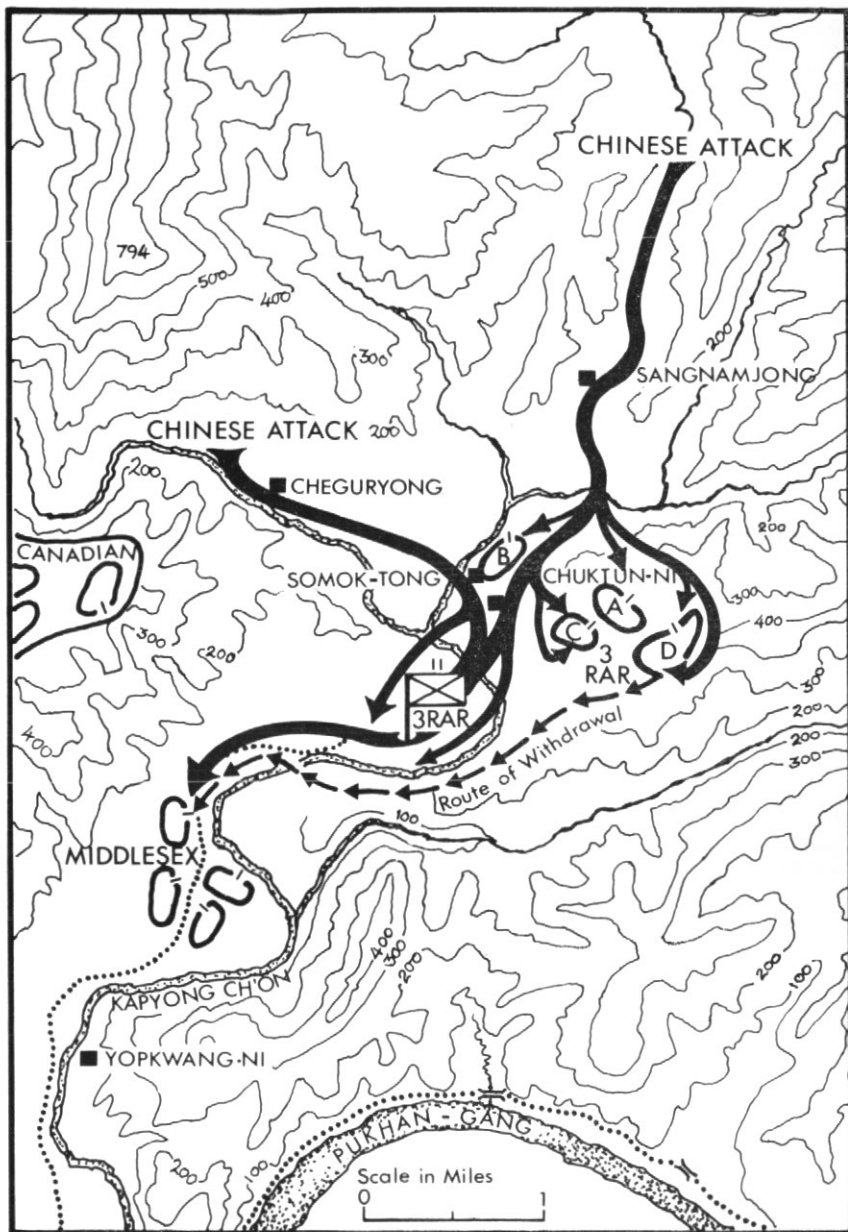
manding bald knob in the east. No. 1 Platoon (Lieutenant F. A. Gardner) was nearest the road. Then came company headquarters, with the MMG Section and, alongside them, No. 3 Platoon (Lieutenant H. Mulry). No. 2 Platoon (Lieutenant I. R. W. Brumfield) occupied the bald knob overlooking the main position. By nightfall the platoons had cut defences in the unkind ground and the Quartermaster Sergeant (Sergeant W. G. Mann) had organized a hot evening meal, after which 'F' echelon transport and the cooking gear returned to the rear. Sentries were posted and the remainder of the company curled up in sleeping bags before their turn came to watch. In the valley they could hear the disturbing sounds of the retreating South Koreans.

'D' Company, on the right, had the highest ground.

'Blue, our section leader, was always unlucky, so we got the biggest hill,' wrote machine-gunner Pte Eyre, 'and we moved up with 'D' Company immediately. From the little flat we were in, right in the centre of a rice paddy, we climbed up the highest of the hills, about two or three miles of back-breaking torture, carrying our Vickers guns, belts of ammo, our personal weapons, food and God alone knows what else. At the crest we had a blow while Blue reported to Don Company commander to find out exactly where we were to be situated. Meanwhile, we all parked around and nattered about everything except the thing that was uppermost in our minds: What's going to happen up here? How serious is the break-through? How long is this game going to last?

'Puffing and blowing Blue arrived back. "On your feet, fellers," he said. "We're going forward with No. 11 Platoon to that high ridge there." He motioned a ridge without a trace of vegetation on. "Hell!" said Jack, one of the lads in the section, "that hill reminds me of Harry's head, you can see it for miles." Harry gave Jack a dirty look and we up gear and off again until we were finally in position. We dug in and then Blue surveyed our pits and told us that a 50 per cent stand-to was the order for the night. "Keep your eyes open," he added, "we don't know what to expect." He was right. We didn't know what to expect. But, if a 50 per cent stand-to was the order, we could expect something serious.'

After dark South Koreans began to stream through the Australian position at a jog-trot. Some of their non-commissioned officers were wandering about asking what to do. Drivers abandoned stalled vehicles



The Battle of Kapyong, 23-24 April 1951.

and soldiers began to shed their equipment, uttering low moaning sounds as they did so, and isolated shots from the rear added to the pandemonium of blaring horns from the overloaded ROK vehicles. Soon the whole area, between the Australian positions, was a chaos of flashing lights, shouted instructions and intermittent gunfire as the advancing Chinese mingled with the retreating Koreans.

'The clamour on our front became easily recognizable as that of a defeated army in retreat,' wrote Captain R. W. Saunders, commander of 'C' Company, who watched the scene from a hill just above the village. 'I had heard it before, in Greece and in Crete and earlier in Korea. I must admit I felt a little dejected until I realized I was an Australian company commander and if my morale got low then I couldn't expect much from my troops. This served to buck me up and I lay down in a shallow trench and had a little sleep. The sound of small arms fire woke me and soon after the crash of tank cannon in 'B' Company's area. I could also see flashes of fire coming from the direction of Battalion HQ and I realized that the enemy were now in a good position to cut off the companies.'

By 10 p.m. the main Chinese force had reached the Australian perimeter. The American tank platoon forward of 'B' Company took the first shock. Suffering casualties and confused as to whether they were under fire from Chinese or panic-stricken South Koreans the tanks began to fall back down the valley road towards Chuktun-ni village between 'B' Company and the other Australian companies. Meanwhile, the Chinese had fanned out and were probing 'A', 'C' and 'D' company positions.

With the tanks out of position the Chinese began to move straight down the road between the company positions towards battalion headquarters. The US tank commander, who had given no orders for his forward platoon to fall back, rushed down into the valley to stop his men retreating too far. Lieutenant Young, 'B' Company's second-in-command, went with him.

'We reached the road too late to stop two of the tanks from falling back to battalion headquarters area,' wrote Lieutenant Young, describing what happened next. 'We stopped the last one. The commander said he had dead and wounded aboard and was going back to recrew and rearm. We persuaded him to stop and promised to send his wounded back by jeep and bring ammunition up to him. The tank skipper then asked where we wanted him to stop and block. A rather

indefinite wave of the arm on my part was not sufficient for him. He wanted to be guided to his position. That left me posted so I marched ahead of the tank *north* along the road. By this time an American mortar FFO [forward fire officer] accompanied by a negro carrying his wireless set, had joined us. The FFO was looking for our 'A' Company and wanted guiding.

'After walking for about fifty yards, with the tank grinding along behind us in the dark, I saw movement in the shadow of a bank on the right side of the road, towards 'A' Company. There was moonlight on the road itself. Thinking that ROK troops were still skulking there I called out *Iddiwa* [Anglicized Korean for 'Come here']. A train of sparks flying through the air towards me was the answer. I dived for the ditch on the left of the road. The FFO and his wireless man went for the hill towards 'A' Company. The tank driver immediately put his vehicle into reverse gear and went backwards. The grenade burst harmlessly on the road. I was now reasonably sure that the Chinese were with us and against us. As I lay in the ditch the Chinese Communist Force literally ran over me after the tank down the road. They flung a few grenades in my direction but did no harm beyond singeing my moustache and hair. I lay quiet for some time, whilst the noise of the pursuit faded south, then I cautiously made way back to "B" Company lines.'

By 11 p.m. the New Zealand Field Artillery, which had been well forward supporting the South Koreans, was in position at the rear of the Australian positions, but owing to a change of orders the 25-pounders then moved to a position behind the Middlesex and were not in a position to give effective support until early next morning. Meanwhile, the milling South Koreans had passed through the battalion area, disrupting telephone line communications between battalion headquarters and the forward companies. However, Lieutenant-Colonel Ferguson was able to keep up intermittent wireless communication through 'C' Company, enabling him to pass and receive information and orders. He was also able to maintain some sort of contact through the artillery network.

Meanwhile fighting had flared up right around the battalion perimeter and inside the headquarters area. The main Chinese drive swept down the valley to the ford and established a road block behind headquarters. The initial attack killed two Bren gunners and wounded four others, besides causing casualties among the regimental police and signallers who were defending low ground around the ford. Lieutenant

C. B. Evans, commanding the machine-gun platoon, saved the situation by asking an American tank commander to turn his cannon on the road block and nearby houses. This tank fire killed forty Chinese in one house alone.

Throughout the night headquarters company and 'A' Company were under constant pressure. In the absence of rear communications, Major O'Dowd, OC 'A' Company, directed the forward defence. By daylight the enemy were occupying high ground overlooking battalion headquarters and dominating the west side of the road back to Kapyong. By this time every man of the light machine-gun section had been killed or wounded and the supporting pioneers had suffered heavy casualties. Meanwhile, 'A' Company had beaten off repeated attacks. About 3 a.m. the enemy began to harass 'B' Company on the left flank island feature and as dawn approached Chinese, who had not got past the ford, fell back to renew their attacks against the forward rifle companies. The main pressure was against 'A', 'B' and 'D' companies. 'C' Company, in reserve, had to deal only with small groups of infiltrators. As casualties began to mount in 'A' and 'D' companies Major O'Dowd called on 'C' Company to supply stretcher parties for the evacuation of the wounded.

At about 4.30 a.m., 24 April, Lieutenant-Colonel Ferguson asked the Brigade Commander, over the rear link to Brigade HQ, for a company of Middlesex, if they could get through, to reinforce the pioneer platoon position, which was the key to the battalion headquarters position. A company of Middlesex arrived but artillery could not be provided to support a company attack. The enemy had now so reinforced their position that the Middlesex found any forward movement impossible and they withdrew along the route to the east already used by the 2nd US Chemical Mortars. When the Chinese rush threatened to catch the mortars in open paddy fields the mortar men had retreated ten miles east, abandoning their vehicles. Actually, the enemy did not reach the mortar positions in strength and the Australians and a US engineer unit later drove out the packed but untouched vehicles.

The Regimental Aid Post, in a paddy field across from battalion headquarters, was under fire all night. Throughout, the chaplains gave valuable assistance with the wounded. 'We managed to evacuate all the casualties from battalion headquarters and the support company during the night,' the Medical Officer (Captain D. D. Beard) reported afterwards. 'It was noticeable that when we were loading casualties on to the ambulance, prominently displaying the Red Cross, firing on us

ceased, only to start again when the ambulance had gone. At dawn, when a heavier Chinese attack began, Lieutenant-Colonel Ferguson came to the RAP and advised a withdrawal down the road. We made a break for it with Padre A. W. A. Laing, Padre E. B. Phillips and the Salvation Army representative, Major E. C. Robertson, and got away safely.'

'Although we had little information in the RAP area about what was going on,' wrote Chaplain Laing, 'it was quite obvious that a serious situation was rapidly developing. As the ROK retreat slowed down to stragglers, firing broke out as the enemy began to infiltrate the position. It was hard to identify friend from foe. A few Australian wounded reached the RAP which soon came under fire, apparently from a house on the edge of the small paddy field where we were sheltering under a bank with the wounded. Only a minimum care could be given to the wounded in the cold and darkness and the MO had only a jeep ambulance with scanty supplies. Throughout the night firing continued from various points around us but no actual assault was made on the RAP area itself. The night passed very slowly and, although we had on our pile-lined caps and jackets, it grew very cold. About 4 a.m. word came from battalion headquarters for the RAP and chaplains to prepare to move south down the road about five or six miles. Although the noise of firing was coming from the south, where the enemy was infiltrating towards the rear, the road was still open and we met the transport officer who guided us to a rendezvous in a paddy field in more open country where we settled in about 6 a.m.'

