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# ARMY JOURNAL

*A periodical review of military literature*

**No. 306, November 1974**

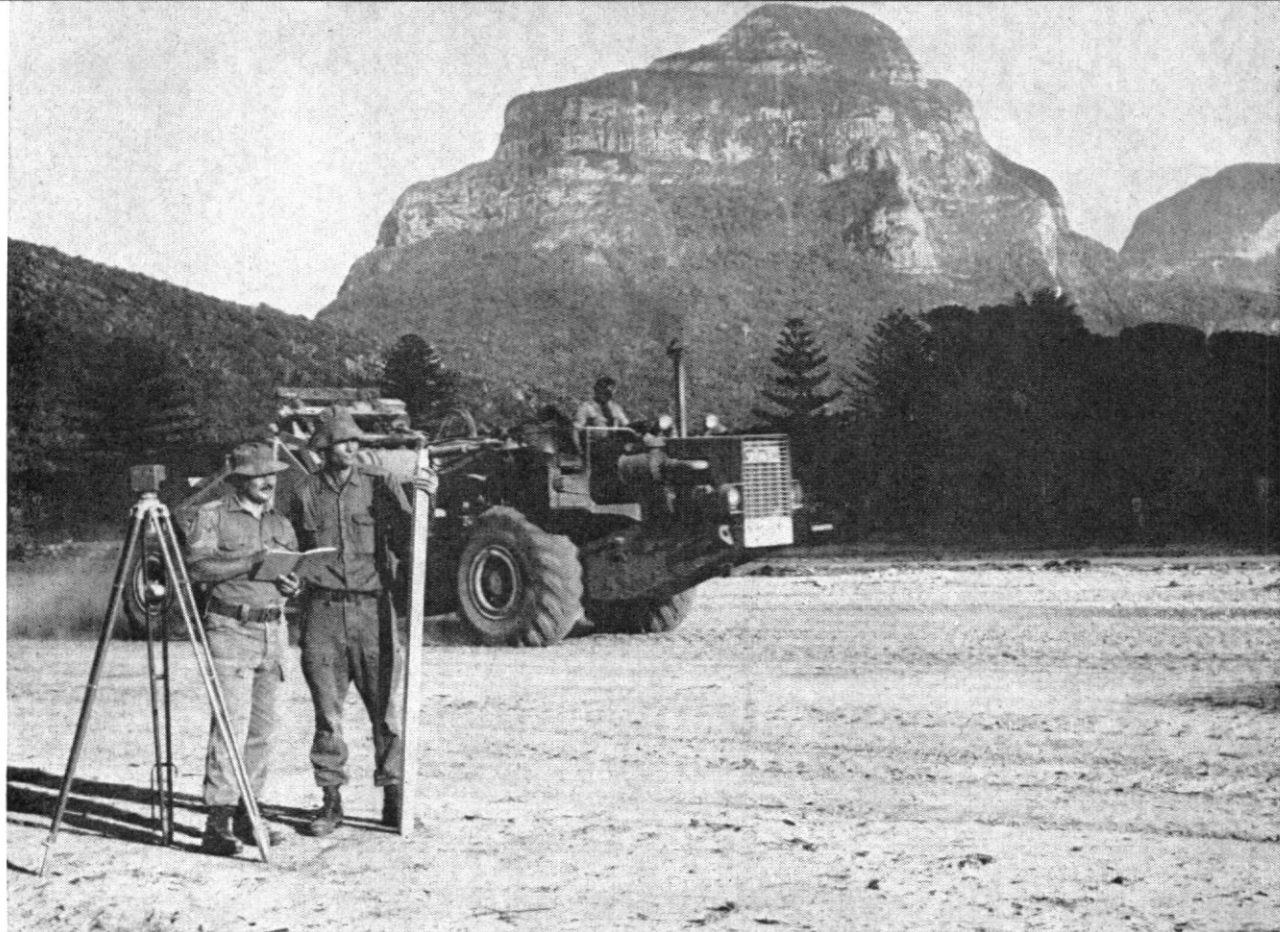
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Airfield construction by 1 Field Engineer Regiment on Lord Howe Island this year. The airfield has been built for land

# THE NEED FOR AUDACITY IN BATTLE



## *Boldness or Rashness - Security or Timidity?*

*Lieutenant Colonel H. L. Bell  
Royal Australian Infantry*

### INTRODUCTION

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

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## Aim

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

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

## FAILURE THROUGH LACK OF AUDACITY

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

### Over-preparation Loses Opportunities

If opportunity beckons, the commander must seize it. No matter how disorganized is his force, any pause is fatal because if he doesn't grasp the chance the enemy will. A typical example of this is the allied landing at Anzio in Italy, 22 January 1944.<sup>2</sup>

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

<sup>1</sup> Chester Wilmot, *Struggle for Europe*, p. 541.

<sup>2</sup> Wynford Vaughan-Thomas, *Anzio*, Ch. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Rudolf Bohmler, *Monte Cassino — A German View*, p. 187.

allied landing had been cancelled, and the only two German reserve divisions had been committed against the allied 5th Army on the Garigliano. Not surprisingly the VI Corps was unopposed, achieved

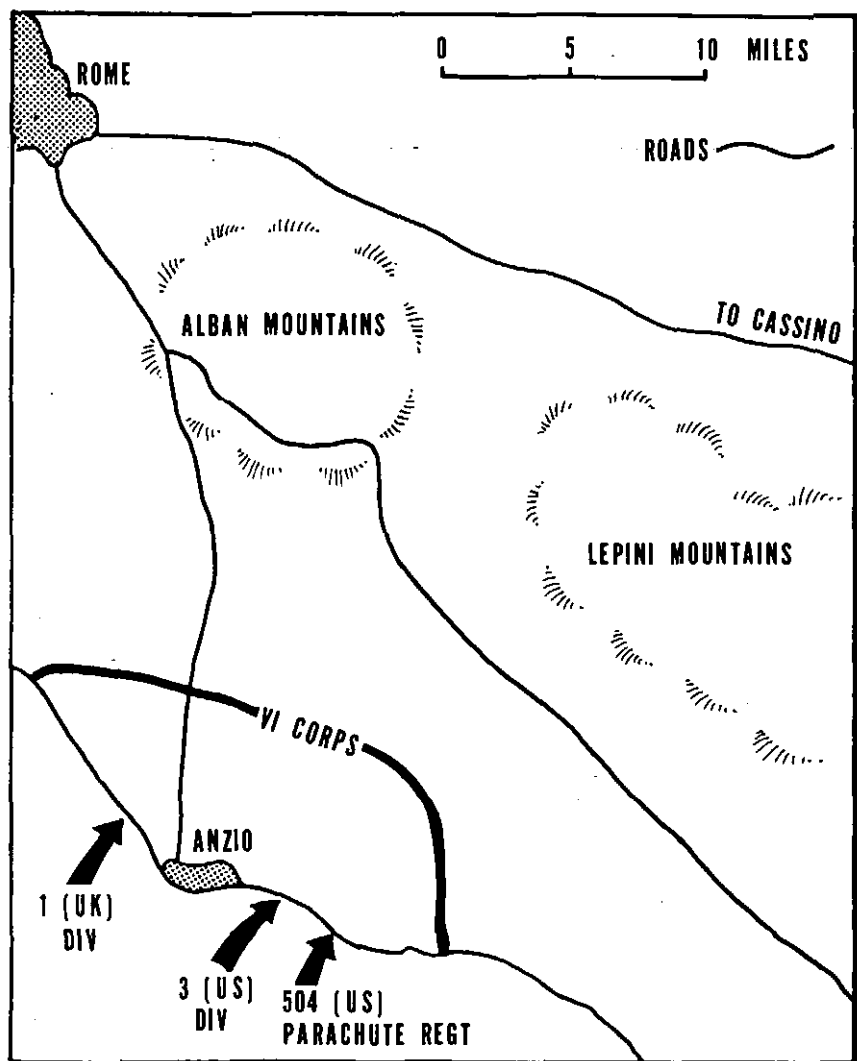


Figure 1. Anzio 22 January 1944.

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

complete surprise and found the Germans with only two battalions between the bridgehead and Rome.

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

Although dismissed, Lucas had only conformed to our teachings on amphibious landings, i.e., consolidation before driving inland. Yet according to the German General Westphal 'On the 22nd and even on the 23rd a single unit thrusting forward without delay and attacking boldly could have penetrated the open city of Rome without hindrance'.<sup>6</sup> What would have been the risk? The loss of this one unit which would have by no means crippled the VI Corps and would have been a small price to pay for bringing to a finish the campaign in Southern Italy.

### **Over-preparation Also Warns The Enemy**

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

Few better examples of over-preparation exist than the action at Dujaila, in Mesopotamia on 7 March 1916.<sup>7</sup> General Townshend was besieged in Kut-el-Amara and three desperate attempts had been made to relieve him. The fourth attempt was intended to capture the redoubt at Dujaila, possession of which would have made the besiegers' position

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<sup>4</sup> Rudolf Bohmler, *op. cit.*, p. 189.

<sup>5</sup> Rudolf Bohmler, *op. cit.*, p. 192.

<sup>6</sup> B. H. Lidell Hart, *The Other Side of the Hill*, p. 371.

<sup>7</sup> Brigadier-General F. J. Moberly, 'Mesopotamia Campaign 1914-18' (*Military Operations — Official History of the War*), Ch. XXXIII.



untenable. The plan was a difficult march by Tigris Corps across the desert with the main effort an assault by two brigades on the redoubt. Unbeknown to the British the Turks had insufficient troops to fully man both the siege-works and the defences covering the siege, so were relying on reserves which could be switched to a threatened spot. This, of course, presumed that adequate warning could be given of a British approach.

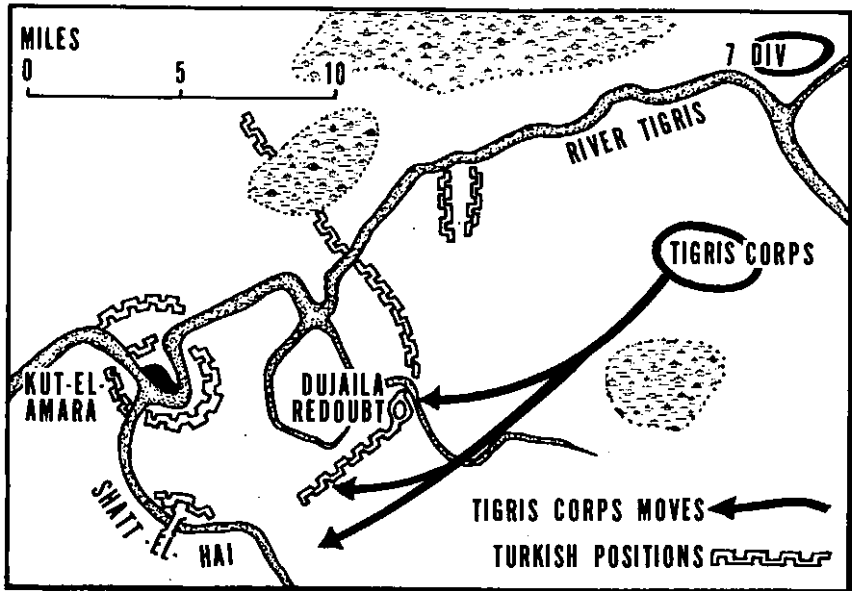


Figure 2. Dujaila Redoubt 8 March 1916.

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

The staff work employed to get the assault troops into position was superb. Arriving at the redoubt at 0600 hours the leading battalion commander was convinced that the position was almost empty, so kept advancing. His brigade commander rode up, was also convinced and urged an immediate assault but the column commander (General Kemball) demurred. He already had experience of 'unoccupied' positions that suddenly sprang to life. He insisted that brigade and unit commanders must have time to reconnoitre objectives, and insisted that the corps artillery must fire a preliminary bombardment. Meanwhile, what

was the position on the Turkish side? Only 200 troops were in Dujaila and the usual primitive Turkish communications failed to inform Halil Pasha of the British approach, which had achieved complete surprise. However, the bombardment removed any doubts and he immediately thinned out the besieging troops and rushed reinforcements to the redoubt. By the time the British attack did go in, at 0945 hours, it was too late. The fourth attempt to relieve Kut failed and with it the fate of the beleaguered garrison was sealed.

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

#### **Avoidance of Casualties — Loss of More Later**

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

The advance of 43rd (Wessex) Division to Arnhem is a classic example of 'saving a penny and losing a pound'.<sup>9</sup> On 17 September 1944, Operation 'Market Garden' launched the great allied airborne offensive with three airborne divisions seizing in one blow crossings over the three rivers running parallel across Holland. 30th (United Kingdom) Corps was to drive through and link up the crossings. The two United States airborne divisions succeeded and were joined by 30th Corps, this operation being greatly aided by the seizure of the Arnhem bridge by 1st British Airborne Division, which prevented German reinforcement south of the River Neder Rijn. However, by the 21st the Germans had retaken the bridge and 1st Airborne was reduced to a desperate situation,

<sup>8</sup> Colonel E. G. Keogh, *The River in the Desert*, p. 121.

<sup>9</sup> Chester Wilmot, *op. cit.*, pp. 517-22.

with 30th Corps having some ten miles still to go. At 0830 hours on the 22nd, 43rd Division set out to reach the Neder Rijn.

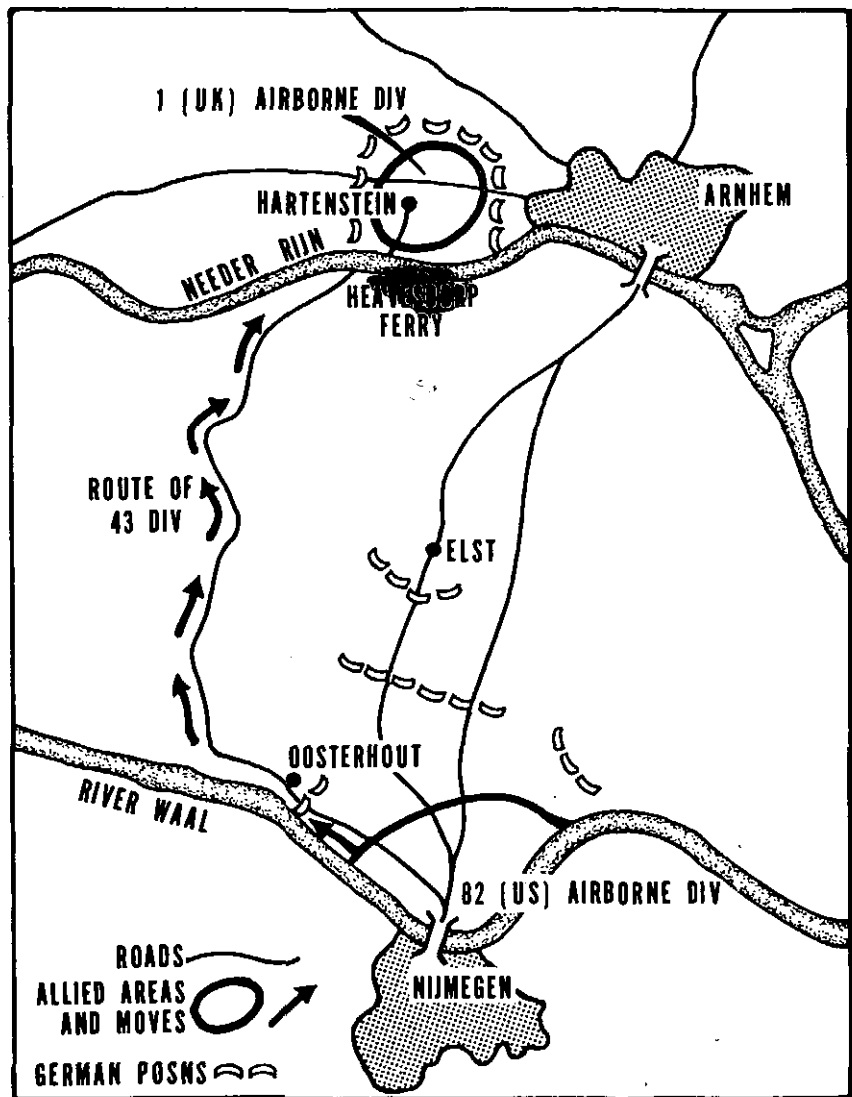


Figure 3. Advance to the Neder Rijn 22 September 1944.

