Defence Force Journal
Contributions of any length will be considered but, as a guide, 3000 words is the ideal length. Articles should be typed double spaced, on one side of the paper, and submitted in duplicate.

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Photography
D.P.R. Stills Photo Section

Published by the Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, for the Department of Defence.

© Commonwealth of Australia 1985
ISSN 0314-1039
R 82/1097(13) Cat. No. 85 1451 8
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Printed by Ruskin Press, North Melbourne
Curtin and Churchill in London in May 1944. (Photo: Melbourne Age)
A SOLDIER'S TRIBUTE TO JOHN CURTIN

By: J. P. BUCKLEY, OBE, ED.

FOREWORD

By The Honourable K. E. Beazley, AO

Colonel Buckley's article "A Soldier's Tribute to John Curtin" is a significant part of the revision of thinking about World War II and its personalities which has been taking place for some time. Colonel Buckley's experience in the convoy which was the subject of the clash between Churchill and Curtin, the period of greatest tension in John Curtin's life, makes this article particularly interesting.

Revision of thinking about Curtin began, appropriately, with Winston Churchill himself. He wrote:

"Our discussions had not been agreeable. Later in the war . . . when he came over to England and we all got to know him well, there was a general respect for this eminent and striking personality, and I personally formed with him a friendship which, alas, was cut short by his untimely death . . ."

and

"I was too conscious of the depth and number of differences in outlook that divided us, and I regret any traces of impatience that my telegrams may bear."

The official British history of the war indicates that perhaps Churchill had more than "impatience" to regret. Sir Earle Page, appointed by the Fadden Government to the Imperial War Cabinet and kept there by Curtin, sided with Churchill in his desire to divert the Australia-bound AIF divisions recalled from the Middle East, to defend Burma. Britain's official history of "The War Against Japan" on this issue, vindicates Curtin's firm stand. The series of histories is published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office, Volume II, by Major-General S. Woodburn Kirby and others and is sub-titled "India's Most Dangerous Hour". Published after full access to documents and records, it refers to the views of the British commander in Burma, Lieutenant-General T. J. Hutton, in these terms:

"When the diversion of the 7th Australian Division was mooted, Hutton refused to indulge in wishful thinking. He warned the authorities that to send large convoys to Rangoon at that late hour was to incur a very considerable risk, for the enemy air force was well established at very short range, and the air defence, even before the air battles of February 25-26 (1942), was very slender. Nevertheless, he signified that he was prepared to hold Rangoon till their arrival though he could not promise that the presence of part or all of the Australian divisions would in fact change the course of events at the last moment, for he was certain that Rangoon could not be held. In this he was correct, for the last minute arrival of an Australian division could have affected the situation no more than the arrival of the 18th (Indian) Division did at Singapore."

Speaking in the Fremantle Town Hall on 20 September 1937, in his last peacetime political campaign, Curtin had emphasized the necessity of air power. More than a year before Pearl Harbor, Royal Navy aircraft from the "Eagle" and "Illustrious" had sunk three Italian battleships in the Taranto Harbor, for the loss of two aircraft, an operation clearly a model for the Japanese. Before the Curtin-Churchill exchange of cables wherein Churchill was attempting to divert Orient
liners laden with Australian troops to Burma (without their tanks and artillery and without escorts as Colonel Buckley points out) and Curtin was refusing this diversion, air power had destroyed the “Prince of Wales” and the “Repulse” — RN capital ships heavily armed with anti-aircraft weapons. Orient liners would have been helpless prey.

Curtin’s cable was a strong one:

“Java faces imminent invasion. Australia’s outer defences are now quickly vanishing, and our vulnerability is now completely exposed. With A.I.F. troops we sought to save Malaya and Singapore, falling back on the Netherlands East Indies. All these Northern defences are gone or going. Now you contemplate using the A.I.F. to save Burma. All this has been done, as in Greece, without adequate air support. We feel a primary obligation to save Australia, not only for itself, but to preserve it as a base for the development of the war against Japan. In the circumstances it is quite impossible to reverse a decision which we made with the utmost care.”

The phrase “to preserve it as a base for the development of the war against Japan” is the essence of Curtin’s strategic agreement with Douglas MacArthur and his strategic disagreement with Churchill, who naturally thought in terms of a “beat Hitler first” strategy.

An unnecessary burden on Curtin was conflict within the Labor Party on the conscription issue, emanating from people who were fighting the conscription battles of 1916-17 all over again. Colonel Buckley explains the resolution of this issue. Another unnecessary burden was the attitude of some trade union leaders who wanted strikes as usual. But his greatest agony was undoubtedly his fear for the safety of Australian troops on the high seas. After that he agonised over Australian POWs in Japanese hands.

It is possible that the terms he used in suggesting that Australia turn from Britain to the United States for assistance, lacked his usual journalistic skill. When he visited Britain in 1944 he seized the attention of Fleet Street instantly by saying “I come to Britain as a representative of 7,000,000 British overseas”, a morale boosting statement.

Colonel Buckley mentions Fred McLaughlin, secretary to Curtin in Curtin’s capacity as Minister for Defence — a man of a strong Christian faith and associated with the Moral Re-Armament Movement.

Curtin came to the conclusion that morale and courage have a deep spiritual root. With Ivan Menzies (the Gilbert & Sullivan star who died in London, May 1985) and doubtless on McLaughlin’s advice, Curtin decided on a deeply spiritual play “You Can Defend Australia” as a morale instrument. He hosted it, converting the Parliamentary Dining Room into a theatre, inviting the Governor-General (Lord Gowrie) and all diplomats, Senators and Members. This play explored precisely that spiritual root, and thereafter Curtin’s wartime speeches bore sprinklings of quotations from it. Curtin’s “theatre” correspondence with Gowrie and others was given by Fred McLaughlin (before McLaughlin’s death) to Moral Re-Armament headquarters in Melbourne. Curtin had given him these letter copies. It is a correspondence significant of Curtin’s spiritual pilgrimage, and a philosophic answer to the blindness and greed which distressed him as serious blockages to the grace of a real love of country, the root of a real morale.

Colonel Buckley’s new estimate has an abiding significance in that issue — love of country.

The Honourable Kim Beazley, AO.
Introduction

I AM very grateful to the Honourable Kim E. Beazley, AO, for his thoughtfully composed introduction to this article. As a loyal and constant admirer of the late Right Honourable John Curtin, PC, MP, Australia’s Prime Minister of 1941-45, Beazley has written extensively elsewhere in most scholarly fashion, about this famous Australian. He is to be commended for his endeavours to ensure that Curtin will not be forgotten by the people of Australia.

In 1985, the year marking the centenary of John Curtin’s birth, it is pleasing to note some revival of interest in the man who unquestionably deserves to be remembered as the greatest of Australia’s Prime Ministers for all that he did for his country at the time of its gravest peril in World War II.

Apart from Kim Beazley’s efforts, it seems that little attention has been given in the last thirty years or so to Curtin and his deeds, and what has been written has focused primarily on political aspects. In this regard the books “John Curtin” by Lloyd Ross and “John Curtin, Saviour of Australia” by Norman Lee should be mentioned.

In an attempt to provide some modest measure of balance, I offer the following to describe the views of but one soldier of the 1939-45 era. It is my confident expectation that my opinions will be shared by large numbers of servicemen and servicewomen and by many other Australians.

Prime Minister Curtin’s reputation is based solidly and permanently on his intense patriotism, his dedication, strength and courage in the face of enormous adversity and his remarkable leadership of the nation against the formidable Japanese threat of invasion throughout the darkest days of 1941 and 1942.

A natural leader, he possessed a special talent of being able by his own example, to inspire others to subordinate their self interests to the national need. His unpretentious humility, honesty and sincerity gave him a quality that endeared him to all with whom he came into contact. He was popular because of his common touch with people at all levels of society.

Soon after his tragic death in the closing stages of the war and just a few weeks before victory, it became evident that even Curtin’s political opponents had recognised and held in high esteem his exceptional ability and leadership qualities.

My own admiration for John Curtin was initiated by a relative. In the mid and late 1930s, an aunt of mine, Mrs. Emily Walsh (nee Scott), a well-known charity worker, held a position as senior Reception Clerk at the Victoria Coffee Palace (as it was known then) in Little Collins Street, Melbourne. She had told me about Curtin who invariably stayed at the hotel whenever he visited Melbourne. As a frequent and well-known guest, he was idolised by all members of the staff who greatly appreciated his kindly consideration, his humanity and his good will to people of all classes.

Having heard about these admirable traits, I was delighted to meet Mr. Curtin on one occasion when my aunt introduced me to him at the Victoria. Thereafter, I became attracted to the quality of this man although my political beliefs did not always coincide with his.

When researching material for my articles on Lieutenant-Generals Sir Vernon Sturdee and Sir Edmund Herring and also on Sir Frederick Shedden, which have been published in previous editions of the Defence Force Journal, I gained further insight into Curtin’s outstanding war-
time achievements and service as Australian Prime Minister.

I consider that our country owes a lasting debt to John Curtin and that much more needs to be done to accurately record and publicly acclaim the contribution to the nation’s history which was made by this great Australian.

**Curtin’s Early Years**

The picturesque little town of Creswick in Central Victoria has the distinction of having produced a number of famous Australians such as:

- Dr. Robert Lindsay and his family of outstanding artists;
- General Sir John Northcott, Commander-in-Chief, British Commonwealth Occupation Force in Japan, Administrator of the Commonwealth of Australia and Governor of New South Wales;
- Sir John Longstaff, versatile and eminent painter;
- Sir Alexander Peacock, Premier of Victoria three times; and
- John Sampson, grandfather of Sir Robert Menzies and the first President of the Creswick Miner’s Union.

The most famous of them all was John Curtin, the future Prime Minister, who was born at Creswick on 8 January 1885.

It is of interest to note that Central Victoria also produced a number of eminent Australian Service officers. These included:

- Lieut-General Sir James McCay, born in Ireland in 1864 and brought up in Castlemaine;
- General Sir Harry Chauvel, born at St. Arnaud, 1876;
- Lt-General Sir Leslie Morshad, born at Ballarat, 1889;
- General Sir John Northcott, born at Creswick, 1890;
- Lt-General Sir Edmund Herring, born at Maryborough, 1892;
- Lt-General Sir Frank Berryman, born at Ballarat, 1894;
- Lt-General Sir William Bridgeford, born at Smeaton, 1894;
- Lt-General Sir Thomas Daly, born at Ballarat, 1891;

and the incomparable doyen of all permanent heads of Australia’s Defence Department:

- Sir Frederick Shedden, born at Kyneton, 1893.

John Curtin’s parents were Constable John Curtin and Kate Curtin (née Bourke) who were both born in County Cork, Ireland. They were married at St. Patrick’s Cathedral in Melbourne on 19 June, 1883. Dr. Lindsay, the family physician at Creswick, was in attendance when baby John Curtin was born and later signed the birth certificate.

Whilst stationed at Creswick, Constable John Curtin was a popular and efficient member of the Victoria Police Force. Unfortunately he suffered poor health, mainly brought about by the after-effects of rheumatic fever which much to his regret, caused his retirement from the Police in January 1890. The family had been very happy in Creswick and were sad to have to leave the friendly little town. Three other children were born to the Curtins (George 1887, Mary 1889 and Frances 1891).

It is of interest to note that a copy of Constable John Curtin’s record of service in the Victoria Police Force is now exhibited in the Creswick Museum. A copy of young John’s certificate of baptism at St. Augustine’s Church on 25 January 1885, is also displayed there.

The prospects for the young family leaving Creswick were not bright. John Curtin (Senior) was only 35 years of age when he was invalided out of the Police Force. In Melbourne he managed a hotel in Brunswick for two years before moving to a similar position at Dromana. Later the family moved to Macedon and subsequently to Charlton in Northern Victoria. Frequent moves due to the shortage of jobs were not at all beneficial for the early education of the Curtin children. In Melbourne, young John attended several Roman Catholic Schools. His last school appears to have been the State School at Macedon which he attended in 1898 when he was thirteen. By that time Curtin Senior was unable to work so the family returned to Melbourne and settled in Brunswick.

It was a very hard time for them all, an experience Curtin rarely mentioned in later life. There were frequent changes of home, rent problems and often no butter for the bread. Young John Curtin had none of the advantages of a comfortable upbringing. He searched for work for some months before starting as a copy
boy with the Lindsay brothers' newspaper "The Rambler" and later at the Melbourne "Age". This was followed by other temporary jobs until he joined the Titan Company, a small engineering firm in South Melbourne, as a cost clerk in 1903, and worked there for 35 shillings per (48 hour) week until he joined the Timber Workers' Union as Secretary in 1911.

The Titan Company still exists and is a subsidiary of BHP. The firm is proud of its association with John Curtin. The Titan Company will celebrate its centenary in 1988.

Although he had finished school at the age of 13, Curtin developed a consuming appetite for further education and knowledge. At this stage he discovered the State Library where he would spend much of his time eagerly poring through diverse and serious books, often missing meals to do so.

At about this same time, Curtin was struggling with his attitude towards his Church. His reasons for this conflict have not been disclosed, but for a while he displayed interest in the Salvation Army and played the cornet in the Brunswick Salvation Army band. According to his friends at the time, Curtin was not anti-Catholic nor was he then or in later life, against any established religion.

Further to his intense reading, he became interested in Socialism and this led him inevitably to the Yarra Bank in Melbourne where he was able to absorb the arguments of the radicals, rationalists, philosophers and socialists of the day.

The speakers used to stand on a small heap of stones where they lectured to all and sundry — frequently there were arguments and sometimes fights. By some people it was regarded as a place to go for a Sunday afternoon's entertainment but for the serious-minded like John Curtin, it was a place to learn from those who had the knowledge and the ability to pass it on. Frank Anstey was one of the radical socialists who had significant influence on Curtin at this time and for many years to follow. Later, as leader of the Federal Labor Party, speaking of Frank Anstey's death and proposing a resolution of sympathy to the relatives, Curtin was to say "... Very humbly I make the statement that of all the men who have influenced me, he (Anstey) influenced me the most ...".

Others, including Tom Mann, had a marked effect on the young Curtin, who enthusiastically threw himself into the life of debate, public speaking, writing and propagating socialism. In later years he never forgot his debt to the Yarra Bank, and the people with whom he associated there. When Prime Minister, an opposition member taunted him by referring to him as a former "Yarra Banker". Curtin silenced him by his reply, "The Yarra Bank was my University".

In spite of his very busy life at work and pressing the claims of socialism, Curtin found time to play football and cricket with Brunswick teams. Believing in the adage that "All work and no play made John a dull boy" he ensured that his physical well-being was not neglected.

Young Curtin was emerging in this period as one of the leading socialists in Victoria.

**Timber Workers' Union 1911**

Early in 1911, John Curtin left his job at the Titan Co. and resigned as honorary secretary of the Victorian Socialist Party to become Organising Secretary of the Federated Sawmill, Timber Yard and General Woodwork Employees' Association. In April 1912 he was sent to Hobart to assist in reorganising the Tasmanian Branch of the Union. It was there he met Elsie Needham, who six years later was to become Mrs. John Curtin.

The pre-World War I years were to be a time of total dedication to the cause of socialism and its opposition to militarism. Curtin, like most of his associates, was totally committed to pacifism.

He played an important role in opposing Australia's involvement in World War I, and in particular to the Government's efforts to bring in conscription for overseas service. No one doubted his sincerity and dedication to the cause he believed in so passionately. Some writers have claimed that Curtin volunteered to join the 1st AIF, but was rejected on medical grounds; however, there is no conclusive proof that he ever did try to enlist.

**Move to Western Australia**

Curtin was appointed Editor of the "Western Worker" and in February 1917, he was sent off with a tremendous farewell party at the Socialist Hall in Melbourne. Whilst his associates were sorry to see him go, they realised he would add strength to the movement in Western Australia. Perhaps this was the ideal place for Curtin to mature and gain the experience to qualify for election as leader of the
Australian Parliamentary Labor Party at some future time. Meanwhile, there was much to be done.

In April 1917, he married Elsie Needham in a Registry Office in Perth. Their honeymoon had to be postponed because Curtin was a much sought-after speaker for the federal election campaign then in progress. By this time he had begun thinking about taking the next step towards a more decisive role in Labor party politics at the parliamentary level.

**Elected to Parliament**

After earlier unsuccessful attempts to enter Federal Parliament, John Curtin finally won the seat of Fremantle in 1928. It was a very close contest, and Labor were delighted to regain a seat which the party had not held for fifteen years. However, the Bruce-Page coalition was voted back into government for its third term, so Curtin's parliamentary debut was as a member of the opposition.

Scullin's Labor Party defeated the coalition in 1929 and much to the surprise and disappointment of many of his supporters, Curtin was not one of those elected to the Ministry. Perhaps he did not want to accept a Cabinet position at that stage. In any case he became bitterly opposed to some of the financial policies of the Scullin Ministry. Anything that was considered detrimental to the workers' interest and well-being got short shrift from the idealistic member for Fremantle, who had not forgotten the years of poverty for so much of his early life. Some people thought that the puritanical and deeply religious Scullin had reservations about Curtin because he had left his Church, and possibly Curtin's drinking, which at the time was not moderate, was also a factor.

There is little doubt that Curtin deserved to be in that Ministry and that his absence reduced its efficiency and appeal to the electorate. Due to its very poor performance in most adverse economic conditions, the Scullin Government was defeated in the House of Representatives and the resultant election held on 19 December 1931 was a landslide victory for the non-Labor parties. Curtin was defeated in the Fremantle electorate.

The next three years were a time of concern for his family. Curtin was offered his old job as editor of the "Westralian Worker" but he would not displace his successor and friend. Instead he became the sports writer for the paper at a much reduced wage and was able to get a few extra jobs as a freelance journalist. During this time he mastered his drinking habit and successfully remained a teetotaller for the rest of his life. Later he emphasised the necessity for all Labor Party Prime Ministers to remain teetotal for their term of office.

In this conversion, John Curtin was greatly helped and supported by his wife Elsie, a tower of strength to him all through his public as well as his private life.

In 1933 Curtin was made Chairman of a board to prepare Western Australia's case for the Commonwealth Grants Commission. This was a well paid appointment which gave his family some financial relief. It also meant travel to the eastern States for meetings which enabled him to continue his association with many of his old political friends. Some were keen for him to contest the seat of Bourke in Victoria which had been vacated by his early mentor Frank Anstey.

In spite of pressure from Victoria, Curtin nominated for his old seat of Fremantle in September 1934. Once again Scullin lost the election, but Curtin won back his electorate of Fremantle with a majority of 2,000 votes. His political progress from this time was to be rapid. It was fortunate for the party, which had divided into groups of savagely competing interests, that Curtin emerged as a rival to Forde for the position of parliamentary leader of the Labor Party.

By the time Scullin resigned as leader on 1 October 1935, Curtin had made his mark in parliament and in his party. Although modestly aware of this, he was very surprised when advised before the Caucus meeting, that he should stand for leadership — provided he could give an assurance that he would remain a teetotaller.

When he was elected as leader, Curtin faced considerable difficulties; he had to overcome his personal problems and also establish his performance as a leader within the party and in the House. These latter goals were not easy, because the NSW Lang State Labor Government's differences with the Federal Labor Party were very significant. He realised too that his party had to formulate a suitable national defence policy for the period. In the light of his early anti-militarist approach to defence, this was no easy task, nevertheless it was the begin-
ning of a transformation in Curtin’s thinking and soul searching in most important defence matters.

Formulating a Defence Policy

Defence was always an emotive issue in the Labor Party (as it still is!) and many of its members firmly believed that war was caused only by capitalism and the imperialists. Conjured up were thoughts of conscription for overseas operations and subservience to British militarists. However, in the mid-1930s, as the true dangers posed by Italy, Germany and Japan were becoming all too apparent, the necessity arose for Curtin to discard some of the earlier theories about capitalist causes of war. Like it or not he could see now that there were signs that the security of Australia might be at stake.

Curtin was still basically a pacifist but he had to completely recast his views on defence to face up to the realities of the threatening situations in Europe and the Pacific. His changing attitude was evident in November 1936 when he submitted to the House his views on a defence policy for Australia.

No doubt the writings of Lieutenant-Colonel H. D. Wynter (later Lieutenant-General) greatly influenced Curtin in his search for a defence policy which would fit in with Labor's thinking at the time. Wynter was the leader of an Australian Staff Corps group who disagreed with the then current Government and Imperial Defence policy, based as it was primarily on the importance of the Royal Navy and the supposed impregnable bastion of Singapore.

Wynter's main theory was that the role of the Royal Navy was highly and dangerously exaggerated. He argued that the really decisive instruments for Australia's defence would be the Army and the Air Force and that the country should be doing everything possible for its own defence. His views were repeated in a paper delivered at a Melbourne meeting of the influential United Service Institution of Victoria in August 1935.

Curtin was given a copy of Wynter's paper and used its conclusions to attack the Minister for Defence (Archdale Parkhill) in parliament. Parkhill reacted by having Wynter posted to a more junior Army appointment in Brisbane!

Defence now took on more important considerations for the Government and the opposition. Curtin mainly used Wynter's arguments in his political sorties against the Government — this had the effect of driving the Coalition into attempting more vigorously to justify Imperial defence policies. At this time Curtin was able to get support for his views on defence from some doubting and troublesome members of his party. This was a demonstration of his powers of persuasion as well as a significant test of his leadership, courage and patriotism. John Curtin had come a long way and his contribution to Australian history was just beginning. Importantly, he had brought some much-needed cohesion into his party.

Labor Party Defence Policy

In November 1936, Curtin spoke on the Defence Estimates in the House. He pointed out that the Singapore Base was 3,000 miles from Australia and there was no certainty that we could depend on the Royal Navy if it was engaged in the Atlantic or Mediterranean. He emphasised how essential it was for Australia to become more self-reliant in defence; it just was not good enough to have to rely on British statesmen to send forces to help our country in time of crisis. In saying this he was not implying disloyalty to the British Commonwealth or the League of Nations but he was speaking frankly and realistically.