As there were insufficient stretcher bearers to cope with the mounting casualties among headquarters and support troops Salvation Army Major Edwin Robertson left the job he was doing for the MO and went out with the hygiene corporal, C. F. ('Gunner') McMurray, MM, to help bring in the more seriously wounded. This meant they had to visit the front line and often made their way with the stretcher on their hands and knees.

'As always seems to be the case during the fiercest battle, humour crept in,' wrote Major Robertson later. 'Some of the forward troops noticed a lone Chinaman making his way over a ridge to obtain a commanding position, from which he could snipe our lines. A sergeant attached to the support company saw him and fired, but only kicked up the dust at the Chinaman's feet. This sergeant was always known as a good shot so some of the boys chaffed him. Full of determination, he had another shot and the same thing happened. Again the boys bar-

racked him and this time, with a do or die glint in his eye, he fired but only to see the same again. Then, to his amazement, the Chinaman whipped off his shirt, tied it to his rifle and waved a "Washout" which highly amused the Australians and helped relieve the tension.'

'A' Company had its first contact on No. 1 Platoon's front nearest the road leading through to battalion headquarters, when a Bren gunner opened up on an enemy patrol approaching his position. The rest of his section joined in and, after a sharp action, the enemy withdrew to the bottom of the hill. In the darkness, the men of 'A' Company could hear the Chinese reorganizing for another attempt to the accompaniment of shouting, whistle blowing and flute blurring. 'A' Company joined in these preparations, and added to the noise by exploding 2-inch mortar bombs and hand grenades in the direction of the enemy.

'The awaited renewed attack came in at the same place the Chinese had hit previously, but on a wider front,' wrote Major O'Dowd, describing the action. 'The attack opened with a shower of hand grenades out of the darkness, followed by a wild determined rush. No. 1 Platoon Bren gunners, Owen gunners and riflemen engaged the attackers viciously, filling the air with bullets and grenades, but the Chinese kept coming on over their own dead and wounded in an attempt to break in. The position held. Whistles and bugles called off the attackers who left behind heaps of their comrades, grim reminder that there would be no cheap victories that night.'

An interval of hasty activity followed on both sides. Lieutenant Gardner reshuffled his troops to fill in gaps caused by No. 1 Platoon casualties. The Chinese lined up for another assault to the sound of much shouting and bugle blowing. Then came an awesome silence as the attackers edged forward in the darkness while the Australians waited, trying to estimate where the next blow would fall.

'The attack poured in again with fresh fury against No. 1 Platoon in exactly the same sector as before,' said Major O'Dowd. 'A shower of grenades was followed by a mad rush, which was beaten off. Then came another and another, with the dose repeated with scarcely enough time for No. 1 Platoon to close in gaps caused by casualties. This time the enemy commander did not call off his attacks, which were being cut down, for he seemed to have an endless stream of reinforcements to throw in. The waves came in one after the other until by weight of numbers the Chinese overran No. 1 Platoon.'

With this position gone, the MMG Section (who had lost their commander, Sergeant S. K. J. Lenoy) and company headquarters were in a dangerous position. Consequently, Major O'Dowd regrouped his centre around Lieutenant Mulry's No. 3 Platoon. The reorganization was hardly completed before the enemy attacked from the direction of what had been No. 1 Platoon's ground. This attempt met with such harsh treatment from Lieutenant Mulry's men that there was no further trouble from that side of 'A' Company's perimeter for the rest of the night.

'The battle from then until dawn, so far as 'A' Company was concerned,' said Major O'Dowd, 'consisted of two series of attacks, probing various points round the perimeter. In each attempt the enemy ran into energetic counter-action which succeeded in turning him back. There was no more massing for attacks in waves. Apparently, the bloody stand made earlier by No. 1 Platoon had depleted the Chinese too badly for him to stage a repeat performance.'

Meanwhile, between 5 a.m. and 6 a.m. battalion headquarters, down the valley near the ford, began to withdraw towards the positions occupied by the Middlesex. During the withdrawal a mortar bomb fell between Lieutenant-Colonel Ferguson and his Intelligence officer (Lieutenant A. Argent), blowing a wheel off the CO's jeep, but the headquarters withdrawal was completed without loss. Whenever the enemy opened up the men jumped from their vehicles and returned fire from cover until one of the tanks covering the withdrawal lumbered up and silenced the opposition.

About 6.15 a.m., Colonel Ferguson reopened his intermittent communication with the rifle companies, which were all intact and in position, although under fierce pre-dawn attack. It was then decided to withdraw 'B' Company from its exposed position to within the perimeter of the other companies on the high ground south-east of the road.

The Chinese had begun to harass 'B' Company on the island feature about 3 a.m. At that time No. 6 Platoon was strung along the ridge, with a tank in the centre, and company headquarters were on the side of the hill below. The Chinese moved up the spur behind company headquarters heading for a knoll occupied by a section from No. 6 Platoon. 'Running to the tank,' wrote Lieutenant Young, 'I managed to get their 50-calibre machine gun to engage the enemy who were beautifully silhouetted against the flames of a burning house down in the village. This tank gunner did magnificent work at that particular point of the attack at about fifty yards range.'

During repeated early morning attacks against 'B' Company explosive bullets from the defending tanks set fire to straw-thatched houses alongside the road and exposed the enemy movements. 'B' Company riflemen, machine-gunners and tanks caused great slaughter to the Chinese who were crowded in the valley between 'B' Company, on the north of the road, and the other companies, south of the road. One group crouched in a ditch to shelter from 'B' Company's machine-gun fire. The 2-inch mortar could not reach them so a tank shelled the bank above the ditch and blew the Chinese out of their position. In the light from the burning houses Captain Young saw the explosion lift the bodies into the air. In the growing light the Australians could see the valley below littered with enemy dead.

At about 4 a.m. Lance-Corporal R. N. Parry, in charge of a light machine-gun outpost on a knoll behind 'B' Company's perimeter, saw large numbers of the enemy forming up for an attack. Fifty or more Chinese tried to clear the knoll, which would have given them a dominating position overlooking the main company positions, but Corporal Parry and his men smashed three determined attacks within twenty minutes. Ten enemy dead were counted after the first attack and as day broke a further thirteen dead were found on the lower slopes.

As daylight developed snipers located in the paddy fields near the road began to worry company headquarters. Orders had already come through for 'B' Company to withdraw across the road to the other companies. Consequently, Captain Laughlin sent out a patrol under Company Sergeant-Major Bradley to clear the ground towards 'C' Company. A few grenades greeted the patrol as it approached the paddy fields but a Chinaman leapt up from a ditch frantically waving a piece of paper. The patrol kept him covered until certain that he was genuine. When his surrender was accepted other Chinese popped out of cover all over the place to give themselves up. The patrol secured forty prisoners. Some of the Chinese soldiers clutched surrender pamphlets of the type dropped by American aircraft. Others were loaded down with Australian cigarettes and toilet gear which they had evidently looted when attacking battalion headquarters during the night.

Before crossing to 'C' Company's position on the high ground south of the road Captain Laughlin loaded the company's only casualty and several wounded POW's on to the company jeeps and sent them down the road to the new battalion HQ site. Tanks, going back to refuel and rearm, escorted the jeeps. The column ran the gauntlet of small

arms and bazooka fire without suffering any damage. As the remainder of the company crossed the valley, under tank cover, they passed many dead and badly wounded Chinese. Throughout the withdrawal 'B' Company exchanged shots with Chinese hiding in the river bed, in broken ground and around the village of Chuktun-ni. 'B' Company was safely in its new positions by 9 a.m., and had brought all its POW's with it.

On 'A' Company's front the situation changed for the worse just before dawn. Throughout the night there had been a danger that the enemy would gain a position on the steep slope in the gap between the main position and No. 2 Platoon on the bald knob. From this slope the enemy could direct fire and grenades right down into the defences. Just after 5 a.m. the defenders could hear movement on this high ground but nothing could be seen in the darkness. At 5.30 a.m., however, a light machine-gun began firing down into the main Australian position. Concentrated return fire silenced the gun but the defenders could hear a series of whistle blasts, evidently the Chinese officer's signal that he had found a weakness and needed reinforcements. Each whistle blast drew a burst of Australian fire, in an effort to frustrate the call, but with no effect.

With first light the Chinese gunner started working over 'A' Company's main position with unpleasant results. Then a New Zealand gunner, who was with the FOO team, picked up the enemy position and went to work with effective sniping each time a Chinese showed his head. This gunner was the only defender who could see the enemy position. He continued to engage with his rifle and refused to change position with anyone in spite of the fact that he was wounded during the action.

As light improved No. 2 Platoon, from their vantage point on the bald knob, began to distinguish the extent of the main position perimeter. However, they could not pin-point the enemy gun position which was causing all the trouble. Lieutenant Brumfield put down searching fire between the main perimeter and his platoon and then sent out a fighting patrol under Corporal C. J. Everleigh to clear the slope. About half-way down the steep incline the patrol made contact and mounted a quick attack on the five or six Chinese still alive in the hastily-made position.

'Having cleared the high ground above our main position we could once more move about with comparative freedom,' said Major O'Dowd. 'We then redirected our attention towards No. 1 Platoon's old position, where the Chinese were still in occupation. Lieutenant

Mulry organized a force from No. 3 Platoon and directed a counter-attack which had no trouble in recapturing the ground. The enemy did not give battle but ran off before No. 3 Platoon could get close enough to extract rent for the night's lodging.'

By 7 a.m. 'A' Company was in possession of all the ground it had occupied the day before. The action cost the company and attached troops 50 casualties but this nowhere approached the number of enemy dead littered in ugly heaps about the disputed position.

'With daylight the initiative swung to the defenders,' continued Major O'Dowd. 'The unsuccessful attackers were exposed in the open, faced with the problem of getting back to safety. All around the company perimeter groups of enemy troops attempted short dashes from one piece of cover to another. Each dash for safety brought down an assortment of fire from our troops who were in the high central feature they had defended so successfully. The situation rather resembled sitting in the middle of a wheatfield at dawn potting rabbits as they dashed hither and thither.'

Meanwhile, 'D' Company had come under heavy attack from repeated waves of Chinese supported by 60-mm mortars. By now the New Zealand artillerymen were able to provide covering fire. There was no observation officer with the company but Captain Gravener established artillery wireless communications and called up support. The attack began at 7 a.m. and continued at half-hour intervals throughout the morning. No. 12 Platoon (Lieutenant Ward) took the weight of these attacks in the forward position. The Chinese launched their initial attacks on a four to five man front, assisted by mortars and grenades, and they suffered heavy casualties.

No. 8 section, under Corporal Rowlinson, took the main enemy assault and suffered casualties. Corporal Rowlinson and Pte R. F. A. Smith were wounded but fought on although Pte Smith, who was badly hurt, eventually had to be evacuated. Pte Dunque, a company stretcher bearer, also continued on duty after he had been wounded. Lance-Corporal Harold Ritchie, second-in-command of No. 9 section, courageously assisted the stretcher bearers to carry out the wounded from No. 8 section. He was cut down by enemy fire and fatally wounded when carrying a wounded man on his shoulders.

Meanwhile, 'B' Company had been having a lively time trying to clear a passage for an ordered general withdrawal down the valley and across the Kapyong ford. During the morning, Colonel Ferguson,

Lieutenant A. Argent, his Intelligence officer, and Captain Beard, the MO, had ridden forward on tanks in a successful attempt to make direct contact with the companies. Because the tanks had to travel closed-up, Colonel Ferguson replaced a gunner in the leading tank. By this time the enemy occupied the positions originally held by battalion headquarters and 'B' Company. This effectively blocked the roadway to the ford. Lieutenant Ken McGregor took a 'B' Company platoon to clear the approach to the ford, but heavy fire pinned down this patrol and



(Australian War Memorial)

Lieutenant L. M. Montgomery, MC (centre front row) and No. 4 Platoon 'B' Company which distinguished itself in the Battle of Kapyong.

caused casualties. Captain Laughlin immediately sent Lieutenant Len Montgomery with a platoon to attack the Chinese positions and extract the two sections pinned down. The battle raged for several hours but Lieutenant Montgomery's men finally gained a commanding height, after a bayonet charge and a fierce hand-to-hand fight in which they killed 81 Chinese. Colonel Ferguson was able to get the tanks to fire

on the enemy position in support of Lieutenant Montgomerie's attack. The Australian casualties were four killed and five wounded. However, the Chinese remained masters of the ford and the withdrawal eventually took place along high ground south of the road and river. Corporal D. P. (Dogpatch) Davie distinguished himself in this action.

Over on the right flank the Chinese continued to make determined attempts to occupy the commanding high ground held by 'D' Company. During the course of the battle on this front Lieutenant 'Johnny' Ward rang Captain Gravener on the field telephone and said, 'Eh boss, it's getting pretty hot down here; the b——s are all round the place. I've lost eight blokes so far. What do you think?'

'You're doing all right,' Captain Gravener told him. 'All we have to do is sit tight and hold our present position.'

'OK, boss,' replied Johnny Ward and settled down to hang out as long as he had anyone left capable of shooting.