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

7th Battalion, The Somerset Light Infantry were the advanced guard supported by a tank squadron, four field batteries, a troop of 17-pounder anti-tank guns, a mortar platoon and a machine-gun platoon. At 0930 hours on reaching Oosterhout the leading platoon was 'held up by fire from a tank and some infantry'.<sup>10</sup> This platoon was extricated and a company with tanks was sent round a flank but was 'held up by mortar fire'.<sup>11</sup> By mid-afternoon a battalion attack was launched which completed the task at 1700 hours. The German garrison was supported by one tank, one 88-millimetre gun and five small anti-aircraft guns. In the entire day's fighting the Somersets lost 19 men wounded. During this time the situation at Arnhem sharply deteriorated. 'By nature Thomas (the divisional Commander) was extremely thorough in the organization of attacks — so thorough that his battalions had come to believe that they could not advance without overwhelming fire support'.<sup>12</sup>

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

### SUCCESS THROUGH AUDACITY

Before quoting examples of success through bold action it is well to admit that a perusal of any military history can usually discover cases of failure resulting from the same boldness. The acid test perhaps, is — if the successful examples had been failures, was the commander justified in his action? A close study indicates the affirmative; that the resultant prize to be won and the later casualties its achievement would save, justified the risks involved even if it meant the risk of disaster.

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

<sup>10</sup> Captain J. L. J. Meredith *The Story of the Seventh Battalion The Somerset Light Infantry*, p. 73.

<sup>11</sup> Chester Wilmot, *op. cit.*, p. 518.

<sup>12</sup> Chester Wilmot, *op. cit.*, p. 518.

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

### **Bold Action on Contact**

Rarely elsewhere is boldness more justified than in initial contact. No less an expert than Rommel has written 'I have found again and again that in encounter actions the day goes to the side that is the first to plaster its opponents with fire. The man who lies low and awaits developments usually comes off second best. This applies even when the exact positions of the enemy are unknown, in which case the fire must simply be sprayed over enemy-held territory. It is fundamentally wrong simply to halt — or to wait for more forces to come up and take part in the action'.<sup>13</sup>

An outstanding example of bold action on contact is the advance of the Israeli Parachute Brigade to Mitla Pass in the Sinai campaign of 1956.<sup>14</sup> The role of this brigade was, on outbreak of hostilities, to drop one battalion at the vital Mitla Pass. Possession of this feature would cut off any Egyptian reinforcement of Sinai from Suez, freeing the bulk of Israel's forces for operations against the main Egyptian army. The other two battalions of the brigade were to advance by road from Giraffi, 130 miles away over a very bad road, and attempt to reach Mitla Pass before the Egyptians could overwhelm the air-dropped battalion.

Crossing the border at 1600 hours on 29th October the brigade fell on the Egyptian company at the border post of Kuntilla. Firing from

<sup>13</sup> *The Rommel Papers*, edited by B. H. Liddell Hart, p. 7.

<sup>14</sup> Brigadier-General S. L. A. Marshall, *Sinai Victory*, Ch. 2.

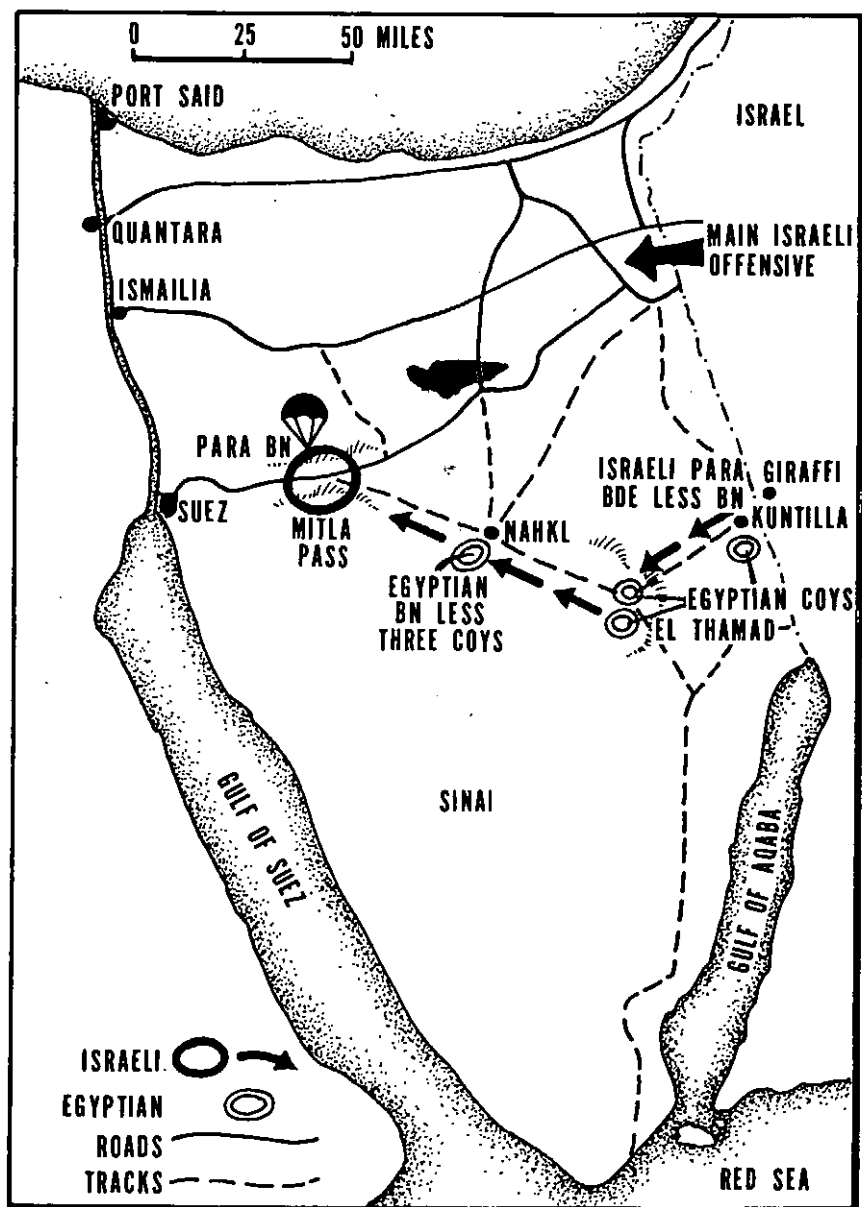


Figure 4. Advance to Mitla 29/30 October 1956.

The Israelis drop a parachute battalion at Mitla Pass, to prevent Egyptian troops from Suez influencing the main battle to the north. The rest of the brigade advances to the Mitla Pass by road and covers the 130 miles in 30 hours.

their half-tracks the leading companies made a mounted head-on charge, overrunning the post with the loss of one man. At 0400 hours the next day the Israelis reached the strongpost of El Thamad, a two-company position astride the road leading over an escarpment, to which there was no other way round. The leading battalion deployed two companies in half-tracks astride the road, with the remainder following in lorries. The whole battalion then charged forward firing from their vehicles. With a loss of nine casualties they killed 60 Egyptians and overran the post. By 1700 hours the brigade came up against the remainder of the Egyptian battalion, at Nahkl, and repeated their charge. At 2200 hours the Mitla Pass was reached after an advance of 130 miles in 30 hours.

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

### **Do Something and Do It Now**

A common charge directed by Germans against their former British opponents is the slow British reaction to sudden changes in the situation. 'Rigidly methodical techniques of command, over-systematic issuing of orders down to the last detail — and poor adaptability to the changing course of battle were also much to blame for the British failures'.<sup>16</sup> In the fog of war of a confused situation 'the side that waits for accurate information before it moves will invariably be outclassed by a more audacious opponent. Quick reaction in such an action will usually catch an enemy "off-balance" more than counter-acting any defects in the tactical plan'.<sup>17</sup>

A quick reaction in a changing situation was the Australian counter-attack at Villers Bretonneux on 4 April 1918.<sup>18</sup> The massive Ludendorff offensive of the Germans in March 1918 had shattered the already weakened British 5th Army and on 4th April, 9th Australian

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<sup>15</sup> Henriques, *One Hundred Hours to Suez*, p. 80.

<sup>16</sup> *The Rommel Papers*, p. 212.

<sup>17</sup> *The Rommel Papers*, p. 184.

<sup>18</sup> C. E. W. Bean, *Anzac to Amiens*, p. 423.

Brigade was placed in reserve at Villers Bretonneux behind the tottering line. At 0930 hours the Germans attacked and broke through to the north, only to be stopped by 9th Brigade which took over the line. When all seemed quiet the Germans suddenly struck again at 1600 hours, to the south. Soon stragglers began to stream past and the 35th Battalion on the brigade's right started to lose cohesion and fall back. It seemed that nothing could save Villers Bretonneux. Realizing that the only faint hope of stopping the Germans was to throw them off-balance by attacking, the Australian commander ordered Lieutenant-Colonel Milne of the 36th (New South Wales) Battalion to carry this out.

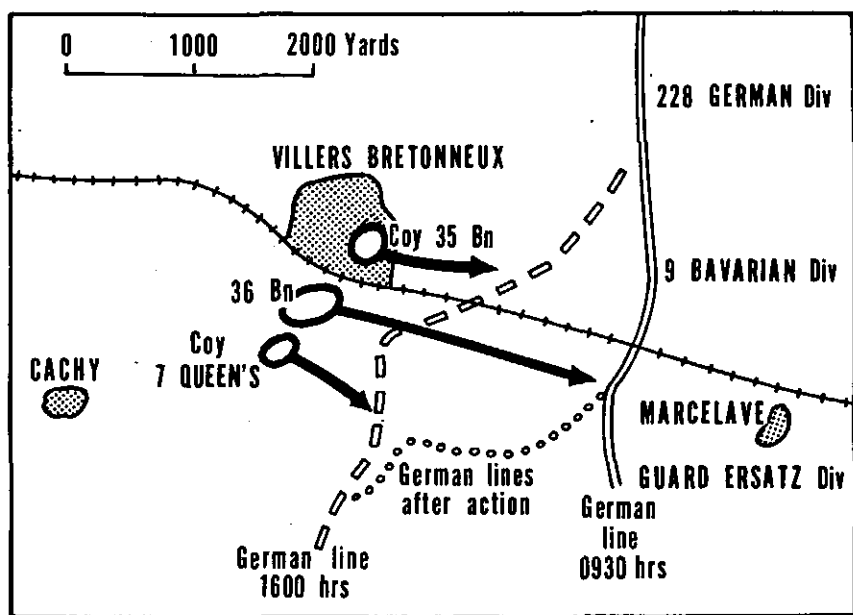


Figure 5. First Villers Bretonneux 4 April 1918.

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

Milne, who had deployed his battalion for such an event, gave a set of orders which illustrate the handling of a first-class battalion (which the 36th was) at its best. 'The enemy has broken through in our immediate front and we must counter-attack at once. Bushelle, your company will be on the left. Rodd, 'B' Company will be in the centre. Tedder, 'C'



Company will take the right and I shall send immediately to the C.O. of the Queen's and ask him to co-operate. Bushelle, your left flank will rest on the railway embankment. The 35th are on the other side. Attack in one wave. 'D' Company under Captain Gadd, I shall hold you in reserve here in the sunken road. Get ready. There's no time to waste'.<sup>19</sup> Bushelle asked 'How far will we go?' Replied Milne, 'Go till you're stopped.' In a few minutes the 36th moved off at a jog-trot followed by some rallied men of the 35th and the 7th Queen's. Taken completely by surprise, the Germans broke and fled for a mile. The 36th halted, dug in, and re-established the line. Villers Bretonneux was saved at a loss to the 36th of 150 men.

Although deployed for an attack, Milne had absolutely no idea of the enemy strength or dispositions, and little enough of his own side's; all he knew was that by attacking into the enemy attack he might disrupt and halt it. Had he taken so much as 20 minutes to prepare, the Germans would have reached him, outflanked him, and had an unopposed run to the English Channel.

Another fine example of immediate action despite the 'fog of war' is the action of the Turkish commanders at Gallipoli on the morning of the British landing of April 1915.<sup>20</sup> Their actions must be considered in the light of the primitive Turkish staffs and communications. Near Anzac Cove there were two formations, part of the 9th Division under Khalil Sami and the newly-formed 19th under Kemal Ataturk, both four miles by cross-country route from the landing beach.

When the Anzacs landed at 0430 hours they were opposed by only one company and pressed on to seize the hill complex around Hill 971, possession of which would have sealed the fate of the Turkish defences on the Narrows. Although disorganized they advanced with great dash. Meanwhile Khalil Sami on hearing of the landing at about 0445 hours immediately ordered his five battalions to march, three south to meet the British landing at Helles and two to strike at Anzac by the shortest route. At the same time he got a message through to Kemal at 0630 hours, asking him to intervene. Although he had no authority to commit his division, the theatre reserve of the Turkish commander, Kemal set out immediately at the head of his only reliable regiment (the

<sup>19</sup> C. E. W. Bean, 'The A.I.F. In France 1918', (*Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-18*), p. 340.

<sup>20</sup> *Anzac to Amiens*, Ch. VIII.