Curtin outlined the fundamental tenets of his policy which (as recorded in Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates Vol. 152 pages 1546-1554) were as follows:

1. A . . . central system of Imperial defence with the RAN as a unit thereof, does not meet Australia's safety requirements. Local defence must supplement it.
2. Australia must have a greater degree of self-containment and self-reliance in defence than it has obtained hitherto.
3. The principal means available to us for attaining greater local security are land and air forces.
4. Our land forces should be organised, equipped and trained on such a basis which will enable them, if necessary, to expand quickly into a field force that will compel an enemy to use its maximum available shipping when it would still be inferior to our force before a second convoy of reinforcements arrived.
5. Our Air Force should be developed on the basis of the tasks required to be performed in reconnaissance and as a striking force,
and later in direct conjunction with the land forces.

6. The development of our capacity to produce munitions locally, both by munition factories and elsewhere (private industry) is an essential element in the attainment of self-reliance.

In conclusion, Curtin stated the true basis of Australia’s defence should be the development of industrial capacity to supply every requirement of her Armed Forces.

Many people believed that this contribution was Curtin’s greatest pre-war speech. In it he had analysed and set out the foundation of a sound defence policy. Later events showed its wisdom, particularly from the time Japan entered the war. It was certainly in line with the views so strongly expressed by Army officers Lavarack, Sturdee and Wynter, leading up to the outbreak of war. Sturdee, later as Chief of the General Staff, was the one who had to hold firmly against the Japanese onslaught, the threat he had forecast in the early 1930s. Likewise he had advocated most strongly, the creation of Australian industrial war capacity, particularly in armaments and ammunition. Most of his recommendations, including the proposed manufacture of 25 pound guns and ammunition, regrettably were ignored by successive Governments in pre-war years.

In brief, Curtin’s defence policy for Australia was in harmony with the requirements as seen by some of the key officers in the Army. Conceivably there could even have been some point of contact between Curtin and those Army officers who were so concerned about the parlous state of Australia’s defences. However, until war broke out, Curtin still had his lapses of pacifism in not wanting Australia to be involved in a European war, or in any war for that matter, but the stark aggression of Germany and Italy began to have some impact on his thinking.

Curtin was strongly critical of the use of sanctions against Italy for its aggression in Africa and he supported appeasement with Germany at Munich, but slowly and surely his concern about the dangers threatened by Japan began to dominate his thoughts on defence.

Some three or more years before the war, accompanied by his daughter Elsie (now Mrs. S. Macleod) Curtin was gazing in deep concentration out to the Indian Ocean when Elsie asked him, “Thinking of the election Dad?” He replied, “I was thinking what our reactions would be if we saw the Jap fleet coming in past the island now.”

“Do you think they ever will Dad?”

“The only question to be answered now is: when?” said her father. (“John Curtin” by Lloyd Ross, page 172).

As the clouds of war gathered over Europe, it became clear to some Australian politicians that something had to be done urgently about improving our defence capability. There was also an increasing fear of the Japanese threat in Asia, in the South-West Pacific, but mostly in Australia. Some still thought that Imperial defence planning and the Singapore base would ensure our safety. There was a good deal of muddled thinking and talking but still little action.

By May 1939, the Federal Conference of the Labor Party had decided, in relation to defence, that Australia was an integral part of the British Commonwealth. More specifically, the party’s policy was for complete national and economic security and the defence of all people in all States against aggression from any source.

The Conference deplored the inadequate provision for defence by the Government and urged the speeding up of production of military equipment. In this period, Curtin’s speeches in the House were well thought out and strongly and ably delivered. He was the leader of a strong opposition which kept the Government on its toes. He was the undisputed leader of his party which must stand as one of Curtin’s main achievements at that time. It was fortuitous for Australia to have a mainly united opposition led by a strong leader to face up to the crisis situations that were looming internationally.

Outbreak of War

On 3 September 1939, Prime Minister Menzies with Curtin’s support, announced that Britain had declared war on Germany and thus Australia was also at war with Germany. Then followed the mad scramble to improve Australian defences which had been so dreadfully neglected since the end of World War I. Excuses in abundance had been made by a succession of Governments for doing nothing or even running down what few defence resources we had. Some of these reasons which I remember were the so-called protection afforded by:

- The Treaty of Versailles.
- The League of Nations.
The Disarmament Conference at Geneva.
Imperial Defence Planning and the power of the British Fleet.
The impregnability of the Singapore Base.
Geographical isolation of Australia from European conflicts.

At the outbreak of war the Australian Army was in an awful shambles. There were no tanks; no modern field artillery (except for a few World War I vintage guns); no Army motor transport; insignificant quantities of obsolete wireless equipment; small arms weapons and ammunition were inadequate and only a few machine guns brought back from Europe in 1919 were available. There were no stocks of clothing to equip all the recruits. We were mostly dependent on procuring equipment for our forces from overseas.

Forty-six years later I vividly recall the parlous condition of the Army and our defences in 1939. The less said about the RAAF the better. The RAN was a little better off in that at least it had a few ships. Our outer defences were almost non-existent. I was sent to Darwin in December 1939 to install some fire-control facilities to enable the obsolete coast defence guns to be used. The primitive fire control gear being replaced had been taken off RAN ships used in World War I, as were the guns. There was no fire control for Darwin’s four 3-inch anti-aircraft guns. Such was the condition of the Coast and Anti-Aircraft defences then.

The only field artillery weapons in Darwin were four 18-pdr. guns (mounted on steel rimmed wooden spoke wheels) which could not be towed at more than 10 mph.

Key rangefinders for all types of artillery weapons were subject to moisture penetration and according to custom had to be sent to Maribyrnong Government Laboratory in Victoria (by sea transport) for repair. Sometimes there were no rangefinders left in Darwin. These few examples indicate the state of neglect of the Army in the years between World Wars I and II.

Returning now to what was happening in Canberra, through the early days following the outbreak of war, Federal Parliament was recalled by 6 September 1939. From the outset, Curtin rejected the Menzies proposal for a Government of all parties. He thought the most useful role for the opposition would be in independently examining Government policies. The Labor Party would preserve its own entity; but would support all measures for the welfare and safety of the Australian people and the British Commonwealth of Nations.

Early War Measures

Curtin urged immediate control of prices, interest rates, rents and raw materials and other commodities to prevent war profiteering. He said that the civil liberties of the people must be safeguarded and the Parliament should remain in session.

A few days later, Curtin was to repeat the ALP policy of opposition to manpower conscription for the services and sending Australian troops and war material to Europe. He believed that all our resources should be kept in Australia, because even though the country seemed safe from attack, the situation could change quickly.

At this time Curtin was very concerned about the possibility of a rampant Japanese force loose in the Pacific, but he still held strong reservations about being involved in any overseas campaign. Furthermore, he had not forgotten the ghastly experiences of the “blood bath” battles in Europe and the Middle East in the war of 1914-18.

Curtin firmly supported Menzies’ declaration of war, but he maintained the hope that some means could be found to bring the conflict to an end — war was never right! In the meantime, the National Security Act was passed and the Government moved to organise the country for war.

As well as being Prime Minister, Menzies became Minister for Defence Co-ordination. At this stage Mr. F. G. Shedden, Secretary of the Department of Defence, played a most significant role in proposing suitable Government machinery for the higher direction of the war. Shedden was a brilliant defence administrator and consultant, with a high reputation in the UK and USA. He became a key figure in formulating Australian war policy. The Government was indeed fortunate to have such an experienced and gifted officer at the helm in the Defence Department.

On 29 November 1939, Mr. Menzies announced that the 6th Division, 2nd AIF, would be sent overseas as soon as it was fully trained. Lieutenant-General Blamey was appointed GOC. Curtin was still against sending Australian forces overseas until the further alignment of conflicting International Powers.
became clearer. I believe he was still very conscious of the possibility that Japan would seize her opportunity to attack at any time.

**Blitzkrieg in Europe**

On 10 April 1940, Hitler’s power-drunk Nazis invaded Norway and Denmark. At least it was now clear to politicians overseas and in Australia that Germany was “hell bent” on overrunning Europe and all hope of negotiating peace with such a dictatorship was hopeless. A month later, Germany unleashed the blitzkrieg on the Netherlands, Belgium and France. The British Army was trapped but heroically fought its way out at Dunkirk — one of the greatest evacuations of all time.

Italy declared war on the Allies in June 1940 just before the French surrendered. The British Commonwealth now stood alone against the Axis enemy. The British Expeditionary Force had lost much of its equipment in Europe in the final stages of the battle and at Dunkirk. Had Hitler chosen to invade England at that stage, Britain would have had very little with which to defend herself. Her main resources were invincible courage, tenacity and the leadership of Churchill.

With Britain fully preoccupied with her own defence and indeed survival, Japan began to seize the opportunity to impose her political will on British, French and Dutch possessions in Asia. By August 1940, the French surrendered their influence in Indo China, giving Japan control of the China Sea and bases. The Japanese asked Britain to close the Burma Road, the only route then functioning for the supply of goods to China. This Britain did for a time, using as an excuse the effects on the road of the monsoon season.

**Menzies Calls for a National Government**

With the desperate situation in Europe and the Japanese becoming increasingly aggressive in Asia, Prime Minister Menzies again called for a National Government of all parties. This was considered by a special Labor Conference in June 1940. The delegates were against it and countered with a proposal to set up an Advisory War Council of all parties to advise Cabinet on the conduct of the war and post-war planning.

This was not accepted by Menzies, so the stage was set for an election. In the meantime, the National Security 1939 Act (amendment) was passed in the House and was supported by Curtin in spite of strong criticism by some members of his Labor Party.

**Federal Election**

Menzies’ policy speech for the 21 September 1940 Federal election was a depressing one. He promised little except greater effort to meet the dire emergencies facing the country. Also, he pointed to the squabbling factions in the Labor Party which he claimed would prevent the ALP from forming an effective alternative government.

Curtin countered by attacking the inefficiency of the Coalition Government (comprising the United Australia Party and the Country Party); he declared that the war would be prosecuted with increased vigour by a Labor Government; and he promised better pensions and increased pay for servicemen.

The Coalition narrowly won the election but its losses of seats and the ALP’s gains gave the balance of power in the House of Representatives to two independents. This was a precarious position for the new Government.

Because Curtin had spent so much time outside his own electorate campaigning for others, he just managed to scrape home after being forced to wait for some time before the results were decided. Whilst he did not have to rely on the soldiers’ vote to retain his seat in the election, it was clear that the majority of the servicemen in his electorate had voted for him. This evidence showed that Curtin was popular with Army voters and there were signs that his popularity was increasing. The troops could identify with him. Also, it was becoming clear to the people that Curtin could handle the extremist members of his party. Already he was demonstrating that he possessed the qualities and skill to be a leader who could lead the nation through the difficulties of war.

Whilst his leadership qualities were apparent to about everyone else, Curtin himself had doubts about his ability to lead the country. He became known in the party as the reluctant Prime Minister.

Curtin believed that with the AIF deployed in the Middle East, Australia was in a dangerous situation because of the increasing expansionist policy of Japan, which was becoming more and more obvious. It could be said that Curtin was becoming obsessed (rightly so) with the potential and real threat posed by Japan. He believed
that all our troops should be in Australia and not overseas.

During Menzies' four months overseas visit to the Middle East and London in early 1941, some plotters in the Coalition were expressing concern about the need to strengthen the resolve and the impetus of Australia's war effort. By the time Prime Minister Menzies returned to Canberra in May 1941, he was beginning to lose the confidence of several of his own party members. This worsened and slowly, over several months, developed into a political crisis.

Curtin's Leadership in Opposition

Menzies once more appealed to Curtin to participate in a National Government. Although Evatt was pushing him to accept the proposition, Curtin again rejected the offer. He was biding his time for when the Labor Party would be able to govern in its own right. Some of the more divisive members of factions in the ALP were beginning to be more co-operative and responsive and the three bitter factions in NSW began to see the need to try to settle their differences, instead of behaving publicly and emotionally in an irresponsible and undisciplined manner. Only Curtin could have had the patience and the dedication to "keep the lid on the cauldron". Under leader Curtin's guidance members of his party were learning fast. Meanwhile, the problems of Menzies were becoming more obvious.

Throughout this period, Curtin behaved with absolute integrity. Some of his supporters thought he was too soft on Menzies and the Coalition Government. In August, the Prime Minister again wrote to the leader of the opposition about participating in a National Government. In reply Curtin submitted four vital considerations:

1. A workable Parliament is essential for the prosecution of the war.
2. The Prime Minister was no longer able to give Australia stable government.
3. I disagree with your assertion that a government led by myself would not be able to secure a workable Parliament and political stability. I feel I have the right . . . to expect . . . the same measure of cooperation . . . as the Labor Party has unswervingly given.
4. . . . in view of your statement that you cannot secure political stability . . . you should return your commission to the Governor-General.

("John Curtin", by Lloyd Ross, page 212).

On 29 August, Menzies was replaced as Prime Minister by Arthur Fadden. Curtin realised at that time that if a Labor Government were in office it could be in trouble with an unequally divided House of Representatives and a minority in the Senate. He, therefore, played his cards carefully in spite of strong urging by Evatt and his associates to move against Fadden. The opportunity was not long in coming.

The two Independent members, Messrs. A. W. Coles and A. Wilson, had become concerned about the growing instability of the Coalition Government, so they began thinking of Curtin as the nation's leader and sought assurance on his capability to fill the role.

On 3 October 1941 the vote was taken. Wilson and Coles voted against the Fadden Government, giving Labor victory with 36 votes to 33. Curtin was summoned by the Governor-General. From this time on, Curtin's self-confidence began to develop remarkably. To some extent he was still the reluctant Prime Minister, but overnight he became the leader Australia desperately needed.

John Curtin, Prime Minister

No other Australian Prime Minister has ever had to commence his term of office facing such tremendous problems as those which beset Curtin in October 1941. The country was almost defenceless and the cream of its military forces was overseas deployed as follows:

- 6th, 7th, 9th Divisions and Corps Troops (with approximately the strength of another division) were in the Middle East.
- 8th Division was in Malaya;
- The Air Force was deployed mainly in Europe; and
- The Navy was scattered over operational theatres in the Atlantic, Mediterranean, Indian and Pacific Oceans.

What was left in Australia were mainly partly-trained Militia with practically no weapons or warlike equipment for use against any invader. Although action was in hand to manufacture weapons and ammunition locally, the lead time required to greatly improve the situation was the critical factor. In this respect the Menzies Government deserve credit for their efforts to rectify the predicament. Essington Lewis (BHP),
Laurence Hartnett (GMH), John Storey and others had been brought into service to organise war production with the object of making Australia as self-sufficient as possible. This was a very tall order indeed and one which would take some years to achieve.

Despite all of these dilemmas, when Curtin took up his Prime Ministerial duties his friends noticed a complete change in his personality and behaviour. His health improved, as did his confidence. He was no longer neurotic or hesitant. One associate described the change as a transformation.

Shedden described the transition from “pacifist” to “great war time leader” as the equivalent of St. Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus. Sir Paul Hasluck considered that Curtin’s service as a member of the Advisory War Council from October 1940, also had some influence on his change of thinking. John Curtin’s primary aim now was to gear Australia for total war so that the country could defend itself against the enemy. He was determined to give his nation the leadership it deserved and to dedicate himself wholeheartedly to the tasks ahead. No man could have been willing to do more for his country in its hour of greatest danger, nor could any person have had a greater love for their country, than John Curtin.

On 7 October 1941 the Labor Ministry was sworn in by Lord Gowrie (who was to become Curtin’s close friend and confidant). Curtin, as well as being Prime Minister, also took on the vital portfolio of Minister for Defence Co-ordination. The ever-loyal Chifley was the new Treasurer. Only Beazley, Forde, Holloway and Chifley had had previous experience as Ministers when they served in the Scullin Government.

The Ministers quickly followed Curtin’s example of working up to 15 hours a day. They were novices and like Curtin, had to learn their jobs quickly. Fortunately, they had the brilliant Shedden (later Sir Frederick Shedden) Secretary, Department of Defence, as their adviser on war organisation, priorities and procedures. Shedden had been superbly trained overseas and was exceptionally well equipped to serve as the most senior defence administrator. His dedication and outstanding ability left nothing to be desired. He was to become Curtin’s most trusted and able defence consultant. (For details of Shedden’s career see the Defence Force Journal No. 50, Jan/Feb 1985). There was no delay in adopting a full-speed ahead attitude. Until the Labor Government could implement its own policies, the best of Menzies’ Coalition Government policies were singled out and given priority.

**Relief of Tobruk 1941**

Earlier, during Arthur Fadden’s brief term as Prime Minister, Generals Blamey and Morshead in the Middle East were worried about the medical condition of the 9th Aust. Division caught up in the siege of Tobruk. The Australian troops had been there for months valiantly holding out against the enemy’s fierce attacks from the land, sea and air. Blamey’s appeal to the British Commander General Auchinleck, to have them relieved, became the subject of a bitter debate. Finally, Auchinleck appealed to Churchill and the matter was brought to the political level by an exchange of cables between Churchill and Fadden which commenced on 11 September 1941.

Churchill’s lengthy cablegram ended “I think you will weigh very carefully the immense responsibility which you would assume before history by depriving the Australians of holding Tobruk till victory was won . . .”. Blamey continued with determination his own representations to Auchinleck on this matter.

In a typical blunt decision, Fadden replied by telling Churchill that he was more interested in “the health of the troops rather than history” and that the garrison had to be relieved. Fadden and Curtin were good friends, had considerable respect for each other and had much in common, including the fact that both were sons of policemen. Clearly Curtin supported strongly the stand taken by Fadden.

On the change-over of government in Canberra, Churchill lost no time in raising the subject again, this time with Curtin. Perhaps he thought that the new and inexperienced Prime Minister would be easy to convince. He was soon to find that John Curtin was not one to be easily overawed or prepared to be subservient to any world figure. Churchill discovered that he had met his match when he tried to pressure Curtin. Roosevelt was to find the same thing later.

Curtin’s reply to Churchill was quite firm. The troops had to be relieved. Faced with this positive resolve, the British Prime Minister then proceeded to direct Auchinleck accordingly.
Having won this first clash with Churchill on a most important principle involving Australian sovereignty, Curtin turned now with added stature and confidence, to face a flow of seemingly never-ending catastrophes which followed in rapid succession.

Author's note:
Because of some of my remarks on “contests” between Churchill and Curtin, I should explain that later in the war, I served for nearly two years in the United Kingdom and North West Europe. I had considerable admiration for Churchill as a great and unique wartime leader. Unfortunately, on a few occasions, he was not always sympathetic to Australia's interests. It seemed that mostly, he still looked on us as a colony and in some of his wartime decisions, acted on this assumption. I am not anti-Churchill and never have been, although some readers may have gained that impression from comments in my historical articles on Lieutenant-General Sir Vernon Sturdee and Sir Frederick Shedden (published in previous issues of the Defence Force Journal (No. 41/1983 and No. 50/1985). Let me say that any such views as expressed in those earlier articles and in this one, are based essentially on my personal observations and upon facts as I know them.

Sinking of HMAS Sydney

Shortly after Curtin became Prime Minister, his first traumatic experience was to be advised on 19 November 1941 that in a naval action off the Western Australian coast, the RAN had experienced its first major loss in the war. The cruiser HMAS “Sydney” was missing with her total complement of 645 officers and men. This tragic news required Curtin to face up to the task of notifying the Australian people and more particularly, the relatives of the missing crew. As a most compassionate man, Curtin sought to carry personal responsibility for his countrymen and everything that went wrong. He took the burden of this responsibility far too seriously, even blaming himself for the loss of life in the forces. By nature a worrier, he suffered enormous anxiety whenever any large-scale engagement of Australian forces was involved.

The Prime Minister visited Government House to see Lord Gowrie, his friend, adviser, admirer and confidant, to discuss the “Sydney” tragedy. Lord Gowrie, one of Australia’s most able and distinguished Governors-General, suggested that he wait a few days before making the melancholy announcement — perhaps some better news might arrive. Curtin accepted this advice.

There was mutual respect and affection between Gowrie and Curtin which helped each to carry out his great wartime responsibilities. At this time Australia was very fortunate to have Lord Gowrie in office. Most Sunday afternoons when John Curtin was in Canberra, he could be found with Lord Gowrie, who held in high regard the Prime Minister’s personal courage and compassion. The Scots aristocrat and the Australian socialist formed a strong combination and were greatly supportive of each other.

The Japanese Threat

In formulating his thoughts on defence policy whilst in opposition in the mid-1930s, Curtin was eager to move Australia towards gaining some form of close defence association with the United States. He wanted his country to have a powerful friend in case Imperial defence policy for the protection of Australia proved useless because of any military involvement of Britain in Europe. However, the then American policy of total military isolation did not welcome any such approaches from other countries. Clearly Curtin was thinking of an alliance with USA for some years before December 1941. He was convinced in 1940 and 1941 that if Japan declared war whilst Britain was preoccupied militarily in Europe, then only America could prevent an enemy invasion of the Pacific nations.

In the meantime in 1941, the progress of talks between the U.S. and Japan dragged on in Washington. The signs were clear; Japan was about to go to war, the only question was — when? Churchill remained confident that Japan could be conciliated; but still he despatched HMS “Prince of Wales” and HMS “Repulse” to protect British interests (also Australian and New Zealand) in the Far East.

Curtin was in Melbourne for a War Cabinet meeting on 5 December 1941 and that night planned to travel to Perth. He was about to leave his hotel for the train when Shedden informed him that a Japanese expeditionary force was on the move. Curtin decided to stay in Melbourne.
On 7 December, Curtin was informed that as well as the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Singapore was being bombed and an enemy landing was being attempted on the east coast of Malaya.

Declaration of War

Curtin broadcast to the nation on 8 December 1941:

“We are at war with Japan. This has happened because in the first instance, Japanese Naval and Air Forces launched an unprovoked attack on British and U.S. territory . . . as a result, the Australian Government this afternoon took the necessary steps which will mean that a state of war exists between Australia and Japan . . . We Australians have imperishable traditions. We shall maintain them. We shall vindicate them. We shall hold this country and keep it as a citadel for the British speaking race, and a place where civilisation will persist.”

Hot on the heels of the declaration of war came the shocking news that both the “Prince of Wales” and the “Repulse” had been destroyed by enemy action. Now doubts about the defence of Singapore were beginning to cause grave concern and alarm.

In Melbourne, the Chief of the General Staff, Sir Vernon Sturdee, was more concerned than anyone. Back in the early 1930s he had predicted a Japanese attack on Australia when lecturing to a group of Army officers doing a Staff exercise. Now his forecast was about to eventuate and he looked to the future with foreboding. It gave him no satisfaction at all to know that his earlier warnings, as well as those of Lavarack and Wynter, had been in vain.