However, in view of the heavy casualties, Captain Gravener decided to tighten his perimeter and withdraw No. 12 Platoon. The withdrawal was conducted so skilfully that the Chinese continued to mortar the abandoned position. Then, about 3 p.m. they launched a full-scale attack against nothing. 'D' Company had a grandstand view as about thirty Chinese, behind a mortar barrage, went through the motions of driving the departed No. 12 Platoon out of position. At the right moment, the Australians and the New Zealand artillery opened up with all available weapons and caused heavy casualties among these Chinese 'attackers'.

At this stage Captain Gravener called for air support to clear the Chinese off the position formerly occupied by No. 12 Platoon. On arrival the spotter plane dropped a spigot flare on what the pilot thought was the target area. Actually, it was the position occupied by No. 10 Platoon. The Corsairs swept in and dropped napalm which sent flames racing through defence positions and the company headquarters area. Captain M. Ryan ran out under fire waving the identification panel which had been placed on the ground to mark the position of our troops while the company wireless operator, Pte J. F. ('Sandy') Winton, made frantic efforts to save the wireless set which was the only means of communication for the transmission of artillery fire orders. By the time the aircraft had discovered the error the napalm attack had caused several casualties, two fatal, and destroyed a quantity of weapons and ammunition vital to the defence.

Taking advantage of this unexpected support the Chinese launched a frontal attack, coupled with a flanking movement on the right. No. 11 Platoon held off the frontal attack and made a minor readjustment to counter the attempted right flank move. Once again the enemy suffered heavy casualties and drew back. At this stage 'D' Company was acting as a rearguard covering the withdrawal of the other companies along high ground to the reserve area occupied by battalion headquarters and the Middlesex 'D' Company received its orders to withdraw late in the afternoon but was then beating off one of the heaviest attacks of the day.

'This attack was the most determined we had experienced up to then,' Captain Gravener wrote in a report on the action. 'The enemy fairly ran headlong into our forward lines and, on the right, had gained the cover of a spur but could not breach our position. At this critical stage it was decided to begin thinning out. We completed this action according to the book and although always followed up we suffered no further casualties except one man reported missing. During this thinning out process the New Zealand artillery slowed down the enemy follow-up. Corrections to bring this artillery fire as close as possible were very effective. As we finally cleared feature 504, which was at the south end of the main ridge, shells were falling no more than 150 yards forward of our troops. At this stage, Major Hunt took over artillery direction and the volume of fire completely frustrated enemy attempts to follow-up further so that the withdrawal was speeded-up without further incident.'

Throughout the night of 23 April and all next day, 'D' Company had no direct communication with battalion HQ. Captain Gravener kept contact through Major O'Dowd and 'A' Company signals. After the napalm attack on the afternoon of 24 April even requests for tank support had to go through 'A' Company. This meant that Major O'Dowd directed the withdrawal, in which 'D' Company acted as rearguard. By just after 9 o'clock on the night of 24 April, the rifle companies were all clear of the forward features which they had defended so successfully for a night and a day.

During the night of 23 April and all day on 24 April, American tanks, commanded by Lieutenant Kenneth W. Koch, collaborated closely with the Australian troops. One tank platoon commander, Lieutenant Wilfred D. Miller, won the Distinguished Service Cross for his courage and initiative during the first Chinese attack. This assault, early on the

night of 23 April, killed the forward tank platoon commander and wounded three tank commanders. When the platoon began to fall back in some disorder, Lieutenant Miller, advancing with his own platoon, jumped from the protection of his own tank and ran forward to halt the retreat and directed the tanks to alternative defensive positions. On the following day Lieutenant Miller repeatedly led his platoon through enemy-held territory to carry critically needed ammunition and supplies to the Australian companies and to evacuate wounded.

'My platoon nearest 'D' Company came into the fray as the enemy attacked 'D' Company,' wrote Captain Saunders, when paying a tribute to the American tanks. 'D' Company stood firm and my fellows said it was better than the fun parlour at Luna Park. However, one great problem soon presented itself. The ammunition was running low and we were beginning to have casualties. About this time, away to the south, I could see dust coming from behind a hill that concealed the road. Then our American tank friends reappeared around the corner, bringing us fresh ammunition and lots of morale. They evacuated our wounded and made several trips along this two-mile stretch of road, under fire all the way. They never once faltered and they helped to build up a strong bond of respect between the fighting men of two countries.

'Towards evening orders came to withdraw. We did so, ably supported by our Anzac friends of the New Zealand 16th Field Artillery. As 'D' Company evacuated their positions Chinese troops were right behind them and many a Chinaman had a dead heat or photo finish with a 25-pounder Kiwi shell. Sometimes the Chinaman won and sometimes only came second. On the road to the west were the faithful tanks watching us withdraw as darkness fell, leaving them alone, surrounded by Chinese infantry, and infantry are deadly against tanks at night. Several hours later we came to the Middlesex lines, passed through them and on Anzac Eve we dug in among friends. At last I felt like an Anzac and I imagine there were 600 others like me.'

Lieutenant Young, second-in-command of 'B' Company, had the job of checking the troops over the river. 'It was nearly 11 p.m. before the last company reached the new positions,' he wrote. 'C' Company passed, followed by company headquarters and one platoon of 'A' Company followed by 'D' Company but no sign of two missing 'A' Company platoons. I gradually fed men away from my small checkpoint group and waited on in the hope of seeing the missing men

from 'A' Company. Finally, with the last of my men eighty yards on his way, I considered discretion the better part of valour and began to move off. There were some large sandbanks in the middle of the river and this caused some delay to our column. While we were there we looked back and saw two advancing columns coming across the river from different directions. We heaved great sighs of relief when they turned out to be the two missing 'A' Company platoons who had lost their way. At the pass on the road into the Middlesex lines Colonel Ferguson checked us in, we handed over our POW's and settled down to sleep, one of exhaustion.'



(Australian War Memorial)

General Van Fleet, GOC 8th US Army, inspects 3 RAR, when bestowing the Presidential Citation in recognition of the unit's action at Kapyong.

This ended the Battle of Kapyong for the Australians. All night and all day the rifle companies had held their positions, exhausting and demoralizing the Chinese, and gradually blunting the offensive which tailed off ineffectively at the Middlesex perimeter. The Australian cost was heavy — thirty-one killed, fifty-eight wounded and three missing, afterwards known to be POW's. But, with the support of the Canadian infantry, the American tanks and the New Zealand gunners, the Aus-

tralian battalion was a major factor in halting the Chinese advance long enough for the Americans to reinforce the Kapyong River front.

'The seriousness of the break-through on the central front had been changed from defeat to victory by the gallant stand of these heroic and courageous soldiers,' said the US Presidential Citation (a unit VC). 'The 3rd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, the 2nd Battalion, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry and 'A' Company, 72nd US Heavy Tank Battalion, displayed such gallantry, determination and *esprit de corps* in accomplishing their missions as to set them apart and above other units participating in the campaign, and by their achievements they have brought distinguished credit to themselves, their homelands, and all freedom-loving nations.'

By order of his late Majesty King George VI all members of the 3rd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, are now entitled to wear the emblem of the US Presidential Citation, a strip of blue watered silk ribbon inside a frame of gold silk, on both upper sleeves of their uniform. The members of the battalion who fought in the battle are entitled to wear the emblem always in whatever unit they serve. All serving members of the battalion, now or at any future time, are entitled to wear the treasured emblem whilst on the strength of the unit only. Thus, Kapyong added a permanent honour to the battle traditions of the Australian Army and put the 3rd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, in the distinguished company of famous British regiments whose continuing history is starred with honours won on distant battlefields. □

MONTHLY AWARD

The Board of Review has awarded the \$10 prize for the best original article published in the January 1971 issue of the journal to Miss Judith Marsh for her contribution 'Churchill *versus* Curtin, February 1942'.



WAR IS CRUELTY

*Major E. J. O'Donnell
Royal Australian Infantry*

War is cruelty, and you cannot refine it.

—William T. Sherman.

Introduction

IT has often been said that no war is as cruel as a civil war. Nowhere is this better exemplified than in a study of the American Civil War which has the advantage of being a war extremely well documented on both sides.

Although millions of words have been written on various aspects of the Civil War, the present writer has not been able to locate any book written specifically about the treatment of the civilian population by the military forces. It seems inconceivable, however, that such a book does not exist. Nevertheless, there is plenty of evidence to be

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found in the various histories of the war, and especially in personal accounts. Henry Commager's collection *The Blue and the Gray* is one that comes to mind immediately as being relevant.

Much could be written about official policy regarding the treatment of civilians. For instance, the United States Congress during the war passed the Confiscation Act which was designed to penalize Southern sympathizers. President Lincoln had a great deal to say about the Act and did his utmost to water it down in practice. However, such things are really outside the scope of this paper which tries to tell what actually happened when the armies and the civil population came into contact with each other, and is far less concerned with national policy.

It might seem after a reading of the essay that ill-treatment and cruelty were the keynotes of the behaviour of the military forces towards the civilian population. It perhaps needs to be remembered that there is a tendency always to write of the spectacular incidents and to ignore the day-to-day commonplaces of living. During the Civil War, the bulk of both the Union and Confederate armies probably behaved reasonably well towards the civilian population. However, a sufficient number of unattractive incidents occurred in almost every campaign to leave the observer with an overall impression that reflects little credit on the military forces.

The system adopted in this essay is to trace the behaviour of the troops of both sides in each of the major theatres of the war, and then to look at the behaviour of the Northern troops towards the Negroes in the South.

Virginia

Of all the Confederate States, Virginia was the scene of the most military activity during the war, and was under continual occupation by the Union armies. In the early stages of the war, Generals McClellan and McDowell tried to prevent the ill-treatment of civilians and damage to property. General McDowell in fact tried so hard to protect Southern property that his own soldiers questioned his loyalty to the Northern cause.¹ McClellan intervened personally to safeguard the crippled wife of General Robert E. Lee and made arrangements for her to be escorted by a Southern officer from her home to join her husband outside

¹ Bruce Catton, *Terrible Swift Sword*. pp. 385-6.

Richmond.² On the whole, McClellan seems to have been able to maintain good order among his men, but despite his orders, two of Lee's homes in Virginia were burned by Union soldiers, including the famous White House which was razed by a soldier from a New York regiment.³ This was the house in which Martha Washington had lived when she married General Washington.

In the Peninsular Campaign of 1862, however, McClellan's men disgraced themselves after the battle of Williamsburg. McClellan's orders were obeyed as far as occupied property was concerned, but those estates which had been abandoned were dealt with harshly. The best known act of vandalism was the destruction of the Governor John Page mansion:

'I have never looked upon a more deplorable picture of the ravages of war than when standing amid the litter of half-destroyed books, papers and documents on the floor of the Governor's library . . . heaps of old engravings, loose manuscripts, vellum bound volumes, torn piles of precious colonial newspapers . . . hundreds of heavy-booted and spurred cavalymen had played football with everything of value in the house.'⁴

Elsewhere in Virginia the houses of Confederate leaders Edmund Ruffin, John Tyler and Henry A. Wise were burned and their libraries destroyed.

In July 1862, Pope succeeded to the command of the Army of the Potomac while McClellan was in the Peninsula. Pope was determined to show that he was tougher than McClellan, and one of the ways he tried to prove it was by measures against the civil population. His Order No. 5 directed that his army should wherever possible live off the land, giving vouchers for supplies taken, with repayment at the end of the war only if the holders could prove that they had been loyal throughout to the Union cause. Subsequent orders declared that Union cavalry should dispense with supply trains in favour of levying the local population, that the people of Northern Virginia would be held responsible for guerilla attacks, and that all disloyal citizens of Virginia should take the oath of allegiance or face deportation or death.⁵ These orders caused considerable resentment throughout the

² Clifford Dowdey, *Robert E. Lee*. p. 214.

³ Dowdey, p. 255.

⁴ Henry Commager, *The Blue and the Gray*. p. 499.

⁵ Allan Nevins, *The War for the Union*, vol. 2, pp. 154-5.

Confederacy, and were not capable of enforcement anyway. Jefferson Davis pointed out to the Confederate Congress that they meant the war would be a fight to the finish, and that the Confederacy would be forced to employ 'against our foe, every energy and every resource at our disposal'.⁶

At the same time as the Northern forces began to discard their previous good conduct towards Southern property, they came to look on the freeing of the Negro slaves as part of the process of stripping the South of its wherewithal to make war. So wherever the Union army operated, the slaves became free whether the soldiers had sympathy for the Negro or not. The slaves anticipated this and became restless on the plantations even before the arrival of the Union troops.⁷ This pattern was later to be copied throughout the South, and especially during Sherman's famous march.

The Shenandoah Valley campaigns in Virginia show clearly many of the problems of relations between civilians and the military forces. The people of the Valley were strongly pro-Southern and were especially keen to support Stonewall Jackson who was considered to be a Valley man because he came from Lexington.⁸ Richard Taylor, who commanded the 9th Louisiana Infantry under Jackson, has recorded the loyalty of the womenfolk of the Valley to the Southern cause.⁹ Jackson's men were liberally supplied with food and information throughout his brilliant campaign of 1862.