57th). 'Kemal instantly conjectured that if his opponents were making for Hill 971 the attack was no mere feint but a major offensive'.<sup>21</sup>

Neither Khalil's two battalions nor Kemal had any idea of the forces opposing them or their precise location. What they did know was that in a few hours possession of Hill 971 would give victory to the British, who were already half-way to their objective when the Turks made contact. Yet these Turkish counter-attacks drove the Anzacs

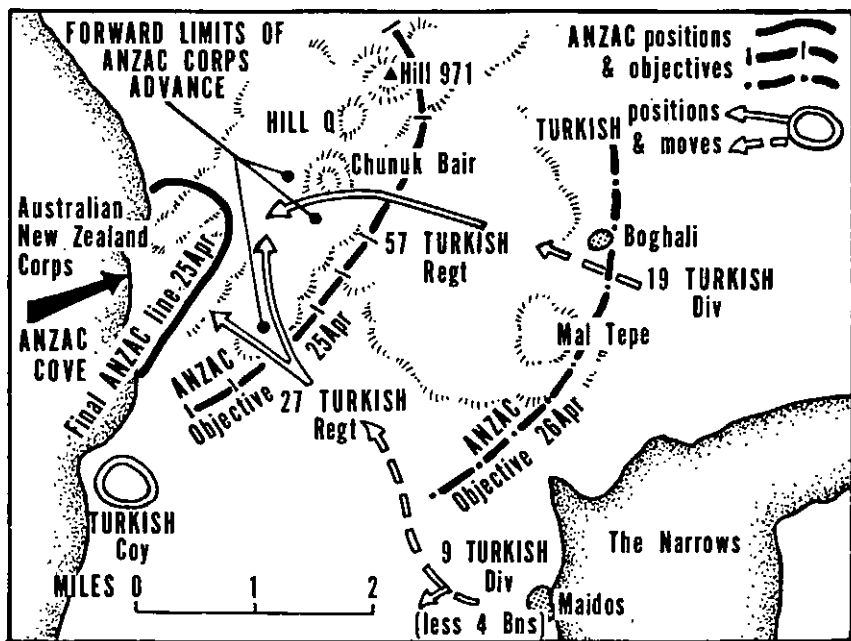


Figure 6. Anzac 25 April 1915.

The British land at 0430 hours. At 0445 hours Khalil Sami orders two battalions to Anzac and three to Helles. At 0630 hours Kemal gets word of the Australian advance to Hill 971. Although having no authority to commit his troops (the Turkish Theatre reserve) he immediately leads his men to Hill 971.

Driven back to a perimeter the Anzacs never do get to Hill 971.

back for more than a mile, reducing them to digging a defensive position instead of triumphantly marching to Constantinople. Had Khalil Sami or Kemal waited for accurate information they might well have waited for two days thanks to Turkish communications. Instead they both realized the need for immediate action, any action, because in a few hours the

<sup>21</sup> *Anzac to Amiens*, p. 115.

position would have been irretrievable. As Kemal said 'The moment of time that we gained with this one',<sup>22</sup> as his leading battalion swept the Australians off the slopes of Chunuk Bair.

### If Opportunity Beckons Seize It

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

The enemy certainly created a golden opportunity at Remagen, on the Rhine, on 7 March 1945.<sup>23</sup> The final Allied offensive into Germany was under way and the great Ludendorff Bridge over the Rhine at Remagen had been heavily prepared for demolition. As the leading elements of III United States Corps reached the bridge the Germans blew the demolition. To everyone's amazement the great structure rocked but settled intact on its damaged supports. To Brigadier-General Hoge, in command of the leading Americans, this was too good a chance to miss so 'he weighed his decision cold-bloodedly. He would lose no more than a battalion if the Germans blew the bridge and cut off the first men who crossed. He would lose no more than a platoon if the Germans chose to blow the bridge while his men were on the way across'.<sup>24</sup> He immediately ordered the leading company across. The troops, expecting the bridge to collapse at any minute, swept by fire from the Germans still on the bridge and with little effective fire support, pressed on with great dash and the day was won. Had Hoge paused for the briefest of preparation the opportunity created by enemy inefficiency might have been thrown away.

Another equally dramatic example of seizure of opportunity, this time created by our own side, was the action of 155th Brigade at El Mughar in Palestine on 13 November 1917.<sup>25</sup> In the British advance on Jerusalem 52nd (Lowland) Division was given the task of clearing the

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<sup>22</sup> Alan Moorehead, *Gallipoli*, p. 138.

<sup>23</sup> General Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe*, p. 413.

<sup>24</sup> Ken Hechler, *The Bridge at Remagen*, p. 128.

<sup>25</sup> Captain Cyril Falls, 'Egypt and Palestine', *Military Operations — Official History of the War*, pp. 164-72.

Turkish defences around El Mugar. 155th Brigade was to clear the defended villages of El Mugar itself and Quatra. Attacking at 1130 hours the brigade soon found the villages more strongly garrisoned than they had first believed, and were halted and pinned down under heavy shrapnel and machine-gun fire. Meanwhile the Yeomanry Mounted Division came up to the 52nd, and on being asked to assist ordered their leading brigade to attack the Turks from the flank. At 1500 hours they launched their attack with great spirit.

As the Yeomanry attack gained momentum it drew the Turkish fire from the battered 155th Brigade. The 155th's Brigadier, up with

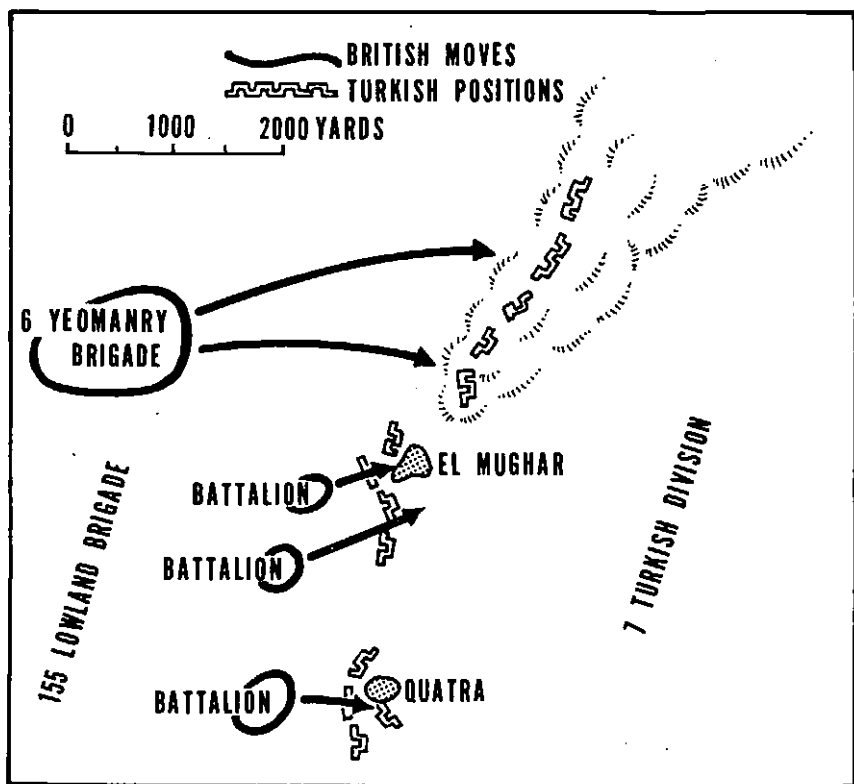


Figure 7. El Mugar 13 November 1917.

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

his forward troops, saw his chance and took it. Seizing a rifle he ran out into the open and gave the field signal to advance. With no further orders than this the leading battalions swept forward, overran Quatra and broke into El Mughar. By 1600 hours the objectives were secure, 800 prisoners had been taken and several hundred Turks killed. The brigade sustained 480 casualties, most during the three hours they had been pinned down.

These two examples clearly illustrate the value of instantly exploiting opportunity. In both instances pausing to co-ordinate would have thrown away the chance. As has been said of the 155th Brigade commander, 'opportunities like this are fleeting but that brigadier did not miss a moment of it. He had his troops on their feet and sweeping forward in a matter of minutes — those men knew their business'.<sup>26</sup>

### **Gambles Are Justified If the Stakes Are Worth It**

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

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

At 0400 hours, in bright moonlight a Japanese motorized column with tanks drove straight into the forward battalion 4/19th Hyderabad, easily penetrating its defences. Pressing on down the main road it was strongly resisted by 5/2nd Punjab but broke through, ignoring the Indian positions away from the road. The Argyll gave the Japanese a tough fight, delaying them for two hours, but once again the enemy broke through the road and pressed on.

The damage had been done. Communications were disrupted, headquarters overrun and gun positions lost. Caught marching along

<sup>26</sup> Colonel E. G. Keogh, *Suez to Aleppo*, p. 176.

<sup>27</sup> *The War in Malaya*, Lieutenant General A. E. Percival, pp. 202-6.

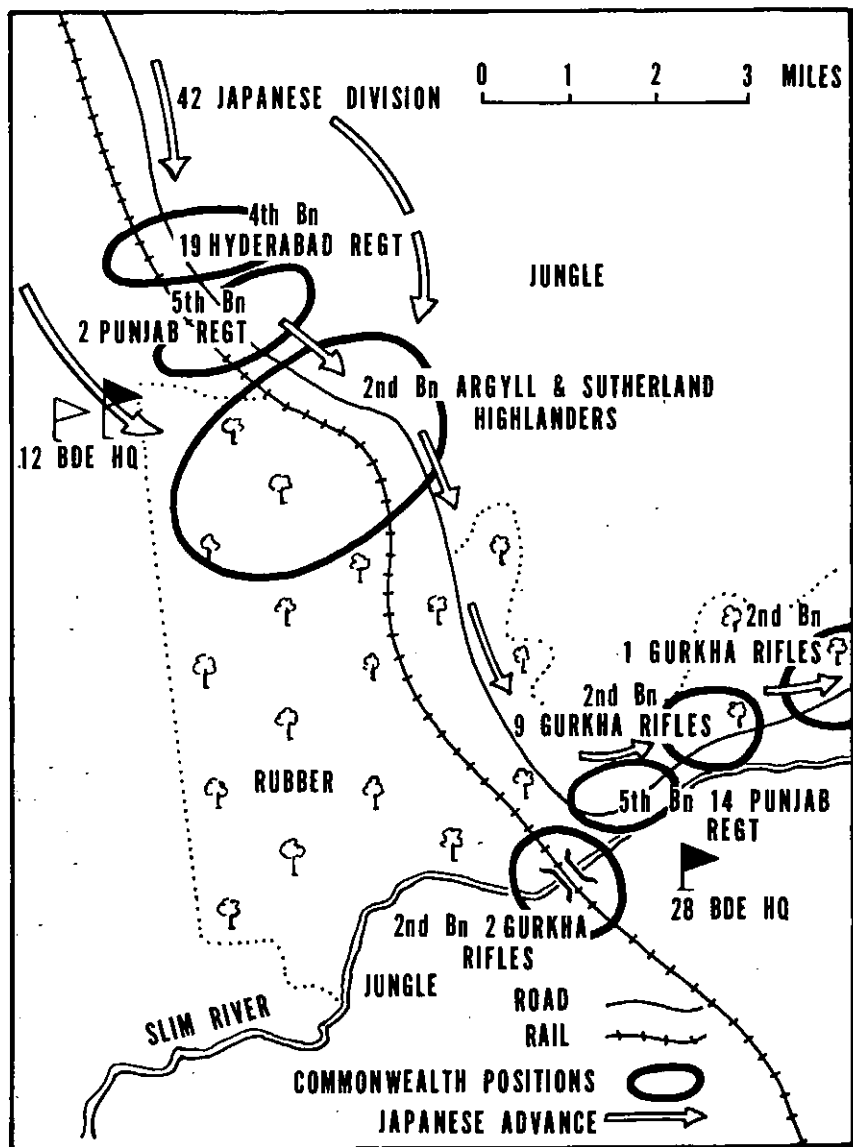


Figure 8. Slim River 7 January 1942.

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

the road as they moved up, 28th Brigade were scattered to the far winds. Pressing on the Japanese seized the road bridge over the Slim River, 15 miles from their starting point. Finally at 1000 hours the action of an enterprising howitzer crew, who knocked out the leading tank, brought the Japanese column to a halt. The Japanese main body then mopped up the bypassed positions. The victory had been won by 'a tank company, an infantry battalion in carriers and lorries, and some engineers'.<sup>28</sup> Only 1100 Indian infantry returned to the British lines, and all transport and two field batteries were lost. '11th Division had ceased to exist as a fighting formation'.<sup>29</sup>

Another gamble was the German parachute operation at Maleme in Crete.<sup>30</sup> The Germans, on 20 May 1941, dropped paratroops at four locations. By the end of the day the Germans had lost more than half of their men and at all dropping-zones except Maleme were faced with certain defeat. Only two parachute companies were available and the prospects of sea reinforcement were not bright, with the Royal Navy on the watch. However, the 5th Mountain Division was still on hand, in Greece. It was then that the German commander 'had to make a momentous decision. I decided to use the reserves for the final capture of Maleme airfield'.<sup>31</sup> 5th Mountain Division was to be flown in by crash-landing transport aircraft onto the beach and a dry river-bed and by attempting to land aircraft on the no-man's land of Maleme airfield. 'It seemed utter madness to attempt the landing, for the airfield was swept by the fire of nine field guns and a platoon of machine-guns. Then the thing that couldn't happen happened. At 0810 hours (21st May) a transport touched down, rolled to a stop, disgorged its troops and took off again — all within 70 seconds'.<sup>32</sup> Despite heavy losses in both men and aircraft, by the end of the day the scales had been tipped and Crete was won for Germany.

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

<sup>28</sup> Lionel Wigmore, 'The Japanese Thrust', *Australia in the War of 1939-45*, p. 196.

<sup>29</sup> Wigmore, *op. cit.*, p. 197.

<sup>30</sup> Gavin Long 'Greece, Crete and Syria', *Australia in the War of 1939-45*, pp. 228-33.

<sup>31</sup> B. H. Liddell Hart, *The Other Side of the Hill*, p. 241.

<sup>32</sup> Colonel E. G. Keogh, *The Middle East 1939-43*, p. 153.

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

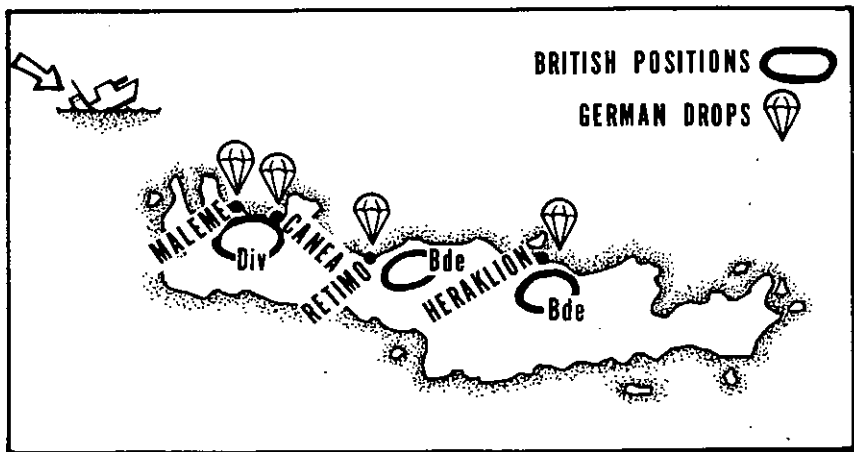


Figure 9. Crete 20 May 1941.