Sturdee was well aware of the dreadful state of the Australian defences brought about by years of neglect by successive governments. Yet he was the man who was now charged with defending the country, so sadly lacking a realistic defence capability while its trained fighting men were all overseas.

At this time of crisis, Australia was extremely well served by this calm, unflappable General as the Army Chief. Sturdee worked well with Curtin and he found the change from the Menzies Government to his satisfaction. There had been too many lawyers in the Coalition Ministry. Too many politicians (of all parties) seemed to think they knew everything there was to know about the Army. Sturdee wondered at times whether they really needed military advisers!

The situation now was desperate. The national need for effective leadership and teamwork had never before been so vital. The team of Curtin, Shedden, Blamey and Sturdee was about to be tested to the maximum degree.

Discussions in Washington — December 1941

Churchill and Roosevelt had discussions in Washington commencing on 23 December 1941. Several important decisions were taken:

1. “Beat Hitler First”, concentrate on the war in Europe (not much comfort for Australia!).
3. Set up an American, British, Dutch and Australian Area Command under the command of General Wavell.
4. Set up a Combined Chiefs of Staff consisting of U.K. and U.S. only.

Australia had not been consulted nor was she represented at this meeting in Washington. Curtin cabled Washington stating his concern about the situation in the Western Pacific, and concluded his cable as follows:

“Should the United States desire we would gladly accept U.S. command in the Pacific Ocean area. The President has said that Australia will be the base of the utmost importance, but in order that it shall remain a base, Singapore must be reinforced . . .”

The situation in Malaya was deteriorating rapidly, or as an Australian civilian officer stated, it was assuming landslide proportions. Curtin again cabled Roosevelt on Christmas Day 1941. Roosevelt replied that he and Churchill had given urgent consideration to Australia’s request and promised that effective air assistance would arrive in the very near future. Churchill’s reply was full of platitudes which sounded good; but meant nothing. In fact, like so many of his unreal promises to Australia at this period, it was dangerous to accept them at face value.

Australia Looks to USA

As the situation went from crisis to crisis in Malaya and the islands in the Western Pacific, Curtin had published in the Melbourne “Herald” on 27 December his historic message seeking American support for Australia’s defence:
"Without any inhibitions of any kind, I make it quite clear that Australia looks to America, free of any pangs as to our traditional links of kinship with the United Kingdom."

The statement caused a sensation. Churchill was extremely upset and so was Roosevelt, who thought Australia was trying to ingratiate herself with the U.S., in which case this message would have the opposite effect. It smacked of panic and disloyalty, thought Roosevelt.

In fact, Curtin had shown his greatness and patriotism by shocking the two allied leaders into realizing that Australia had since the outset, played a consistent and important role in the war, and would continue to do so in the future. At last Churchill and Roosevelt knew they were dealing with a man who was prepared to fight for the safety and sovereignty of his country, and was willing to cooperate in the allied strategy. Australia's great Prime Minister had shown he was not prepared to be servile to either of these world leaders and he was going to have his say come what may! Events were to prove that Curtin was right.

Initially, Roosevelt was uncooperative on Australia's claims for participation in the machinery for the conduct of the war in the Pacific. He did not or would not understand that Churchill, as Prime Minister of Britain, was not also the head of Australia. He too apparently thought of Australia as a British Colony! Later, when he knew the facts, he changed this attitude.

The Japanese forces pressed on down the Malay Peninsula with speed and success. Churchill began to ask questions about the "impregnable" defences of Singapore. To his horror he was told they did not exist because the gigantic coast defence guns could only fire out to sea and they had not been designed or deployed to fire across the Causeway!

The "Inexcusable Betrayal" Cablegram — 22 January 1942

When Curtin was informed that Churchill was considering abandoning Singapore, he sent his next famous cablegram to the Prime Minister of Britain:

"After all the assurances we have been given, the evacuation of Singapore would be regarded here and elsewhere as an inexcusable betrayal. Singapore is a central fortress . . . . we understand it was to be made impregnable . . . . Even in an emergency, divulsion of reinforcements should be to the N.E.I. and not to Burma . . . . we expect not to frustrate the whole purpose by evacuation."

Churchill was more worried about Burma and India, if Singapore fell. He was not giving much thought to Rabaul and islands to the north of Australia, nor indeed to Australia itself.

Return of the AIF.

The "impregnable" bastion of Singapore fell to the Japanese on 15 February 1942. At this time STEPSISTER Force consisting of the 7th Australian Division, Corps Troops and elements of the 6th Division were returning from the Middle East for deployment in the Netherlands East Indies and adjacent islands. I was serving with H.Q. 1 Aust. Corps, travelling on the "Strathalan".

On their departure from the Middle East, nearly all the troops were embarked in converted passenger ships which were not tactically loaded. AIF fighting equipment was loaded separately into slow-moving cargo ships which in most cases were soon some hundreds and even thousands of miles behind the units to which the equipment belonged. None of our ships had any convoy escorts or air cover during this voyage.

Whilst the exchange of cables between Churchill and Curtin was going on about our destination, we were anchored in Colombo wondering where we were to be sent. One thing we did know was that it would be a slaughter if we were put ashore without any equipment with which to fight the enemy!

Although we were unaware of the Curtin/Churchill debate at the time, we were appalled later to learn that Churchill had wanted us to be diverted to Burma with the aim of saving Rangoon. Didn't he know we had nothing to fight with? And, was he aware that the Japanese were almost on the doorstep of a practically defenceless Australia?

Some of the leading Australian troops had arrived already in the N.E.I. and soon were lost to the enemy. It was clear that A.B.D.A. (American, British, Dutch and Australian) Command would soon fold up. Curtin, therefore, signalled Churchill asking that the AIF STEPSISTER Force be returned direct to Australia.
This crossed with a proposition from Churchill that the Force be diverted to Burma. Churchill's message stated:

"I suppose you realise that your leading Division (7th) . . . is the only force that can reach Rangoon in time to prevent its loss and the severance of communication with China . . . There is nothing else in the world that can fill the gap."

On receipt of Churchill's proposal, Sturdee, the CGS, strongly advised Curtin to reject the request forthwith and to demand the return of the AIF because the safety of Australia was reaching a critical stage. When the War Cabinet was considering this vital question, Sturdee found it necessary to offer to tender his resignation immediately if his advice was rejected. Having made this dramatic statement he then got up from the table and left the room. He meant every word he said!

That evening Curtin talked with a couple of trusted newspaper reporters and asked, "Am I justified in taking the risk of sending men, whose arms and equipment are on ships far behind them, into places where the Japanese may very well reach them before their arms and equipment do?"

In the meantime, unknown to the Australian Government, Churchill had ordered that the convoys be diverted to Burma!

Curtin decided that Sturdee's recommendation had to be accepted, so Churchill was advised next day that the AIF must be returned to Australia. It had been a sleepless night for Curtin while he pondered on what action he should take, but as Peter Ryan, Director of Melbourne University Press, was to add later, "Spare a thought for Sturdee".

Colombo to Fremantle

From the time the "Strathalan" sailed from Colombo we sighted no other ship or aircraft. We had no air cover or fighting ship escort. We heard "Tokyo Rose" on the radio telling us the AIF would be returning in a "sea of blood" because the Japanese had full control of the seas and the air on our route home.

Later we were to hear that John Curtin agonised for almost every hour of our dangerous voyage. He could not sleep. He became most anxious and was worrying himself sick fearing that his decision could mean the decimation of the Australian Force. He became ill and for long periods shut himself alone in his room. It was not until after his loyal and dedicated Private Secretary, Mr. Fred McLaughlin (who was a deeply religious man) managed to persuade the Prime Minister to join him in prayer for the safe return of the AIF, that Curtin seemed more at ease.

McLaughlin, who was known as the "Prince of Private Secretaries", served in that capacity under Prime Ministers Bruce, Curtin and Chifley. Having known and worked closely with him for some 20 years, it was he who described to me Curtin's apprehension and extreme anxiety during that very worrying period.

Many years later the brilliant British historian, Ronald Lewin, had this to say (page 176 of "The Chief": his biography of Lord Wavell):

"... even if the Australians had been allowed to disembark at Rangoon, they would have been swallowed up . . . in an inevitable catastrophe . . ."

In the Official History, Lionel Wigmore, in the "Japanese Thrust" (page 465) wrote:

"It is now evident that the 7th Division would have arrived only in time to help in the extraction from Pegu (near Rangoon) and take part in a long retreat to India. In that event it could not have been returned to Australia, rested and been sent to New Guinea in time to play the crucial role it was to carry out in the defeat of the Japanese offensive which would open there in July. The allied cause, therefore, was well served in the sound judgment and solid persistence of General Sturdee, who maintained his advice against that of the Chiefs of Staff in London and Washington; and by the tenacity of Mr. Curtin, who withstood the well-meaning pressures of Churchill and Roosevelt." (Writer's note: Well-meaning for whom? Certainly not for the safety of Australia.)

As Curtin will be remembered as a great Australian Prime Minister who stood up to Churchill and Roosevelt, so too should Sturdee be remembered as the Australian General who won out against the Chiefs of Staff in London and Washington. Neither should it be forgotten that Curtin also had to stand up to some members of his own Australian Advisory War Council and senior Australian political representatives in London who wanted to comply with Churchill's "directive" to send the 7th Australian Division to Burma.

The combined efforts of the two great Australian leaders Curtin and Sturdee, contributed
enormously to saving Australia in the dark days of a perilous time in the nation’s history. Perhaps this will be judged as their finest hour.

Following the surrender of Singapore, much has been written about what was described as the panic of some Australian politicians. David Horner and a few other historians have mentioned this, but I am not aware that anyone ever accused John Curtin of being in a state of panic at any stage — deep anxiety, yes — for the safety of the nation, its gallant servicemen and for their wives and families; but panic, NO!

Certainly General Sturdee would not have agreed with any such suggestion. He had great admiration for Curtin and his courage. Throughout this critical period Sturdee had demonstrated very convincingly his own remarkable ability to remain calm and quite unflappable. In his book “The Commanders” published in 1984, David Horner wrote of Sturdee “... he was the rock on which the Army and indeed the Government rested during the weeks of panic in early 1942”.

The matter of the return of the AIF to Australia was brought to finality by a cable to Churchill from Curtin on 23 February which concluded:

“We feel a primary obligation to save Australia not only for itself, but to preserve it as a base for the development of the war against Japan. In the circumstances it is quite impossible to reverse the decision which we made with utmost care, and which we have affirmed and reaffirmed.”

As one of those who returned to Australia with STEPSISTER Force, I shall ever be deeply grateful to Prime Minister Curtin for his genuine and great concern for our safety.

Home!

During the first week of March 1942, a number of us were looking skywards from the deck of the “Strathalan” when out of the blue appeared an obsolete aircraft making a deafening noise and bravely struggling to keep airborne. We knew then that Fremantle could not be far away and soon we would be home. The city of Perth was alive to the dangers of enemy attack. Air-raid shelters were being dug in most back gardens and there was a sense of foreboding in the community.

After refuelling, we hastened to Adelaide where we disembarked on 16 March (my birth-day). The people of Adelaide were magnificent. We were billeted in private homes and thousands and thousands of returning soldiers were treated as heroes. Even wives and girl-friends from other States were invited to come to Adelaide for the short period whilst AIF units were regrouped before being sent to their new defence locations. There was not much leave for those who were rushed to Darwin and some other areas.

A few misguided historians (mostly born during or after the war) have suggested that Australia was not then in any danger. Such views should be ignored. Let there be no doubt at all, Australia was in a real and very grave predicament at that time. The sense of danger was recognised by many of the population and was becoming increasingly evident throughout Australia. General Sturdee set an example by digging an air raid shelter in his home garden in Toorak and advised others to do likewise.

The “Tiger of Malaya”, General Yamashita, was quoted after the war as saying that “Australia was in no danger of invasion”. Is it realistic to imagine the “Tiger” giving any other answer to his captors and interrogators? On the other hand Admiral Yamamoto (whose forces had attacked Pearl Harbor) had volunteered to lead the Japanese attack on Australia, but this campaign had been postponed until Burma was subjugated. I can assure any of those who might wish to “rewrite” the history of that time that with very good reason, from Prime Minister Curtin down, there was genuine fear of the likelihood of an enemy attack on Australia.

MacArthur Arrives in Australia

After much deliberation and debate, Roosevelt agreed that General Douglas MacArthur should become Supreme Commander of the South West Pacific Area. This meant the USA was now committed to provide aid for the defence of Australia. Curtin had worked strenuously to bring about this result, although later there were to be conflicting explanations about the events leading up to MacArthur’s appointment. At the time, this action was just what was needed to uplift the flagging morale of the Australian people. I was serving on the staff of H.Q. Home Forces then and can recall clearly the great jubilation and relief felt by us all when we knew the Americans were to join us in the battle.
No doubt the U.S. Chiefs of Staff realised that Australia was the only reliable base for the allied war against Japan, not only because of geographical location, but also for the provision of land, air and sea facilities; plus the added attractions of supply of food, stores and other equipment required to help the prosecution of the war. Also the Australian Army could be employed to fight the Japanese in the approaches until American forces could be deployed. There were, of course, plenty of dividends for the Americans in coming to the aid of Australia in 1942. They did so primarily because of their own national interests, which coincided with Australia’s own interests, as perceived in the overall strategic situation.

Most fortunately, from 18 March 1942 when MacArthur arrived in Australia, he and Curtin became close friends and remained so until Curtin’s death in July 1945. Curtin was attracted by the flamboyant MacArthur, who in turn developed a great liking and respect for the Prime Minister. This harmonious relationship enabled them to co-operate without any noticeable disagreement. They had identical interests for the conduct of the war although each had his own reasons. Curtin thought essentially about the safety of Australia, whilst MacArthur was determined to honour his promise to defeat the Japanese and return to the Philippines. “I shall return” he had vowed. Those words were to be remembered in the history of the war in the Pacific.

Return of General Blamey

On 5 March 1942, General Sir Thomas Blamey, who was then in the Middle East, was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Australian Military Forces. The General first became aware of this when he received an urgent cablegram on his return to Australia on 23 March. Curtin and Blamey also were to develop a close relationship, although their personal points of view differed and they had little in common. Curtin was consistently loyal to Blamey but there were some members of his Cabinet who tried to “white ant” the gifted General. Likewise, Blamey had great respect and admiration for his Prime Minister. It says much for Curtin’s leadership and “aura” of command that he was able to hold the loyalty and affection of both MacArthur and Blamey, his two principal military advisers, for the duration of his term as Prime Minister. In addition to his duties as Commander-in-Chief, Blamey was appointed Land Forces Commander under MacArthur.

Methods of Working — Curtin and MacArthur

When MacArthur arrived in Australia he was most disturbed to find that defence facilities were so meagre with nearly the whole of the nation’s trained soldiers still overseas. At his first meeting with the Prime Minister, it was agreed that he would deal direct with Curtin on all major matters of policy and procedures. Matters of important detail would be handled
through normal Government channels. Existing policies and procedures for supply and personnel matters were to continue. Importantly, unified control would apply in combat (Hasluck: "The Government and the People" Vol. II, page 114). It was agreed that they would meet as required for "War Conferences" and the only other person to be present would be Shedden, the Secretary, Department of Defence, who was in the opinion of Hasluck, the arranger, facilitator and sometimes the prompter of their collaboration. MacArthur soon recognised Shedden's great influence with Curtin and used this fact to his advantage. As a loyal and close confidant of the Prime Minister, Shedden did occupy a powerful position.

Curtin, Shedden and Blarney received some criticism for "giving in" to some of the requests made by MacArthur. However, those critics seemed to overlook the facts that Australia was then in a critical war situation, was dependent on the U.S. for military assistance, and was most grateful for all the help provided. So why upset MacArthur while his requests were quite reasonable? On MacArthur's part, at no time did he act in any way detrimental to Australian interests. He was quick to appreciate the strength of Curtin's sincerity, fierce patriotism and his understandable reaction to any questioning of his country's sovereignty.

It was not long before Curtin and MacArthur were co-operating in a manner which was to cause some concern to both Churchill and Roosevelt. In particular, the Curtin/MacArthur attitude was to try to modify the "beat Hitler first" policy, so that the Pacific theatre could get a fairer share of the Allies' war equipment and personnel. To further this aim, Sturdee was sent to head the Australian Military Mission in Washington, to press at the highest levels for Australia's entitlement for military aid. Curtin, MacArthur and Blarney all regarded this appointment as vital to the SWPA war effort.

In informing Parliament of the Coral Sea battle, Curtin gave an impassioned plea for the Australian people to realise the crucial importance of doing everything possible for the defence of the nation. He finished his speech with these words:

"Men are fighting for Australia today; those who are not fighting have no excuse for not working." (C.P.D. Vol. 170, page 1060).

The two naval and air battles of the Coral Sea on 7 May and Midway on 4 June 1942 were defeats for the Japanese. Their losses were severe and their plans for the capture of Port Moresby were upset, at least temporarily. Fortunately, these successes gave the Australians some hope for the future. This was a welcome change from the despair which had developed following the surrender of Singapore.

Curtin did not let these temporary triumphs change in any way his determination to continue obtaining assistance from the Allies. Evatt was able at this time to convince Churchill of the very great danger Australia faced as a result of which Churchill announced that the war in the Pacific would be fought now with the same determination as in Europe.

Throughout this period, Curtin's speeches in the House and elsewhere were those of an intensely patriotic Australian and a great statesman. His appeals to the unions, manufacturers and farmers and to the public in general, were blunt but sincere and sensible. He exhorted everyone to put their "shoulder to the wheel".

**Curtin's Attitude towards Military Matters**

John Curtin for most of his life had been anti-military and until he became Prime Minister he had no desire to understand matters of military procedure, organisation or command. His few disagreements with Blamey were due to his lack of knowledge of the Army command structure.

The first evidence of this occurred when Major-General Gordon Bennett escaped from Singapore. On his return to Australia, the General was treated as a hero by the Government, who without any consultation with Blamey promised Bennett a top job in the Army. Blamey and other serving Generals were not at all favourably disposed towards Bennett because of the manner in which he had left his troops in Singapore. The Bennett/Blamey conflict lasted for years and Bennett's escape later was the subject of a Royal Commission. This matter
has been covered well in other articles and history books.

The second disagreement concerned the "Rowell case". Lieutenant-General S.F. Rowell was GOC Australian Forces in New Guinea when the Japanese invaded the north coast of the island with the intention of advancing over the Owen Stanley Ranges to capture Port Moresby. Australian troops had been forced to withdraw until the enemy were getting very close to Port Moresby. Rowell's assessment was that he was stabilising the front and soon would be in a position to counter attack. However, MacArthur and Curtin were very concerned about the situation. They decided to send Blarney to New Guinea to take command of the battle. Rowell resented this action and when Blarney arrived the two officers were unable to find a workable formula.

Finally, Blarney removed Rowell from the command and sent him back to Melbourne. Then followed an outcry from the press and public about the injustice done to Rowell. Curtin had to intervene and did so by instructing Blarney to find a posting for Rowell as a Major-General. This was another example of Curtin's total loyalty and confidence in General Blarney.

Curtin also came in for some criticism for allowing squabbles between senior commanders in the RAAF to drag on for far too long. He did try to obtain a Chief of the Air Staff from the UK but for various reasons that did not eventuate. This problem was serious at the time and should have been resolved more quickly.

The Prime Minister was never very happy when he had to become involved with Armed Forces matters. He possessed none of Churchill's pretensions of being a grand strategist. He saw his role as looking after the home front while operational matters should be handled by MacArthur and Blarney.

It is true that Curtin never sacked any Senior officers. He made only one top appointment in the Army when he assigned Blarney as C-in-C of the AMF General Blarney was the only allied officer to be appointed to his country's highest command on the outbreak of war, and to be still holding the same position at the end of the war.

**One Year as Prime Minister**

Curtin could look back on his first year as Prime Minister with satisfaction. He had given the nation strong, dedicated leadership and had effectively seen it through its worst ever crisis period. In doing so, no doubt he had used up too much of his health reserves, as was to become apparent in 1944 and 1945. He was still doing all he could to obtain more aid from Churchill and Roosevelt and continuously he was pleading with his people for greater and greater effort in prosecuting the war.

But he was deeply worried about the next major political problem which he knew had to be faced — the policy of committing Australian troops for service overseas.

It will be recalled that in World War I, Curtin was a leading advocate for anti-conscription. If ever a man (who had never experienced active service) totally hated war, it was Curtin. However, now that the safety of Australia was at stake he found himself in the position of having to decide between loyalty to his political party and his responsibility for the survival of the nation. In the end, he decided to bring the matter to a head and in so doing, he was fully prepared to face up to internal party political pressures, no matter how severe they might prove to be. Curtin's speeches at this time and indeed throughout the whole period of the war, were outstanding both in delivery and content. His ability to inspire the nation, especially when inspiration was needed most, showed up his skills as a natural and great leader.

**The Militia Bill**

The Australian Army was organised until 1942 on the basis of two distinctly separate forces; a voluntary AIF which could be sent to serve anywhere outside Australia; and the AMF, including conscripts, which was restricted to Australian home defence.

This organisation was cumbersome and awkward to manage, particularly when the policy was varied to permit individuals and units of the AMF to volunteer for overseas service. This meant that AIF and AMF (Volunteer) units then could serve side-by-side in a combat zone under different service conditions and rates of pay.

Shedden and MacArthur diplomatically but firmly pressed Curtin to solve this ridiculous dilemma. Understandably, the Americans were more than puzzled as to why they had been sent to help defend Australia while the AMF could not be used to defend Australia's own territories. Curtin accepted the force of the arguments put to him.
Having decided to rectify the situation, the Prime Minister had to proceed cautiously. He was well aware that there still were elements in the Labor Party who were prepared to go to any length to prevent the introduction of conscription for overseas service. But once his mind was made up and he had determined the course to be followed, Curtin was prepared to accept the consequences. He called a special Federal Conference of the ALP in Melbourne on 16 November 1942. After much acrimonious debate and bickering, the conscription issue was referred for further consideration to the State executive committees of the party. In January 1943, the party reassembled in conference and this time the Prime Minister won endorsement for his proposed amendments to the existing legislation. Following that, approval was given by Cabinet and the new Act was sent to the House of Representatives.