In 1864, the Valley was still in the hands of the Confederacy and was a major source of food supply for the Army of North Virginia.



(*Mathew B. Brady or assistant,
Library of Congress*)
Major General William Tecumseh
Sherman, U.S.A.

⁶ Catton, pp. 384-5.

⁷ Catton, p. 385.

⁸ Commager, p. 151.

⁹ Commager, pp. 150-9.

However, the Union General David Hunter had commenced a reign of terror against the civilian population of the Valley leaving a track of desolation rarely witnessed in the course of civilized warfare.¹⁰ Two of his long-remembered acts were the destruction of the Virginia Military Institute and Washington College. The combination of a direct military threat from the Confederate General Jubal A. Early and partisan raids from Mosby's Rangers forced Hunter out of the Valley into West Virginia. Mosby's men were mostly recruited from the Valley and had an effect out of all proportion to their number of about 300. One of their more sprightly exploits was the capture of a Northern paymaster with \$173,000.

The final act in the tragedy of the Shenandoah Valley came when General Sheridan took over Northern operations following the failure of the Confederate drive on Washington. He now commenced a policy of systematic destruction to ensure that the Valley could never be used again to support the Confederacy. His campaign was marked by the same ruthless efficiency shown by Sherman in the Carolinas, but there was less of the vandalism and senseless cruelty of Hunter's depredations. In a despatch to Grant on 7 October 1864, Sheridan reported 'I have destroyed over 2,000 barns filled with wheat, hay and farming implements; over seventy mills filled with flour and wheat; have driven in front of the army over 4,000 head of stock, and have killed and issued to the troops not less than 3,000 sheep . . . The people here are getting sick of the war; heretofore they have had no reason to complain, because they have been living in great abundance . . . when this is completed, the Valley, from Winchester up to Staunton, ninety-two miles, will have but little in it for man or beast.'¹¹ No wonder Grant said that a crow flying over the Valley would have to carry its own rations.¹²

The War in the West

The war in the West was conducted over vast distances by smaller and more scattered armies than were assembled in the East. The fighting, however, was just as savage and in many cases consisted of guerilla operations in which the civilian population played a large part,

¹⁰ Donald, p. 352.

¹¹ Commager, p. 1059.

¹² John Bach McMaster, *Our House Divided*, p. 435.

both as combatants and as victims. Both Northern and Southern irregular forces engaged in acts of brutality which were unrivalled in any other theatre of the war.

In Missouri the population was fairly divided as regards loyalty to North and South. General Schofield, who commanded the State Militia, called them out to join the Union forces. Men sympathetic to the Southern cause felt it was only a matter of time before they would be called up, so in their thousands they joined Southern guerilla forces in the State. Lincoln had authorized martial law in Missouri in November 1861, a step that was probably necessary under the circumstances. However, the Union commanders Halleck, Schofield and Curtis, enforced military government with a harshness which made the situation much worse. Halleck was responsible for arbitrary fines and assessments and many death sentences, while Curtis suspended free speech and publication, restricted trade and carried out wholesale arrests. By the middle of 1862, something like 10,000 Confederate guerillas were operating in Missouri.¹³

Bands of guerillas from Kansas invaded Missouri — some fighting for the Confederacy and some for the Union; both groups were referred to as 'Jay Hawk'ers'.¹⁴ The most vicious of all the guerilla leaders was William C. Quantrill who recruited an irregular band of Confederate sympathizers and harried the country on the Missouri-Kansas border. Quantrill was responsible for the two most notorious atrocities of the war in the West. In August 1863, he raided the town of Lawrence, Kansas, and after looting and burning the place, massacred about 150 men, women and children. He carried out a similar operation two months later at Baxter Springs, Missouri.¹⁵ Savage guerilla warfare broke out in most of the counties of Missouri; in one county alone Confederate guerillas killed nearly 100 Unionists, and in retaliation the Union militia killed 30 men, one of whom was 86 years old.¹⁶

The most savage of the Northern raiders was Colonel John B. Turchin whose real name was Ivan Vasilivetch Turchinoff. Turchin was a Don Cossack and a veteran of the Hungarian war for independence and the Crimea.¹⁷ He was an advocate of ruthless warfare and

¹³ Nevins, pp. 277-8.

¹⁴ Commager, p. 380.

¹⁵ Commager, p. 392.

¹⁶ Nevins, p. 293.

¹⁷ Merton E. Coulter, *The Confederate States of America*, p. 368.

permitted his Nineteenth Illinois Regiment to raid indiscriminately. He was responsible for the destruction of Athens, Alabama where he is said to have told his troops 'I close my eyes for two hours'. In that time his men looted the town, carried out totally unnecessary destruction of property and insulted women.¹⁸ For this atrocity he was court-martialled by General Buell and was sentenced to be dismissed. The War Department, however, thought differently and he ended the war as a brigadier-general greatly admired in certain sections of the North.¹⁹

In Kentucky, Confederate forces in 1862 carried out numerous raids on the civilian population with the aim of destroying whatever might be useful for the Union armies. The Confederate General Braxton Bragg denounced these acts at the time they occurred. However, when his invasion of Kentucky failed and he was withdrawing into the South, he carried out a scorched earth policy which resulted in the district being referred to as the 'Land of Sorrow'.²⁰ Many of Bragg's men, because of their poor state of health and lack of footwear, became stragglers during the withdrawal: these men, and also Union stragglers, were a great nuisance to the population.

Northern troops in Louisiana were responsible for many outrages. As each unit in turn passed along the route to New Orleans, it took a hand in vandalism and the burning of houses along the way. The war diary of the Fifty-Second Massachusetts records: 'We have left an awful scene of desolation behind us.'²¹ The Fourteenth New York regiment near Brashear City, Louisiana, took 800 horses and 3,000 cattle from the hapless population.²²

When New Orleans was occupied by the Northern forces, the Military Governor, General Ben Butler, found that his troops were subjected to ridicule by the inhabitants, especially the women. Union officers were spat on in the streets, and the redoubtable Admirable Farragut even had a bucket of slops emptied on him from a balcony.²³ Butler retaliated by publishing his notorious General Order No. 28 on 15 May 1863 which announced that any woman, who, by word or deed, insulted the Union flag, uniform or army would 'be regarded and held

¹⁸ Nevins, p. 293.

¹⁹ Nevins, pp. 293-4.

²⁰ Nevins, p. 295.

²¹ Nevins, pp. 295-6.

²² Nevins, p. 296.

²³ Donald, p. 94.

liable to be treated as a woman of the town, plying her avocation'.²⁴ The order was effective in New Orleans for no woman ever put the matter to the test, and frigid relations marked the rest of the Northern occupation. The order created a furore in genteel circles in England and prompted an angry letter to *The Times* from Palmerston, then Prime Minister. This in turn produced a spirited reply from Ambassador Charles Adams and the resulting crisis almost led Britain into recognizing the Confederacy.²⁵ The name of 'Beast' Butler has been abhorred in the South ever since and he is believed to have committed every crime down to stealing silver spoons from the homes in New Orleans.²⁶



(A. R. Waud)

Refugee Train Fleeing Sherman's Army.

In 1862, General William T. Sherman first tried out his theory that the war should be taken to the whole of the Southern population. Sherman's theory and practice of warfare are discussed in more detail later in this paper but a description of some of his exploits in 1862 can be mentioned here. In retaliation for Confederates firing on supply steamboats on the Mississippi River, he ordered the destruction of

²⁴ Coulter, p. 370.

²⁵ Catton, p. 396.

²⁶ Donald, p. 94.

every house in the town of Randolph. On 27 September 1862, he ordered that every time a boat was fired at, ten families should be expelled from Memphis where he had his headquarters. He placed Confederate prisoners on the boats. When even this proved insufficient and the attacks continued, he ordered the destruction of all houses, farm buildings and fields in a fifteen-mile strip along the Arkansas bank of the river. When short of transportation in November 1862, he commandeered 2,000 mules and horses from around Memphis.²⁷

In Mississippi in 1863, Sherman ordered General Blair to lay waste the Yazoo Valley. Half a million bushels of corn, stores and pork and every grist mill were destroyed. The capital, Jackson, was burned and looted. Not even churches and the State Library were spared.²⁸ A Mississippi planter, John Huston Bills, wrote in his diary of the wanton destruction by the Northern troops and also recorded; 'the Negro girls cannot pick cotton in the field unless guarded by their husbands and brothers'.²⁹ Many of the Negroes ran away to the Union forces or assisted in the destruction of their masters' properties.

The Heart of the Confederacy

General Sherman's three campaigns in the South through the heart of the Confederacy provide the best documented view of the behaviour of Northern troops towards the civilian population of the South. Up till now, civilians had for both sides largely been the accidental participants in the war; now, they were to become completely involved as a target.

Sherman knew the South well having served there for most of his military career. At the outbreak of the war he had been the popular and respected founder and superintendent of the Louisiana Seminary of Learning and Military Academy. He was well known and liked in the South and was a close friend of the Confederate General Braxton Bragg whom he had known from West Point days, along with Generals Beauregard and Jubal A. Early.³⁰ Early in the war, his ideas regarding the conduct of warfare seem to have been the same as those of his fellow officers, and he shared with them the view that the 'noncombatant

²⁷ Nevins, pp. 294-5.

²⁸ Nevins, p. 296.

²⁹ Nevins, p. 297.

³⁰ For biographical details see Liddell Hart, *Sherman*.

population, as well as private property generally, should be free of molestation except where military necessity prevailed.³¹

In the second half of 1862, while stationed in Memphis, Tennessee, Sherman began to revise his ideas. He became convinced that the whole population of the South was implacably opposed to the Union. He thought that the shortest way to achieve peace would be to make war so terrible that the South would never want to fight again. The



(George N. Barnard, 1864.
Library of Congress)

Demolition of Railroad Depot in Atlanta.

use of military forces against the civilian population would have two major effects. It would demoralize the Rebel armies in the field and it would destroy the economic capacity of the Confederacy to wage war.³² Liddell Hart, the distinguished British military historian who wrote a brilliant study of Sherman's strategy, has pointed out that 'the purpose of Sherman's strategy was to minimize fighting by playing on the mind of the opponent'.³³ Sherman's theory of total war was not merely for the purpose of revenge on the South or prompted by motives of cruelty or barbarism; rather, it was a search for the quickest and most efficient way of ending the war.

In 1863, as has already been related, Sherman put his ideas into practice on a minor scale in Mississippi. In the Spring of 1864 he was ready for his historic march into the heart of the Confederacy. Initially he was not in a position to apply his theory of total war. His plans called for an invasion from Chattanooga, Tennessee through North Georgia to Atlanta. The country was rough and mountainous and thinly populated so that he was forced to rely on the railroad from Louisville, Kentucky to Atlanta for all his supplies. A series of brilliant outflanking

³¹ John G. Barrett, *Sherman's March Through the Carolinas*, pp. 14-15.

³² Barrett, pp. 15-16.

³³ Liddell Hart, *Sherman*, p. 440.

moves against the stubborn defence of General Joseph E. Johnston brought Sherman near to Atlanta by the end of June 1864. Johnston's Fabian tactics were not appreciated in the South except by his own soldiers, and he was replaced in July by the more audacious General John Bell Hood who promptly gave battle and was defeated, enabling Sherman to occupy Atlanta on 2nd September.³⁴ Before reaching Atlanta, Sherman had determined on a new policy regarding captured cities. He could see no point in the usual Federal policy of garrisoning cities. The result of that was to tie down a great number of soldiers who might be more usefully employed in the field. He therefore ordered the city to be evacuated of its civilian population, and for its depots and communication centres to be destroyed.

The order for the removal of the civilian population caused the anticipated protest. A request from the Mayor, James M. Calhoun and two of his councilmen that the order be revoked, prompted a reply from Sherman that, because of its importance in explaining his philosophy of war, is given in lengthy quotation:

But I assert that our military plans make it necessary for the inhabitants to go away, and I can only renew my offer of services to make their exodus in any direction as easy and comfortable as possible.

You cannot qualify war in harsher terms than I will. War is cruelty, and you cannot refine it; and those who brought war into our country deserve all the curses and maledictions a people can pour out. I know I have no hand in making this war, and I know I will make more sacrifices today than any of you to secure peace. But you cannot have peace and a division of our country. Once admit the Union, once more acknowledge the authority of the national government . . . I and this army become at once, your protectors and supporters shielding you from danger, let it come from what quarter it may. You might as well appeal against a thunderstorm as against these terrible hardships of war. They are inevitable, and the only way the people of Atlanta can hope once more to live in peace and quiet at home, is to stop the war . . .

We don't want your negroes, or your horses, or your houses, or your land or anything you have, but we do want and will have first obedience to the laws of the United States. That we will have, and if it involves the destruction of your improvements, we cannot help it. I want peace, and believe it can only be reached through union and war, and I will ever conduct war with a view to perfect and early success.