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

### Battles Can Be Won Without Waiting For Detailed Information

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

The action at Sanananda, in New Guinea, on 20/21 November 1942, was an example of success achieved by quick decision despite inadequate information.<sup>33</sup> The Australians were pursuing the Japanese

<sup>33</sup> Dudley McCarthy, 'South-West Pacific First Year — Kokoda to Wau', *Australia in the War of 1939-45*, pp. 387-91.



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

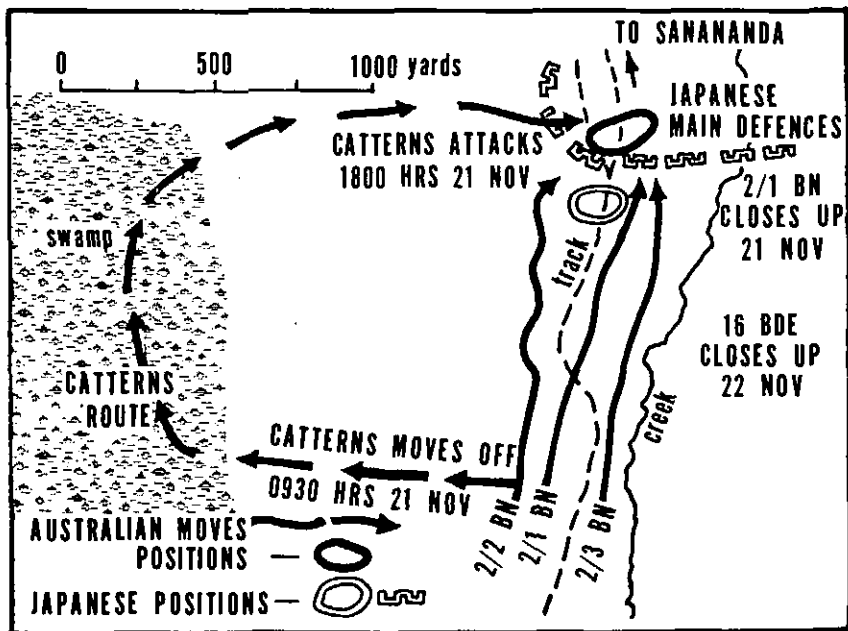


Figure 10. Sanananda 21/22 November 1942.

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

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

'The Japanese were obviously occupying main positions and were

therefore in strength. The Australians had no communications to their battalion — they had no means of getting the wounded away. It was obviously a situation that called for complete withdrawal or boldness of the most calculated kind. Therefore they would attack.<sup>34</sup> Quietly deploying, Catterns' companies went straight into the assault killing 80 Japanese and scattering the rest. Digging in, they discovered that they were astride the main Japanese track. After repelling closely-pressed counter-attacks, Catterns' force was relieved on the night of the 21/22nd. Although they lost 31 killed and 36 wounded out of 91 men, this little force inflicted heavier casualties on the enemy, silenced their artillery, caused the withdrawal of their covering troops who had delayed the whole brigade and accurately fixed the limits of the long-sought main Japanese defences.

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

### **Battles Can Be Launched With Minimum Dissemination of Orders**

In the Australian Army an almost sacrosanct principle is that all troops must be 'in the picture' before being launched into battle. No one would dispute this, particularly with Australian infantry from whose ranks leaders invariably come to the fore no matter how many officers and non-commissioned officers become casualties. This principle, however, is a means to an end, victory — and if victory can be won by speedy action which brooks no time for prolonged orders then we must accept short-cutting of our procedures.

There is one instance where a decisive victory was attained by troops who not only were not 'in the picture' but were deliberately kept that way. In Normandy the 43rd (Wessex) Division was given the task of capturing the key position of Mont Pincon on 5 August 1944.<sup>35</sup> This feature was 1,200 feet high, very steep and defended by strong forces and minefields at its foot. An attempt was made by 43rd Division on the south but was bloodily repulsed. On the 6th, 129th Brigade was to attack from the west with two battalions and the tanks of the 13/18th

<sup>34</sup> McCarthy, *op. cit.*, p. 390.

<sup>35</sup> Major General H. Essame, *The 43rd Wessex Division at War*, pp. 64-9.

Hussars. Attacking at midday the brigade was stopped with crippling casualties. However, at 1500 hours the Hussars broke through and gathering the 60 surviving riflemen of the 5th Wiltshires seized a position behind the German lines. Seeing a track leading up the face of the mount the enterprising Hussar commander ordered two tank troops up the feature. To their surprise, and to that of the bewildered Germans on the mountain, the tanks reached the top at dusk. The Divisional commander immediately ordered his reserve battalion to pass through the gap and get up onto Mont Pincon before German reinforcements could occupy it.

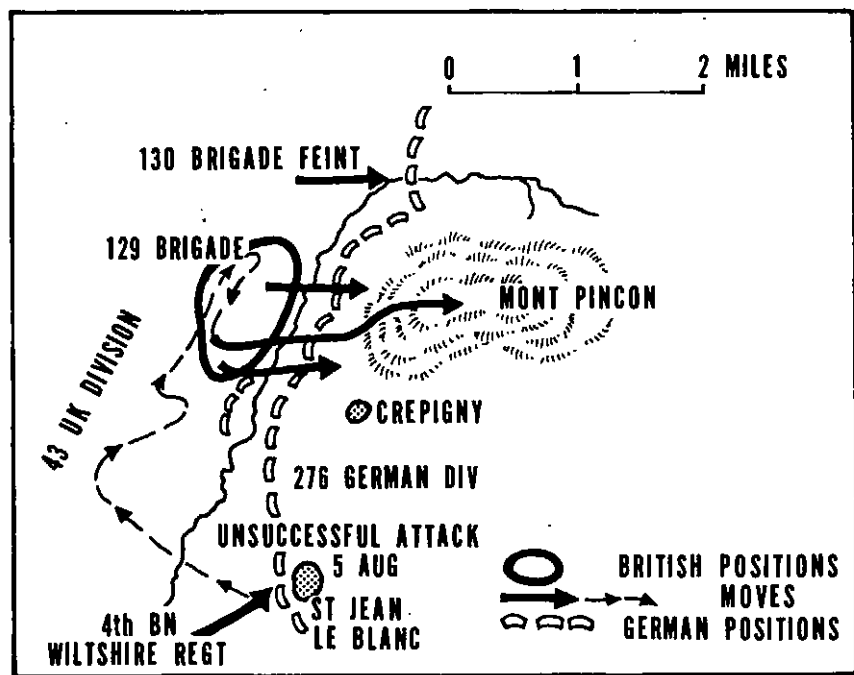


Figure 11. Mount Pincon 5/6 August 1944.

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

The reserve, the 4th Wiltshires, were in a bad state. Heavily battered in the previous day's attack on the south, they had just marched on foot seven miles, suffering 50 casualties from shelling on the way.

Passing through the gap as it turned dark they moved up the mount in single file 'expecting to find ourselves surrounded at any moment. The sergeant commanding the leading platoon very resourcefully told his men that they were not doing an attack, but were going up to relieve another unit already there. This materially assisted the speed of the advance'.<sup>36</sup> By dawn they had eliminated stray Germans on the feature, dug themselves in and made untenable the position of the whole 5th Panzer Army.

### **The Unexpected Achieves Surprise**

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

One example of surprise achieved by instant decision was the New Zealand and Australian charge at 42nd Street on Crete, 27 May 1941.<sup>37</sup> During the night 26/27th the 5th New Zealand and 19th Australian Brigades were withdrawn to a line along the road known as '42nd Street'. Out of touch with their divisional headquarters, the two weak brigades, thoroughly exhausted, arrived in position with the mistaken belief that a force was covering their rest and reorganization. By 0800 hours some of the battalion commanders started to suspect that perhaps all was not well. The commander of the 28th (Maori) Battalion contacted his neighbours (2/7th [Victorian] Australian and 21st New Zealand Battalions) who agreed that if attacked they would hold their fire until 'the enemy came to close quarters — open fire and then charge'.<sup>38</sup> As they had no heavy fire support and the enemy was supported by mortars and dive-bombers they considered that a 'normal' defence was quite out of the question.

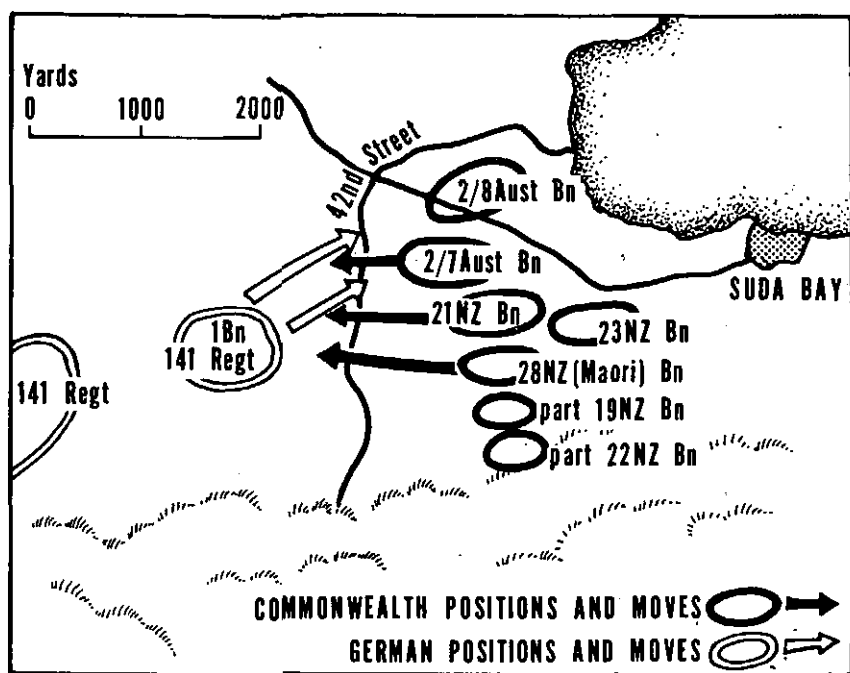
Meanwhile the German 141st Mountain Regiment was working its way towards Suda Bay, its 1st Battalion leading, blissfully unaware that 42nd Street was held. At 1100 hours this battalion appeared in view, fully deployed, moving obliquely across the front of the three Anzac battalions. Seeing their chance, the forward company com-

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<sup>36</sup> Wilmot, *op. cit.*, p. 409.

<sup>37</sup> D. M. Davin, 'Crete', *Official History of New Zealand in the Second World War*, pp. 374-9.

<sup>38</sup> Gavin Long, 'Greece, Crete and Syria', *Australia in the War of 1939-45*, p. 251.



**NOTE: AUSTRALIAN AND NEW ZEALAND BATTALIONS SHOWN WERE APPROXIMATELY 1-2 COMPANIES IN STRENGTH**

Figure 12. 42nd Street 27 May 1941.

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

manders gave the word, and almost as one man the three battalions, joined by stray soldiers from their neighbours, swept forward. In a few minutes the German battalion was driven back 600 yards leaving behind 350 dead, and was 'virtually finished in its first action'.<sup>89</sup> The Anzac troops lost 73 casualties. Not surprisingly the 141st Mountain Regiment halted its advance, and so spared the Anzac brigades which could not have possibly withstood an organized attack. The immediate and unexpected had paid off.

A simple but telling example of sudden departure from normal procedures is the action of the 2/33rd (New South Wales) Battalion in

<sup>89</sup> Davin, *op. cit.*, p. 379.

the Ramu Valley of New Guinea on 9 October 1943.<sup>40</sup> Japanese had been reported on the 4100 Feature overlooking an important track. The 2/33rd was ordered to clear the feature which was very high and extremely precipitous. Major McDougal's company was to lead the battalion up the mountain and set off at 1600 hours. The enemy, who could not see the lower slopes, were being kept quiet by air attack. When night fell McDougal's company was still climbing and far from the top. The brigadier and battalion commander had to make a quick decision and made it. The troops were to push on and attempt the almost unheard-of feat of a night attack in New Guinea. With no idea of the enemy's dispositions McDougal's men continued and 'moved straight towards the highest point to try their luck against whatever opposition was there'.<sup>41</sup> At 2130 hours the Australians finally reached the top. Completely surprised, the Japanese fired a few shots, broke, and then fled. The position which should have held for days was taken in a few seconds.

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

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

In most hard-fought battles, and particularly in those where the opponents are not too unevenly matched, there comes a time when the issue hangs in the balance. One last effort by the attacker or one last desperate stand by the defender and the scales are tipped one way or the other. At this stage in the battle the original orders and plan have largely ceased to be operative and the unit commander is now 'playing by ear'. It is here where bold decision will count and where time-consuming battle procedures are merely likely to surrender the initiative.

Such an occasion was Rommel's crossing of the River Meuse on 13 May 1940.<sup>42</sup> The 7th Panzer Division had reached the river during the night, and working to a pre-arranged decision, crossed the river at three places, despite the fact that their artillery had not yet caught up.

<sup>40</sup> David Dexter, 'The New Guinea Offensives', *Australia in the War of 1939-45*, pp. 574-6.

<sup>41</sup> Dexter, *op. cit.*, p. 575.

<sup>42</sup> *The Rommel Papers*, pp. 6-7.

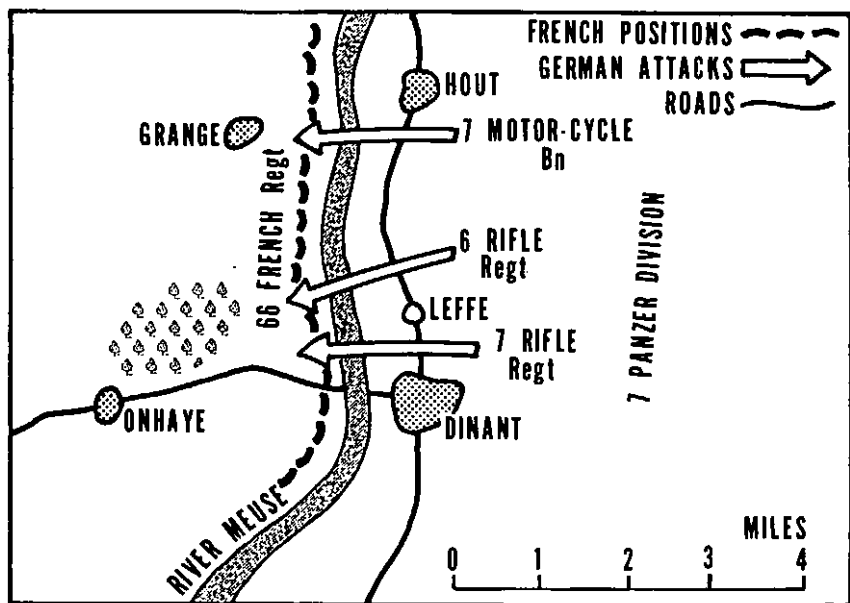


Figure 13. The Meuse 13 May 1940.