This Act defined the South West Pacific Zone as the area bounded on the west by the 110th meridian of east longitude, on the north by the Equator and on the east by the 159th meridian of east longitude.

In his book “John Curtin” (page 306), author Lloyd Ross mentions that Shedden wrote to MacArthur enclosing notes for the second reading speech on the Militia Bill which was to be delivered by the Prime Minister. Ross thought that the letter accompanying the speech notes revealed the closeness that existed between Shedden and MacArthur and also with Curtin, a relationship that enabled Shedden’s direct access to the Prime Minister. This confirms what most senior officials believed at the time.

The Bill became law in February 1943 and its enactment was a personal triumph for Curtin. In spite of strong resistance from some members of his Cabinet and party, he had redeemed a situation that simply could not be justified, especially to allied forces. Again the Prime Minister had leaned heavily on his Secretary, Defence Department, for strong loyal support and sound advice.

Soon afterwards, Shedden was created a Knight Commander of the Most Distinguished Order of St. Michael and St. George. This award was made on Curtin’s recommendation despite some fierce and spirited Labor Party opposition, thus illustrating how highly the Prime Minister valued Shedden and all he had done for Australia’s war effort. MacArthur also had recorded his own opinion that Shedden deserved a high honour.

At this time Curtin was abused and called “traitor” by a few firebrands of his Labor Party. In fact, some members were to cause him considerable worry throughout his service as Prime Minister. Being “thin-skinned”, Curtin was profoundly hurt by some of the nasty accusations and taunts made against him. He fretted and became deeply depressed about having to wage war against fellow parliamentarians and some union leaders as well as against Japan!

Progress in New Guinea — 1943

Steadily the enemy was forced back over the Kokoda Trail and to the beach heads of Buna and Gona on the northern coast of New Guinea where some very bloody battles were fought. The Japanese were determined to fight to the finish and it was a tough campaign for the Australians, who now had been joined by the Americans.

Slowly, the Australian troops moved forward until by 16 September 1943, Lae was captured by the AIF combination of the 7th Division (under Vasey) and the 9th Division (commanded by Wootten). Finschhafen fell on 2 October 1943. Lieutenant-General Herring, the Corps Commander, had performed with great distinction throughout this campaign. He was knighted for his service but this was to be the last such award recommended by the Labor Government. Immediately after this campaign Sir Edmund Herring was appointed Chief Justice of the Victorian Supreme Court and he retired from the AIF to take up his new duties.

Whilst the battles in New Guinea were being won, a political “time bomb” was being fused in Canberra. This was to cause enormous problems later for Curtin.

The Brisbane Line

Never has so much valuable time and space been given to a “non-event” as was devoted to what was called the “Brisbane Line” which dragged on for months from February to December 1943. The two principals in the case who alleged that the previous Menzies Government had approved a plan to abandon to an invader the region of Australia above a line drawn north of Brisbane, were ALP member Eddie Ward and General MacArthur.

Ward knew a Federal election was imminent and purely for political reasons, he wished to make the opposition parties appear to have been
willing to commit what he called an act of "national betrayal".

To be honest, MacArthur's motive has to be described as self-aggrandisement. His claim was that as a great leader, he had abandoned the "defeatist" Brisbane Line concept as soon as he arrived in Australia in March 1942.

As was proved later, there was no truth in either claim. However, the honourable, loyal and super-sensitive Curtin could not publicly deny Ward's allegation. More importantly, he could not contradict MacArthur without creating a blaze of publicity and discrediting the allied Supreme Commander at a critical stage of the war.

The Prime Minister asked Blarney to examine the allegations as he had been serving in the Middle East when the so-called Brisbane Line plan was conceived. After investigation, Blarney reported that there was no such plan. A Royal Commission was then set up, but it had to be aborted when Ward refused to testify.

War historian Paul Hasluck wrote that this episode was one of the few occasions when "Curtin fell below his customarily high standard of honesty and courage". However, there were few who doubted that Curtin was mainly protecting MacArthur, for at that time, to say the least, it would have been disadvantageous to the allied cause for the General to be dis­paraged by Australia's Prime Minister.

Federal Election — August 1943

Curtin announced that the date for the next Federal election would be 21 August 1943. Because of the venom raised by the Brisbane Line controversy, this proved to be a bitterly fought election. Murdoch of the Melbourne "Herald" carried out a lengthy attack on Prime Minister Curtin and his Ministry but the Australian people were not deceived by these newspaper articles.

The Curtin Government won the election with ease. The "Sydney Morning Herald" wrote in its editorial:

"The people of Australia have given Mr. Curtin a most generous vote of confidence. Few Prime Ministers have been more explicitly rewarded by the electorate for national services faithfully and competently rendered . . . voters were moved by strong approval of its record in the war crisis." (Norman Lee, "John Curtin, Saviour of Australia", page 143).

Overseas Visit — 1944

The Australian balance of manpower for manufacturing, primary industry and the Armed Forces began to show considerable signs of strain towards the end of 1943. Pressure began to build up for Curtin to make an overseas visit to discuss these and other matters with Churchill and Roosevelt.

Before arriving at any decisions about reducing the Armed Forces manpower to enable Australia to continue to supply the U.S. forces with food and other essential commodities, also to continue to meet Australia's agreed obligations to the United Kingdom, it was necessary that these matters be discussed at Prime Ministerial level in London and Washington.

Curtin never felt comfortable about air travel and he was not at all happy about having to leave Australia for any reason, but when he was advised about a Commonwealth Prime Ministers Conference to be held in London in May 1944 he readily accepted the invitation to attend. He decided that the trip also would give him the opportunity to meet President Roosevelt on his journey to England.

Following his many discussions with Shed­den, his faithful and highly competent defence adviser, Curtin had been giving much thought to the need for a British Commonwealth Def­ence Organisation and related Procedures. He felt it was not good enough for major decisions affecting Commonwealth nations to be taken in London by the British authorities without
consultation with the national Governments concerned.

Curtin considered that some executive body should be set up, or if that was not feasible, then at least a standing consultative organisation should be formed which would be a permanent body with its own secretariat, meeting in rotation at the various British Commonwealth capital cities.

The Prime Minister took Sir Frederick Shedden and General Sir Thomas Blamey as his principal advisers to attend the conference in London. Their trans-Pacific crossing was made aboard the ship “Lurline”.

Curtin’s well wishers hoped that he would be able to get some rest on the ocean journey, especially as Mrs. Curtin was to accompany him. He was always more relaxed and happy in her company. They were a devoted couple and Mrs. Curtin was particularly helpful to the Prime Minister in Washington. He was beginning to show the strains of his mammoth task of running the country while also meeting the never-ending demands of the war effort. Even some of the unions had been causing him very difficult problems, but he had handled them firmly and with strength. He could not bear to think of anyone not being prepared to give his utmost effort for his country, and in particular, for those men at the battlefront who were fighting and giving their lives for their country.

Arrival in Washington

Curtin commenced his discussions in Washington with the United States Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, on Anzac Day 1944. John Curtin was not one to be overawed by any famous person. He could hold his own with any of them, Churchill and Roosevelt included. The latter was very keen to meet this character from Australia whom he had begun to admire for his perseverance and courage. The only matter which Curtin found difficult to discuss with Roosevelt was an Australia-New Zealand agreement on proposed post-war responsibilities for territories in the Pacific, a topic which had caused some ill-feeling. The record of the leaders’ talks showed they resolved that it was best to forget the whole incident.

Curtin was invited to spend part of the weekend at the Roosevelt estate. He and his host quickly became firm friends and had great respect for each other.

With Group Captain Hugh Edwards (later Sir Hugh Edwards, VC, KCMG, CB, DSO, OBE, DFC) at Binwood RAF Station, England in May 1944.

(Photograph: M. C. Smith)

London — 1944

The Prime Minister arrived in London late in April 1944. He soon found in the United Kingdom that his reputation had lost nothing in prestige by the manner in which he had stood up to Churchill some two years earlier. Curtin was treated with respect and goodwill everywhere he went. His modest dignity endeared him to those he met and made him a popular figure whether in Whitehall, at Lords Cricket Ground or wherever he went in London.

He visited some of the distant RAF bases to see RAAF members setting off on bombing missions over Europe. One particularly bitter night, he stood out in freezing conditions at the side of the runway waving to the departing air crews. Each of these crews received his message whilst in flight: “Safe Return — Curtin.”

Air Marshal Harry Wrigley, at age 93, still remembers Curtin waiting for more than six hours for the bombers to return from their mission over Germany. He wanted to see the crews safely back and hear their debriefing reports.

Not one of the many Australian servicemen who heard about these visits, thought of them as any sort of political gimmickry on the part of the Prime Minister. Rather his gesture was accepted as the genuine act of a caring and compassionate fellow Australian. No wonder he was so popular with the troops!
It was clear to most people who met Curtin in London that he was a very sick man. He was rarely seen without his tweed overcoat wrapped tightly around his throat as shown in the accompanying photograph taken with Group Captain Hughie Edwards (later Air Commodore Sir Hugh Edwards, VC, KCMG, CB, DSO, OBE, DFC) at RAF Station “Binbrook” near Hull in 1944.

The Australian High Commissioner in London, Mr. Stanley Bruce, was very impressed by Curtin. They had met previously in Canberra when they sat in the House of Representatives together, Bruce then being Prime Minister and Curtin a new member. During the 1944 London Conference, Bruce, speaking of Curtin, remarked that he would “never desire to work under a better man”.

Curtin the socialist and Bruce the conservative, became warm friends. Bruce was very supportive of Curtin throughout the whole of the Prime Minister’s London visit. Realising that Curtin was a sick man, Bruce helped him as much as he possibly could. Indeed, the High Commissioner was very proud of his Prime Minister and made sure that Curtin received every credit due to him.

When John Curtin received the Freedom of the City of London, his acceptance speech was brilliant. So also was his speech at Cambridge University, when an Honorary Degree of Doctor of Laws was conferred on him. Curtin was an impressive orator and despite his illness, he was in excellent form at these and other important ceremonies in the U.K.

We Australians serving in London at the time held our visiting Prime Minister in the very highest esteem. I had the honour of being presented to him at Australia House. Having met him on only one previous occasion some years earlier at the Victoria Palace in Melbourne, I was very flattered when he said, “You are Emily’s Walsh’s nephew. Next time I am in Melbourne I will tell her that I met you again in London.” He did!

That incident was typical of the kindliness of this gentle man. It was characteristic of him to like doing nice things for people.

At the 1944 Prime Ministers’ London Conference the main items for discussion were:
- Conduct of the war (to enable the Governments represented to revise their respective war efforts in relation to overall strategic planning); and
- Post-war problems, British Commonwealth and International.

Curtin’s primary interest and contribution to the Conference concerned the war in the Pacific Region and in particular, his proposal for consultation and coordination in Commonwealth Defence planning and organisation.

He was disappointed by the other delegates’ lack of interest in coordinating Commonwealth defence interests. Surprisingly, Smuts from South Africa was not enthusiastic about Curtin’s proposals. This result was not really unex-
pected because Churchill clearly did not favour too much formal consultation. It suited him better to be able to issue orders without having to subject them to any type of prior consultation with Australia or other member nations of the Commonwealth. Churchill adroitly got his own way in this matter.

Throughout the Conference, Curtin was able to skilfully and successfully match his wit with Churchill’s. It became clear that Churchill developed a respect and liking for the competent, outspoken Australian, although they were to have many differences of opinion right up to Curtin’s death. Few men could stand up to and get the better of Churchill, but Curtin was one such person.

He was invited to spend a day at Chequers, the Prime Minister’s country residence, ostensibly to meet some members of the Churchill family. However, the visit did not turn out that way. Curtin found it was to be very much another working day with a secretary taking down notes of all the Prime Ministers’ discussions. These notes were checked later (and amended as necessary) by Shedden.

A story was told that at the Buckingham Palace reception for delegates to the Commonwealth Prime Ministers’ Conference, Churchill persisted in pressing Curtin to have a drink. As always, Curtin refused politely, indicating quite firmly that as a teetotaller, his favourite beverage was a cup of tea. The young Princess Elizabeth overheard this remark and arranged immediately for a cup of tea to be taken to the Australian Prime Minister.
Curtin's health was causing concern, yet he bravely endeavoured to keep up with his demanding official schedule. In the Australian community serving then in London, from High Commissioner Bruce down, everyone felt enormous pride in the way the Prime Minister represented our country so splendidly during the whole of his visit to the United Kingdom.

One important topic which Curtin discussed with Churchill concerned his Government's decisions on balancing Australia's manpower resources to meet the many and growing demands for the remainder of the war. In summary, the plan provided for:

- **Primary Production.** Current scales of food supplies to the U.K. to be maintained.
- **The Armed Forces.**
  - RAN: To be manned at its present strength.
  - Army: Six divisions for active service.
  - RAAF: 53 Squadrons.

After Churchill was informed of this plan, Curtin advised President Roosevelt similarly. Curtin was pleased with the success of his visits to London and Washington, but he was very glad to return home to Australia. By now, he was well aware that his health was failing.

**Appointment of Duke of Gloucester as Governor-General**

When Lord Gowrie's term as Governor-General expired, Curtin wanted him to continue in office for another term, but Gowrie preferred to return to the United Kingdom. The Prime Minister decided then that there could be many advantages in appointing H.R.H. The Duke of Gloucester to the post. Curtin had to be exceptionally discreet in handling the nomination and associated preliminaries. When the appointment was announced, there was little criticism, even though Curtin had defied Labor policy by not appointing an Australian.

In the event, a close understanding and warm friendship developed between the newly appointed Governor-General and the Prime Minister which created a very amicable working relationship between the two men.

**The Last Six Months**

There had been many huge worries with which Curtin had coped but after nearly four years' service as Prime Minister, his health began to deteriorate rapidly. Some of the major problems he had handled included:

- Balancing the war effort.
- Post-war planning, including demobilisation.
- The deployment of the Army, its use in the invasion of Japan, and in a caretaker role in the islands to the north of Australia.
- Union unrest.
- Proposals for peace treaties.
- A World Organisation for Peace.
- The post-war economy of Australia.
- Plans for the Pacific Region.

Early in November 1944, Curtin suffered a serious illness in Melbourne where he remained in hospital for many weeks. By late January 1945, he was able to return to Canberra and he appeared in the House on 22 January, still showing signs of his illness. Despite this, he got no mercy at all from the opposition.

He began to press MacArthur about the proposed use of the Australian troops. He did not want them employed only for mopping up operations in the Islands and neither did Blamey, but MacArthur was playing his cards carefully. He wanted his American forces to get all the credit for liberating the Philippines, so the Australians were given tasks for containment and clearing the areas such as Balikpapan, Brunei, Tarakan, etc.

Curtin was determined that his country should be seen to be pulling its weight until and after the surrender of Japan. It was unthinkable that Australia should cease to assist her Allies, especially the Americans, who had come to her assistance at a time of desperate danger and great need. The Prime Minister was firm in the view that Australia should take her place at the peace table as a nation which had contributed to the defeat of the Japanese and was in battle to the end. No craven approach for Curtin!

In the last months of his life, John Curtin was protected by the loyal Chifley, who was determined that his revered Prime Minister would not be worried unnecessarily by the many remaining problems still to be solved.

On 29 April, Curtin was again admitted to hospital — his reserves were rapidly dissipating. He knew the end was near. A fortnight before he died, he dictated a message detailing his wishes for his funeral service arrangements. He
A SOLDIER'S TRIBUTE TO JOHN CURTIN

had given Australia his all until he had nothing more to give.

John Curtin died on 5 July 1945 at the age of 60. His body lay in state in King’s Hall, Parliament House, Canberra, whilst the whole country mourned the passing of their great leader.

He was given a State Funeral and was buried at Karrakatta Cemetery in his own electorate of Fremantle in the presence of the greatest gathering of notables and people ever seen at a funeral in Western Australia. The nation mourned the loss of its beloved leader. Sir Alfred Kemsley told me that one of the saddest mourners at the funeral was General Sir Thomas Blamey.

General MacArthur sent a telegram to Mrs. Curtin:

"Your husband was one of the great of the Earth."

This was followed by a press release stating: Mr. Curtin was one of the greatest wartime statesmen, and the preservation of Australia from invasion will be his immemorial monument."

The London “Times” carried a most impressive tribute to him to be read by his admirers in the United Kingdom.

Political Tributes to Curtin

The many excellent tributes to the life and work of John Curtin by certain of his political opponents make interesting reading. In particular the accolades conferred by Arthur Fadden, Robert Menzies, Percy Spender and Stanley Bruce were notable for their authenticity and warm sincerity. They all regarded Curtin as a great wartime national leader, a remarkably successful Prime Minister and most importantly a true man of his people.

Menzies wrote of Curtin:

“...He was a good and effective speaker; not perhaps a great one. He had something of a passion for abstract nouns and I thought his speech was marred by a love of rolling Latin endings... (he showed) a marked capacity for securing the confidence of the Australian public, a confidence which, as Prime Minister from 1937-41, I had lost. (At that time) John Curtin spoke to me, ‘You know old man, I was quite happy about you as Prime Minister, so were my fellows. Had you continued as you were going, we would have taken no steps to defeat you. But when your own people rejected you, my people decided to attack and nothing could hold them!’

‘...We had, in the nature of things, many differences. But it is not my purpose, nor is this the occasion, to write a political history. My immediate task has been to explain how and why John Curtin became one of the greatest Labour leaders in my time, and why it is that I respect his memory.

‘John Curtin, confronted by a martial and difficult world, grafted a pragmatic approach on the historic beginnings of his party and so made a fine place in Australian history.’

(Menzies in “Afternoon Light”).

Lord Bruce, speaking later about Prime Minister Curtin’s visit to London in 1944, had this to say:

“...Curtin was excellent, an extraordinarily receptive and perceptive man. I’d never desire to work under a better man.” (“Lord Bruce — The London Years”, by Alfred Stirling, page 363).

John Curtin was very appreciative of all the excellent work Bruce had done for Australian interests in London. In 1944 he offered Bruce the attractive appointment of Australian Representative in Washington, but Bruce’s preference was to stay in London.
Sir Percy Spender, who died in May 1985 (at the remarkable age of 97), describing John Curtin in "Politics and A Man". wrote as follows:

"Curtin in my judgement stood above them all. A kindly warm-hearted man, despite a rather prim and somewhat cold appearance; he was an outstanding wartime leader.

"His human sympathy evidenced itself in different ways. One personal incident I remember well. I had, shortly after my entry into Parliament, come under personal attack because...I had questioned the validity of a long-held Australian article of faith; that the British fleet which had protected Australia since early colonial days, was still a safe and certain shield against hostile attacks on our country.

"Those who challenge a faith are apt to be regarded with disfavour. But the words which brought wrath upon me were, unfortunately, soon to be proved true by the disasters of Pearl Harbor and Singapore.

"Curtin was then Leader of the Opposition. Shortly after I had spoken, he crossed the floor of the House to speak to me. He thought my speech had been courageous and that I should not allow myself to be disturbed by the reactions of a few, no matter how unpleasant the experience was. ‘In politics,’ he said, ‘you must get used to the knocks. If you believe in something strongly enough, and you think it your duty to speak — stand up and say it’.

"With this I could only agree; it has always been my way, though it has got me into a few spots of trouble. Putting his arm on my shoulder, he remarked (as far as I can recall his words), ‘I think that what you said was right. Something, however, you will learn is that in politics it is not always wise to be right before it is obvious that you are, and then it is usually of little importance’.

Sir Arthur Fadden, who handed over the Prime Ministership to John Curtin, wrote in his autobiography "They Called me Artie" as follows:

"Curtin was then Leader of the Opposition. Shortly after I had spoken, he crossed the floor of the House to speak to me. He thought my speech had been courageous and that I should not allow myself to be disturbed by the reactions of a few, no matter how unpleasant the experience was. ‘In politics,’ he said, ‘you must get used to the knocks. If you believe in something strongly enough, and you think it your duty to speak — stand up and say it’.

"With this I could only agree; it has always been my way, though it has got me into a few spots of trouble. Putting his arm on my shoulder, he remarked (as far as I can recall his words), ‘I think that what you said was right. Something, however, you will learn is that in politics it is not always wise to be right before it is obvious that you are, and then it is usually of little importance’.

Sir Arthur Fadden, who handed over the Prime Ministership to John Curtin, wrote in his autobiography "They Called me Artie" as follows:

"In passing over the reins to Curtin I did so with the greatest confidence in his leadership abilities, his wisdom and his general capacity. Any man who has played football...will at some time in a season have picked out a man from the opposing side to admire for his ability, clean play, and general good sportsmanship — their ‘best and fairest’. The best and fairest I ever opposed in politics is easy to nominate — John Curtin.

"I do not care who knows it, but in my opinion, there was no greater figure in Australian public life in my lifetime than Curtin. I admired him both as a man and as a statesman. Curtin is entitled to be rated as one of the greatest Australians ever. Clear in mind and expression, firm in principle and a forceful debater, he was a man of unusual political courage, willing to fight for courses of action unpopular among his colleagues if he was convinced those courses were right.

"Our association, which developed into deep friendship, was founded on a similar origin, as both our fathers had been policemen.

"When I was Acting Prime Minister, Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition, he gave me not only his personal co-operation, understanding and loyalty, but also his mateship, often in the most difficult circumstances, even when we disagreed. And because we were on different sides of the House, disagreement was not infrequent.

"Curtin was a true man of the people, humble and unassuming. Had I known when I cleared my desk in preparation for handing over the leadership of the Government to him, that he was to die before his tasks were completed, I would have done so with a very heavy heart.

"As Prime Minister, he worked unceasingly for Australia and suffered much personally over the wartime decisions he was obliged to make, never forgetting the tragic effect his decisions might have on men of the fighting services and their families. Many a time I saw him deeply distressed as he awaited the outcome with trepidation, as when the A.I.F., returning over a hostile sea to fight in the Pacific, were intensely vulnerable”.

Fadden’s comment merits repetition: “There was no greater figure in Australian public life in my lifetime than Curtin”.