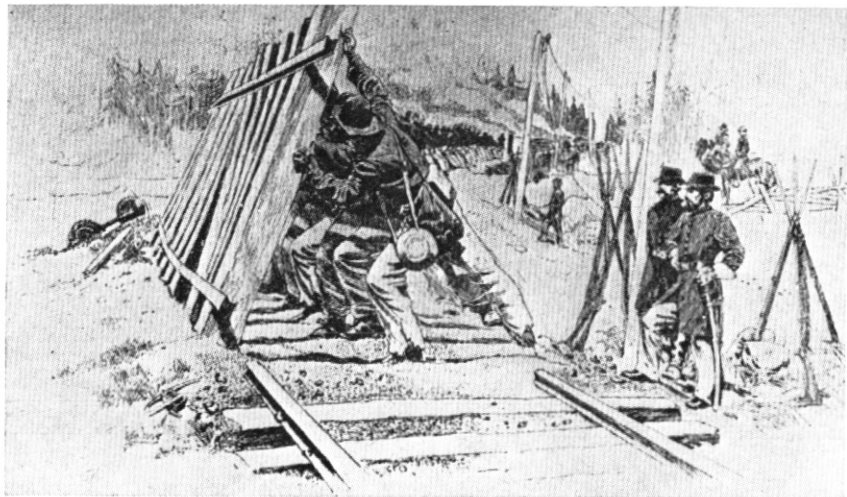
But my dear sirs, when peace does come, you may call on me for anything. Then I will share with you the last cracker, and watch with you to shield your homes and families against danger from every quarter.³⁵

The deportation of the people was carried out as he ordered but with a humanity that was acknowledged by its victims. About 30 per cent of the city was destroyed including the railway installations and government depots.

³⁴ Liddell Hart, ch. 16-18.

³⁵ Barrett, pp. 20-21.

But by now Sherman was thinking further ahead to carrying the war right across to Georgia to the coast. The Confederate General Hood complicated the situation by moving his force back into Tennessee. Sherman boldly countered by ordering his trusted West Point classmate General Thomas to hold Hood at Chattanooga with a slightly inferior force, while he proceeded against minimal opposition to march across Georgia to Savannah with 60,000 men.



Sherman's Army Destroying Railways. *(Walton Taber)*

On 15th November, Sherman began the famous march to the sea which in twenty-four days carried his army more than three hundred miles to Savannah. He destroyed the railroad to his rear and relied entirely on the countryside for supplies. Now at last he was bringing the war to the people. His army embarked on a sixty-mile wide swathe of destruction that made 'Georgia howl'. On 21st December, Sherman occupied Savannah. Here the harshness ended on Sherman's specific orders. The city officials were maintained in their posts and the Mayor, Dr Arnold, and the Confederate military commander General Geary both co-operated with Sherman. Arnold realized the futility of future opposition and commenced preliminary moves to take Georgia out of the war.

The white Southerners who had been in the way of Sherman's march across Georgia had cause to hate his name. Mrs Dolly Burge

from a plantation near Covington wrote: 'Sherman himself and a greater portion of his army passed my house that day. All day, as the sad moments rolled on, were they passing, not only in front of my house, but from behind; they tore down my garden palings, made a road through my back-yard and lot field, driving their stock and riding through, tearing down my fences and desolating my home — wantonly doing it when there was no necessity for it.'³⁷ For the Negroes it was the day of liberation. Sherman wrote 'the Negroes were simply frantic with joy. Whenever they heard my name, they clustered around my horse, shouted and waved in their peculiar style, which had a natural eloquence that would have moved a stone. I have witnessed hundreds, if not thousands, of such scenes and can now see a poor girl, in the very ecstasy of the Methodist "shout", hugging the banner of one of the regiments and jumping up to the "feet of Jesus"'.³⁸ Many of the Negroes wanted to join Sherman's forces but he discouraged them because of the problem of feeding the extra mouths.

The good behaviour of Sherman's men in Savannah surprised and delighted the population. Sherman made immediate arrangements for the feeding of the population and the numerous refugees. He extended his protection to the families of high-ranking Confederate officers at the request of the officers themselves.³⁹ At this time there was criticism in Washington of Sherman's well-known opposition to having Negroes in his Army. Secretary of War, Edwin Stanton, came to Savannah to investigate the question but was reassured when Sherman produced twenty-five Negro preachers who commended his policies and his treatment of the Negroes generally.⁴⁰

It would have made normal military sense to have ended the invasion of the South at Savannah, embarked the troops, and made them available to Grant stalemated by Lee in front of Richmond. Sherman, however, proposed a third campaign which would take him from Savannah through the Carolinas to Richmond. He felt that an operation in the Carolinas would have an equal or greater effect on the morale and fighting capacity of the Confederacy as a direct attack on Richmond.

³⁷ Commager, p. 957.

³⁸ Commager, p. 950.

³⁹ Barrett, p. 28.

⁴⁰ Barrett, p. 31.

There was doubtless also, the desire to punish South Carolina which had been the first state to secede. He wrote to Grant 'that the whole United States, North and South, would rejoice to have this army turned loose on South Carolina, to devastate the State in the manner we have done in Georgia . . .'.⁴¹ Grant acquiesced.

Since once again Sherman intended to cut himself off from his base in Savannah, it might be as well to examine his foraging system, as it vitally affected the civilian population who had the misfortune to be in the way of his army. A foraging detail 'under the command of one



(From the *Story of the Great March* by George Ward Nichols)
The 'Bummer'.

or more discreet officers' was organized for each brigade to collect food, forage, horses, wagons etc. 'freely and without limit'. Foraging parties were supposed to leave sufficient food for the household and were not to trespass or use threatening language. Destruction was not permitted, except when opposition was encountered from guerillas, bushwhackers or inhabitants, when commanders could 'enforce a devastation more or less relentless, according to the measure of such hostility'.⁴²

Sherman's orders were not unreasonable, but in practice some of his foragers far exceeded their authority. Those foragers under the

⁴¹ Barrett, p. 28.

⁴² Barrett, pp. 36-37. See also Liddell Hart, pp. 345-7.

command of officers and working for their brigades, seem to have been efficient but not unduly destructive. On the other hand roaming bands known as 'bummers' were nothing more or less than marauding savages engaged in wilful destruction. The 'bummer' was defined by one of Sherman's staff, Major Nichols, as 'a raider on his own account, a man who temporarily deserts his place in the ranks and starts upon an independent foraging mission'.⁴³ These were the men who gave Sherman's force such a bad name. On the other hand they were good collectors of intelligence, and General Joseph E. Johnston is said to have called Sherman's 'bummers' the most efficient cavalry ever known.

Widespread vandalism marked the passage of Sherman's force. Most of the towns were burned, especially by Kilpatrick's cavalry. In Hardeeville, even the churches were deliberately destroyed. This was Sherman's total war with a vengeance, compounded by the hatred of the Union soldiers for South Carolina. Although the destruction was carried out by only a small proportion of the force, it would seem that no serious effort was made by Sherman or his senior commanders to halt it.

The worst episodes occurred with the occupation of the capital, Columbia, on 17th February. Sherman's troops had access to unlimited quantities of liquor in the city and went on a monumental rampage aided by the Negroes. During the night the city was set on fire, whether deliberately or by accident was never satisfactorily explained. The Methodist church was set on fire three times by the soldiers, while the Ursuline Convent was burned and ransacked by drunken soldiers. There were a few cases of rape against white women and more cases against black women. Sherman's final comment on the destruction at Columbia was, 'Though I never ordered it and never wished it, I have never shed any tears over the event, because I believe it hastened what we all fought for, the end of the war'.⁴⁴

The remainder of the campaign, while of considerable military interest, affords little new insight into the relations between the military forces and the civilian population. As the advance proceeded into North Carolina, the foraging continued as before, although North Carolina suffered less than its Southern neighbour. The Union General Morgan wrote of his foragers that they 'have become under that name

⁴³ Commager, p. 952.

⁴⁴ Barrett, p. 38.

highwaymen . . . their victims are usually old men, women and children, and Negroes whom they rob and maltreat without mercy, firing dwellings and outhouses even when filled with grain that the army needs I desire to place upon record my detestation and abhorrence of their acts'.⁴⁵ It is an interesting commentary, however, on the virtues of living off the land that Sherman's army had a sick rate of only two per cent, which has been attributed to the advantage of a balanced diet over the normal Army rations of the time.⁴⁶

Of greater significance, however, was the behaviour of Sherman towards the army of Joseph E. Johnston and the people of the South once Lee had surrendered to Grant at Appomattox. Fearful of the rise of guerilla warfare, and in any case filled with a magnanimous spirit, Sherman proposed generous peace terms to Johnston, which were accepted.⁴⁷ Sherman assisted the Confederate Army to disperse to their homes, strictly enforced good behaviour on his own troops and kept his word to the people of the South that he would befriend them as soon as they had ceased to fight. It is ironic that Sherman's terms for the South were repudiated in Washington when they became known. Nevertheless, Sherman did what he could to alleviate the economic distress of the civil population 'to relieve present wants and to restore the relations of friendship among our fellow-citizens and countrymen'.⁴⁸

Liddell Hart called Sherman the first of the modern generals, and writing in 1930 made the interesting comment that a second modern general had yet to appear.⁴⁹ It may be thought that perhaps too much emphasis is given to Sherman, but the more the subject of relations between the military forces and the civil population is researched, the more important does Sherman seem. Here was a general who could see beyond the fighting to the ultimate aim of the war, which was not conquest but the restoration of peace. Instead of fighting a long war of attrition filled with inconclusive battles, he engaged in a war of movement which reduced casualties on both sides to minor proportions, but still achieved his objectives. His campaigns through Georgia and the Carolinas, bringing economic devastation in their wake, demoralized

⁴⁵ Barrett, p. 189.

⁴⁶ Barrett, pp. 191-2.

⁴⁷ Barrett, Ch. 14.

⁴⁸ Barrett, Ch. 17.

⁴⁹ Liddell Hart, p. 443.

the South as nothing else could. Although the excesses of his foragers were regrettable, Sherman always believed that their overall effect was to shorten the war. In his application of war to the civil population, Sherman brought a new dimension into warfare.

This section of the war in the South would be incomplete without mention of the behaviour of some of the Confederate forces towards their own Southern population during Sherman's campaign. During the retreat towards Atlanta a Southern newspaper wrote, 'Our own army,



(George N. Barnard, 1865. Library of Congress)
Ruins in Columbia, South Carolina.

while falling back from Dalton, was even more dreaded by the inhabitants than was the army of Sherman'.⁵⁰ The Confederate cavalry commanded by Wheeler, was responsible for many atrocities including the mutilation of bodies. On the whole, the citizens of the South were safer as far as personal violence was concerned with the Union army than they were with their own forces.⁵¹ At Aiken, South Carolina, Henry

⁵⁰ Liddell Hart, p. 348.

⁵¹ Liddell Hart, p. 348.

William Ravenel found his plantation had been ransacked by Confederate cavalry who took all the 'corn . . . fodder, some salt, rifled the house, broke open all the locks, and took away what they wanted, carpets, blankets, clothes etc., etc.'⁵² In Wheeler's defence it should be noted that he always claimed that these outrages were committed by marauders falsely claiming to be from his corps, and by means of advertisements in Southern newspapers, he offered to pay for any damage done by his men.⁵³

Confederate Forces in the North

When the Army of North Virginia under Robert E. Lee invaded Maryland in 1862, they were under strict orders to behave properly towards the civilian population. This was partly because of the natural temper of Lee, but no doubt also because he was anxious to win recruits and friends to the Southern cause.

General Lee prepared an address to the people of Maryland in which he said, 'No restraint upon your free will is intended. No intimidation will be allowed. This army will respect your choice whatever it may be; and while the Southern people will rejoice to welcome you to your natural position among them, they will only welcome you when you come of your own free will'.⁵⁴ There seems to have been very little hostility to the Confederate forces although Dr Zacharias of the Reformed Church had the temerity to pray for President Lincoln in the presence of Stonewall Jackson. As Jackson, following his usual custom, was asleep during the sermon, no harm was done and Douglas says that he would have joined in heartily had he been awake.

In any event, the behaviour of the troops was exemplary and there is no record of any citizen being ill-treated or property taken without payment. Lee was even careful to play down pro-Southern enthusiasm. With the army came a civil commissioner, E. Loring Lowe, with authority from President Davis and General Lee to handle any political negotiations. The behaviour of the Southern troops was favourably commented on at the time, and a Union officer compared them thus with his own men: 'No one can point to a single act of vandalism perpetrated by the rebel soldiers during their occupation of

⁵² Barrett, pp. 57-58.

⁵³ Barrett, p. 58.

⁵⁴ Henry Kyd Douglas, *I Rode with Stonewall*, p. 151.