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

7th Motor-Cycle Battalion crossed at Houx, 6th Rifle Regiment at Leffe and 7th Rifle Regiment at Dinant. Urgency was the keynote as French tanks were known to be in the vicinity and the building of tank pontoons had to be started as soon as possible. At 0400 hours Rommel toured the crossing places. 7th Motor-Cycle Battalion was across but badly pressed and vulnerable to tank attack. The 6th Rifle Regiment had established a small bridge-head but most of their boats were destroyed and the crossing had come to a standstill. However, at Dinant real disaster threatened. Only one company of 2nd Battalion 7th Rifle Regiment was across, and it was covering under the heavy fire from 'the stout resistance of the French 66th Regiment'.<sup>43</sup> Almost all the assault boats were sunk and the troops badly shaken. The die was cast.

Rommel acted immediately. He first contacted his corps commander and urgently requested that the artillery be pushed forward.

<sup>43</sup> Colonel A. Goutard, *The Battle of France 1940*, p. 159.

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

### THE REMEDY

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

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

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<sup>44</sup> 'Infantry in Battle', *Infantry Journal, United States*, p. vii.

<sup>45</sup> Major General Bogert, *Battle Preliminaries* (Reprinted from *Canadian Army Journal in Australian Army Journal*, July 1964), p. 9.



the instant decision are neglected. Our training battles are invariably well-ordered and tidy affairs!

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

### The Argument For Our Present Methods

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

- Tactical training, especially TEWTs, are used to teach principles. Therefore we should use standard organizations and procedures and not cloud the lessons with too many imponderables.
- Our battle procedures are a basis from which to work. Actual battle experience will enable commanders to short-cut procedures.
- Realistic portrayal of the 'fog of war' is difficult to achieve.

*Tactical Training.* The argument on tactical training is easily refuted. True, a 'teaching' TEWT should use standard organizations and unconfused situations. But we seem to serve until retiring age having attended none other than 'teaching' TEWTs. What we need are 'practice' TEWTs where truly realistic situations and quick decisions are presented to officers who already should have mastered the basic principles. And if it is true, as often alleged, that our knowledge of basic principles is weak then the answer is more TEWTs. At least one

<sup>46</sup> 'Notes on the Practical Conduct of War Games' (General Leo Freiherr Geyr Von Schweppenburg) (*Australian Army Journal* September 1963), p. 22.

regular battalion in the last decade went three years without conducting a single officers' TEWT.

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

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

### **The Need For Training In Quick Battle Decisions**

So far this paper has quoted examples drawn from 'conventional' non-nuclear warfare. How do these ideas apply to other types of war? In nuclear war there can be no question that the confused situation and the need for instant reaction to meet it will be normal. What, then, of counter-insurgency? The difficulty, in guerilla warfare, of bringing the enemy to battle is so well-known that once having contacted an enemy we simply cannot afford to let him break contact. This will create situations where units will have to immediately attack with the briefest and crudest of battle preliminaries — probably a few sentences on a radio. And such situations in a war similar to that in Vietnam will involve whole battalions or more. Even in the Malaya-type emergency against small bands the need for boldness will still be vital. Does the patrol commander attack the enemy camp straight away and be certain of killing some but at a possible cost to himself? Or does he bring up the rest of his force to carry out the perfect operation which might only capture a vacated camp?

### **CONCLUSION**

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

- Create more realistic and confused situations in training exercises.

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

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

ARTHUR WELLESLEY  
DUKE OF WELLINGTON

1769-1852

All the business of war, and indeed all the business of life, is to endeavour to find out what you don't know by what you do; that's what I called 'guessing what was at the other side of the hill'.

*Crocker Papers* (1885), vol. iii, p. 276.

# On Gobbledygook

Argus J. Tresidder

SCIENCE fiction writers have often tried to create suspense by picturing the invasion of our planet by hordes of weird creatures from other worlds. They are usually more intelligent than earthlings and have superior weapons, but, by human standards, they are unspeakably hideous. We are faced by an invasion far more real and destructive than imaginary Martians. It is directed by highly intelligent beings whose positions as executives, bureaucrats, teachers, scientists, military leaders, sociologists and the like make them very influential. Their weapons are official reports, correspondence, authoritative articles, books, and so forth. The invaders are as frightening and repulsive as any little green men in flying saucers. They are the buzz-words or gobbledygook presently strangling all forms of communication.

Gobbledygook may be defined as pretentious, wordy, involved, sometimes unintelligible jargon. The word itself, still cautiously labeled 'slang', was invented by an American Congressman, Maury Maverick (1895-1954), probably on the base of *gobble* which comes from an old French word for mouth. *Gook*, now mainly an impolite military term for an Asian, is what the linguistic experts call a phonesthemic word, one whose sound suggests the meaning, in this case unpleasant. *Gook* is related to *goo* and *muck*. In short, gobbledygook is sticky muck (*muck* is from an old Norse word for *dung*) issuing from the mouth.

Gobbledygook is not a recent invention. Writers have indulged in it, mainly to demonstrate their learning, in all periods. We even have a word to describe one form of gobbledygook, any artificial, high-flown style: *euphuism*, named from a character created by the 16th Century romantic writer, John Lyly, famous for his mannerisms and affectations. Lyly believed, for example, that 'it is . . . a greater show of pregnant wit than perfect wisdom, in a thing of sufficient excellency, to use superfluous eloquence'. How apt a description of some modern writing and speaking — superfluous eloquence!

Styles change of course. What we consider heavy, involved writing today was once admired. The authors of the King James Version of

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the Old Testament occasionally produced passive, involved verses like 'O thou enemy, destructions are come to a perpetual end, and thou hast destroyed cities; their memorial is perished with them'. Samuel Johnson pontifically declared, 'He examined lines and words with minute and punctilious observation, and retouched every part with indefatigable diligence'. Ralph Waldo Emerson weighed in with 'A true aspirant . . . never need look for allusions personal and laudatory in discourse'. We would not accept any of these examples, though they are fairly clear, as good, simple writing. For all their inversions and Latinized wording, however, they do not illustrate the modern evil of gobbledygook which, all too often, means the deliberate choice of confusing or vague or pompous words and phrases.

In recent years, the use of gobbledygook by writers and speakers has multiplied, for several reasons. First, since gobbledygook usually sounds impressive, many addicts adopt it to give themselves a specious air of authority. Second, since gobbledygook is vague in meaning, those who are not sure of the validity of their ideas or who want to be imprecise find it useful. Third, since academic disciplines and scientific, technical, diplomatic and other categories of professional emphasis develop their own distinctive jargon, those who want to be recognized as up-to-the-mark specialists or to be identified with their peer-groups like to use the language peculiar to those groups. Fourth, the increase in all the media of communication spreads the infection of certain popular gobbledygook words and phrases.

Here are a few examples of current gobbledygook:

1. *We must maximize the fact of our incumbency.*

This statement by White House staffers during the Watergate controversy is almost as pernicious as the crimes they tried to conceal. Its meaning comes dimly through the feeble, ugly word *maximize* and the inflated *incumbency*.

2. *During the analysis phase, interactive processes that explore all possible data orchestrations, projective simulations utilizing a full range of feasible scenarios, programed walk techniques and structural zoning will enable the development of quantitative parameters for a real world master plan for public transportation in Lower Manhattan.* (New York City Planning Commission Report).

I doubt that the writer of this remarkable passage really knew what *data orchestrations*, *projective simulations* and *quantitative parameters*

mean. He was confident, however, that few readers would challenge such a statement and most, though uncomprehending, would applaud the evident authority of anyone who could toss off such magnificent phrases.

3. *Evaluation and Parameterization of Stability and Safety Performance Characteristic of Two and Three Wheeled Vehicular Toys, for Riding.*

This is the title of a study, costing \$23,000, for the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. We can be both indignant at the cost and scornful of the language which, in simple terms, means 'Why children fall off bicycles'.

4. *The core area is suffering from disinvestment and needs to be looked at in the broad picture. If prompt actions are implemented within the suggested parameters, meaningful and relevant objectives may be finalized.* (Consultant firm report on a municipality for the purpose of getting federal urban renewal funds).

This bit of pretentious windiness seems to mean that the central city is running down, but that it is still salvageable. *Disinvestment* and *finalized* are barbarisms. 'Broad picture', 'implementing actions', 'suggested parameters' and 'relevant objectives' are pathetic clichés.

5. Note the frequent appearance of what is probably the most popular word in contemporary jargon, *parameter*. It meets all the conditions of gobbledygook: it is rhythmic and sonorous; hardly anybody knows what it means; its real meaning is so evasive that the word seems to fit anywhere. *Parameter* is actually a mathematical term meaning 'a quantity or constant whose value varies with the circumstances of its application'. It does *not* mean 'boundary', 'conditions' or 'significance' as glib speakers and writers variously use it.

6. *The proposed implementation of the project involves the alignment of disparate elements which have not singly or collectively yet been submitted to the corporate consideration of the personnel selected at the appropriate executive level.*

This inflated sentence was quoted by Anthony Burgess, a British writer who loves his native tongue, as a sample of 'pedantry which verges on gobbledygook'. 'This kind of language', he continues, 'lends itself to high-level lies and evasions, as also to such monstrous terms as 'anticipatory retaliation', which means knocking hell out of the enemy

on the assumption that they'd do the same to you if you gave them the chance.' (*The New York Times Magazine*, 9 September 1973).

Let's now examine the different forms of gobbledygook: technical words, illegitimate words, muddy words and phrases, and overused words or jargonized clichés.

### Technical Words

Between 1934, when the Second Edition of the Merriam-Webster Unabridged Dictionary was published, and 1961, when the Third Edition appeared, some 17,000 new words had come into use in the field of chemistry alone. Most of these words, like those in other sciences, were technical. They are useful only to chemists or electronic engineers or computer scientists or whatever specialized group has a need for them. Technical words are not in themselves gobbledygook. They become so only when specialists employ them away from their own turf because they want to impress or because they have forgotten that the basic principle of communication is clarity and they are too lazy or too impatient or too addicted to jargon to try to achieve it.

Technical language is necessary and good so long as it is used only with those who know what it means. Pilots speaking to pilots can talk about 'vertical envelopment' or 'vectoring' or 'airframe configuration' without confusing or irritating their hearers. Sociologists can talk to their colleagues, with impunity, about 'motivational deficiency due to deprivation' or 'ethical disorientation' or 'developing the infrastructure'. The mysterious language of the computer world, full of 'software' and 'input' and 'flow-charting', is just fine for those who live in that world. Educators can speak intelligently to educators about 'cognitive domain' and 'psychomotor responses'. The Marine can speak to Marine about 'subtheatre, theatre conventional, and theatre nuclear levels of warfare'.

When the technical words slip over into general communications, the speaker or writer *must* explain them, seek simple ways of saying them, or leave them out. Some readers and hearers are so humble that they blame their lack of understanding on their ignorance; others are annoyed by the presumption or pretentiousness of the user; a few say, 'Gee Whiz! This guy is smart'. Whatever the reaction, the communication is broken.

In short, there's nothing wrong with technical words; just limit your use of them to the right time and the right place.

## Illegitimate Words

Gobbledygook artists are never more happy than when they can devise some new monstrosity of a word and use it often enough to give it currency. For example, *orientate*, derived from *orientation*, has burrowed into the language like a liver fluke and now has dictionary sanction. We already had a good word, *orient*, meaning the same thing. *Commentate* is the same sort of bastard word. *Liaise*, *enthuse*, *destruct* and *surveil* are equally unattractive. The formula, for those who take pride in their gobbledygook, is to turn a noun like *position*, *impact*, *critique*, *structure*, *suspicion*, *interface* or *attrition* (*attrit*) into a verb, or a verb into a noun, like *abort*, *mix* and *insert*. The most fertile breeding ground for gobbledygook is the suffix *-ize*. With it, you can form shocking hybrids from almost any part of speech: *randomize*, *contaminize*, *containerize*, *civillianize*, *suboptimize*, *bureaucratize*, *initialize*, *sanitize*, *undefinitize*, *conceptualize*. The suffix *-wise* is also handy for those who are unconcerned about grace in language: *weatherwise*, *student-bodywise*, *applicancewise*, *logisticalwise*.

I am not suggesting that imaginative creativity has no place in the development of English, that we should discourage bold neologisms. Lexicographers can hardly keep up with the many colourful and forceful additions to our vocabulary. Words like *spin-off*, *astronaut*, *smog*, *drip-dry*, *jalopy*, *two-way stretch*, *countdown* and *teen-ager* are new within our time. For the most part, they are combinations of familiar words to describe new conditions or new products. They are precise words which scientific progress or new discoveries or changes in social, political and economic affairs have made necessary. By the same process, some gobbledygook becomes respectable; you can find *maximize* and *orientate* and *quantify* and *enthuse* even in conservative dictionaries. The words *polarize* and *politicize*, both overused today, seem, nevertheless, to fill needs and should not be condemned with the *-ize* obscenities (except when they become clichés by overuse).

What I am driving at is that, when good solid words are available, you should not uglify your communication by violating usage or producing verbal deformities. Why *position* something when *place* or *locate* is available? Why say *inhouse* when *internal* or *local* would do as well? When we let central cities deteriorate, must we *ghettoize* them?

## Muddy Words and Phrases

Most gobbledygook is not in the form of technical or bastardized words. It is far more likely to be combinations of conventional words



which fail to produce clear images or arbitrary phrases which sound good, but carefully conceal meanings or disguise ignorance.

Here are several examples:

1. *Families who cling to ethnic traditions may encourage a participatory orientation toward death by their reliance upon patterns of personal interaction rather than institutionalized procedures.*

This sentence has no particular words to which we can object. Even *institutionalized*, a jarring *-ize* word, is clear enough. But the phrases 'participatory orientation' and 'patterns of personal interaction' dim the meaning. Even after several re-readings, the ideas do not clearly emerge.

2. *This is in the affective domain and would require an 'interest inventory' type evaluation.*

Only those familiar with the professional jargon of 'affective domain' and 'interest inventory' would have even a foggy notion of what this sentence says. Such ponderous, elitist phrases should be kept (as their users would say) *inhouse*. (Or banished to the outhouse. Ed.) Incidentally, they might look up the proper use of the noun *type*.