Hasluck’s Assessment of Curtin

Sir Paul Hasluck, KG, GCMG, GCVO, regarded by many (including myself) as the outstanding historian of the Second World War, knew John Curtin pre-war as a fellow journalist in Perth. In fact, it was John Curtin who persuaded Hasluck to move to Canberra. These two men had a long and friendly association with each other.
The two volumes of "The Government and the People", written by Paul Hasluck, are the best of the World War II official histories. His depth of research, his summing up and interpretation of important events, and the opinions expressed by Sir Paul are a superb model for any future historian.

Now at the age of 80, Sir Paul is still a keenly interested sage and willing helper for those searching for accuracy and authenticity in writing about World War II history. His knowledge is profound and is not excelled by any historian known to me.

The following extract from the final paragraphs of "The Government and the People" (Volume II, page 635) expresses Hasluck's opinion of John Curtin:

"Let it be remembered that Curtin did not fight hard to become Prime Minister and showed some reticence about assuming office. Having come to the heavy responsibilities and finding them greatly increased by a new turn in a war that was already being waged, he grew in wisdom, character and strength with the added burdens that were laid on him. His own dedication was complete. He held back nothing from his service to the nation.

"For the first two years of office, he overcame obstacle after obstacle and accomplished task after task with great resolution. But at the time when very properly he could have gained in confidence still further by looking at what he and his colleagues had done, and when he could have fairly reasoned that the crisis had passed and eventually victory was certain, a change became perceptible.

"He began to question whether he had done enough. Whether he could have done more. He moved towards an austerity of personal life and showed more intolerance to those whose self-indulgence showed that their dedication was incomplete. He worried more about criticism. He worked harder and harder and spared himself less. He felt criticisms and the denigration both by the newspapers and by his own party members more keenly. Then physical tiredness and sickness came. A wholly committed man who had given everything he could and who had done much good for the nation, became one of the most tragic casualties of the war.

"The Prime Minister did not live to see victory, although victory was on its way. He had lived out his own text: 'We have a heavy responsibility. I ask every Australian man and woman, to go about their allotted task with full vigour and courage... We shall hold this country and keep it as a citadel for the British speaking race and as a place where civilisation will persist'."
John Curtin Centenary

Creswick, birthplace of John Curtin, the small Victorian town near Ballarat, was the focus of the Curtin Centenary in 1985. In this idyllic town with its forest setting, the celebrations were planned and carried out with great dedication and success. The Organising Committee worked for more than twelve months to ensure everything possible was done properly to honour and remember the district’s most distinguished son, who was born on 8 January 1885. The two principal organisers were Mr. Jack Sewell, Chairman of the Curtin Memorial Centenary Committee, and Mrs. Anne Scott, the Convener.

The celebrations commenced in December 1984 when the Honourable Kim Beazley (Senior) visited Creswick from Western Australia to address the local school children and carry out other important duties in connection with the centenary.

Later, the Honourable Race Mathews unveiled a portrait of John Curtin which had been painted by Bruce Fairless. This was followed by the Curtin Oration delivered by Dr. H. C. Coombs (one time Governor of the Reserve Bank), who had worked for John Curtin during the war.

The main activities took place on Sunday, 6 January, 1985. In the morning a civic church service was held at St. Augustine’s Church where John Curtin had been baptised. It was a very moving service with an overflow attendance. This brought back memories for me of the 1945 Memorial Service in London at Westminster Abbey, which I had been privileged so long ago, to attend also. The Centenary Service at Creswick was no less impressive for its devotion and sincerity. I was most grateful to have been invited.

In the early afternoon of the same day, the John Curtin Memorial was unveiled by the Honourable John Dawkins, representing the Federal Government. This simple bronze memorial is set in a local goldfields conglomerate and is situated adjacent to the Creswick War Memorial in a small park opposite the Creswick Police Station where John Curtin’s father once served as a policeman.

Later, Mr. Dawkins unveiled the foundation stone for the John Curtin Memorial Hostel for Elderly Citizens, which is being built in the town.

The celebrations were attended by some 40 members of the Curtin family. Mrs. Elsie Macleod, the late John Curtin’s daughter, travelled from Cottesloe, Western Australia, to attend the ceremonies. She fulfilled her role as leader of the group with great charm, dignity and graciousness.

The non-party political form of the functions was most appropriate and very impressive. Indeed, the local State M.P. for Ballarat, Mr. Tom Evans of the Liberal Party, was one of the most earnest and enthusiastic workers to ensure the success of all the celebratory events to honour John Curtin the man, and his deeds as a truly outstanding Australian Prime Minister.

Final Salute

Congratulations to Creswick. Its people can be justifiably proud of the manner in which
they paid such fitting tribute to Curtin in the centenary year of his birth. The little community has set a splendid example to the rest of Australia.

Perhaps some other authorities will follow Creswick’s lead by taking up the torch to honour the late Prime Minister Curtin in 1985. As the saviour of Australia and her sovereignty, he richly deserves it.

From his humble beginnings, this self-educated man, aided by exceptionally talented and loyal advisers, rose to the greatest heights in the service of his country. He was motivated throughout by his passionate national outlook, his unfailing belief in his fellow countrymen and his overwhelming desire to exert every ounce of energy for the good of Australia.

It is with gratitude and admiration that this one-time soldier proudly salutes John Curtin, a Great Australian.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

The writer is indebted to the following:

Mrs. Elsie Macleod (daughter of John Curtin): For photographs, copies of the certificate from Cambridge University and the Order of Service at Westminster Abbey. Also for her interest, encouragement and information provided.

Hon. Kim Beazley: Foreword which was provided so willingly.

Norman Lee: Author of “John Curtin, Saviour of Australia” for information.

Mr. Michael Tracey: Managing Editor, Defence Force Journal, for his advice, considerable help and for providing the means to publish this article.

Lloyd Ross: “John Curtin”, which was very helpful for my research.

Mr. C. Smith: For photograph of Curtin with Hughie Edwards.

Frank Hamly: Editor of “Mufti”, the R.S.L. Victoria newspaper. A valuable adviser and a gifted editor.

Sir Alfred Kemsley: “The Commanders.”

Mr. Anne Scott and Mr. Jack Sewell: Of Creswick, for details of Curtin’s early life in Creswick.

Mr. James Coulter: Moral Re-Armament Movement, Melbourne.

The Defence Force Journal for use of information contained in the articles on Sturdee, Herring and Shedden.

Sir Robert Menzies: “Afternoon Light.”

Sir Arthur Fadden: “They Call Me Artie.”

Sir Percy Spender: “Politics and A Man.”

Alfred Stirling: “Lord Bruce — The London Years.”

Brigadier and Mrs. K. R. Colwill: For invaluable editorial assistance, advice, encouragement and interest. Without their help this story would never have been written.

**EPILOGUE**

Since writing this article, I have read other references to the Curtin family which have been published recently to mark the centenary year of John Curtin’s birth.

Some of the misunderstandings which have been printed or screened on TV have caused Mrs. Elsie Macleod (Curtin’s daughter) to express her views to set the record straight. Mrs. Macleod and “The Australian” newspaper have given me permission to include the appended extracts from a letter which was published on 27 April 1985.

**CURTIN, BY HIS DAUGHTER**

At present while my father John Curtin is being turned into something of a hero, it seems that my mother is being propelled into the opposite role as villain of the story. Some things have to be refuted or explained before the momentum goes too far and present-day journalists cannot be expected to know what the situation was 40 years ago.

My parents were equally devoted to the Labor Party and its cause, and my father’s achievement of the prime ministership was the fulfilment of their combined lifetime efforts for the party.

As for . . . comment that she “resented the strains that political office placed on her husband and family”, I never once heard her complain about the situation; she accepted it all with grace, probably because she instinctively knew that it was the type of career that best suited her husband.

Although my mother spent a considerable time at The Lodge with my father, there were certain periods when she returned to W.A. My father had insisted that the Cottesloe home be retained as his principal residence and he felt that by my mother returning home to W.A. for varying lengths of time it reassured the people of Perth, who were then living in real fear of a Japanese invasion.

Also, she returned to see her mother, who was in her mid-eighties and who died just 10 months before my father.

It was wartime and it did not seem unusual for our family to be separated when so many other families all over Australia were also separated . . . My father adored my mother; they had a very stable and happy marriage, and he certainly would have been “hell-fire” mad at the unjust treatment his beloved ‘Nippy” is now receiving.

ELSIE MACLEOD,
Cottesloe, W.A.

Author’s Note: “Nippy” was Curtin’s nickname of endearment for his wife.

From the mass of information provided to me by Elsie Macleod and my own independent research I agree with Elsie’s statements set out above.

The author served in the Regular Army until 1949 when he became an Assistant Secretary and served later as First Assistant Secretary, Department of Defence, until he retired in 1974. His previous contributions to the Defence Force Journal included articles on Lieutenant-Generals Sir Vernon Sturdee and Sir Edmund Herring, and also on Sir Frederick Shedden. Buckley is a member of the Sir Thomas Blamey and the Sir Edmund Herring Memorial Committees.
By Captain C. B. Symon, RAR

Introduction

SUGGESTING change within the Army Reserve is not for the faint hearted. There is considerable inertia within the system. Unfortunately, suggesting change as a Regular Army Officer is sometimes taken as a questioning of the need or worth of the Army Reserve. I leave that argument to the naive or the unthinking. It is clear that an active and effective Army Reserve is absolutely essential given Australia's vulnerability borne of its size and sparse population. The Regular Army is not, and is not likely to be large enough to deal with the range of conflict and emergency scenarios which may beset the nation. The Army Reserve is therefore, a source of trained manpower which can supplement and complement the Regular Army when required, at considerably less cost than maintaining that manpower on a regular payroll.

The Emphasis on Individual Training and its Repercussions

There has been some confusion within the Army Reserve since the receipt of directives instructing Commanding Officers to emphasise individual training at the expense of collective training. Whilst the directive is easy enough to comply with on the surface, there are many repercussions which, I fear, may not have been thought through in introducing this cost cutting measure.

The role of an Army Reserve Infantry Unit is identical to that of its Regular Army counterpart: "To seek out and close with the enemy, to kill or to capture him, to seize and to hold ground and to repel attack by day and night, regardless of season, weather or terrain."

The capability to achieve this role is very heavily dependent on the collective skills within units. There is, however, neither the time (34.5 days per-man per-year) nor the money to achieve any significant proficiency in these collective skills within the Army Reserve. This problem is exacerbated by the fact that the organisation of units has been derived from this inappropriate role. Army Reserve Infantry Units have basically the same organisation as their Regular Army counterparts. The composition of rifle companies and specialist platoons is directed at meeting units' operational roles. This works well for Regular Army Infantry Units which have the time and money to train in the collective skills so necessary to achieve their operational role. There is also considerable incentive for Regular Army Units to be proficient in the collective skills necessary to achieve their operational role; after all, it's difficult to assess the lead time available to them before they may be committed to the ultimate test of their worth.

How much of this is relevant to the Army Reserve? Given that there is likely to be a continued emphasis on individual training at the expense of collective training, it may be time to 'bite the bullet' and give Army Reserve Units (particularly Infantry Units) a new role and...
organisations which are oriented towards training objectives. Operational objectives should be secondary as they cannot be achieved by Army Reserve Units unless considerable time and money is spent on collective training. With a new role emphasising individual training, the organisation of units could be altered so that it reflected individual training requirements. Presently the organisation of units is designed to fight battles; it is not well suited to the efficient training of soldiers in individual skills.

Problems Arising from the Present Structure

Decentralisation is a dominant feature of the present structure of the Army Reserve. Typically, within the Infantry, there are Battalions in the major capital cities with Companies and Platoons in the regional areas. As a structure designed to impart collective skills for a unit with an operational role, this is logical. Members of the local Army Reserve Unit would parade on Tuesday nights and, having completed Recruit and Initial Employment Training, they are able to learn and practice collective skills (eg. Platoon attacks, Company in defence etc.) as a unit.

As an organisation designed to impart individual skills this decentralisation is inefficient. There is considerable duplication as small groups of soldiers are taught the same lessons all over the state and often within the one city. Many individuals within these small groups have already sat through the lesson previously. We are not taking advantage of the economies that could be achieved through greater centralisation and the streaming of Army Reserve manpower.

Corps Training Units

The establishment of Corps Training Units in the capital cities and very large regional centres would overcome the problems identified above. The role of Corps Training Units would be oriented towards training soldiers in individual skills, (eg. to train soldiers in the skills required within an Infantry Battalion). The organisation of Corp Training Units would be open with only a ceiling figure to determine the maximum number of personnel in the unit.

A soldier marching into the Corps Training Unit from recruit training would be assigned to Level One Training (ie. currently IET). Once he has assimilated this training and has passed the required objective tests, the soldier proceeds to Level Two Training. Such training would, of course, be of a more advanced nature. Topics covered may include such things as continuation training in weapon handling, transitional practices on the range, limited drill instruction, an introduction to some new weapons (eg. 66mm SRAAW) and lessons on the organisation of the Battalion. Training in this manner would be streamed into, say, six levels with the last levels including such areas as the specialists weapons (eg. Mortar and 84mm SRAAW) and skills (eg. pioneer works and signals subjects), and more advanced infantry skills such as rappelling, where possible, and survival techniques.

Streaming in this manner would, I believe, add considerably to the attractiveness of the Army Reserve thereby improving retention rates. The considerable repetition that is today such a dominant feature of training, because of low retention rates, could be considerably reduced. At present, more advanced training is often not possible because a high proportion of unit personnel do not have a sufficient grasp of basic skills. Streaming through centralisation would give motivated and ambitious soldiers within the Army Reserve rewards for their efforts in the form of more advanced training. NCO's and junior officers would be utilised as instructors at all levels, under Regular Army supervision.

Some Problems

Such a system of centralisation does present problems. What of the country depots? In the main, they would be closed down. Country members could have to accumulate mandays on a continuous basis as is currently the case with 'special conditions' units. Metropolitan members could continue the present mix of continuous and non-continuous training. What about the fine histories and traditions of Army Reserve Units; is this all to be wasted? I don't believe it is necessary and it certainly isn't desirable to completely 'wipe off' the Army Reserve at unit level. On graduation from Recruit Courses, I would foresee recruits receiving unit lanyards and accoutrements, being introduced to other members of their unit within the Corps Training Unit and given lessons on the history and traditions of their unit. He would then commence his training in the Corps Training Unit but with a sense of identity and kinship that has come from the knowledge that he is part of a unit.
Unit structures would, therefore, be largely shadow organisations which could come together for short periods of collective training during the year.

Are these Corps Training Units to be part of Field Force Command or, would it be more logical for them to come under the umbrella of Training Command? This is an interesting question which I shall deal with by stating that it is beyond the scope of these jottings to answer. What would, however, be required of the functional command would be training packages containing the objectives and lessons for all levels of training. In this way training within the Army Reserve would be systematic and uniform throughout Australia.

### Conclusion

The centralisation and streaming of Army Reserves training has many advantages in both economic and training terms. It optimises the training dollar by taking advantage of the economies of scale. Perhaps more importantly I believe it will give added incentive and purpose to the soldiers of the Army Reserve who will, at last, be able to advance through personal motivation, application and hard work to reach a standard of training which cannot be achieved under the present system. The Army Reserve will then be a source of manpower, trained to higher standards who will be truly ready to supplement and complement the Regular Army when required.

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Captain Symon graduated from the Royal Military College, Dunrobin in December, 1980 with a BA (Mil. Stud.). He was then posted to 5/7 RAR as a platoon commander and later Assistant Adjutant.

In 1984 he was posted to 28 Indep Rifle Coy RWAR as the Adjt/Trg Offr. He is currently studying towards an economics degree.

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**LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**

**Mastery Learning**

Dear Sir,

I write to express appreciation to Squadron Leader P. Clifford (DFJ Mar/Apr 85) for his insights on the application of Mastery Learning in Papua New Guinea and on the importance of language training for Australian instructors.

He does not suggest that instruction should be conducted in Pidgin. I share this view.

However, from his letter, we appear to agree that Pidgin language training does provide the instructor with certain insights to use of language in training foreign students.

I feel that if these insights are accepted within the Australian Defence Force, then a new era of understanding will come when Defence personnel become more sensitive to the problems of training foreign students.

It is interesting that the first public glimmer of light should come from the RAAF, a Service that relies very much on the professionalism of Education Officers in the management of technical training.

In this area, the Australian Army is sadly lacking.

_B. D. COPELAND_

_Major_

"If PNG students can’t hack my lessons, that’s their problem. It’s all covered in the Army Training System."
THE WIDENING ROLE OF DESTROYERS AND FRIGATES IN TOMORROWS NAVY

By Lieutenant Alan Hinge, RAN

AUSTRALIA is a maritime trading nation with an economy largely integrated with world markets. Consequently, ensuring the security of our Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs) is a vital national interest which must be defended. In fact, ensuring their integrity is essential to maintaining national security and is, in itself, a measure of national power. The role of the Royal Australian Navy is to be prepared to conduct sustained maritime operations in support of national interests, including the defence of SLOCs. To fulfil this role the navy must be capable of carrying out two basic missions. The primary mission being SEA CONTROL and the secondary mission being POWER PROJECTION. The aim of this article is to specify the widening role of destroyers and frigates (surface combatants) in filling these mission requirements which, until 1983, had been largely undertaken by a carrier based navy.

In 1945 the aircraft carrier emerged from WWII as the main sea control/power projection platform of western navies which could afford them. From the early 1950s until 1983 the RAN employed the carrier as its backbone with destroyers and frigates being gradually transformed from hard hitting, general purpose hunters to specialized escorts performing a 'protect the carrier' function. The situation has now turned full circle. Destroyers and frigates are now called upon to fill the gap left by the carrier. They must again become the hard hitting, multi-purpose, independent units capable of all-round attack and defence so that the RAN may continue to achieve its basic and unchanged missions.

Surface combatants are versatile platforms capable of performing a variety of jobs. They can maintain station for extended periods under the most adverse conditions and sea states. Also, they have a long shelf life and are very amenable to modernization. These vessels can house command, control/communications equipment capable of supporting a wide range of activities. For example, maintaining control of a convoy group or co-ordinating a number of ASW/AEW helicopters. Another significant advantage is that they act as visible and authoritative representatives of national will and policy in times of tension and confrontation. More will be said on this very important attribute but suffice it to say, for now, that a visible show of appropriate force has not lost its utility in the conduct of international relations and probably never will.

Before focussing our attention on the widening role of surface combatants in sea control and power projection it is necessary to first address two important questions. The first being: Is the surface combatant survivable under the conditions of modern warfare? Secondly, can the job of surface combatants be done by aircraft and submarines as many people in fact suggest?

The very survivability of surface combatants has been thrown in doubt in some quarters...
largely as a result of sensational popular press coverage of The Falklands War. Many misconceptions concerning the future of surface combatants arose as a result of the loss of four British warships. In particular, the sinking of *HMS Sheffield* prompted some concern for surface ship survivability as a result of it being hit by an Exocet missile. It must be remembered that this ship and *HMS Coventry* went down as unsupported pickets used for purposes which they were not designed or properly armed and equipped for. The other ships, *HMS Antelope* and *HMS Ardent*, shared the same fate, for the same reason. These vessels were employed in confined waters where they could not manoeuvre and where their radars were of no use against surprise attack. It is also interesting to note that much was made of the *Sheffield* sinking but little was said of *Ardent* surviving thirteen 1000 pound bomb hits which included six detonations before sinking! In addition, *HMS Glamorgan* survived a direct Exocet hit largely as a result of well directed damage control and quick action by an alert crew.¹

The whole issue of surface ship survivability as raised by The Falklands conflict is reminiscent of the concern in 1967 caused by the sinking of the Israeli frigate *Eliat* by Styx missiles launched by Egyptian Fast Missile Patrol Boats (FMPB). Within a short time Israel developed effective countermeasures which led to no further loss of major surface combatants in that war and in the 1973 conflict against even more formidable Soviet hardware. In fact, evidence exists that *Atlantic Conveyor* was sunk by an Exocet missile seduced by the 'successful' countermeasures of a British Frigate in the vicinity.² The sea skimming antiship missile has only proven itself against incompletely equipped surface combatants not being used in their designed role. The destroyers and frigates of the RN were generally specialized ASW platforms geared for hunting Soviet submarines in the North Atlantic. It remains a tribute to their versatility and survivability that the vessels did so well, for they were generally underequipped for their Falklands role of power projection, thanks to government financial cutbacks.

One essential fact concerning the use of surface combatants in The Falklands is often overlooked. The operation could not have been mounted at all without surface vessels in general and surface combatants in particular. Without destroyers and frigates the troops could not have got ashore and the 'beans and bullets' would not have been delivered. These vessels ensured the security of the two RN carriers and substantially contributed to keeping the essential logistic tail unsevered. Even now; the endurance, versatility and mobility of surface combatants is maintaining the security of the islands. It is interesting to note that the Soviets, in their most prestigious journals, concluded that the surface combatant will remain the backbone of a balanced fleet. Soviet writers point out that ... 'the Royal Navy's basic missions of blockading and seizing The Malvinas (Falklands) was carried out by surface ships'. The Russians claimed that surface combatants and surface ships in general played the main combat role and it was only due to their employment that the British '... accomplished their assigned missions'. They believe that the conflict vindicated with 'full clarity' the increased role of surface combatants in conflict at sea and conclude that they will '... continue to have an important role in war at sea'.³ Clearly, then, for the realistic and pragmatic Soviets, the surface combatant retains its place as a significant and survivable sea control/power projection platform. But can its place be taken by cheaper platforms such as submarines and shore based aircraft?

Shore-based aircraft are visible and effective but not enduring. They are potent within the Economic Exclusion Zone (EEZ) but are a spent force very far outside it. Aircraft lack endurance to remain on station to fight. Combat range is relatively low and there is no ready access to reloads as they haven't a magazine. Carrier-based aircraft remedy this low stamina problem, but only at a prohibitively high cost given the associated expense of a specialized platform. The advocates of a purely submarine Navy fail to see it as a comparatively low-endurance, low-speed, low-mobility vessel whose invisibility can often have a detrimental effect upon the national strategy of deterrence. This is because it is seen as a purely offensive and hence escalatory weapon. An important aspect of deterrence is that, appropriate visible capability displayed is often more advantageous than invisible or covert capability in a politically tense situation. In addition, the submarine is increasingly faced with the problem of weapons range far outpacing sensor range. To attack, the submarine must acquire targets using its sensors. These are of limited power and range,
particularly against surface combatants employing long-range passive sonar towed arrays and ASW helicopter linked information. Consequently the increasing reach of standoff torpedoes and missiles is useless if sensor range is reduced to 25-50% of the maximum standoff weapon range. The ratio of detection range to standoff weapon range is remaining relatively constant for surface vessels but is in fact decreasing for submarines as stand off weapons rapidly increase in range.