Frederick, while even now a countless host of stragglers are crawling after our army devouring, destroying and wasting all that falls in their devious line of march'.⁵⁵

The following year, in June 1862, Lee again invaded the North, this time Pennsylvania. Once again, the Confederate forces were under strict orders to respect private property. In the main, the orders were obeyed, but by now the bitterness of war had started to set in. Many of the Southerners had learned that their own homes and properties had been ravaged by Union forces, and were disposed to get their own back. There was considerable foraging from the rich Pennsylvania farms to provide meat, vegetables and flour. J. E. B. Stuart's cavalry took horses as they pleased. Some extracts from a Confederate diary help to fill out the picture: 'We are getting up all the horses, etc., and feeding our army with their beef and flour etc., but there are strict orders about the interruption of any private property by individual soldiers But though I had such severe wrongs and grievances to redress and such great cause for revenge, yet when I got among these people I could not find it in my heart to molest them No houses were searched and robbed, like our houses were done by the Yankees. Pigs, chickens, geese etc., are finding their way into our camp; it can't be prevented, and I can't think it ought to be. We must show them something of war'.⁵⁶

When General Early made his dash for Washington in July 1864, there were some examples of less restrained behaviour on the part of the Southern troops. In Hagerstown, Maryland the troops exacted a ransom of \$20,000 and 1,500 suits of clothes. In Frederick, a ransom of \$200,000 was demanded and paid from the banks through the Mayor. Two trains were captured between Baltimore and Havre de Grace and the passengers were robbed. During his retreat back towards the Valley, Early sent his cavalry under McCausland in a raid against the city of Chambersburg in retaliation for the depredations committed by Major General Hunter. Nearly two thirds of Chambersburg was destroyed including over 250 houses in the heart of the town and all the public buildings.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Nevins, p. 217.

⁵⁶ Commager, p. 595.

⁵⁷ John Bach McMaster, *Our House Divided*, pp. 432-3.

Treatment of the Negroes

Although the issue of slavery was central to the whole civil war, it is nonetheless a sad fact that the Northern soldiers on the whole were anti-Negro.

This was especially so of the soldiers from poorer backgrounds and those from the border states. Both of these classes were probably prejudiced before the war started. Some of this feeling was associated with the belief that Negroes were receiving official preferment. The sight of a Negro on horseback, for instance, seemed to infuriate white infantrymen, and other soldiers complained that the Negro servants of white officers lived better than they did.⁵⁸ Criticisms of the Negro civilians seem to have been concerned with their supposed laziness, lack of responsibility, insolence, lying and thieving. More significant was the fear that freedmen would migrate to the North on terms of social equality, including having similar job opportunities. Dr Bell Wiley considers that the most important contributing factor to the hostility of the Northern soldiers to the Negroes was the association of Negroes with the war itself. As the war dragged on and suffering and hardship seemed endless, the Northern soldiers tended to vent their war weariness on the Negroes who flocked hopefully to their lines.⁵⁹

Examples of the ill-treatment of Negroes may be useful to show some of the things that actually happened. In Virginia, soldiers from a Connecticut unit took two 'niger wenches, turned them upon their heads and put tobacco, chips, sticks, lighted cigars and sand into their behinds'.⁶⁰ At Paducah in 1862 Negroes escaping from their Southern masters were stoned by troops from the Midwest when they tried to enter the Union lines. A German soldier during the invasion of the South Carolina coast in 1862 wrote, 'while on picket guard I witnessed misdeeds that made me ashamed of America . . . for example, about five miles from the fort, about 8-10 soldiers from the New York 47th Regiment chased some negro women but they escaped, so they took a negro girl about 7-9 years old and raped her'. In Louisiana soldiers tricked Negroes into giving them several hundred dollars in gold by telling them that 'Massa Lincoln' wanted to borrow the money, and giving as guarantees soap-wrappers certificates.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Bell Wiley, *The Common Soldier in the Civil War*, pp. 109-110.

⁵⁹ Bell Wiley, p. 112.

⁶⁰ Bell Wiley, p. 114.

⁶¹ These and other examples are given by Bell Wiley, pp. 114-5.

Why Was It So?

War is always cruel, and families will always suffer in them. However, the American Civil War seems to have been more cruel than most, and many more civilians became innocent victims than one would expect in a war fought between civilized peoples professing noble ideals. It is worthwhile to ask why there should have been so much cruelty.

In the first place, America had not been accustomed to major warfare on its soil, since the time of the Revolutionary War. The habits and usages of war which were familiar to Europeans were not as well known to Americans.

Sherman once defended the action of his foragers by saying that America had no equivalent of the European burgomaster who could be given a list of required supplies by an invading commander, and who had a system for procuring the goods from the local farmers and businessmen. Neither army in the early stages of the war was at all prepared for a prolonged conflict, so that the soldiers suffered from many wants. If they had waited for the Commissariat to catch up with them, they would have starved or frozen to death. So they helped themselves. On a higher level, the Northern generals eventually saw that the war was to be a fight to the finish. It became obvious to some of them that victory could be won by destroying the South's morale and economic capacity to make war. Thus the civilian population of the South became a target, and the farmers' crops became a military objective.⁶²

The quality of leadership in the armies is highly relevant. The Union armies were deficient in professional officers, especially at the junior level. In many cases, junior officers were simply elected from among the men on the basis of their civilian position or personality. Ignorant of war, they carried out many senseless acts which professional soldiers would not have countenanced. The Confederate armies on the other hand contained a higher proportion of professional officers, and those who were not professional often came from the Southern aristocracy with its tradition of chivalry. They were also country men with a respect for private property not so common in men from the more urban North.⁶³

⁶² This last point is well made by Bruce Catton in his *America Goes to War*, pp. 20-23. He adds, 'Modern war began to take shape here in America in the 1860s: and the agonizing uncertainty under which all of us have to live today is, I suppose, a part of our atonement.'

⁶³ Bell Wiley has a chapter each on the composition and attitudes of the Union and Confederate armies.

The rank and file in the Northern armies were generally drawn from the poorer classes and contained a high proportion of immigrants. Despite their own educational shortcomings, these men seem to have had a great contempt for the people of the South whom they looked on as backward. Their poor treatment of the Negroes, as has been mentioned previously, was partly due to pre-war prejudice, especially in the case of those soldiers from the border states and the Midwest, and partly to their fear that the Negroes once freed would flock to the North and compete for jobs. Towards the end of the war, the Union army also contained Negro units, but their behaviour in contrast with that of many white regiments, was uniformly good, probably as a result of outstanding leadership.⁶⁴ The rank and file of the Confederate armies were generally drawn from the poor whites who might have been expected to behave badly. However, on the whole, their behaviour towards civilians, with some exceptions which have been mentioned earlier, was fairly good. The reasons for this can be seen first, in the quality of their leadership, and secondly in the fact that the war was fought for the most part in the South among their own people. The worst behaviour on both sides was in the West, and this can be explained largely by the frontier conditions existing there. Where lawlessness was rife, and guerilla warfare rampant, it was natural that a rough frontier justice would prevail, and that many private scores would be settled.

Towards the end of the war a bitterness seems to have set in, both in the North and South. This can be attributed partly to the propaganda of both sides which highlighted the cruelty of the other, but more so to a general war-weariness among a people who had been so completely unprepared for war. Thus it was that Southern forces in their last invasion of the North under Early, behaved badly towards civilians in contrast with their excellent behaviour under Lee in the first two invasions. Similarly, the ill-treatment of civilians by Sherman's men in the Carolinas can be seen as resentment of the war by men who had been fighting long beyond their expectations. South Carolina as the first state to secede was especially the victim of Northern hatred. Sherman himself wrote that his army was 'burning with an insatiable desire to wreak vengeance' on South Carolina . . . 'I almost tremble at her fate'.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ See Higginson, *Army Life in a Black Regiment*. Collier, New York. 1962 edition.

⁶⁵ Barrett, pp. 38-40.

The effect of the harshness of the armies towards the civilian population was to hamper reconstruction after the war. Guerilla warfare in the South-West did not completely die out and the sinister activities of secret societies such as the Ku Klux Klan continued the struggle in a different way. The economy of Virginia took years to recover, and nothing could bring back the burned mansions or looted libraries of the great estates. Sherman may have hastened the end of the war by his devastation of the South, but in no way did he alter the inevitable outcome. By the time he commenced his march, the South was doomed anyway, while the North was growing stronger daily. Sherman's total war was undoubtedly a master stroke from the strategic point of view; his plans for a generous peace settlement were undeniably statesmanlike; but the people of Mississippi, Georgia and the Carolinas would never forget his destruction of their homes and burning of their cities. A legacy of bitterness was left which a century has failed completely to erase. □

For part of the last year of war the Australian Army in the field was larger in proportion to population than that of any of the Allies, except perhaps Russia. The Government's motives in maintaining the national effort at so high a level appear to have been a wish that Australia should pull her full weight, and an ambition to gain international esteem and a position of influence in the peace. It is an illusion to which small nations are prone that the policies of foreign allies, as distinct from those with whom patriotic sentiments are shared, are influenced by such emotions as gratitude for past support.

—Gavin Long, *The Final Campaigns* (1963)

Regimental Tradition Morale and Organization

Major General J. L. Moulton, CB, DSO, OBE

ARRIVING in France as a young soldier in March 1918, he was, a friend once told me, marched with his draft to the quartermaster's store, ordered to hand in his cap badge, and issued with that of another regiment, with which he served through the rest of the war, fighting in the retreat and the advance to victory. In much less dramatic circumstances in 1941, I saw a machine-gun company from a home counties regiment transformed into highlanders on the re-organization of the support battalions. It took to the kilt rather kindly.

That this sort of thing happened on occasion in both world wars is common knowledge. Yet the main argument of many who oppose infantry re-organization stems from the success of the old system in those wars. It is not, moreover, the system of 1914-18 or of 1939-45, when a regiment might comprise many battalions and thus allow some flexibility in drafting, that they seek to perpetuate, but that of today when, as before the Cardwell reforms, a regiment has come to equal a single battalion. One does not have to be an enemy of the regimental system or a believer in a corps of infantry to doubt the objectivity of this sort of reasoning, and to wonder whether such advocacy does not do more harm than good to the cause it is intended to support. Certainly in its over-simplification it ignores a number of fundamental questions.

To begin with, what are we talking about, devotion to regimental history, or the confidence and comradeship of men who have lived, trained and later fought together? If the former, then in what proportion of British and Commonwealth units in the two world wars was regimental history a major factor in morale, and not just the panache that a good unit will discover for itself, if not in historic associations then elsewhere? Have units with a strong sense of regimental history

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consistently displayed higher morale than others, including, for example, the Canadians and Australians of World War I? After allowing for the fact that units with strong historic tradition were probably regulars and better trained than others, were they notably more effective in battle? And has there been over the years no debit side in rigidity of ideas, complacency and opposition to change?

Final answers to such questions will never be found. Even to form firm conclusions would require research well beyond the level of conventional official and regimental histories. One can only marvel at the confidence of those who pronounce on the subject with so much certainty on the basis of their own, inevitably limited, experience; marvel and doubt its objectivity. Without imitating that self-confidence, perhaps we may be able to achieve something useful in examining a little further those questions and widely known facts that touch on them.

World War I the Crucial Event

The need for courage and hardihood among infantry soldiers is surely unquestioned. Talk of the special devotion required from the infantry may or may not be true,¹ but is beside the point, for the question is not 'Is courage needed?' but 'Where does courage come from?' If anyone doubts that infantry needs to be brave and enduring, it is the traditionalists who, by their actions if not by their words, have too often shown that they regard infantry, as suits their convenience, as parade ground toys, a source of casual labour or cannon-fodder, too readily dissipating the store of endurance that is in all men limited, if not equal in content.

World War I was the crucial event. Before it, despite premonitory experiences in the American Civil War, the two Boer Wars and the Russo-Japanese War, the traditional function of infantry, to clinch battlefield superiority by attack, was accepted as practicable and credible. Rather more doubtfully, so was the traditional function of the other regimental arm, horsed cavalry. By the time it was over, one had become subject to serious doubts and widespread scepticism, and the

¹ Comparisons of courage are highly subjective. How does one compare for example the courage of infantry with that of sappers clearing a minefield, aircrew, or men below water in confined spaces in ships liable to be sunk or flooded?

other was seen to be disappearing except by those obsessed by traditionalism and the glamour of the horse.

Although in 1914 the British infantry of the line had shown itself pre-eminent in defence, by 1918 the ordinary run of infantry divisions had come to be regarded as inferior to a small *élite* — the Guards, the Canadians and Anzacs, and some British divisions whose identity is today more difficult and invidious to establish. These tended to be used rather as were storm troops on the German side.

Dominions battalions of men startlingly taller, handsomer, firmer in nerve, better schooled, more boldly interested in life, quicker to take means to an end and to parry and counter any new blow of circumstance, men who had learnt already to look at our men with the half-curious, half-pitying look of a higher, happier caste at a lower.²

C. E. Montague makes the depressing comparison in the context of Amiens 1918. Concerned rather to expose social conditions in prewar Britain and the British Army, he does little justice here to the excessive demands that had been made on British manpower, of which elsewhere he shows himself fully conscious.