3. *What is the doctrine and technical interface concepts for the TAO Center Operation in a joint environment?*

This is almost pure gobbledygook, marred in addition by faulty agreement of the verb. I doubt that the writer himself knew the meaning of 'technical interface concepts'. He probably did know what he meant by 'joint environment', but few of his readers will, and many will believe that he abuses the good noun 'environment'.

4. *The initial phase of Data Analysis involves the development or modification of special analytical methodologies. These can include trip hierarchy modeling, computerized flow simulations, and data-orientated network restructuring. Methodologies used by the Urban Centers study and other current efforts will be employed wherever possible to facility input-output compatibility.*

Computer language is a strange and disturbing product of our time. What are 'analytical methodologies'? Why should anyone who hoped to be understood invent such deformities as 'hierarchy modelling', 'computerized flow simulations' and 'data-orientated network restructuring'? Don't tell me that he could not have found simpler words to express what he was trying to say! He was obviously keeping the

mysteries of computer science secure from vulgar familiarity. He slipped when he turned the noun 'facility' into a verb, an error even in a gobbledygooker's book, but he comes back bravely with the impenetrable 'input-output compatibility'.

Sometimes, the muddy phrases are euphemisms or evasions, meant to blur unpleasant or damaging facts. Thus *napalm* may become *selective ordnance*; *retreat* or *withdrawal* may become *retrograde movement*; the phrase 'protective reaction air strikes' covers *air attacks*; an unofficial execution becomes 'terminated with extreme prejudice'; 'crop-poisoning' may appear as 'resources control'. A market researcher may conceal an error as 'a demographic skew'. A child who cheats in school is 'ethically disoriented'. A bad child is a 'severe norm violator'. A person who is fired is 'dehired', 'outplaced', 'selected out' or 'made redundant'. A lie may be called 'an inoperative statement'.

Words are muddy not only because they obscure meaning, but because some of them are pretentious, replacing simple words which might not carry so much weight and evidence of the user's large vocabulary. *Use* is less impressive than *utilize*, *make* than *fabricate*, *laws* than *statutory provisions*, *before* than *prior to*, *have* than *possess*, *do* than *accomplish*, *prohibit* than *militate against*, *happen* than *transpire*.

Robert G. Weaver, who teaches expository writing at the Army War College, recently published an article in *Army* (July 1973) entitled 'Meet General Bafflebag, Chief of Obfuscation'. In it, he tells how he was asked, when he first arrived, to describe his course, stating its purpose. We wrote, 'To help officers write effective English'. The colonel who reviewed the paper *stopped breathing when he came to that sentence. He looked incredulously at it and then at me. Then he said patiently. 'Can't you say that in a little more sophisticated way?' I tried a few times and finally settled for his version: 'To prepare officers for high level command and staff assignments by cultivating the skill of writing.'*

Analyzing the rephrased purpose, Weaver comments:

*It says in effect: We don't know what it is and don't care to define it, but it has to be resplendent; and when people see it they must know that this is the kind of thing a high-level person does, so let's not get it confused with the plain talk of any ordinary mortal.*

Weaver gives another example of fuzzing up meaning that in the light of Watergate stands out as a horror of communication.

*A manager somewhere is hobbled by an obsolete machine. He can't replace it as long as it works. If he could get somebody to break it everyone would be better off. He could write a memo: 'Bill, break that machine'. The stark clarity of that message could come back to haunt him. His boss might say, 'How dare you ask Bill to break a perfectly good machine!' So the manager says something like this: 'All aspects of the problem having been carefully considered, it has been suggested that certain accounting benefits may accrue to this office if the widget gadget on level 1B were rendered inoperable'. Now, if Bill breaks the machine and there are no repercussions, the manager can take credit for having ordered the breaking. If Bill's deed backfires, the manager can say, 'I didn't tell him to break it. I just told him to render it inoperable. I thought he had sense enough to unplug it. It's hard to get competent help these days'.*

A word-watcher in the CIA has listed the following elegant words commonly used in the correspondence of the clandestine services: *caveat, rationale, thrust, interface* (as a noun and or verb), *dichotomy, lacuna, forthcoming* (in the sense of candid), *profile* (high or low), *silhouette* (high or low), *options, lifestyles, posture, rapport*. Most of these words, he comments, don't convey clear meaning, but they sound 'distinguished and important'.

We might add a few more wetback words which have illegally entered the English language and become undesirable citizens: *capitulationist, culturicide, decisioning, disincentive, doctrinarianism, empirically validated, ghettonomics, preemptive strike, somatopsychic, wholenatured, organic will*.

A Congressional subcommittee making a special study of 'The Federal Paperwork Jungle', has estimated that the annual cost of government writing — letters, reports, publications — is \$8 billion. If one Government record were burned every second, some statistician has figured out, it would take 2000 years to burn all those now in filing cabinets. Much of this vast accumulation, say the critics of the system, is the unnecessary result of gobbledygook which one of them has defined as 'a disease to which bureaucrats are peculiarly susceptible and which is indicated by a swelling of the vocabulary and a dulling of the senses'. The subcommittee figured that \$1.5 billion of the \$8 billion go for writing an annual billion letters. If letters were concise and made free of gobbledygook, the Government could save from \$100 million to \$200 million a year.

If, by some miracle, all current jargon were eliminated from the language so that today all bureaucratic communication would be, in Somerset Maugham's words, 'simple, lucid, and euphonious', new muddy phrases would have to be invented for tomorrow because many writers do not *want* to be simple and lucid. They don't mind euphony if 'good sound' is all it means. The more resonant the word, especially if it is a Latinized polysyllable, the better they like it. But simplicity might make others suggest that their knowledge is not profound or their discipline hollow or their impact on society unimpressive; and lucidity is a dangerous quality, making clear where responsibility and understanding lie. Unfortunately, many people don't wish to be pinned down by what they say. If they are imprecise, they can wriggle out of responsibility for ideas that turn out to be unacceptable or disadvantageous.

The great evil of gobbledegook is not only that it is ugly and irritating and indigestible, but that it allows the user to get away with vagueness and irresponsibility for what he says at the same time that it makes him sound highly professional and articulate. We can forgive him even if we don't understand him when he over-uses technical language because we can assume that his subject is difficult or abstract and that he normally communicates only with other specialists. We're sorry that he doesn't take the trouble to get through to us, but we must defer to the experts in a technological age. When he deliberately uses muddy phrases to obscure meaning or to evade responsibility or when he is trying to impress us with his wisdom and his familiarity with 'inwords', we have reason to despise him. This kind of intention to confuse, lack of truth, and use of euphemisms and other inexact terms are more and more evident today.

### Cliches

I am not speaking about tired phrases like 'cute as a bug', 'crooked as a dog's hind leg', 'little girls' room', 'as honest as the day is long', and other manifestations of folk wisdom and unimaginative figures of speech. I'm thinking about the pompous repetition of words and phrases that may have been effective the first 10,000 times they were used, but which have worn out their forcefulness: *point in time*, *time-frame*, *thrust*, *clout*, *problem area*, *consensus of opinion*, *spectrum*, *orchestration*, *climate of opinion*, *environment* (as in 'aqueous environment' for water, 'modern environment' for today), *nitty-gritty*, *core area*, *combat integrity*, *phase factor*, and so forth.

Before the time of instant national and international communication, fad words stayed around longer than they do today. Before it died, a cliché slowly moved from the big cities into the hinterland, and the small towns enjoyed popular phrases, which had just arrived, long after they were shunned by the speakers in the cities where they were born. Today, radio and television wear out words as they do jokes and dramatic situations by overexposure. 'Nuts and bolts' and 'nitty-gritty' have begun to nauseate, like 'tell it like it is' and 'can of worms'. During the Vietnam War (which the cliché-makers decided to call a *conflict* rather than a *war*), we heard or read the phrase 'protective reaction strike' until we were numb and began to accept it as meaningful until suddenly its hypocrisy became apparent. Other examples of clichés (and illegitimate words) which have begun to pall are *seize* (as in 'seized of a problem') *viable*, *knowhow*, *frame of reference*, *rubric*, *dialogue*, *back-stop*, *scenario*, *think pieces*, *phase-out*, *bird-dog* (verb), 'light at the end of the tunnel', *ambivalence*, 'other side of the coin', and, of course, monstrosities like *surveil* and *liaise*, which someone has called 'a deformed, genetically uncivilized infinitive'.

Most clichés are not gobbledygook in the sense that they obscure meanings. Many of them are once-bright metaphors, tarnished by overuse. Some are 'inwords', admired and imitated ad nauseam: *clout*, *thrust*, *escalate*, *crunch*, *simplistic*, *boggle*, *visceral response*, *infrastructure* and *orchestrate* are examples. Constantly repeated, they became irritants, detracting from clarity because the listener finds himself attending to the means of communication rather than to the message it is meant to convey. In everyday speech, we get into the habit of using popular clichés without realizing that they may stand in the way of effective communication: *life-style*, *senior citizen*, *fun party*, 'have a ball', 'let's face it', 'I have news for you', 'get with it', 'I've had it'.

At the National War College several years ago, one of the students, Marine Colonel (now Brigadier General) Ralph Spanjer, made a survey of the gobbledygook used by guest speakers at the college, all men of achievement. He concluded that there are four general varieties of contemporary triteness especially popular in governmental ('emphatically including military') and academic circles.

1. Some words, he decided, are simply trite: *boggle*, *timeframe*, *inhouse*. 2. Others achieve triteness because of overuse: *thrust*, *credibility gap*, *scenario*, and *quantum jump*. 3. Some are foreign phrases

excessively used: *vis-à-vis*, *quid pro quo*, *rapprochement*, *détente*, *caveat*, *a priori*. 4. Some are basically good, but atrociously overused: *ambivalent*, *expertise*, *dialogue*, *clout*, *spectrum*.

Fifty-one of the hundred speakers used the champion cliché *pragmatic* that year. Among the runners up were *vis-à-vis*, *dialogue*, *xenophobia*, *charisma*, *thrust*, *exacerbate*, *dichotomy*, *hegemony*, *cost-effective*, *proliferation*, *counterproductive*, *quid pro quo*, *caveat*, *viable*, *ambivalence*, *scenario*, *escalate*, *expertise*, *low silhouette*, *quantum jump*, *flexible response*, *rapprochement*, *détenté*, *simplistic*, *inhouse*, *timeframe*, *pluralistic*, *polycentrism*, and *infrastructure*.

An ingenious member of General Spanjer's class combined his list of gobbledygook words in a parody of Hamlet's famous soliloquy. Following are a few lines from that imaginative effort:

*To exacerbate or not to exacerbate, that is the dichotomy;  
Whether 'tis more viable vis-à-vis the mind to suffer  
The thrusts and boggles of outrageous escalation,  
Or to take arms against a sea of pragmatism,  
And by opposing, end them. To die, to crunch,  
No more, and by a crunch to say we end  
The xenophobia and the thousand counter-productive dialogues  
That flesh is heir to; 'tis an inhouse ambivalence  
Devoutly to be opted, to die, to sleep . . . .*

As long as we stand by unprotestingly and accept the assaults on our beautiful, flexible language, we deserve nothing better than the turgid, exasperating communication prevalent today. As long as newly fledged professionals admire and imitate the heinous jargon of their superiors, feeling that thereby they show their sophistication, gobbledygook will thrive. As long as those in high places produce verbal miscarriages like *persecutorial*, *confidentiality*, *prioritize*, *to auspice* and *self-destruct*, which then become part of the national vocabulary, we will have deterioration of the language. As long as those who object to 'nebulous verbosity' and pretentious 'bafflegab' are called enemies of usage, which is the justifier of any violation of grammar, pronunciation, and meaning the speaker or writer consciously or unconsciously makes, we are in danger of imprecise, ugly and ineffective communication.

Let's stamp out gobbledygook! ☞

# **My Subject Is War**

**Wilfred Owen MC:**

## **A Portrait of a Soldier - Poet**



*Lieutenant C. A. Jones  
Royal Australian Artillery*

**My subject is War, and the pity of War. The Poetry is in the pity. Yet these elegies are to this generation in no sense consolatory. They may be to the next. All a poet can do to-day is warn. That is why the true Poets must be truthful.**

**W**ILFRED Owen today holds but a microscopic place in English literature if quantity of work produced in a lifetime can be used as any sort of yardstick. However, of that quantity produced he was, due to his deepest sincerity, convictions and personal example, able to prove himself an inspiring leader to the soldiers under his command, and as a war poet of such force that his name remains synonymous with the record of suffering endured by the frontline soldiers of the Great War.

### **The Coming of War**

On 28 June 1914, the fateful shots were fired at Sarajeva in Serbia (now part of Yugoslavia), which were to provide the spark to ignite the powder keg of the European power struggle into explosion. The victims, namely the Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the throne of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and his wife, Sophie, were assassinated by a student and Serbian extremist named Gavrelo Princip, who not only ended two lives, but also an era in the history of mankind.

Sir Basil Liddell Hart wrote, 'Fifty years were spent in the process of making Europe explosive', and once that explosion had occurred

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there was no containing it. After the initial shock of the assassination Europe was almost immediately divided into two armed camps, with the Central Powers on one side and the Allies on the other. The following table shows the rapid sequence of events which led to total war:

- 28 July 1914    Austro-Hungary declares war on Serbia.
- 29 July 1914    Russia mobilizes armies for war.
- 31 July 1914    Germany demands France remain neutral if war breaks out between her and Russia. Germany wants as a pledge the French fortresses of Verdun and Toul. France refuses.
- 1 August 1914   Germany declares war on Russia.
- 2 August 1914   Germany demands free passage for troops through Belgium in order to outflank the French fortifications on the Franco-German border. Belgium refuses.
- 3 August 1914   Germany declares war on France.
- 4 August 1914   German troops invade Belgium through neutral Luxembourg. Britain sends Germany an ultimatum demanding withdrawal. Germany refuses. Britain declares war on Germany.

### **Initial Strategy: or the War before Owen**

Each major European power had, prior to the actual outbreak of the Great War, a certain amount of military opinion as to what would be the most desirable strategy to use in order to achieve an early victory in the event of war. Some of these military theories were sound concepts, while many others unfortunately were false to such a degree as to be the cause of hundreds of thousands of needless deaths.

Part of the French military thinking at the time involved the use of a chain of fortresses centred around four cities<sup>1</sup> along the Franco-German border, which extended from Belgium in the north to the Alps in the south. The Germans, on the other hand, had developed, due to their advanced military thinking, a somewhat better plan which they

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<sup>1</sup> Those cities being Belfort, Epinal, Toul and Verdun.



called 'The Schlieffen Plan' after its initial planner and then Chief of Staff, Alfred von Schlieffen.

In brief, this plan entailed a heavy German right hook to smash through Belgium, while a much weaker, but defensive left wing remained at the Franco-German border to prevent a similar French breakthrough. Only ten German divisions were to be sent to the Eastern Front to hold back the Russian hordes. The Germans were gambling on a slow Russian mobilization, in order to set her armies the task of knocking France out of the war in a matter of weeks, thus preventing the British from landing troops on the Continent and also eliminating the risk involved in fighting a two-front war.