Submarines and aircraft were valuable adjuncts in The Falklands conflict and performed well as part of the balanced RN task force. The submarine could police an exclusion zone but could not stop Argentine resupply by air or decisively influence conditions on land. By itself it could serve little purpose. Carrier-based aircraft projected power and greatly aided in self defence of the fleet but The Falklands were ultimately taken by men transported, fed and ammunitioned by surface vessels protected by surface combatants which remain the backbone of a balanced fleet. Surface vessels once again proved themselves the DECISIVE instruments of maritime warfare.

Properly armed and equipped destroyers and frigates are thus survivable, flexible and essential to modern sea control/power projection requirements. This is particularly significant as the RAN carries the responsibility for ensuring the security of SLOCS. Important strategic materials must get through and economic links between the continents must be maintained. A clever foe could perceive a force projection weakness and attempt economic strangulation by cutting our lines of communication and harassing shipping. This could draw important and humiliating concessions. Given the unavailability of carrier-based ASW/force projection capabilities hitherto used as the primary force for maintaining SLOCS, tomorrow’s Australian surface combatant must be provided with a maximum level of practical self sufficiency. It must incorporate substantial offensive and defensive capabilities in the anti-war, anti-submarine and anti-ship realm together with adequate self defence systems. Such a multipurpose vessel must also be capable of directly influencing conditions on land using non-nuclear cruise missiles and attack helicopters.

The primary mission of tomorrow’s Australian surface combatant will be Sea Control. Sea control is the power of directing events at sea. It is achieved by maintaining the initiative and firepower by which to destroy hostile aircraft, surface ships and submarines. To effect sea control over SLOCS the RAN must have the ability to protect strategic shipping in its progress in and out of Australia to a range of several thousand miles at least. This can only be achieved by a well equipped Blue Water Navy.

The first requirement for effective sea control of Australian SLOC’s is a potent ASW capability by which to achieve a local superiority over hostile submarines capable of harassing shipping. But how does one take the initiative from the submariner and rob him of his major tactical asset... Invisibility? The answer to this question was succinctly given in the late 1940s by Admiral Ernest King, the US Navy’s Chief of Naval Operations during WWII. Admiral King on summarizing the lessons of two world wars, each with its own Battle of the Atlantic, said: ... 'escort is not just one way of handling the submarine menace, it is the only way ...' The prime realization in ASW is that the submariner is most vulnerable when attacking bait, rather than prey! Convoy operations concentrate protecting forces (destroyers and frigates) and degrade the submariner’s advantage of invisibility. In order to attack the submariner must be in the general area of the convoy and must attack within range of his sensors (not weapons!). The attacking submarine must also be close enough to gain sufficient intelligence to confirm his target. Besides this, the surface combatant is itself screened by the sheer multiplicity of targets in the convoy. Convoy operations provide force concentration, defence in depth and economy of force together with forcing the submariner to largely compromise his position. Such operations are the best form of offensive anti-submarine warfare in defence of our sea lines of communications.

The records of both world wars testify to the success of convoy operations and that independent sailings and poorly escorted convoys occasioned extremely heavy losses. This was exemplified in WWII by the exploits of the all-time tonnage king, Lothar Von Arnauld de la Periere. This German submariner sank 195 allied ships, the overwhelming majority of which were independently routed. Similarly, in WWII, Otto Kretschmer sank 147 such sitting ducks and earned the tonnage king title for that war. In stark contrast to such carnage only 7 ships went
down to air escorted convoys in WW1 and during WWII only 20 vessels shared the same fate. Today, Australia has first class ASW helicopters designed to substantially enhance the ‘eyes and ears’ of surface combatants, giving them a detection range far in excess of the submarines. Convoy merchantmen in future could even be equipped with helo-platforms and helicopters capable of supporting the surface combatant in its ASW task. In future convoy operations the hunter (submarine) will again become the hunted!

In order to maximise its ASW capability, particularly during independent missions, tomorrow’s Australian Surface Combatants must have engines and hull of increasingly low noise type. The upper deck must be increasingly developed to accommodate shipborne aviation in the form of ASW/AEW helicopters. Such vessels will be equipped with long-range, passive towed array sonars, since active transmissions give away position and greatly simplify the submariner’s fire control problems. For the submariner the lower probability of surface ship detection and identification will lead to increased uncertainty and stress with a requirement to penetrate closer to the suspected target. Long-range passive sonar supported by relayed active/passive sonar data from helicopters will greatly enhance the detectability of the submarine and thus limit its tactics. The introduction of the FFG 7 with its attached helicopters was a substantial boost for Australian ASW and this platform is approaching the true multipurpose ship with its Harpoon, Standard and Phalanx offensive and defensive capabilities.

Future developments in surface combatant design may involve implementation of the SWATH (Small Waterplane Area Twin Hulls) concept by which to maximize deck space and stability for helicopter and even VSTOL operations. This type of vessel has many advantages over the conventional ‘Greyhound of the Sea’ hull type in that it can carry considerable topside weight in both systems and aircraft. They have excellent locations for towed arrays and multiple sonar dome installations. High stability and very quiet operation are also valuable attributes of this hull type. SWATH type hulls may be of great advantage to future Australian surface combatants in an effort to gain the enormous benefit of organic shipborne aviation without incurring the prohibitive costs involved with purpose built carriers.

The secondary mission of tomorrow’s Australian surface combatant is power projection ashore. A power projection capability is an essential prerequisite to a credible deterrent strategy. Australia must have the capability to attack possible hostile staging bases and make punitive strikes in response to unacceptable foreign behaviour. A nation with an effective power projection capability has an effective diplomatic tool which can readily indicate strong national resolve and commitment. Britain, another maritime nation, invited and received rape during The Falklands failure of deterrence as a direct result of downgrading her VISIBLE power projection capabilities. She reduced her number of surface platforms and underequipped many of those remaining in service. The nation geared its fleet to a single threat scenario and built up its sub-surface component accordingly. This reduction in visible force projection potential cast a negative reflection on national will and power. The belligerents then perceived a downgraded capability and resolve which led them to resort to the classical employment of force to create a military fait accompli. A perfect example of modern gunboat diplomacy brought about by a breakdown of deterrence! Britain suffered heavily both in the economic sense and in actual combat. Losses were greater than necessary because she underequipped most of the victims and forced them into roles they were not adequately prepared for or supported in. Like Britain, Australia will fight its next war with its fleet in being. If the fleet is not capable of performing ‘surgical’ power projection operations in support of the national interest an intolerable price will be exacted economically, politically and in Australian lives lost.

The bolstering of Australian warfighting ability through the provision of an enhanced power projection capability will make Australian surface combatants valuable instruments in the Australian national strategy of deterrence. Destroyers and frigates can be equipped with non-nuclear, land targeted cruise missiles of considerable range and potency. A cruise missile of the Tomahawk variety would give surface combatants the ability to strike high level targets in and around hostile ports and harbours from a stand-off range of several hundred miles. The major advantage being that a naval blockade is effectively established outside the immediate strike range of land based aircraft and missile-equipped patrol boats. In operations at closer
range from the hostile coast the helicopter can be effectively employed against FMPBs by providing targeting data to the harpoon missile equipped surface combatant. Consequently, the surface combatant would attack the patrol boat from far beyond the FMPB radar horizon, resulting in the FMPB not knowing what hit it! This further confirms the increasing importance of the helicopter in equipping the surface ship to fulfil its widening role.

In the force projection role, surface combatants could possibly act in raiding groups of two destroyers (or frigates) so as to keep at least two helicopters continually on station in high risk zones. A small merchantman would operate with these raiders in a ‘milch cow’ role making rendezvous as required. The supply ship may even incorporate facilities to support two attack helicopters of the AG-1H (Cobra) variety for direct use against FMPB’s, coastal shipping and surgical interdiction operations ashore as required by the surface combatants.

The issue of expense invariably arises when considering the development of truly self-sufficient, multi-purpose vessels capable of dominating a multi-threat environment. Sophisticated defensive and offensive weapons/sensor systems are inevitably costly given their high specifications of capability, reliability and endurance. However, in acquiring these assets tomorrow’s surface combatant will more be able to fulfil its broadened sea control/power projection commitment. It will once more become the hard hitting fighting machine of yesteryear as opposed to the over specialized escort it had been reduced to in the last four decades. The two hundred or so Australians aboard each major surface combatant deserve every chance of survival and victory by paying NOW for a potently armed and equipped blue water fleet in being.

In addition to the defence of Australian territorial integrity by force projection and the maintenance of our SLOCs, the future widening role of Australian frigates and destroyers in promoting regional stability is of major importance. Obligations to our US and ASEAN allies in terms of being actively involved in the maintenance of regional stability has been conveniently forgotten by a number of myopic, naive protagonists of an Australian BROWN Water Navy (BROWN). This navy would consist of FMPB’s and Corvettes together with a few submarines. Its job would be simply to patrol and defend the EEZ in conjunction with shore based aircraft. A return to this insular and downright reactionary ‘fortress Australia’ attitude is certainly short term good news for the Treasury and the communist world in general. Australia’s major ally, the United States, is already shouldering a disproportionate cost of the defence of Western Democracy and rightly expects its allies to at least contribute to preserving regional stability. Our ASEAN allies expect Australia to take an active and VISIBLE role with them in ensuring the peace and freedom of the region and its seas. Support of allies cannot be achieved by a Brown Water Navy conceived and moulded by ‘Maginot’ mentalities with isolationist mindsets. The ability to help allies and project a presence in the region becomes all the more important as the seas become an increasingly more probable area of conflict as large EEZs are more effectively policed and the value of ocean based resources increases.

Australia, the US and ASEAN are not only involved in a collective defence of territory and resources. Common national interests, ideals, freedoms, goals and forms of government exist. A common threat embodying the real menace of communist expansion, whether it be opportunistic or deterministic, is also shared. Our allies expect us to maintain a visible, authoritative and projectable blue water navy to significantly contribute to our common defence. By being seen to do this we not only bolster our natural strategic advantage of geographic defence in depth but we maintain the goodwill and respect of our allies. This is a consideration when hard times come and allies ask themselves “What have you done for me lately?” The basic issue remains that; if Australia is perceived as being without visible ‘ambassadors’ of political resolve and weak in the region, we will court danger and invite confrontation. A nation neglecting its military organisation, in this case the Navy, from false and selfish motives will quickly be despised by friend and foe alike.

In summary: Australia is a resource rich island trading nation with an economy dependent for its well-being on international trade. The nation must have a Navy capable of protecting trade and insulating it from attack and harassment. To achieve this the Navy must have the capacity to adequately carry out the sea control and force projection missions in a multi-threat environment. Sea control implies the maintenance of
links with our allies and trading partners by keeping open sea lines of communication. Power projection involves the authoritative reinforcement of a national strategy of deterrence by having the ability to interdict hostile forces in the open sea or in his home ports. Since the end of WWII both these missions involved the extensive use of the aircraft carrier with destroyers and frigates occupying specialized escort roles. It was determined in 1983 that maintaining a carrier was too rich for Australia’s blood and consequently the burden of preserving adequate sea control/power projection capabilities fell upon the Royal Australian Navy’s destroyer and frigate squadrons. This broadening of the role of Australian surface combatants to fill the capability gap left by the carrier DEMANDS that each unit will be suitably equipped to perform a variety of tasks independently. Modern technology makes the general purpose, multi-role destroyer and frigate possible. Like most things this comes with a price. Seapower, and ultimately national survival itself, is always paid for dearly, and this must be accepted if national security is to be ensured.

Finally, it must be stressed that Australia, in becoming an increasingly attractive economic target, cannot afford to be embarrassed by the development and use of appropriate force. Our world and indeed our region is inhabited by many new sovereign states growing more nationalistic, protectionist and militarist. These states will have no compunction in using force to intimidate and harass us or our neighbours; in fact, they tend to respect its use. Force is not obsolete. Appropriate force has not lost its value in the conduct of international relations and this will remain the case. Reversion to an inward looking Brown Water Navy, castrated by reactive fortress mentalities, will deprive decision makers of the historically proven option of the political application of limited naval force. Without suitably outfitted surface combatants authoritatively representing national interests, Australia will appear a toothless tiger in the military and political jungles. Destroyers and frigates provided with maximum practical self sufficiency are visible and effective representatives of national resolve during any time of conflict or tension. To meet the increasing demands made of them in terms of sea control and power projection they must be equipped to be even more enduring, versatile and harder hitting units capable of covering long distances, at short notice, to perform hazardous missions. The net effect of the acceptance of these wider roles by the frigates and destroyers of tomorrow’s Royal Australian Navy will be a significant increase in national deterrent credibility and warfighting capability. This, in itself, will do much to ensure Australia’s security against the threats which are sure to come.

NOTES
2. Ibid. p. Evidence exists to suggest that Chaff was the countermeasure used to seduce the missiles involved in this attack. Unfortunately, the *Atlantic Conveyor* was not so equipped. (See also *The Defence of Surface Ships Against Airborne Attack* by Col. N. Dodd for an excellent outline of available countermeasures. Defence Communications and Security Review 2/83, pp. 25-31.
4. Lieutenant Commander R. Chatham, USN, *A Quiet Revolution.* US Naval Institute Proceedings. Jan. 1984, pp. 41-46. It must be remembered that the submarine, after detecting a possible target, must localize it. In using passive sonar the submarine only has information on bearing; not range, course and speed. Closer penetration is required involving possible use of active sonar by the submarine.
5. G. Till. *Naval Warfare as a Whole.* Navy International. May 1983, p. 294. The author makes the point that the aim of seapower is to "positively" use the sea — to exploit resources, to trade, transport men and equipment or mount operations against the shore. This requires surface ships, as seapower can only be decisive if it affects conditions on land. Nations restricting themselves to 'negative' (sea denial) operations involving exclusive use of submarines will deprive themselves of the DECISIVE instrument of maritime warfare — Sea Assertion.
6. The possible threat, along with others, was pointed out in a 1981 submission to Parliament by the Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence.
7. Captain R. Bowling, USN. *Escort of Convoy: Still the Only Way.* US Naval Institute Proceedings. Dec. 1969, p. 56. This article gives a good account of both Battles of the Atlantic and the tardiness of the Americans and British in adopting convoy tactics in both wars. It is interesting to note that major reason for not quickly adopting convoy tactics in WWII was that an inordinate confidence was placed in new ASW technology (sonar/asdic) which did not deliver the goods. This is a lesson we should still be mindful of.
9. On Wednesday 10th October, 1984, it was announced in Parliament that the FFG7 squadron of the RAN would be fully equipped with highly capable Sikorskvi SEAHAWK helicopters.


14. D. Murray and P. Viotti (Editors). *The Defence Policies of Nations: A Comparative Study*. Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1982. This volume analyzes the defence policies of many nations and it is evident that the Clausewitzian concept of force being an extension of politics seems to be universally accepted, particularly by the Communist world.

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**CURRENT DEFENCE READINGS**

Readers may find the following articles of interest. The journals in which they appear are available through the Defence Information Service at Campbell Park Library and Military District Libraries.

The NATO pipeline system. Smith, Homer D.; Simpson, David A. *Army Logistician*; Jan/Feb 85: 16-21. Although the NATO CEPS (Central Europe Pipeline System) has some operational and organizational peculiarities, generally speaking it epitomizes the co-operative logistics that characterizes all networks of what is collectively known as the NATO pipeline system.

FFG7 Class Frigate and DD963 Class Destroyer Marine Gas Turbine Propulsion Systems Maintenance and Operational Training Facility. Delia Rocca, J.; Siehn, John D. *Marine Technology*; Jan 85: 1-27. This facility, constructed at the Great Lakes Naval Training Center, provides “hands on” training for maintenance and operation of marine gas turbines and associated propulsion plant components and controls and their piping and electrical systems.

The defence of India. Smith, Chris; George, Bruce *Jane’s Defence Weekly*; 2 Mar 85: 365 + (4p). Suggests that India’s new Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi has a clear mandate to reverse India’s political decline and unmistakable slide into inertia.

The Rock of Gibraltar. Dodd, Norman *Defence Communications and Security Review*; 1/85: 12-16. Reviews the current assets and future role of Gibraltar suggesting it as a role of national and NATO importance.

The Caribbean — future developments and prospects. Moss, Ambler H. *NATO’s Sixteen Nations*; Nov/Dec 84: 20-22. The Caribbean Islands, politically long neglected, have limited space, few natural resources, low labour productivity and little cohesion.

United States security and the Caribbean Basin. Leogrande, William *NATO’s Sixteen Nations*; Nov/Dec 84: 14-16. Human misery, absence of hope, poor economic prospects combine in Central America and the Caribbean with the search for rapid simple solutions which mostly mean a resort to violence.

United States policy towards Central America. Cirincione, Joseph *NATO’s Sixteen Nations*; Nov/Dec 84: 33+ (3p). The Reagan Administration’s support of the rebel side in Nicaragua on the one hand, and of the government side in El Salvador on the other, has had a mixed reception among the general public in Europe and the United States, with politicians and Congress wary of its activities.
Some Factors Contributing to Cadet Success at OCS

By Major Warwick Graco, AA Psych Corps

Dedication
This article is dedicated to the members of the 1/82, 2/82 and 1/83 classes from the Officer Cadet School. Some of the results cited in this paper are based on responses obtained from these graduates whilst they were officer cadets at the school.

Introduction

The charter of the Officer Cadet School (OCS) is to train Australian cadets for service as officers in the Australian Regular Army, and for a few, as ground staff in the Royal Australian Airforce. In addition, OCS has trained officers for service in the armies of Papua-New Guinea, New Zealand, Philippines, Singapore, Brunei, Cambodia, Thailand, South Vietnam, Uganda, Kenya, Nigeria and Fiji. The course of instruction aims to prepare them for this service and to develop those attributes upon which officership depends.

For civilian entry, Australian cadets must be between 18.5 and 22 years. If they hold a tertiary qualification they are allowed entry up until they turn 24, while if they are serving members, they are eligible until they turn 27. As a rule, foreign students comply with these entry requirements. The average age of each intake normally falls in the 20-21 interval.

There are two intakes per year at the school: one in January and the other in July. Corresponding to these intakes, there are two classes: a senior class and a junior class. The former are completing the second half of their course while the latter are doing their first. The course is comprised of forty-four weeks of instruction with twenty-two weeks in each term. In junior term the instruction is oriented towards training cadets in the individual and group skills common to officers and soldiers, and introduces them to specialist officer skills, while in senior term the instruction concentrates on preparing them to be junior officers.

The course provides education and training in subjects common to all corps. They are divided into academics and military skills. Academics cover tactics, logistics, arms and services, military history, military law, military administration, military training, communication skills and methods of instruction. Military skills include battlecraft, radio-telephone procedures, weapons training, navigation and map-reading, first aid, physical training and drill. Most of the military skills are taught in junior term while the majority of the academic subjects are addressed in senior term. To graduate from OCS, a cadet must pass all subjects. In some circumstances, the Commandant of the School may allow a cadet, with a failure in a subject, to graduate.

Assessment

Though a heavy emphasis is placed on the military education and training of cadets, an equal amount of attention is devoted to their leadership and personal development. A significant aid, which facilitates this development, is the school assessment system.'
Assessment of officer cadets is an integral part of the course at OCS. It is a necessary and essential process, that firstly, assists staff to identify those cadets who are performing unsatisfactorily and will not reach graduation standard, and secondly, helps staff to foster and guide the development of cadets. The qualities and their definitions which are used in the assessment system are listed in Table 1. These are categorized as leadership qualities and personal qualities. Assessment of the former count towards cadets’ leadership marks.

Assessment of cadet performance is a continuous process and instructional staff are required to submit either assessment or observation reports. The former contain ratings of those qualities that can be appraised in various instructional activities plus written “word pictures” of cadet performance. The latter provide comments on cadets’ actions, attitudes or accomplishments which are outside those programmed for formal assessment.

Guidance System

Australian cadets enter OCS after being subjected to an exacting selection procedure. The ultimate aim of the School is to have every cadet graduate. However, for medical and personal reasons, some cadets resign from their course while, as indicated above, some will be removed as a result of unsatisfactory performance.

To assist cadets in both their adjustment to the course and their development, officer instructors are appointed as guidance officers to a group of cadets. The role of the guidance officer is important: by his constructive guidance and counselling he is a major influence in motivating and guiding a cadet to overcome the difficulties he faces during the time he spends at the school, and to reach the standards required to graduate.

Other key members of the staff also contribute to the development of cadets. The Student Counsellor assists when a cadet has a particular personality and/or performance problem (eg weak motivation, a study difficulty or a fault with his leadership style) that requires attention which the guidance officer cannot provide. Similarly, senior instructors, company commanders, the Chief Instructor and the Commandant give appropriate counselling and reinforcement to cadets when necessary. Company commanders are responsible for cadets’ personnel administration, and they are ably assisted by the School Chaplain when cadets have personal problems that are of a serious and confidential nature.

Because of the intense and rigorous nature of the course, all cadets encounter difficulties with both their adjustment and development during the time they stay at the school. Examples of these difficulties are shown in Table 2. Since cadets face many challenges, the question that begs itself is what personality traits assist cadets to cope successfully with the course? Detailed below are the results of two studies that attempted to answer this question. This research arose from a broader investigation into the role personality traits play in effective leadership.

Investigations

The first study examined a number of personality characteristics which were believed to play a part in effective cadet performance, and the second examined the basic dimensions which underlie leadership and personal qualities assessed at the school. Both studies are complementary: the first shows what a cadet should possess to succeed, whereas the second indicates what he has to do at OCS to demonstrate that he will make an adequate officer.

The results of the first investigation are tentative because of the small samples involved and certain technical problems that are associated with conducting this type of research. The results of the second are sounder because of the larger samples employed. Despite these problems, the findings of both investigations provide a guide to where we should be looking, in terms of identifying the personality attributes and behaviours of individuals who are able to meet the standards on a hard and demanding course, such as that conducted at OCS. To assist the reader to comprehend these findings, psychological jargon and statistical technicalities are avoided in the description.