The Australian official historian, C. E. W. Bean, is more generous in describing the March retreat:

... Gough's troops were not the volunteer army that charged the German machine-guns in July 1916, on the Somme, or even the army that entered 'Third' Ypres. But enough has been extracted from German sources to show that its effectiveness in the later stages of the retreat was far beyond that with which it was credited at the time Many of its battalions, when next seen by the Australians, had been two-thirds filled with newly fledged officers and boy-soldiers straight from English training depots. Inevitably the divisions of March 1918 were not those of the First Somme, and those of April 1918 were not those of the Fifth Army's retreat.³

Exhaustion of national resources of manpower and spirit, treated by the higher command as if inexhaustible, was the main reason for this state of affairs; 23 per cent of the British male population was called up, in contrast to the 13½ per cent of the Canadian and Australian. To later generations the wonder is not that the morale of the mass suffered, but that an *élite* was able to preserve its morale. What enabled it to do so? If we could discover that, then surely we should have got nearer to finding an answer to our questions.

² C. E. Montague, *Disenchantment*, (Chatto & Windus 1922) p. 159 in the Phoenix edition of 1928. On p. 131 he says that, in the opinion of Canadians and Australians, of the home divisions, '... only the Guards Division, two kilted and three English ones could be said to know how to fight.'

³ C. E. W. Bean, *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-18*, Vol V. *The AIF in France 1918* (Angus and Robertson, Sydney 1937) p. 297.

The Guards were certainly traditional; but, as Lord Moran has pointed out, their privileged position made them a special case.⁴ The Canadians and Anzacs had not at the time anything comparable to the regimental tradition of the British. Among the British, there were, as regimental historians are ready enough to point out, many successful units with strong regimental ties. But there must have been many, too, in Kitchener's Army that had charged the machine-guns on the Somme, without much that could be properly called traditional influence.

The decisive factors are likely to have been training, leadership and sheer luck in not being run into the ground by repeated heavy losses and frustration under impossible conditions. Short-term battlefield tradition, the comradeship and shared experience of a good team, was clearly very important. That might derive or gain strength from the historic tradition of a parent regiment or corps, but should not be confused with it.

Looking for other factors among successful divisions and units, one will often find the possession of some distinguishing characteristic — Canadians, Australians, Highlanders and so on — that enhanced collective and individual pride; if it caught the headlines as well, so much the better. That was often linked with the important factor of return of men after wounds or detachment to their old unit, keeping the team together and showing the individual that he mattered enough to return to those whom he knew and trusted. Linked, too, was often the existence of some sort of political or social consideration that prevented a division being exhausted and rundown beyond a point of no return.

Historical regimental tradition, combined with professional skill and the habit of doing things properly, must have been a powerful factor in getting a regular unit off to a good start in a new war, and a sprinkling of officers and NCOs would, no doubt, carry such influences to the Territorial and Service battalions of their regiments, but there were units without those particular advantages which nevertheless managed to achieve the all-important short-term battlefield tradition of a good team.⁵

When it was all over and the wartime army had disappeared, what remained was chiefly a sour and bitter memory of over-burdened infantry, wasted cavalry and privileged staff officers. Except by a

⁴ Lord Moran, *The Anatomy of Courage* (Constable 1945) pp. 169-173 in the 1966 edition. He mentions here the return of wounded factor.

minority, the incredible feat of human spirit triumphing over appalling conditions was forgotten, or regarded as having been scandalously misapplied by inept command. To the nation at large the infantry seemed to be the special victims of a brutal military machine, while in the Army itself the infantry of the line acquired a subtle and slightly complacent inferiority complex, accepted and accepting itself as inferior to the *élite* of World War I.

The Peace and World War II

Technological developments had, in World War I, transformed the military scene. In the peace that followed social and economic developments took up the running, and the seeds of the social revolution that followed World War II were sown. The problem that faced all the fighting Services in the twenties and thirties can, in hindsight, be seen easily enough as adaptation to both the technological revolution that had overtaken warfare, and to the social revolution that was beginning to appear in the nation which they served and upon which their existence depended. No Service or Arm was entirely successful in that dual adaptation, but the failure of the two Arms with strong regimental tradition was on the whole greater than that of others.

The sorry record of the cavalry's opposition to the armour that was soon to enable its tradition to survive is too well-known to need repetition. The failure of the infantry was less obvious, and, because rooted in its traumatic experiences in World War I, more excusable.

A great deal of the best in British regimental tradition comes from the Peninsular War. Inspired by Sir John Moore and other enlightened soldiers its infantry was well in advance of that of other armies.

Charles Grey, Ralph Abercromby, Charles Stuart, John Moore, and Thomas Maitland, stern disciplinarians one and all, possessed that peculiar thoughtfulness for the soldier's comfort which loses no opportunity of staving off from him avoidable hardship and privation.

⁵ In his preface to Douglas Jerrold's *The Royal Naval Division* (Hutchinson 1923) Sir Winston Churchill describes in some detail leadership and the 'being different' factor, and claims that the 63rd (RN) Division 'raised themselves into that glorious company of the seven or eight most famous Divisions of the British Army in the Great War.' (p. xiii). In France the division contained Army, but not regular, battalions as well as Naval and Royal Marine Light Infantry ones. The naval battalions, which gave the division its distinctive character and achieved a fine battle record, were a mixture of RNVR, RFR and Kitchener's Army and could hardly have had a 'regimental' tradition. Douglas Jerrold's *The Hawke Battalion* (Benn 1925) is full of interest. A. P. Herbert served in this battalion, which is presumably the background of his World War I classic, *The Secret Battle*.

Beyond all question he (Moore) was the very best trainer of troops that England has ever possessed. His system, whether applied to a single regiment, or to the Light Brigade which he made so perfect at Shorncliffe in 1804, rested on one principle, that every officer should know his duty and do it, and should teach his men their duty likewise.⁶

Certainly in its understanding of fire power, and almost certainly in the relationship between officers and men, the British infantry of 1914 was also much in advance of its contemporaries. By 1940 the lead had passed to the Germans.

This was not the fault of the human material. Faced by heavy odds in battles that he could not win and later by an older generation more to blame than he for defeat in Norway and France, the British soldier behaved creditably and stoically. In the words of a German report:

The English soldier was in excellent physical condition. He bore his wounds with stoical calm. The losses of his own troops he discussed with complete equanimity. He did not complain of hardships. In battle he was tough and dogged. His conviction that England would conquer in the end was unshakeable. . . . Certainly the Territorial divisions are inferior to the regular troops in training, but where morale is concerned they are their equal. In defence the Englishman took any punishment that came his way.⁷

No one can ask more than that: but, if it was only the Germans who had the chance to win, it was also they who, in infantry as well as in armoured tactics, had developed a new dynamism that enabled them to do so.

Fresh ideas on infantry warfare had appeared in Britain between the wars, but the Army had been slow to adopt them.⁸ Had it been more receptive, had it been ready to look more critically at traditional methods, something might have been done despite the grinding poverty in men and money. The initiative and enterprise of the Dominion troops in World War I were the 20th Century equivalent of the light infantry methods of Sir John Moore, which had, indeed, been derived from the colonials of an earlier age, the North American backwoodsmen. In their relaxed discipline might be detected the military potential-

⁶ Sir John Fortescue, *History of the British Army* (Macmillan) Vol. V Part II, p. 928 and Vol. VI, p. 410.

⁷ Major L. F. Ellis, *The War in France and Flanders 1939-1940* (HMSO 1953), p. 326.

⁸ That the Germans borrowed ideas on infantry warfare from British writers is less well known than that they did those on armoured warfare. Sir Basil Liddell Hart's *The Future of Infantry* (Faber 1933) was translated into German and widely circulated in the German Army. *Memoirs* Vol. I (Cassell 1965), p. 222.

ties for good and ill of the coming age. To have aped them would have been folly, but there was much that might have been learnt from them and adapted by the British in a new infantry renaissance. The Army certainly looked on the World War I record of the Canadians and Anzacs with respect approaching awe, but it was respect unaccompanied by desire to emulate. Such things, it was weakly assumed, were not possible for the British soldier. For him a more rigid system was essential, and socially more comfortable for his officers. Let the Line, if it could, imitate the Guards, certainly not the difficult, unruly Australians.

The tactical inheritance from Moore had, however, been lost long before 1914. In the Rifles and Light Infantry the tradition survived, having perhaps some influence in marksmanship and quickness of reaction, but little in battlefield practice.⁹ The sociological inheritance remained, but did so as a largely static tradition of paternalism, admirable in itself, but, in its overtones of squire and peasant and of undemanding standards, out of date in the modern world. Under Moore and his contemporaries, influences from the backwoods had started to replace those from Potsdam and Frederick the Great. After him the adjutants and drill sergeants had ousted the backwoodsmen. More than a century later it was the heirs of Frederick who revitalized infantry warfare.

When Britain re-armed in the thirties there was nothing comparable to the German system of hard training and battlefield flexibility which made the Germans of 1940 such formidable opponents, despite the rapid expansion of the *Wehrmacht*. There was no School of Infantry. Conscription, introduced in April 1939, found the Army short of instructors and short of ideas. After mobilization in September, many units of the expanded Territorial Army occupied themselves in kit inspections and guarding vulnerable points when they might have been hardening themselves for action. Stung to action by defeat in Norway and France, the British at last began to stir themselves. At the School of Infantry, newly established at Barnard Castle, at the command battle schools, in the Airborne, and in the private armies such as the Commandos and Chindits, a belated renaissance appeared.

Thus it was that in World War II the ancient British infantry tradition renewed itself. By its end the infantryman was no longer

⁹ The use of units of Rifle regiments in the first armoured divisions was a modern reversion to the historic role of Dragoons rather than to that of Rifles.

regarded as the fall-guy of the Army, too dull to have a trade, but as a skilled exponent of a difficult and dangerous art. In subsequent decades over-dilution with under-trained National Service men and the fact that there is no civilian equivalent to the infantryman's trade combined to dim the image. More recently force reductions and bad recruiting have dimmed it further. To blame that on interference with the regimental system is unrealistic.

Putting Tradition to Work

The trap of traditionalism is that traditionalists are by definition concerned with the past, and, in looking back to heroic times, are apt to miss what was most heroic in them, the forward looking of the great men. So Nelson becomes to a wartime Navy a name for blind adherence to obsolete custom, and the regimental system made effective and humane by Moore becomes an obstacle to battlefield effectiveness and social change. Too many long-established armies have failed, and too many revolutionary ones succeeded, for it to be possible to ignore that, while tradition can be an inspiration, it can also be a dead hand. The proper place for dead tradition is a glass case in the museum.

If tradition is to live, it must be put to work. Historic tradition, although not essential for successful military practice, is potentially a great source of strength for it, which should be conserved and wisely applied. The task of organization is, therefore, to use tradition wisely, and the task of tradition to find a useful outlet and purpose in the contemporary world.

Both the Cardwell and Haldane reforms achieved this. Bitterly opposed by the traditionalists of its day though the former was, we can now see that, by finding a place for tradition in a more effective army, it enabled the old regimental connection to survive. The times that threatened regimental tradition were not those of action and reform but those of stasis — after 1815 and after 1918. When the Army lost its sense of purpose, tradition became fossilized.

The large regiment and divisional systems are clearly workable forms of infantry organization, in which the equivalent of strong regimental connections have ample opportunity to develop. To argue that this is not so from experiences of the multi-battalion regiments of the two world wars is confused. The genuine difficulty is in the change from the old to the new, in transferring traditions and loyalties from

the old regiments to the new divisions. Not to understand and sympathize with this would be equally blind.

Group association is a very ancient human trait, and one of its components is antagonism to other groups. Both constantly appear in the fighting services without encouragement, sometimes in face of official discouragement. In the Navy they have often appeared between branches and activities, among, for example, submariners, aviators and small ship men. In the Air Force they were evident among fighter pilots and bomber barons. In the Army they have been fostered more intensively than elsewhere by the comparative narrowness of the regimental system, and by the sometimes exaggerated exclusive elements in it. Inevitably those brought up in these groups, which have in the case of the regiment been further compressed by external pressure over the last fifty years, are sensitive to forced amalgamation with other groups.

However, regimental loyalty, except perhaps at its most distorted, has never been completely exclusive; there have always been other loyalties and inspirations, ideals of hardihood and self-reliance, of skill and courage of arm and nation. Who in the Army would wish to have no pride or inspiration from Trafalgar or the Battle of Britain? Who in the Air Force, none from Waterloo? Must Englishmen deny the panache of the Highlander, or Scotsmen have no part in Agincourt? There are ways of exploiting tradition, putting it to work, and so preserving it alive, if we are willing to discover them.

Purpose the Key

Now at last we face the real difficulty of the Services today, lack of evident purpose. Failure in the Middle East, overshadowing the general success in orderly derogation of imperial power over the last twenty years, and withdrawal from the Indian Ocean under financial pressure, have had greater effect on morale than infantry reorganization, because they have obscured the sense of purpose. If there were clear prospect of action, the Army would surely take reorganization in its stride. Wartime reorganization can be shrugged off as a temporary expedient, but a deeper reason why it meets little resistance is that there is something more important to do. When history is being made, tradition looks after itself. The real problem of the Services today is not to preserve buttons and badges, but to discover a new sense of purpose.