The Germans came very near to success. In fact the plan probably only failed due to the inefficiency of one man, that man being von Schlieffen's successor, General Moltke. Moltke was a very cautious, talentless man who did not possess the nerve required to implement the Schlieffen Plan. He therefore amended the initial plan by reducing the right wing of the German line by approximately a third of its original strength. By so doing, Moltke shortened the German line which, on punching through Belgium fell short of Paris when swinging south in an enveloping move, thus missing the heart of French resistance and also running out of momentum due to the insufficiency of fresh reserves. The German advance was finally thrown back outside Paris at the Battle of the Marne in September with the cost of 250,000 casualties to both sides.

The results of the opening strategy of the Great War was that there was a race to the sea by both sides in a vain attempt to outflank each other. Also Moltke was dismissed as Chief of the German General Staff, his successor being von Falkenhayn.

Ypres<sup>2</sup> was the focus of this race to sea. It was written of First Ypres:

The battle was won by a khaki line of tired, laggard and unshaven men, unwashed, plastered with mud, many in little more than rags. The Officers and men of the BEF showed inestimable value of discipline and a unique standard of musketry.

Ypres marked the end of the war of movement and the beginning of years of trench warfare and deadlock. The battle itself was to cost the British alone some 50,000 lives.

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<sup>2</sup> The scene of bloody battles in 1914, 1915 and 1917.

### The Coming of Owen

It was not until 1915 that Wilfred Owen joined the Army and became engulfed in the vortex of conflict. When war had broken out a year earlier Owen had viewed it with an abstract objectiveness. In fact his 1915 enlistment seems to have been controlled by his tutorial programme.

Born at Oswestry, Shropshire on 18 March 1893, Owen was educated at the Birkenhead Institute and then at London University. In 1913 he went to France (he had already been there on earlier occasions with his parents)<sup>3</sup> and took up a tutor's post at the Berlitz School of Languages at Bordeaux, where he remained until 1915 when he returned to England and joined the Artists Rifles on 22 October. Owen gained his commission on 4 June and was gazetted to the Manchester Regiment where he served with their 2nd Battalion in France later in 1916.

On no account may it be said that Owen started his poetry as a result of the Great War. When he was ten his mother took him for a holiday to a town called Broxton; ten years later Owen wrote:

For I fared back into my life's arrears  
Even the weeks at Broxton, by the Hill,  
Where first I felt my boyhood fill  
With uncontainable movements, there was born  
My poethood.

The war however made his poetry. Many of Owen's pre-war verses were based on an over 'poetic' Keatsian style. Although he had learnt sadness from French poets such as Tailhade (which was to stand him in good stead later in his poetical career), Owen still as yet seemed to lack a goal, a subject in which to sublimate his poetical instinct. He needed a topic which he could grasp and thus change his style from being a mere reflection of Keats into something with a life of its own. Ironically Owen found what he sought in something he was to protest against until his early death — the war.

Not long in France, Owen soon began to write poetry which took up the view of the sacrifice of the common soldier. His early poems of the war were as if he was only observing events from a distance, almost

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<sup>3</sup> Owen was later to recall that he would never again beg his father to take him to France.

as a bystander. They were not so much of suffering as dealing with the unfairness of the roles people had in the war. Owen believed that in no way did the people at home deserve the life of ease and freedom earned at such great sacrifice by the front line soldiers:

You shall not hear their mirth.  
You shall not come to think them well content  
By any jest of mine. These men are worth  
Your tears. You are not worth their merriment.

Truly Owen had found his purpose! He himself noted that here was his chance, 'To be able to write as I know how'.

Like most people in 1915, Owen was of the belief that the war would not last many months. Yet both sides were eager and confident. Continental armies were conscripted; Lord Kitchener (British Secretary for War) appealed for a new army. There was a great rush to serve. While at the front, trenches were built up and improved, the routine of stand-to became second nature and the heroism was incredible. Stories filtered back from the front of occasions where battalions took footballs into no-man's-land and dribbled them across to the enemy trenches.

Caught up in this whirlpool of activity Owen still had time to comment on the Army administration upon arriving in France: 'No one knew anything about us on this side, and we might have taken weeks to get here. ...'

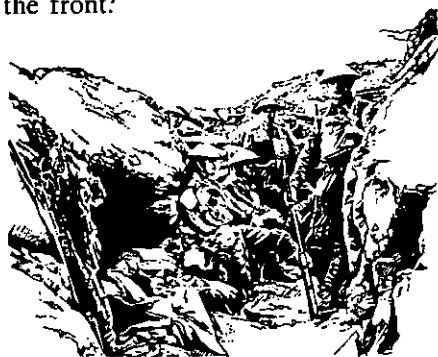
Owen also wrote to his mother mentioning how he had chosen a servant recently, not for his profile, nor yet his clean hands, but for his excellence in bayonet work. For the servant is always at the side of his officer in the charge, and therefore, remarks the sagacious Owen, is worth a dozen nurses.

### **Advance: and be killed**

By the end of 1915 the Germans still remained confident. They had arrived at the idea that a breakthrough was not essential. Rather, a plan was decided upon where they would 'bleed France white', by wearing her armies down at Verdun. The Germans called their plan Operation *Gericht*<sup>4</sup> and it involved the use of some 1,400 guns in the space of a few square miles. The French had received from various sources adequate warning but Joffre paid no heed, in fact he even

<sup>4</sup> Meaning 'Place of Execution'.

moved a large number of his own guns out of that particular sector of the front:



On 21 February 1916 the German plan began in earnest. They had a superiority of 3:1 in numbers and 7:1 in guns, yet made little progress. The struggle developed into a major national morale issue. The Germans, due to pressure from home, became committed to the capture of Verdun. The French, however, were just as determined to stand

fast. Petain was appointed to control the defences and adopted the motto 'They shall not pass'. To reduce the pressure on Verdun, the British launched a series of disastrous offences on the Somme.

On 1 July 1916, British guns opened fire with a tremendous artillery barrage on the Somme. It was to last six days and consume some 1½ million shells. The first assault on the German defences was launched at 0730 hours on 1 July:

No braver or more determined men ever faced an enemy than these sons of the British Empire who went over the top on 1 July 1916. Never before had the ranks of a British army on the field of battle contained the finest of all classes of the nation in physique, brains and education. And they were all volunteers, not conscripts. If ever a decisive victory was to be won it was expected now.<sup>5</sup>

Despite these gallant words, however, the Germans, like the French at Verdun, had survived the tremendous bombardments. As a result the British army suffered 60,000 casualties on the first day of the offensive, which included 20,000 killed and another 26,000 seriously wounded. These were the worst losses ever suffered by a British army in the field. Owen, ever close to the sufferings of his men, wrote, in their jargon, 'The Chances':

I mind as 'ow the night afore that how  
 Us five got talking, — we was in the know, —  
 'Over the top tomorrer; boys, we're for it,  
 First wave we are, first ruddy wave; that's tore it'.  
 'Ah well,' says Jimmy, — an' 'e's seen some scrappin' —  
 Ye get knocked out; else wounded — bad or cushy;  
 Scuppered; or nowt except yer feeling mushy.

<sup>5</sup> Official History of the War, *Military Operations, France and Belgium, 1916*, vol. 1.

One of us got the knock-out, -blown to chops.  
T'other was hurt like, losin' both 'is props.  
An' one, to use the work of hypocrites,  
'Ad the misfortoon to be took be Fritz.  
Now me, I wasn't scratched, praise God Almighty  
(Though next time please I'll thank 'im for a blighty),  
But poor young Jim, 'es livin' an' 'es not,  
'E reckoned 'e'd five chances an' 'e 'ad;  
'E's wounded, killed, and pris'ner, all the lot,  
The bloody lot all rolled in one. Jim's mad.

By November the battle had died down. The result was a salient ten miles long and ten miles deep pushed into the German line; but at such a cost! The British army had suffered some 420,000 casualties, the French 207,000 and the Germans some 660,000. This was a true reflection on the attitude of complete disregard for needless loss of life shown by the commanders of both sides. At home, the morale of the people was delivered a stunning blow. Asquith was replaced by Lloyd George and the French removed Joffre from his position as Commander-in-Chief of the French army.

## Gas

Gas by now had been used by both sides with terrible effect. Warnings of the first gas attacks (which were contrary to the 1907 Hague Convention) had come months beforehand. They were even published in the March edition of the 'Bulletin of the French 10th Army', but no action was taken. The British were even given an efficient respirator by a German deserter but typically failed to utilize it and instead continued to design inefficient ones.

When gas did come, the Germans first used green Chlorine gas and later Phosgene, which was colourless and ten times more toxic. The Allies countered with gas of their own but the Germans kept the initiative and in 1917 brought into service the hideous Mustard Gas, which besides being deadly to breathe, was also corrosive to the skin. In the last year of the war, approximately half of the shells used by the Germans were gas, with both sides suffering over a million casualties in the final outcome. Owen describes a 'gas death', in his brutal poem, '*Dulce Et Decorum Est*':

Bent double like old beggars under sacks,  
 Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge,  
 Till on the haunting flares we turned our backs,  
 And towards our distant rest began to trudge.  
 Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots,  
 But limped on, blood shod. All went lame, all blind;  
 Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots  
 Of gas-shells dropping softly behind.

Gas! Gas! Quick, boys! — An ecstasy of fumbling,  
 Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time,  
 But someone still was yelling out and stumbling  
 And floundering like a man in fire or lime —  
 Dim through the misty panes and thick green light,  
 As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.

In all my dreams before my helpless sight  
 He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.  
 If in some smothering dreams, you too could pace  
 Behind the wagon that we flung him in,  
 And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,  
 His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin;  
 If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood  
 Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,  
 Bitter as the cud  
 Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues, —  
 My friend, you would not tell with such high zest  
 To children ardent for some desperate glory,  
 The old Lie — *Dulce et decorum est*  
*Pro patria mori.*

### Sentry Duty

In January 1917, Owen wrote to his mother, 'I have just received orders to take a train at E'taples, to join the 2nd Manchesters. This is a Regular Regiment, so I have come off right well. It is a huge satisfaction to be going among well trained troops and genuine "real old" officers'.

It was immediately on joining the Manchesters that Owen probably suffered his worst experience of the war. It occurred when he took a

detachment forward to man an observation post in no-man's-land. In one of his many letters to his mother, Owen tells how he and his platoon occupied a forward OP amid an 'octopus of sticking clay'. The OP had two feet of rising water at its floor and one entrance blocked by fire. The Germans knew they were there and gave Owen just cause to remark, 'These fifty hours were the agony of my happy life'. He admits that he himself almost broke down and drowned in the water which rose by the hour. The platoon occupying a position to the left, Owen wrote, had both its sentries 'blown to nothing'. Owen suffers pangs of conscience when he recalls that one of those sentries was a servant he had earlier rejected and who could be living now since servants were excused sentry duty. Of his own sentries, Owen says he kept them halfway under cover, yet despite this, an incident happened which Owen records in his magnificent poem, 'The Sentry':

We'd found an old Boche dug-out, and he knew,  
And gave us hell, for shell on frantic shell  
Hammered on top, but never quite burst through.  
Rain guttering down in waterfalls of slime  
Kept slush waist high that, rising hour by hour,  
Choked up the steps too thick with clay to climb.  
What murk of air remained stank cold, and sour  
With fumes of whizz-bangs, and the smell of men  
Who'd lived their years, and left their curse in the den,  
If not their corpses . . .

There we herded from the blast  
Of whizz-bangs, but one found our door at last, —  
Buffeting eyes and breath, muffing the candles.  
And thud! flump! thud! down the steep steps came  
thumping  
And splashing in the flood, deluging much —  
The sentry's body; then his rifle, handles  
Of old Boche bombs, and mud in ruck on ruck.  
We dredged him up, for killed, until he whined  
'O sir, my eyes — I'm blind — I'm blind, I'm blind!'  
Coaxing, I held a flame against his lids  
And said if he could see the least blurred light  
He was not blind, in time he'd get all right.  
'I can't', he sobbed. Eyeballs, huge — bulged like squids,

Watch my dreams still, but I forgot him there  
In posting next for duty, and sending a scout  
To beg a stretcher somewhere, and floundering about  
To other parts under the shrieking air.  
Those other wretches, how they bled and spewed,  
And one who would have drowned himself for good, —  
I try not to remember these things now.  
Let dread hark back for one word only; now  
Half listening to that sentry's moans and jumps,  
And the wild chattering of his broken teeth,  
Renewed most horribly whenever crumps  
Pummelled the roof and slogged the air beneath —  
Through the dense din, I say, we heard him shout  
'I see your lights!' But ours had long died out.

Owen later somewhat proudly informed his mother that the officer who had relieved him had abandoned the position after only 24 hours, leaving behind his three Lewis guns. Owen added that the officer was to be court-martialled the following week.

### **No-man's-land**

It can be seen that Wilfred Owen disclosed many of his personal thoughts and feelings to his mother, a person most dear to him. I am sure that he did not include her even when he wrote: 'All women, without exception, annoy me, and the mercenaries . . . I utterly detest.'

Owen then had little pity for bereaved women whom he considered not worthy of the men who died at the front. Yet for his mother Owen held a definite sensitivity. By his correspondence with her we learn much about the war and his feelings regarding it. Owen describes no-man's-land to his mother by saying: '... the fires of Sodom and Gomorrah could not light a candle to it. . . . It is pock-marked like a body of the foulest disease, and its odour is the breath of cancer. . . .'

Owen adds: 'There is no sign of life, on the horizon and a thousand signs of death.'

As always, Owen's concern for his men shows evidence when he writes to his mother that he is most worried about the total impossibility of the evacuation of wounded from 'the abode of madness'. He adds cynically that the dead sit outside the dugouts all day, all night and are still there a week later sitting in their motionless groups. It is this which saps the 'soldierly spirit':



For a man who kept himself alive on 'brandy and the fear of death', Owen had many near escapes. One such lucky escape Owen describes in the following manner:

A big shell lit on top of the bank, just two yards from my head. Before I awoke, I was blown in the air right away from the bank! I passed most of the following days in a railway cutting, in a hole just big enough to lie in, and covered with corrugated iron. My brother officer of B Coy, 21t G, lay opposite in a similar hole. But he was covered with earth, and no relief will ever relieve him, nor will his rest be a nine days rest.

### Evacuation

Owen's luck really ran slim on 19 March 1917 when he was wounded and sent back to the 13th CCS. He recovered rapidly, however, and returned to his battalion by early April. On 1 May Owen was once again sent back to the 13th CCS mainly as a result of bad nerves. From there Owen was sent back to the 41st Stationary Hospital, then in June to the number 1 General Hospital, then again on 18 June to the Netley Hospital in Wales and finally to the Craiglockhart War Hospital, Edinburgh on 26 June.