Personality Study

To determine the relationships between cadets’ personality traits and their performances, cadets from three classes from the school were each administered a questionnaire which was designed to measure some of their personality characteristics. The attributes selected included those dealing with cadets’ dominance, their boldness, their flexibility, their emotional...
TABLE 1. QUALITIES USED IN THE OCS ASSESSMENT SYSTEM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serial</th>
<th>Quality</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>GROUP INFLUENCE</td>
<td>The quality which enables an individual to bring about a willing effort on the part of the group toward achieving a desired objective or goal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>POWER OF EXPRESSION</td>
<td>The ability to express one's ideas with ease and clarity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>APPLIED KNOWLEDGE</td>
<td>The degree to which an individual displays a practical understanding of principles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>ORGANIZATION</td>
<td>The ability to arrange available resources and information in a systematic way so as to produce effective results.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>PHYSICAL ENDURANCE</td>
<td>The ability to keep going under arduous conditions of physical stress.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>JUDGEMENT</td>
<td>The ability to see the essential elements of a problem, logically weigh facts, assess priorities and decide on the best solution based on these considerations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>REACTION UNDER STRESS</td>
<td>The ability to control emotions in order to remain efficient and effective in the attainment of objectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>APPLICATION</td>
<td>The sustained effort using all resources available to achieve an objective in spite of obstacles and setbacks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY</td>
<td>That attitude of an individual which enables him to be dependable and to discharge his obligations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>COOPERATION</td>
<td>The desire to participate willingly in a group and further the aims of the group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>ENERGY</td>
<td>The vigour with which he pursues his tasks, activities and interests.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>CONFIDENCE</td>
<td>The quality of self assurance of ability to carry out tasks no matter how difficult or complex.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>ACCEPTANCE OF PROCEDURES</td>
<td>Refers to the degree to which the individual accepts, improves on, or rejects established procedures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>PARTICIPATION</td>
<td>The quality which indicates the degree to which the individual participates effectively in group activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>MATURITY</td>
<td>A measure of degree of emotional and social development.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: 1. The first nine qualities are regarded as leadership qualities and the remaining six as personal qualities. 2. These definitions have been truncated.

TABLE 2. ADJUSTMENT AND DEVELOPMENTAL PROBLEMS CADETS CAN EXPERIENCE AT OCS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serial</th>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>MOTIVATION</td>
<td>A lack of interest in the Army and/or a lack of desire to be an officer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>ATTITUDE</td>
<td>A negative opinion of the Army and/or an inability to relate to authority.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>ACADEMIC</td>
<td>An inability to do assignments and cope with exam requirements of the course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>LEADERSHIP STYLE</td>
<td>Either the failure to develop an effective leadership style or the inappropriate use of leadership styles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>CONFIDENCE</td>
<td>A serious lack of self assurance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>PERSONALITY PROJECTION</td>
<td>An inability to project one's personality in training activities, such as being withdrawn, quiet and nonparticipative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>ENERGY</td>
<td>A lack of enthusiasm, vitality and alertness in training activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>EMOTIONAL REACTION</td>
<td>A tendency to show undue emotional tendencies when under stress or pressure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>MATURITY</td>
<td>A failure to act in a manner commensurate with one's age.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>PEER ACCEPTANCE</td>
<td>An inability to relate to fellow cadets.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

INTERPERSONAL COMPETENCE
- Applied Knowledge
- Confidence
- Power of Expression
- Participation
- Group Influence
- Organization

MATURITY
- Maturity
- Sense of Responsibility

APPLICATION
- Application
- Sense of Responsibility
- Organization

COMPLIANCE
- Acceptance of Procedures

JUDGEMENT/COMPOSURE
- Judgement
- Reaction under Stress

PHYSICAL ENDURANCE
- Physical Endurance

Figure 1. Dimensions Underlying The OCS Assessment System
stability and their ability to tolerate frustration, their emotional toughness, their conscientiousness, their self control, their efficiency with reading and study, their motivation to achieve, their desire for stimulation, their tendencies to be manipulative or "Machiavellian" and their tendencies to be conservative. These traits were chosen because it was felt that they would help explain cadet success. To take two examples, the "dominance" trait was included in the study because it was suspected that cadets who assert themselves in various school activities would do better on their course than those who are quiet and retiring. Similarly, it was expected that cadets who are conservative by nature, in terms of accepting established practices and procedures, would attract less attention from staff than those who question them.

The analysis entailed comparing measures of these traits with the results cadets obtained for various subject taught at the school. The results obtained from the statistical analysis suggested the following characteristics play their part in all aspects of cadet performance, ie academics, military skills and leadership:

a. **Assertiveness** — The results implied that an effective cadet:
   * Is outgoing and ascendent, ie is not quiet and retiring;
   * Is adventurous and bold, ie is not shy and timid;
   * Is shrewd, poised and polished, ie is not simple, naive and artless; and
   * While being dominant, he is not "loud mouthed", overbearing or overly aggressive.

b. **High Self Control and Good Organization** — The results indicated that an effective cadet:
   * Is well organized and purposeful, eg has efficient study habits;
   * Is conscientious, persistent and not easily distracted, eg is reliable and determined;
   * Exercises careful control over his emotions, eg is not prone to display inappropriate outbursts of temper;
   * Is relaxed and placid in the sense that he is not tense, frustrated and highly driven — the type that would burn himself out;
   * Is internally directed, ie he sees himself as being responsible for his own actions rather than attributing his circumstances to external causes such as luck; and
   * Is not calculating or manipulative, ie "Machiavellian".

c. **Masculine Orientation** — The results revealed that an effective cadet:
   * Is emotionally tough in that he is not soft, sentimental or tender;
   * Has a strong preference for masculine activities such as football, cricket, hunting and camping. He also seeks stimulating and challenging activities that have an element of risk such as parachuting, scuba diving and mountain climbing; and
   * Has a high need for achievement, ie he is a doer, a worker, a person who applies himself to achieve his goals.

**Performance Study**

It was stated before that these attributes are one side of the coin; the other is what cadets must do to show that they would make satisfactory officers. The investigation into the dimensions that underly the leadership and personal qualities of the OCS assessment system provided some answers to this question. The assessment data for five OCS classes were analysed. The findings of the statistical analysis suggested that there are seven dimensions comprising the system. The qualities which are associated with the dimensions are shown in figure 1. It is to be noted that some qualities are common to more than one dimension.

These dimensions suggest that an effective officer is:

a. **Interpersonally Competent** — The qualities of "Applied Knowledge", "Confidence", "Power of Expression", "Group Influence", "Participation" and "Organization" constitute this dimension. This indicates the dimension is measuring the extent to which the cadet is socially adept in terms of being knowledgeable, poised, articulate, influential or persuasive, organized in his thoughts and ideas, and active when interacting with others.

b. **Interpersonally Involved** — The qualities of "Energy", "Cooperation" and "Participation" are related to this dimension, and this suggests that it is measuring the degree to which a cadet involves himself in training in terms of being energetic, alert, "switched on", enthusiastic, cooperative and participative.

c. **Composed** — The qualities of "Judgement" and "Reaction under Stress" are
associated with this dimension, and this discloses the extent a cadet is self possessed, cool, calm and collected, and has good powers of reasoning and judgement when under stress.

d. **Mature** — The qualities of “Maturity” and “Sense of Responsibility” are correlated with this dimension, and this reveals the degree to which a cadet is responsible, reliable, and acts in a manner commensurate with his age.

e. **High on Application** — The qualities of “Sense of Responsibility”, “Application” and “Organization” are relevant to this dimension, and demonstrates the degree to which a cadet is hardworking, organized and responsible in fulfilling his training and study obligations.

f. **High in Endurance** — The quality of “Physical Endurance” is the only one associated with this dimension. This shows the extent to which a cadet has good powers of endurance.

g. **Complaint** — The quality of “Acceptance of Procedures” is loaded on this dimension. This reveals the degree to which a cadet is not overly critical, rebellious or argumentative.

**Evaluation**

The results of both studies hold no surprises. To be successful at the school, a cadet needs to be assertive. From the time he commences his course, he is required to project his personality in all social, sporting and instructional activities, and he has to assert his authority when placed in positions of responsibility. If he is quiet, shy and reticent, or if he is overly aggressive and outspoken, he is almost certain to receive timely counselling from staff.

Similarly, a high degree of self control and personal organization assists a cadet to perform satisfactorily on his course. The training tests the character, resilience and motivation of cadets, and those who are unreliable, lazy, lax, shirkers and lacking in moral fibre; those who are unable to organize themselves and their time; those who cannot control their emotions; and those who are living on the “end of their nerves”, are the ones who are likely to attrite on their courses.

A masculine orientation is an important prerequisite because of the physical and psychological demands of cadet training. Those who are both physically and emotionally tough have a better chance of meeting these demands.

From a performance point of view, OCS places a high premium on cadets’ interpersonal skills. For example, as indicated above, cadets are called upon to instruct others and they are placed in situations where they must command those below them. If a cadet is not socially adept (eg articulate, confident and influential), his chances of graduating are far less than his companions who are competent in this manner.

Allied to this requirement is the emphasis placed on cadet involvement in all activities that occur at the school. Cadets are expected to be cooperative, alert and enthusiastic at all times. If they are quiet, withdrawn or noncontributing, they are also likely to be the focus of attention from staff.

The same applies to other dimensions of the assessment system. Cadets are put under pressure in tactical exercises and they have to maintain their composure, while demonstrating to their instructors that they have sound reasoning and judgement. Maturity, high application, physical endurance and compliance (or acceptance of procedures) are also regarded as important attributes of an officer and ones which assist a cadet to be successful at OCS.

**Caveats**

Having outlined and discussed the results of the studies, a number of caveats must be stated so that the reader does not misinterpret their findings and implications. Firstly, it must be recognized that cadets who enter OCS are the end result of a long filtering process. Those who are medically unfit, educationally unqualified and psychologically unsuitable (in terms of failing to meet the minimum intellectual standards or in terms of being either mentally or emotionally unstable) are eliminated at the recruiting level. Furthermore, those judged not to be officer material are rejected at the selection board level. Thus, the cadets who enter OCS are a highly selected group. It follows that the personality attributes identified in this investigation are those that explain cadet success after the criteria cited above are applied. In other words, personality requirements, such as being emotionally stable and having an above average level of intelligence or better, play their part in explaining cadet success at OCS.

Secondly, it was mentioned that the results of the personality study are tentative because
of the small samples involved and certain technical problems inherent in research of this nature. Until larger samples are employed and the technical hitches are overcome, it cannot be stated categorically that the traits identified are those which explain why cadets do well at OCS.

Thirdly, it would be presumptuous to assume that if a cadet is deficient in one of the key personality characteristics, such as assertiveness, he will not graduate from OCS. This is not necessarily true as his other attributes might compensate for his deficiencies. However, it is expected that if a cadet is deficient in all the traits identified (i.e., assertiveness, self-control and organization, and masculine orientation) his chances of graduating are not promising. The same compensatory principle applies to the performance dimensions where, for example, a cadet who lacks confidence and presence, might graduate because of his strong application, good character and intellectual prowess.

Fourthly, research carried out at OCS has indicated that life history, or biographical variables, such as cadets' academic achievements, sporting attainments and prior leadership experiences, help predict their performances at the school. To give an example, if a cadet has represented his state in football, his chances of graduating are better than if he played this sport socially at school. The rationale behind this approach is that past success is predictive of future success. In line with research of others, it was found that a combination of biographical variables and ability scores were predictive of effective performance at OCS. This shows that other sources of data, besides personality traits, are important in the cadet success equation.

Lastly, with regard to the performance study, a number of analyses were conducted, and the dimensions identified were those that appeared to best explain cadet performance at the school. However, in another institution that has a different ethos, these dimensions might not apply as much as they do to OCS. Each institution has its own set of norms, practices and procedures, and what is true of one might not be true of another.

Conclusion

In conclusion, though a number of reservations have been expressed about the findings of these studies, they do provide an indication of some of the personality traits that are associated with, and of the performances that underlie, cadet success at OCS. At this stage the results of the personality study suggest that a cadet who is likely to do well on his course is assertive, has high self-control and good organization, and is masculine in his orientation. Similarly, the outcome of the performance study reveals that a successful cadet is socially competent, involves himself in all school activities, is composed, is mature, has high application, has good physical endurance and accepts procedures.

NOTES

1. The assessment system used at OCS is based on one developed at the Officer Training Unit (OTU), Scheyville in the period 1966-1972 (see Reference Note 1. and Owens (1966)).
2. The qualities and their definitions employed in the OCS system have been progressively modified over the years. The ones examined in this study were those used in the period 1980-1983.
3. The school chaplain is available to assist both staff and cadets with matters that are of a personal and confidential nature. Because of his unique position, he is the one member of the staff whom cadets can confide in when they need to unburden themselves.
4. It would require a long and detailed explanation to explain the problems that are encountered in investigating the relationships between personality traits and behaviours. To date, only weak-to-moderate statistical relationships have been demonstrated to exist between these two types of variables (see Epstein 1979, 1980 and Rorer and Widiger 1983 for reviews of this issue). The results derived from this investigation were consistent with this trend, except that the correlations obtained were underestimates of those that would normally be found between these factors. This was caused by using a restricted sample of subjects in the investigation. The restriction arose from not surveying those applicants who were either rejected or who failed to graduate from OCS. Technically these subjects should be included in the study, if a better impression is to be gained of the role personality variables play in determining performances of OCS cadets.
5. The personality traits used in this investigation were based on items taken from each of the following personality measures:
   a. The Cattell Dominance (E), Superego (G), Adventurousness (H), Masculinity (I), Sophistication (N), Conservatism (Q1), Self-Sentiment (Q3) and Ergic Tension (Q4) scales (see Cattell 1957, Cattell and Kline 1977);
   b. The Gough Dominance, Flexibility, Intellectual Efficiency and Flexibility scales (see Gough 1957);
   c. The Zuckerman Sensation-Seeking scale (see Zuckerman 1978, Zuckerman et al 1972);
   d. The Christie and Gies Machiavellian scale (see Christie and Gies 1970);
   e. The Rotter Internal scale (see Lefcourt 1976, Phares 1976 and Rotter 1966, 1971);
   f. The Smith Achievement Motivation scale (see Smith 1973); and
   g. A composite Ego-Strength scale that was made up of items the author considered to measure this concept.
6. The personality scales which were associated with each of the attributes were as follows:
   a. Assertiveness - The Cattell Dominance (E), Adventurousness (H) and Sophistication (N) scales were the key constituents of this attribute. It was also found that a second assertiveness dimension emerged from the analysis. The Gough Dominance and the composite Ego-Strength scales loaded positively while the Cattell
Sophistication (N) scale loaded negatively on this dimension. An examination of the items used on the scales suggested that this dimension was indicating a person who lacks social skills and graces, e.g., is loud-mouthed, overbearing and ignorant.

b. High Self Control and Good Organization — The Cattell Self-Sentiment (Q3), the Gough Intellectual Efficiency and the Rotter Internal-External scales were loaded positively, while the Christie and Gies Machiavellian scale was loaded negatively with this attribute. The Cattell Superego (G) scale had a moderately positive association, while the Cattell Ergic Tension (Q4) had a moderately negative relationship with this characteristic.

c. Masculine Orientation — The Cattell Masculinity (I) and the Smith Achievement Motivation scales had strong relationships, while the Zuckerman Sensation-Seeking scale had a moderately positive relationship with this dimension.

7. The Landy et al. (1980) technique for statistically controlling for halo error was used to determine these performance dimensions. Though this technique has been criticized by others (see Harvey 1982, Hulin 1982, Murphy 1982, Mossholder and Giles 1983), it provided more useful insights into the dimensions underlying the OCS assessment system than was obtained from using conventional statistical analyses.

8. Some useful references on the effectiveness of biographical data as selection predictors include Asher (1972), Alker and Owen (1977) and Reilly and Chao (1982).

REFERENCES


AWARD: ISSUE NO 52
(May/June 1985)

The Board of Management has awarded the prize of $50 for the best original article in the May/June issue (No 52) of the Defence Force Journal to Commander G. L. Purcell, RAN for his article Perspectives on the New Discipline Legislation.
This article examines the importance of organized battlefield salvage of stores and equipment as a source of supply in modern warfare. Over the centuries, the place of battlefield salvage has developed to the point where, in World War II, it was considered an essential part of the supply function, and vital to the achievement of victory. With the advent of today’s sophisticated weapons and equipment, and their insatiable demand for supplies, the place of salvage on the battlefield seems assured. It concludes that although this aspect of logistics is currently almost totally neglected, there are considerable economic, strategic and tactical advantages to be gained from efficient and systematic battlefield salvage operations.

"It is difficult to impress upon the fighting soldier the great importance of salvage."

GHQ, MEF
Cairo, 1943

Introduction

SINCE the end of World War II almost no consideration has been given to the subject of organized equipment salvage within the combat zone as a source of supply during war. This is evidenced by the fact that battlefield salvage is virtually never mentioned in modern military literature. Yet its importance in the past, particularly during World War II, is a matter of historical fact. Both the British Army and the United States Army regarded salvage as vital to the achievement of victory, and an essential part of the supply function. The current neglect of what is potentially a critical aspect of logistics can possibly be attributed to the fact that in peacetime, armies have strict rules covering the return and disposal of unserviceable stores and equipment. There is little wastage and no scope for salvage. Peacetime practices, however, are quite unsuitable in wartime conditions. In war, vast quantities of stores and equipment are, by necessity, abandoned on the battlefield. Items which cannot be recovered must be replaced by new production, adding to the heavy demand on industry and transportation. They may also be used to advantage by the enemy. On the other hand, items that can be salvaged, whether of friendly, enemy or local civilian origin, are denied to the enemy, reduce the logistic burden, and contribute to combat power.

The aim of this article is to examine the importance of battlefield salvage as a source of supply in modern warfare.

What is Battlefield Salvage?

The term ‘battlefield salvage’ applies to organized salvage operations conducted within the combat zone during war. By definition, salvage is ‘the saving or rescuing of condemned, discarded, or abandoned property, and the material contained therein, for reuse, refabrication or scrapping’3. In peacetime, salvage is often narrowly associated with the collection and disposal of waste by sale, but in war the term takes on the much broader meaning of ‘saving for further use everything which comes into our hands, insofar as that is possible’4. Salvage in war can be carried out both at home and on the battlefield. Salvage at home, although of great importance, is beyond the scope of this article and will not be considered further.

The fundamental criterion for battlefield salvage, is that the item being salvaged must, at least potentially, have some residual useful-
ness. It must be suitable either for reuse, for breaking down into useful parts and components, or for conversion into raw materials for reprocessing.

The main source of salvage material is the stores and equipment lost, destroyed or abandoned as a result of combat action on the battlefield. The Eighth Army in North Africa recognized the potential of this source: 'In a successful and far reaching advance large quantities of enemy equipment of all natures are captured, the material taken ranging from extremely valuable optical instruments, wireless equipment, gun spares, special types of small arms, down to the more common items such as the excellent German 20 litre petrol container known as the "Jerrican"'. Armies also discard many stores which seem temporarily to have no further use, especially if the problems of possession or protection become a burden. Such items could include unwanted vehicles, weapons or ammunition, but more commonly comprise delivery and packaging stores such as harnesses, ammunition containers, packing cases and fuel drums. Large quantities of clothing are also discarded when the weather changes from winter to summer. If an efficient salvage organization is in operation and the fighting troops are aware of the continuing demand for these items, much can be saved before it is discarded and lost.

Of lesser importance as a source of salvage is the abandoned property of the local population. The potential of this source will obviously depend on the density of the population and its standard of industrialization. The local civilian community can rarely supply weapons and ammunition but is often a good source of fuel, vehicles, boats, engineer plant, workshop tools and equipment, telephones, blankets and medical stores.

The Evolution of Battlefield Salvage

Salvage has always been an inevitable feature of warfare. Medieval archers, after the first encounter of battle, had to rely almost exclusively on salvaging spent arrows to shoot back. Since that time the importance of salvage operations on the battlefield has changed with the nature of war, the improvement in weapon technology, and increases in the logistic burden. A brief account of the evolution of battlefield salvage in warfare will demonstrate the emerging importance of this aspect of logistics.

Before 1914

All large armies prior to 1914 lived off the countryside. Available means of transportation were incapable of bringing up all of an army's needs from a base area. By far the greatest part of the consumption of an army was food and fodder which had to be obtained locally. Local resources were soon exhausted so to stay fed, an army had to keep moving. Continuous advances at the rate of 15 kilometres per-day were not only possible but necessary. To facilitate mobility, weapons and equipment had to be light and simple. Field commanders often had to scour the countryside for food and fodder but rarely found it necessary to conduct organized salvage to maintain fighting efficiency. With few exceptions, salvage which did occur was usually an impromptu individual activity to loot the dead and collect desirable items of discarded equipment for personal use. In many respects, salvage was synonymous with pillage. One notable exception, involving organized salvage on a large scale, occurred in 1805 when Napoleon collected and incorporated the entire Austrian arsenal into the armaments of the Grande Armee and was able to write home that no more ammunition was needed.

World War I and the Logistics Revolution

The revolution in military technology which occurred just prior to, and during World War I brought about a radical change in the conduct of logistics. Modern warfare based on machines had arrived at last, and with it came an insatiable demand for ammunition, replacement equipment, spare parts and fuel. By 1916, the quantity of supplies a British division needed to fight exceeded, for the first time, that which it needed to eat. The demand for these new types of stores could not be satisfied from local resources; they had to be produced by the home base and transported, at a great expense and effort, to the front. Confronted by great supply difficulties and evidence of tremendous wastage on the battlefield, the British Army, in 1917, found it 'necessary to set up a definite salvage organization'. The United States also determined to utilize the waste of its army in the field. In August 1914 the Office of the Quartermaster General formed a special unit of eleven officers that was sent to France to study the salvage methods of the French and British and to devise and install a complete salvage system for the Amer-
ican Expeditionary Forces. As a result the first comprehensive order on salvage, War Department General Order No. 9, was issued on 29 January 1918. The concise term 'salvage' was adopted to replace the words 'conservation' and 'reclamation'.