In that, organization has an important part to play. Haldane's reforms achieved greater success than Cardwell's because he persistently

asked the question, What is the Army for? and was able to provide an answer to it. The commitment to reinforce the French left, sound or not, was a purpose for which the army in Britain could be organized and trained. Its divisions and brigades, expressing this purpose, were linked by the regiments to tradition and expanded to include the Territorials. Organization was purposeful and could be seen to be so.

Today the Rhine Army has a clearcut purpose and is organized for it, although under nuclear deterrence and flexible response that purpose is not self-evident to the superficial or unsophisticated, who may need to be reminded of it.¹⁰ The purpose of the army in Britain is more diffuse and not genuinely reflected in its organization. Piecemeal reinforcement of Rhine Army is hardly convincing, and any other major operational task would involve all three Services, for which little permanent organizational provision is made. Sending units to play an indefinite role in an international army may seem like loyalty to NATO, and a loosely linked system of inter-Service co-operation in the formation of *ad hoc* forces may look economical and flexible on paper, but neither provides a corporate purpose capable of engaging full commitment. So men look elsewhere, engage themselves in subsidiary activities, or lose interest.

The function of the Army in Britain is inevitably that of strategic reserve, as to a considerable degree are those of the other two Services there. No one can be certain what task they will next be called upon to do. All that can be done is to make an intelligent forecast and organize for that. Provided that a reasonable degree of flexibility is maintained, forces organized thus are likely to do better in an unforeseen emergency than those which, lacking any real sense of purpose, have become preoccupied with customs and habits.

It is a well established principle that a reserve should not be dribbled into action, but should intervene either as a whole or with enough strength and balance to have sensible impact. Even in the simplest of its tasks, reinforcing Rhine Army, Army Strategic Command and the related air commands would have much greater effect, politically

¹⁰ When *Any Questions* visited Rhine Army a few months ago no one in the team could supply an answer to the question, what good was BAOR doing by being in Germany? The possibility that it might be preventing something that could escalate into nuclear war seemed not to have occurred to anyone, although the intelligentsia has not shown itself indifferent to that prospect in the past.

as well as militarily, if they could intervene as a strategic entity, even though that may not fit in with present NATO ideas. Any other operation by UK based reserves, on the NATO flanks or outside Europe, would require the formation of a joint-service task force. Little of this is reflected in present organizations, which, in their separate-Service characteristic, look back to 1914 and 1939 rather than to the present and future. The integrated command system, which in the last decade has proved itself in overseas commands, looks like disappearing when withdrawal into Europe is complete.

The alternative is to organize the UK operational reserves as a single joint three-Service entity, capable of operating as a balanced whole, or of detaching smaller task forces as required. The United States Fleet Marine Forces, now renamed Marine Expeditionary Forces, have been doing just this for the last twenty years, and have given ample proof that the idea is workable and flexible. MEF Pacific and MEF Atlantic, each of divisional/airwing strength, can either operate as a whole or detach regimental or battalion groups, one of the latter having been maintained for many years with the Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean. The scale on which the Americans do things seems to us at times lavish, but they also know a great deal about cost-effectiveness, and this system is at least as cost-effective as any other, probably more so than many. Nor, because the Americans make it an entirely Navy-Marine affair, including the aviation, need we exclude Army and Air Force, or limit ourselves to seaborne movement at the expense of airborne.

Within this or some other purposeful system, the British infantry tradition could come to life again. Because the incentive would be present the level of individual and collective performance could be set high throughout the Services. The standards now achieved by the few in shooting, orienteering and adventure training could become the norm. With achievements like this to aim for, the great tradition of the British infantryman would take new life. No longer concerned to hoard everything from the past, it could develop and build on to what was most worthwhile in it. Why don't we do it? Surely Sir John Moore, were he alive today, would.

REVIEWS



THE MAKING OF ISRAEL'S ARMY, by Yigal Allon (Valentine, Mitchell, 1970, 277 pages). U.K. Price 50s.

Reviewed by Dr T. B. Millar, Australian National University.

THE Six-Day War between Israel and its Arab neighbours in June 1967 was one of the most remarkable feats of arms of modern times. Almost certainly the circumstances which made such a rapid and devastating victory possible will not be repeated, but it has taken the physical presence of sizable numbers of Russians, with their aircraft and missiles, to reassure the United Arab Republic on that point. The Israelis are a formidable nation, state, and armed force; intelligent, skilled and wholly determined.

They did not become so overnight, but have passed through a series of crucibles, individual and collective, social and economic, political and military. In this book, the heat of the fire and the smell of victory divert attention from the ashes formed in the processes.

Yigal Allon, a native-born Israeli and currently Deputy Prime Minister of his country, began his military career — or the military aspects of his career — in the Jewish underground defence organization, *Haganah*, during the Palestine riots of 1936-39. Later he helped found the *Palmach*, the permanently-mobilized strike force and laboratory of the *Haganah*, which by 1945 consisted of four well-trained battalions. Allon commanded the *Palmach* from 1945 to 1948 then took over command of the southern front during the war for independence. He has therefore had considerable influence on the development and use of the Israeli armed forces, which have not only secured the state but have helped create the nation.

This book consists of two parts. The first is an expansion of a chapter that General Allon contributed to the book presented to Liddell Hart on his seventieth birthday — *The Theory and Practice of*

War. This gives a brief history of the Jewish armed forces from the self-defence cells formed in the 1880s up to the Six-Day War. The last two-thirds of the book comprise a series of documents: the oaths of the *Haganah* and the *Palmach*, participants' reports of sabotage actions against the British or battles against the Arabs, the *Palmach* field-training programme (in which night-training often took up almost as much time as training by day), camp-fire exhortations, letters to emissaries, and Allon's own essay on the requirements for a good commander.

The lessons of the book apply to no one and to everyone — to no one, because no other people (not even the Israelis themselves, again: success has changed them) will parallel these circumstances; to everyone, because the struggle has a timeless quality, and the principles of success in struggle are themselves timeless and all-pervasive.

On three occasions the Israelis have demonstrated that they are much more able to win the war than the subsequent peace; that the fire by night turns into smoke and cloud by day. And in the long history of the Jewish people, these three dramatic victories will be minor incidents, recorded and magnified by the history books for purposes of national and ethnic mythology, but less important than the much harder campaigns of learning to live with ancient enemies so splendidly defeated, so brutally displaced, so bitterly resentful. □

ORDER

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THE RUSSO-GERMAN WAR 1941-45, by Albert Seaton. (Arthur Barker Ltd, 1971, 100S U.K.).

Reviewed by Professor L. C. F. Turner, Royal Military College, Duntroon.

THIS large volume of nearly 600 pages is one of the most important books yet to appear on the Second World War. There has been much writing about the Russian campaign, derived principally from the memoirs of German generals or what they may have said to Liddell Hart in prison camps. It is a relief therefore to read a thoroughly documented work, based on a most detailed study of German war diaries and operational reports, coupled with an exhaustive analysis of the published literature in German and Russian. In learning and research this book is decidedly superior to Alan Clark's much over-rated

Barbarossa, which was published in 1965. The style is less vivid, but the approach is far more scholarly.

Colonel Seaton is an authority on the Red Army and *Wehrmacht* and is qualified both in German and Russian. He is under no illusions about the value of Soviet sources, including the six volumes of the official Russian publication *History of the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union*, which appeared in the early 1960s. Seaton says:

'Although much of the content of these Soviet histories is probably true, much of it can be proved to be false'.

Of the numerous memoirs of Soviet marshals and generals, he says:

'The books by Rokossovsky, Grechko and Sokolovsky are well produced and detailed military studies, which could, however, have been written equally well by a Soviet military historian. The accounts by Zhukov, Vasilevsky, Konev, Eremenko and Lelyushenko on the other hand are simpler, and include much interesting personal detail. The published books, whether written by Soviet generals or by Soviet historians, do not, however, portray the whole truth or even necessarily what the writers believe to be the truth, since all the works bear evidence of official editing and censorship to ensure that they do not contradict previous accounts or deviate from the current Soviet Government and Party views'.

It is a tribute to the author's skill that by checking the Russian accounts against German documents, he has been able to produce a coherent and convincing analysis of Soviet strategy. We have here a study of the Russian campaign which is likely to hold the field for many years as the principal authority in the English language. No serious student of war can afford to neglect it.

Modern military histories are notorious for the poor quality of their maps and unfortunately this book is no exception. There are numerous sketches but no general map of the theatre of war. There are no pull-out maps, and many place names of strategic and tactical importance, although referred to in the text, cannot be found on the relevant sketch map. Incredible to relate, not a single map has been provided with a scale. A highly qualified cartographer, working in close co-ordination with the author, would have greatly enhanced the value and readability of the book.

The gigantic struggle was dominated by the personalities of Hitler and Stalin. They were both utterly ruthless and unscrupulous and

equally devoid of any sense of humanity or honour. Both committed grave strategic blunders and interfered frequently and disastrously with the conduct of military operations. Stalin was the more formidable opponent because he had a stronger sense of political reality. In particular the Russian dictator's masterly handling of American statesmen and diplomats in 1943-45 paved the way for Soviet domination of central and eastern Europe.

The author comments as follows on Hitler as a war leader:

'During 1942 Hitler was in direct command and in sole charge of all planning and operations on the Eastern Front and elsewhere. . . Intelligence, the life's blood of operations, meant nothing to the *Führer* since he only accepted what he wanted to believe and he made his strategic and tactical plans in a vacuum. Nor had he any understanding of the basis of logical appreciations and plans, relative strengths, time and space and logistics . . . *Führer* missives to army group commanders were orders and not directives; and were so detailed and so binding as deliberately to stifle all initiative. Hitler was no longer amenable to advice, certainly not to criticism, and his pathological suspicion of military leaders and the General Staff was already beyond reason. Important, even vital decisions were too frequently made in a background of haste, excitement, recrimination, rage, insults and interminable repetitive monologues, and leadership had become the fleeting reaction to momentary impressions and a total ignorance of the function of command.'

Clearly no army could have emerged victorious from a conflict with a greatly superior adversary under leadership of this kind. In 1941 the excellent tactics of the German generals and the superb fighting quality of their troops achieved a series of victories unprecedented in history, but they were all thrown away by faulty strategy. The author is inclined to doubt whether any line of strategy would have given decisive victory to Germany, in view of the enormous resources of the Soviet Union and the vast distances involved. This reviewer differs from him on this vital point. In August 1941 the Germans could certainly have captured Moscow and could probably have dislocated and paralysed the railway system of European Russia. But with the game in his hands, Hitler diverted his armour northwards towards Leningrad and southwards into the Ukraine. This was not a sudden improvisation; at a conference on 5 December 1940 Hitler rejected proposals by the General

Staff that the main thrust should aim at Moscow and declared that 'only ossified brains could think of such an antiquated idea'.

When Hitler finally thrust at Moscow in October 1941, the weather broke and mud and snow rather than the resistance of the Red Army saved the Soviet capital. The counter-offensive which Zhukov launched on 6 December regained much vital ground and inflicted crippling losses on the *élite* of the German Army. Moreover, the *Luftwaffe* suffered severely, when Hitler forced his airmen to fly numerous supply missions to beleaguered garrisons, regardless of weather conditions. Although the Germans recovered sufficiently to launch a great offensive in the summer of 1942, the *Wehrmacht* was never again the superb fighting machine which had gained such astonishing triumphs in 1940 and 1941.

There were other possibilities of German victory. If Japan could have been induced to attack the Soviet Union in 1941 or early in 1942 the result might well have been different, and it should be remembered that Siberian units drawn from the Far Eastern provinces played a notable role in the Russian winter offensive of 1941-42. The author mentions the little known fact that 47% of Allied supplies to Russia passed through the port of Vladivostock. They were carried in American freighters flying the Soviet flag and throughout the Pacific war the Japanese made no attempt to interrupt this traffic.

Another possibility was that Hitler might have induced the subject peoples of the Soviet Union to aid him in a crusade against the Communist régime. In 1941 the advancing Germans were frequently hailed as liberators in the Baltic states, White Russia, the Ukraine and the Crimea. But instead of seeking the support of the oppressed peoples, Hitler subjected them to the merciless rule of Rosenberg and the Gestapo. The author might well have said more about the gross stupidities and appalling cruelties perpetrated by the SS and the German administration in occupied Russia. Certainly members of the Red Army committed fearful barbarities in the invasion of eastern Germany in 1945 but no people has ever been so brutally provoked.

The book contains some very interesting details about operations which have been largely ignored by Western historians. There is a graphic account of the Soviet offensive in Rumania in August-September 1944, where a combination of Rumanian treachery and Hitler's stupidity in not ordering a timely withdrawal involved the German 6th Army in a disaster comparable with Stalingrad. The author has effectively demolished the legend, which some British historians have attempted to

propagate, that Hitler possessed strategic gifts and that he was frequently wiser than his General Staff. No army in history has ever been so shamefully misused by its Commander-in-Chief as the German Army in the Eastern Front.

When measured by the enormous sacrifices on both sides and the hideous sufferings of civilians, the Russo-German War represents the greatest tragedy of the Twentieth Century. The author has rendered a notable service to historical knowledge by his very detailed, impartial and thoroughly documented account of this momentous struggle. □