While in Craiglockhart Owen had the good fortune to meet Sigfried Sassoon, another war poet. Sassoon willingly helped Owen with his work. A Mrs Gray, who also met Owen while he was at Craiglockhart, wrote of him:

He could only suffer, or rejoice vicariously. He was too sensitive, too sympathetic for direct personal experience.

She also observed Owen as a man being neither gay nor playful but possessing a tenderness of spirit.

Many soldiers involved in action during the Great War held a great bitterness towards civilians at home but against war profiteers in particular. While at Craiglockhart Owen wrote:

This morning at 8.20 we heard a boat torpedoed in the bay, about a mile out, they say who saw it. I think only ten lives were saved. I wish the Boche would have the pluck to come right in and make a clean sweep of the pleasure boats, and the promenaders on the Spa, and all the stinking Leeds and Bradford war profiteers now reading *John Bull* on Scarborough Sands.

When Owen's time came to return to the front he wrote, 'I am glad. That is I am much gladder to be going out again than afraid. I shall better be able to cry my outcry, playing my part'. Owen also added, 'Now must I throw my candle on [Sassoon's] torch'. It is with these statements I think that Owen is able to answer the question he had earlier asked himself, that being, 'And am I not myself a conscientious objector with a very seared conscience?' To Sassoon, Owen

wrote, 'I'm in hasty retreat towards the front. Battle is easier here, and therefore you will stay and endure old men and women to the end, and wage a bitterer war and more hopeless'.

While in England, Owen had seen a light — namely that of passivity at any price! He wrote:

Suffer, dishonour, disgrace, but never, never resort to arms.  
Be bullied, be outraged, be killed, but do not kill.

Did Owen, himself a soldier, follow such a teaching? An interesting point which can probably be answered by the poet in that, in his poetry, Owen shows only a regard for his fellow soldiers. He never, for a moment, considers that their sacrifice will be worth what it gains. In one of his characteristic letters to his mother he wrote that he was in France because his men needed him:

I came out in order to help these boys — directly by leading them as well as an officer can, indirectly by watching their sufferings that I may speak of them as well as a pleader can.

It was clear that Owen was in France for the sake of his men and for no other reason. When mulling over the insanely stupid reasons for which the ordinary soldier was being slaughtered Owen wrote 'Futility', which includes the searching question:

Was it for this the day grew tall?  
—O what made fatuous sunbeams toil  
To break earth's sleep at all?

More angrily Owen again cried out with frustrated rage in his poem 'Anthem For Doomed Youth':

What passing bells for those who die as cattle?  
Only the monstrous anger of the guns.  
Only the stuttering rifles rapid rattle  
Can patter out their hasty orisons!

### Nearing the End

By the time Owen had returned to his unit in France, the Hindenburg Line was under assault. The war was still continuing with unabated fury. The battles of Arras, Messines and 3rd Ypres, (including Passchendaele), to name but a few, all passed with the same tremendous casualty lists. 1917 was perhaps the worst year of the war for the Allies. The French had received heavy losses and the morale of her army was low. In the east, Russia had sued for peace and thus released thousands of German soldiers for duty on the Western Front. To make

things even worse, Britain was suffering badly from the effects of the German submarine warfare.

At the front, mine warfare had reached its peak. The Battle of Messines was preceded by the blowing of 19 underground mines after two years work by Welsh miners. Plumer, Commander of the British 2nd Army, said to the miners the day before the battle:

Gentlemen, I don't know whether we shall make history tomorrow, but we shall certainly change geography.

He was correct in both senses. The shock waves from the explosions were felt in London. Craters up to 300 feet wide and 100 feet deep were caused, resulting in some 20,000 German casualties. Yet still the German line held fast. Sickened, Owen wrote:

I thought of some who worked dark pits  
Of war, and died  
Digging the rock where Death reposes  
Peace lies indeed.

With the cracking of the German economy and the added weight of fresh US troops, the Allies gradually began to push back the German line. On occupying a German trench, Owen wrote:

It was curious and troubling to pick up his letters where he had left off writing in the middle of a word . . . .

It was in one of these advances that Owen, on 1 October, was to win his MC.

By now the Central Powers were fast reaching a state of collapse. To his mother, Owen wrote:

It is rumoured that Austria has already surrendered. The new soldiers cheer when they hear these rumours, but the old ones bite their pipes and go on cleaning their rifles, unbelieving.

Thus Owen echoed the general attitude on the Western Front towards the close of 1918.

### **The End**

On 4 November 1918, Owen and his men had reached as far as the Sambre Canal. They found the bridges down and attempted to cross by raft. Owen was everywhere (according to eye-witnesses) spurring his men on — until he was hit and killed by a sniper's bullet — just one week before armistice. As in life, so in death, Owen reflected the futility of the sacrifice (the battalion later crossed at another point further downstream).

The Great War was one in which all the Great Powers of the time were involved. It marked the first time that the US had played a significant part in European affairs. It was a war which shook monarchs from their thrones and destroyed empires. Yet despite this, none of the important effects were really lasting. No nation fell out as a great power and material destruction, although great, was only in limited areas. Within ten years most nations had their economies at a level surpassing that of the 1914 level. The only real point of economic significance was probably that European nations, especially Britain, had to draw on their overseas investments in order to meet their bills.

On the political side, people lost faith in governments which ran the war badly. Yet in countries such as Britain, where the government had done well, a more stable political environment evolved. More of a significance was the fact that Britain no longer dictated absolute power over the waves. Both the US and Japan (in the Far East) arose as worthy challengers.

Throughout the duration of the war, most nations had the opportunity to sue for peace. The peacemakers, however, fell from power; Bethmann in Germany, Asquith in Britain, the Tzar in Russia, and were replaced by hard men such as Lloyd George, Clemenceau and Ludendorff. The war just continued on even after all the initial so called reasons for fighting had long been lost in the oblivion of destruction. It is of little wonder that the British soldier sang:

We're here because we're here  
Because we're here  
Because we're here—

This was the war for which Owen and millions of his fellow soldiers had sacrificed their lives. It was against the recurrence of such a war which Owen had warned against in an original language, harsh with the realism and horror of personal experience. He was a young poet who had become of age emotionally and spiritually by his time in the trenches.

How different is the bulk of Owen's poetry written during the period from August 1917 to September 1918 when compared to his early, vague and highly 'poetic' pseudo-Keatsian verse. It was the war which had brought about a revolution in his mind. It had been the subject which had made the poet — and also killed him.

Wilfred Owen MC, war poet, Army Officer and humanitarian.

left us with one great legacy; his collection of letters and verse. Owen said:

And Death fell with me, like a deepening moon.  
And He, picking a manner of worm, which half had hid  
Its bruises in the earth, but crawled no further,  
Showed me its feet, the feet of many men,  
And the fresh-severed head of it, my head. ✂

#### ANDREW BONAR LAW

1858-1923

If, therefore, war should ever come between these two countries [Great Britain and Germany], which Heaven forbid! it will not, I think, be due to irresistible natural laws, it will be due to the want of human wisdom.

*Speech, House of Commons, 27 Nov. 1911*

I said [in 1911] that if ever war arose between Great Britain and Germany it would not be due to inevitable causes, for I did not believe in inevitable war. I said it would be due to human folly.

*Speech, House of Commons, 6 Aug. 1914.*

# CIDS A.R. ABBREVIATED REPORT

*Captain P. S. Sadler  
Royal Australian Artillery*

‘**A** NYWAY, old man, nice to see you again and call over next time you’re in Canberra — I have to go over to CIDS now.’

‘Sid’s? Sid’s what — barbers, pie stall, wine bar?’

‘No, not Sid’s — CIDS. You’ve never heard of it?’

That is a fairly common exchange at Russell Offices or Campbell Park these days. Very few people seem to have heard of CIDS, which is not surprising because up to now it has quietly gone about its business without fuss or publicity. But CIDS work is becoming more important in this era of increasingly automated and streamlined communications.

CIDS is a tri-service organization which serves all elements of the Department of Defence. The letters stand for Central Initials Development Section. CIDS is responsible for investigating and fulfilling the requirements for acronyms and groups of initials which may, or may not, be needed to make day-to-day administration and communication easier. At first sight this may seem to be an easy task, but it is not so clear-cut. A common mis-assumption about the work of CIDS is that it must always devise something appropriate and easy to remember, but the requirements for awkward and undecipherable sets of initials must not be forgotten.

In almost all aspects of society there are valid and legitimate reasons for wanting to cause a certain degree of doubt and confusion.

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*Captain Sadler enlisted in the ARA (R Aust Svy) in 1959. Graduating from OCS in 1964 he was allotted to RAA. Regimental duties followed including service in Vietnam 1966-67. In 1970-71 he completed the Long Course at US Army Field Artillery School and on his return was an Instructor at the School of Artillery, 1972-73. He was posted to the Directorate of Artillery in July 1973.*

Within the defence forces, seemingly illogical groups of initials and awkward acronyms may provide a form of low-level security. This is part of the 'what you don't know won't hurt you' syndrome. Other 'initial codes' are designed to be broken relatively easily, but the 'ease' depends upon a combined experience/intelligence factor. It may be desirable that the experienced sergeant decipher something that it would be dangerous for the young lieutenant to know. The development of initials and acronyms to fulfil such requirements is obviously a job for specialists.

The listing of initials and their meaning is another job which requires skill and an understanding of the sphere in which the initials are to be used. We have all read pamphlets which contain a glossary of abbreviations and their meanings. How often have you seen a set of defined initials which have no significance and appear only once, but have been unable to discover the meaning of something else which seems critical? Bad editing? Sloppy staff work? Poor proof reading? None of these things — it's the planned 'need to know' syndrome. If you are expected to understand that aspect of the pamphlet, then you will have been taught what the initials stand for. Most readers would appreciate that *JSP 102 (Glossary)* is recognized in the trade as *CIDS magnum opus* in this field.

The man at the grass roots level may wonder why titles of branches, procedures, organizations and equipment etc., and consequently their initials, change so often. There are a number of reasons — some obvious and others not so — for this happening. Is a set of initials no longer applicable? Can a set of initials be dispensed with? Is it confusing with some other set of initials? Can it be made more confusing with some other set? Do the initials form an acronym that has unsavoury or otherwise undesirable connotations? (Special Technical Research and Engineer Assessed Knowledge may have had an acceptable acronym two years ago, but not in today's social climate). Has a set of initials which were designed for low-level security become too well known? (Too many people have come to realize that DMR does not always stand for Department of Main Roads). Can the importance of a self-inflated empire be rationalized by giving it an undignified title? (D Inf sounds impressive — D ZOT does not). A special department of CIDS, known as XAMI, monitors these requirements and devises changes.

Modern techniques have allowed expansions in the quality and quantity of CIDS work and the art of initial development has reached

a high level. But some of the old initials are still hard to better. DUKW was a classic in its field for as long as the DC-3, while the Gunners still use one of the best initial codes ever devised. When a forward observer is adjusting fire and he does not see a round land, he calls out 'OU', which means that the round was 'unobserved'. To the uninitiated 'OU' would appear to mean 'observed-un', while its derivation is actually a contraction of 'Oh, You Bastard!'

Could the business and communications oriented procedures at CIDS ever come up with such inspired brilliance as 'OU'? Probably not, in the same way that a computer could never have written *Hamlet*. However, CIDS does aim to raise the general standard of initials development and application within the services. Its achievements and progress should be followed with interest. ✕



# From The Past

## GENERAL ORDER, HORSE GUARDS

March 8, 1841.

The Master-General and Board of Ordnance being about to form Cricket Grounds for the use of the Troops at the respective Barrack Stations throughout the United Kingdom, the General Commanding-in-Chief desires that Commanding Officers of regiments, depots, and detachments, will cause these grounds to be strictly preserved, and that no carriages or horses be suffered to enter them. The cricket ground is to be considered as in the immediate charge of the Barracks master, who, however, cannot reasonably be expected to protect it effectually, unless assisted in the execution of that duty by the support and authority of the Commanding Officer of the station, as well as by the good feeling of the troops, for whose amusement and recreation this liberal arrangement is made by the public. Lord Hill will treat as a grave offence every trespass that shall be wantonly committed by the troops, either upon the cricket ground or upon its fences. The troops will, moreover, be required in every such case to pay the estimated expense of repairs, as in the case of barrack damages. Special instructions concerning the cricket grounds have been issued to the Barrack-Masters by the Master-General and Board of Ordnance.

By command of the Right Honourable General Lord Hill, Commanding-in-Chief.

JOHN MACDONALD, Adjutant-General.

*(The Sydney Cricket Ground originally belonged to the Army, and this is how it came about—Ed.)*

## SOLDIERS UNDER EXCITEMENT

May, 1851.

The following circular memorandum has been issued by the Adjutant General to the Forces:— Several instances having recently occurred in which offenders when under trial by Court-Martials or examination before the Commanding Officer have become excited and have so far forgotten themselves and the respect due to their superiors, as to throw their caps at the court or party engaged in the investigation, and thereby have involved themselves in one of the most serious offences a soldier can be guilty of, the Commander-in-Chief, with a view to

prevent as far as possible the recurrence of such crimes, has been pleased to direct that henceforth, whenever soldiers are placed under restraint requiring them to remain uncovered, they shall in all cases be deprived of their caps, and of such other articles as may be calculated to be used as missiles, in order that they may have neither the temptation nor the opportunity of committing such outrages.

### PRESERVED MEAT FOR THE NAVY

*Dec. 1851.*

The following circular (No. 76) has been issued by the Admiralty:—'My lords are pleased to direct that the under-mentioned instructions be observed in future, whenever preserved meat may be issued on board Her Majesty's ships and vessels:—Instructions for opening canisters of preserved meat, and preparing their contents for issue:—1st. The canister is to be opened with the lever knife furnished for the purpose, and is to be cut completely round the body near the top. 2nd. Great care is to be used that the meat be not broken in being taken out of the canisters. 3rd. If the meat be intended to be eaten cold (it being already fully cooked), it may at once be turned out whole, upon the canister being thus opened; but if any difficulty should be found in shaking it out unbroken, a hole must be stabbed with a knife in the bottom of the canister to admit the air, and thus to effect the desired object. 4th. When the meat is intended to be eaten warm, the canister, after being opened as directed in the first paragraph, should stand in a copper of boiling water, immersed to about two inches from the top, from 15 to 20 minutes only, in order that the meat may become sufficiently warm. 5th. If a good soup be required, it may be obtained by adding to the jelly, thus dissolved with the fat, a quantity of boiling water, with the necessary seasonings. 6th. In a hot climate, when it is intended that the meat should be eaten cold, every possible means of cooling it should be adopted previously to the canisters being opened'. ☞

*(These three extracts reprinted from Colburn's United Services Magazine and Naval and Military Journal.)*