World War II and Salvage on a Large Scale

In 1939 the British Army predicted the importance of salvage in the coming war. The Salvage Corps was raised as a service under the control of the Quartermaster General, and a Salvage Training and Mobilization Centre was established. During the course of the war this centre provided specialist salvage training to 563 officers and 4420 other ranks. Each Overseas British force had a Controller of Salvage, with representatives at army and corps levels. Salvage units were established at army, corps and divisional headquarters, with salvage depots, as required, on the line-of-communications. A standard Field Salvage Unit consisted of one officer and 40 other ranks, although numerous different sized salvage units were raised to handle special items such as armoured vehicles, empty containers and ammunition.

In 1943, the ‘Q’ Staff, Middle East Force, Cairo, emphasized the importance of salvage operations in North Africa: ‘When almost every item of new production had to be brought thousands of miles by sea at peril to merchant shipping and naval escort, it was essential that full advantage be taken of all equipment and stores that the enemy was forced to leave with us’. As an indication of the potential of salvage, the following list shows some of the more important items retrieved from the battlefield in North Africa between October 1940 and June 1943:

Guns (various calibre) 1 460
Artillery ammunition 1 300 000 rounds
Mortars 870
Machine guns 10 400
Rifles 595 000
Small arms ammunition 39 000 000 rounds
Vehicles 850
Tyres 55 000
Jerricans 2 000 000
44 gallon drums 910 000
Petrol 83 000 gallons
Oil 196 000 gallons

Much of this equipment was in a condition to be used immediately. Between March 1940 and June 1945, the salvage organization of the British Army retrieved 2 279 893 tons of material and stores, to a value of £35 408 339. Of this, 1 262 600 tons, valued at £28 695 043 (more than 80% of the total) was salvaged from the battlefield.

The Benefits of Salvage

Major accounts of salvage operations in the official histories of both the British and United States Armies in World War II emphasize the economic benefits. However, military histories frequently recount instances of salvaged weapons and equipment being used to provide an immediate and direct tactical advantage that would not otherwise have existed. For example, in the story of the defence of Tobruk, a place of honour will always be reserved for the “Bush Artillery” — whose captured Italian guns in great variety of size, vintage and reliability, that infantrymen without gunner training manned and fired in a manner as spirited as the fire orders employed were unorthodox. For either purpose, salvage can only be regarded as an unreliable source of material which is often foreign, old, damaged or destroyed, or in some way of generally poor quality and value. At the same time the salvage activity itself will consume valuable manpower and resources in collection, protection, sorting, storage, transportation, repair and reclamation. Organized salvage operations should therefore only be attempted when positive benefits have been identified. The major benefits of salvage can be considered in three areas: economy, strategic mobility, and combat power.

Economy

Modern war has been described as ‘a conflict of industry, resources and transportation as much, if not more, than it is of arms’. Conservation of military material and supplies, and the resources required to produce them, is vital to the war effort. This becomes even more critical if the country is mobilized for a protracted conventional war, and especially if cut off from traditional sources of strategic resources such as oil, rubber, aluminium, iron and copper. Even the most powerful nations such as the United States recognize this to be true: ‘The mobilization that took place in World War II was similar in many respects to that of World War I. There were the same basic problems of insufficient industrial capac-
ity of critical raw materials in seriously short supply, and of an upward spiraling of prices as the gap between supply and demand became wider and wider\textsuperscript{17}. Smaller nations, particularly those in a state of self defence, are even more seriously inflicted with the economic problems of mobilization. Whilst being far from the complete solution to this problem, systematic salvage of equipment and material can significantly reduce the national economic burden. Each item salvaged for reuse reduces the demand for new production. When normal supply is cut off, salvage is often a major source of critical strategic raw materials.

Strategic Mobility

While the quantity of supplies consumed by modern armies has risen dramatically, the means available for their transportation has not kept up with the demand. In World War I when motor transport was in its infancy, armies on the western front were forced to remain static simply to be supplied with the necessities with which to operate as a fighting force. Strategic mobility was lost\textsuperscript{18}. The improved speed and range of modern means of transport has had only minor effect. It is largely cancelled out by the huge consumption of modern armies and by the ease with which supply lines can be interdicted. In terms of strategic mobility it means little that a mechanized division can cover 20 kilometres per hour or 200 kilometres per day. The question is whether it is possible to supply a division advancing at this rate for more than a day or two.

Strategic mobility is essentially a problem of supply. ‘Every pound of material recovered and reused in the theatre of operations (makes) that much more shipping space available for other needed supplies and must contribute eventually to an improvement in the strategic mobility of the force’\textsuperscript{19}.

Combat Power

Combat power is said to be a combination of fire power, manoeuvre and morale. Both fire power and manoeuvre, which is a product of mobility and communications, are primarily equipment dependent. The most productive battlefield salvage activities are those directed towards retrieval of equipment which is of immediate use to improve fire power, mobility and communications. The priority for salvage must reflect this requirement.

Developing a Salvage Capability

The current neglect of salvage as a source of supply in war indicates a general attitude that either it will not prove to be significant, which from experience is not always the case, or that if salvage is necessary it will occur naturally, without organization. There is no doubt that salvage, to a limited degree, will occur naturally. Any fighting soldier will retrieve from the battlefield any item which satisfies an immediate requirement not met by normal supply. This has always been the case. But such a casual attitude is not taken with other aspects of supply so why should it be considered appropriate for salvage? The following discussion is not comprehensive but indicates a few of the measures which can be taken to improve the efficiency of battlefield salvage efforts.

Salvage Awareness

In World War II the British Army realized that much ‘valuable captured material and equipment is regarded by the fighting troops as “prize of war” and . . . that the majority are not salvage conscious’\textsuperscript{20}. The United States Army was also confronted with a similar attitude in its troops: ‘the average American soldier was convinced that the capacity of the nation to produce commodities was unlimited. He was accustomed to relative carelessness and extravagance rather than frugality in his handling of material goods’\textsuperscript{21}. The numerous smaller wars since World War II have reinforced this attitude to the point where today a fighting soldier in a western army has come to expect an abundance of supply.

Salvage awareness at all levels is the first step towards an effective salvage programme. Training and instruction in salvage should be carried out in all units. In 1939, the British Army Council instructed that ‘all ranks should understand:

• The principles and need for economy.
• The value of salvage.
• The organization for salvage within the unit and of the Salvage Corps.
• The responsibilities of units and of individuals for salvage’\textsuperscript{22}. Any salvage organization must rely on the troops in the field to collect material, or at least notify its location.

Staff Action

The salvage value of any item will depend on both the operational and economic require-
ments, and on the shortages in supply. These factors are best known to the Staff who have a responsibility to promulgate instructions detailing salvage procedure and the order of priority for salvage conscious fighting troops are wasted unless they know which items are required, and where.

The salvage value of an item is not always immediately obvious. At times during the North Africa campaign in 1942, enemy armoured fighting vehicles were not required, while the bungs of 44 gallon drums were of high priority. Often simple, apparently valueless items are required to make serviceable larger equipments or systems. This will almost always be the case when environmental conditions on the battlefield are markedly different from those of the home training areas. Repair parts scales developed from training experience are no longer valid. Excessive dust, humidity and rough going will result in a sudden surge in demand for many items not normally supplied in quantity, such as rubber hose, tyres, brake linings, vehicle springs and some electronic components. Shortages in supply of such items render complete vehicles and weapon systems unserviceable. Often salvage from the battlefield is the only short term source of supply so all ranks must be kept aware of the requirements.

Collection, Handling and Accounting

Collection, handling and accounting for salvaged material is a manpower intensive activity which by nature, is best performed by the supply service. When considerable quantities of salvage are expected, a dedicated salvage organization should be established. There is no requirement in peacetime for salvage units to exist, however their organization, operating procedures, and training requirements should be determined as part of the general preparation for war.

Management and accounting procedures for salvaged material will vary considerably from those for normal supply. Reusable items of friendly origin, and scrap, can be returned to the normal supply system for repair, re-issue, or backloading as appropriate. Items of foreign origin without commonly recognizable designations and stock numbers are more difficult to manage. Special liaison is required to ensure that the capabilities of the salvaged enemy equipment are matched to the requirements of the units in the field. In this matter the Staff have a responsibility to know what salvaged material has become available, and to direct its distribution to units where it can be used most effectively. In this respect the modern trend toward the exclusive use of automatic data processing for stores accounting in the field is counter productive because it cannot cope with items which do not conform to standardized stock control designations and descriptions. Whilst machine accounting is well suited to peace-time conditions, it is less than ideal in war when the efficient management of salvaged material is important.

Probably the most difficult management and accounting problems occur with damaged and incomplete items retained in the theatre of operations for reclamation of spare parts and components. Complete breaking down of equipments to reclaim parts is an expensive activity, and, to be of further use, the parts must be identified, inspected, repaired if necessary, packaged, labelled, and brought to stock. Yet they may never be used. But unless this is done there is no way of knowing what parts are available from salvaged equipment. Complete systems can remain unserviceable because of the inability to locate the required part, even though it may be available. One possible solution to this problem is to establish reclamation depots where equipment salvaged for parts can be held. Demands for a part that cannot be satisfied through normal supply are referred to the reclamation depot where technical personnel can inspect the equipment held and extract the required item. It is worth noting that this system is as applicable in peace-time as it is in war.

Repair

For very good reasons, the modern trend in military equipment is toward repair by assembly replacement. Unfortunately, this has resulted in a fundamental change in the organization and equipment of workshops which, more and more, tend to be specialized to specific repair tasks. In addition, tradesmen are trained to diagnose and replace rather than repair. This trend is reinforced by the lack of urgency in peace-time which allows equipment to lie idle for months, and even years, awaiting the supply of a minor replacement part. Replacement parts for salvaged equipment will not always be available through normal supply channels, so workshops must be equipped and staffed to undertake more detailed repairs,
often relying heavily on more resourceful fabrication and substitution. This capability can be developed and practised in peace-time by exercising workshops in ‘battle standard’ repairs without a supply of replacement parts.

**Data Packs**

A prerequisite for the successful repair and operation of salvaged equipment of foreign origin is the availability of information about the subject item. This includes operating instructions and the technical details required for inspection, repair and servicing. Where repair parts have to be fabricated, production drawings are also desirable. In military procurement terms, this complete information package is frequently referred to as the ‘data pack’ for the equipment. The effectiveness of battlefield salvage is considerably boosted if prior to war, comprehensive data packs are prepared for the civilian and enemy equipment identified as potentially useful. Data packs could be held on microfilm and only distributed in print if and when required.

**Conclusions**

Over the centuries the place of battlefield salvage has developed to the point where, in modern warfare, it has become an essential part of the supply function. The advent of sophisticated, technical military weapons and equipment, and the resulting huge demand for supplies, has not relegated battlefield salvage to a thing of the past, but has ensured its importance on tomorrow’s battlefields. It has in the past, and no doubt will in the future, produce worthwhile economic, strategic and tactical advantages. As with any other military endeavour, the effectiveness of salvage operations can be enhanced by adequate preparations in organization, procedure and training.

Although battlefield salvage is currently neglected as a potential source of supply, there is every reason to believe that if a nation, of any size, becomes heavily committed to a modern conventional war, particularly in self defence, then it will be forced through sheer strategic and economic necessity to resort to salvage. Any peace-time preparations made to develop the salvage capability of its defence forces must substantially contribute to its chances of achieving eventual victory.

**NOTES**

1. None of the major indices on defence literature currently include battlefield salvage as a subject.
7. Van Creveld M. *Supplying an Army: An Historical View.* RUSI Journal, June 1978. p 59. Van Creveld estimates that at least 90% of an army’s supply requirement was food and fodder.
11. Magnay, p 140.
14. Magnay, p 143.
18. Van Creveld, p 60.
22. Magnay, p 139.

Editor’s Note: This article first appeared in the *Fort Queenscliff Papers.*
ONE DAY ON THE ISLAND OF CRETE

By Mr. S. Bond

'The brutality of battle can bring out unforgettable emotions that will come back years later. A story of coincidences.'

FOLLOWING explicit instructions from his government to 'overcome Australians' antipathy towards the German people for having started two world wars', the new German Consul-General in Melbourne called a special news conference.

Advance publicity, said the Consul, had a surprise for the news media and the Australian people.

"What's new we don't already know that the Kraut says he's got for us?" asked a cynical newsman to all and sundry gathered under the German eagle symbol outside the Melbourne Consulate.

Inside the conference room, a number of secretaries were milling around making sure everything was in ship-shape order for the Consul's entry. Television crews were checking lighting and setting up equipment in the best possible places.

The Consul's study door swings open and Dr. Felix Gaerte, a slim, alert man in his mid-fifties, dressed smartly in a light grey suit which sets off his somewhat swarthy complexion to advantage, strides into the room. He moves briskly with military bearing, in spite of a distinct limp as a result of war wounds.

Dr. Gaerte stops abruptly; stunned, a look of disbelief spreads across his face. This quickly turns to a puzzled recognition of a man in the room. It's obvious Dr. Gaerte is struggling to recall where he had last seen this fellow.

Almost simultaneously, a newsman in the group appears equally embarrassed. Both men had not seen each other for almost forty years. Their last encounter had been a most memorable one; more especially for the German.

Both men's minds flashed back to the One Day on the Island of Crete — May 20, 1941: a fateful day for both; then they were sworn enemies. It was also a significant day for Cretans, being the 120th anniversary of their Liberation from the Turks.

This was the fateful day the remnants of the 2nd Anzac Corps (the survivors of the "Dunkirk of the Aegean" — the retreat from Greece) had been expecting for the past month.

The day dawned fine and still. At about 6.30 a.m. a far larger force of Stukas* than usual appeared over Suda Bay-Maleme area and again attacked the airfield and harbour, as well as many small villages along the road linking these two focal points. Clouds of dust rose from the airport, obscuring the view of the anti-aircraft gunners already jaded by the month-long daily bombardment. Each gun this morning received the full attention of two or more screaming Stukas, which bombed and strafed incessantly until a new relay of planes took over.

An hour or so later a great throbbing noise drifted in from the sea. Hundreds of huge planes and gliders, tier on tier, appeared in the bright blue sky; low-flying, slow-moving troop-carrying bombers towing heavily laden gliders. It was a majestic sight, fascinating yet awesome in its reality.

Meanwhile, flights of dive-bombers continued to pound the defenders scattered around the aerodrome and hillsides nearby. First, this air armada circled Maleme, searching for possible landing sites among the hundreds of bomb craters. When scarcely a few hundred feet above the ground, as if by magic, white specks mixed with colour suddenly appeared
beneath the canopy of planes. Clouds of paratroops began floating to the ground. The brilliant sun seemed blotted out as hundreds of parachutes, with men and canisters dangling from them, billowed and floated to the ground.

For the first few minutes the defenders appeared mesmerised, and watched the spectacle in sheer amazement. And then every rifle began firing. The crash of volley after volley echoed and re-echoed up and down the valleys. Some of the firing was wild at first; but it appeared the German High Command in Athens had been misinformed by its 5th column on Crete about the disposition of the defenders. The German plan was to send in paratroops into supposedly undefended positions, regroup, then tackle the enemy. Instead, at least at Maleme aerodrome, these crack airborne troops — the flower of the Wehrmacht — were dropped among New Zealand rifle battalions — some of the finest duck shooters in the world!

This mass invasion from the sky, carried out simultaneously at Maleme and Galatas (New Zealand Headquarters), was a rifleman’s dream. The Maori and 22nd Rifle Battalions, making the best use of natural cover, picked off hundreds of paratroopers before they hit the ground; it was sheer murder and mass suicide for some of Germany’s finest troops. The Germans suffered colossal casualties in the first few hours of the invasion — said to be a “full dress rehearsal for the future invasion of Britain”!

After the initial debacle, the Germans looked around for better “safe landing grounds”. They found the ideal spot. The 7th Australian General Hospital had been established on a peninsula, near Galatas, just alongside the 6th New Zealand Field Ambulance. The two hospital units spread over some thirty hectares and, in the view of the Germans, presented the “cordon sanitaire” they had been seeking.

Without further ado, Stukas and light bombers began pounding the medics’ lines. Tents were fired with incendiary bullets, while patients fleeing for their lives were riddled with machine-gun fire. A few minutes later, adopting new tactics, paratroopers descended with Tommyguns blazing. Hand grenades were tossed into hospital tents crammed with the sick and wounded, and with unarmed orderlies. The wails of the helpless, as fire quickly engulfed the tents, were terrifying and sickening. Nurses and orderlies raced about extinguishing some of the patients, but the fires were too fierce and most were incinerated. Others, attempting to crawl from the burning tents on their hands and knees, met withering fire from German automatics. Still others with gaping wounds, legs and arms shattered by grenades and bodies covered in blood, stumbled from the blazing inferno, only to collapse and die unattended a few metres away.

Rounding up the hospital and field ambulance men, and patients who could still walk, the Germans herded them along the road to the New Zealand Headquarters at Galatas. But progress was soon blocked by men of the 18th New Zealand Rifle Battalion.

During the ensuing battle, the Commanding Officer of the 6th Field Ambulance, Lieutenant-Colonel J. R. L. Plimmer, was shot dead. Col. Plimmer had dropped his hands to save himself from falling into a slit trench; a German mistook his action and emptied his Tommygun into his body.

Adequate protective markings had been displayed at the hospital and ambulance lines. Red Crosses were painted on all tent fly sheets and the roof of the small hospital, while large Red Cross flags were laid out at strategic points around the grounds. The Germans, however, while recognizing terms of the Geneva Convention, refused to recognize as non-combatants any personnel wearing steel helmets in hospital lines.

This was made clear later in the day by the former world heavyweight boxing champion, Max Schmelling, a major in the Paratroop Regiment which had attacked Maleme aerodrome that day, and who had been wounded and brought to the 5th New Zealand Field Ambulance only a stone’s throw from the aerodrome. Imbued by the usual German arrogance, Schmelling was utterly convinced German arms would conquer Crete. “It’s in the bag already,” he said, smiling broadly.

Schmelling could not explain the German attack on the 7th Australian General Hospital, which he called a “blunder”. However, he explained that perhaps German pilots had seen “too many steel helmets in the hospital grounds” and concluded the wearers were combat troops taking refuge in a “safety zone”. He urged all medics to go bare-headed and, he assured his listeners, they would be respected by German pilots.

News of the German ruthlessness at the 7th Australian General Hospital spread rapidly
among Allied troops. This stiffened the resistance of the fighting units, and as a warning to the German High Command, an unofficial order went out "No more prisoners"!

This instruction, however, was not conveyed to stretcher parties operating around Maleme aerodrome, who continued to bring in the wounded, Allies and German, the Germans outnumbered the Allies eight to one.

During a determined assault on the aerodrome early next morning when all hell had broken loose, our stretcher party was drawn toward a German paratrooper waving a white handkerchief. A little further on a couple of Germans were also trying to bring attention to their plight. All three had been wounded in the legs and arms; only one was a stretcher case.

After dressing their wounds, we found the young officer could not walk without assistance. After fixing tourniquets and making ready for the long trek back to the field hospital, a patrol of Maoris, with fixed bayonets, came upon us suddenly from a bend in the dry river bed.

"What have we here?" asked the leader; a sergeant obviously in charge of the patrol. "You know we're not taking any more Kraut prisoners," he bellowed. "After what the bastard Jerries did to the poor buggers at the 7th Australian General Hospital yesterday, we've decided 'no more German prisoners'. You'd better leave this pack of bastards to us!"

"Sorry, Horrie" (nickname for all Maoris used by Pakehas, and a term of endearment), "these Germans have surrendered to us. They're wounded and unarmed; they're no longer a menace to anyone. These men need our care; I have no intention of handing them over to anyone," I said.

"You're making a big mistake," said the Maori. "I've been told 'no more prisoners'; to 'kill all the bloody Huns'. I might as well start with these bastards!"

"These men are protected by the Geneva Convention — of course, you wouldn't know anything about that, would you?" I bellowed. "Go on to the 'drome if you're looking for a fight; there's still plenty of Jerries there."

I could see deep apprehension in each of the faces of the German wounded while this heated dialogue proceeded.

As the Maoris moved off, Lieutenant Gaerte, who had given no indication previously that he understood English, said: "We're all most grateful; you've saved our lives. My comrades admire your courage; we hope we can do something for you one day!"

And so it was that the vivid memory of that One Day On The Island of Crete, in May 1941, flashed through the mind of the new German Consul-General in Melbourne almost forty years later, as Dr. Gaerte strode across the conference room with outstretched hands of welcome.

"How are you my dear fellow?" exclaimed Dr. Gaerte. "It's such a shock, and also a joy, to see you again after so many years," he added, still wringing my hands.

Dr. Gaerte turned to the Press group and offered the explanation: the One Day on the Island of Crete, forty years ago!

I'm somewhat stunned, though thoroughly overjoyed, to see this man who saved my life on that day of mass slaughter, when hundreds of my comrades died. Crete was an awesome holocaust without parallel. I had previously jumped in airborne invasions of Holland, Norway and France, but the resistance on Crete was the worst of all. So please forgive me, gentlemen, if I show some emotion. It was a terrible experience; but it gives point to the story I have to tell you and the Australian people.

"I have some pictures of Australian soldiers who fought during the battle for Crete. I've carried these photographs around with me hoping for the opportunity to give them back to their owners, or relatives, who would be interested in having them," said Dr. Gaerte.

Dr. Gaerte opened a large envelope and produced some faded photographs of Australian soldiers, wearing traditional Digger hats, grouped around their howitzer which had pounded German positions on Crete till it ran out of ammunition.

After recovering from his wounds, Dr. Gaerte, making a tour of the battlefields of Crete before returning home to Austria, had picked up a camera, still in good condition and with only half the film exposed. "These photos show some of the Australians who were defending this position," said Dr. Gaerte. "Some of them might still be alive, and I would like to hand the photos back to those
concerned. So gentlemen, if you care to give some publicity to these pictures, someone might claim them.”

This was the new Consul-General’s surprise and goodwill gesture to the Australian people, arising from that One Day On The Island of Crete.

IVOR HELE — THE SOLDIERS ARTIST by Gavin Fry
Published by the Australian War Memorial
Reviewed by J. P. Buckley, OBE

IVOR HELE was the first official war artist appointed in the 1939-45 war. He served throughout the conflict in the Middle East, New Guinea and on the Australian mainland.

In acknowledgement of his outstanding service in World War II, Hele was appointed to undertake further work during the Korean conflict. He was the longest serving war artist. Back in civilian life, Hele won the prestigious Archibald Prize for portraiture five times. He is also a most successful ‘figure’ and ‘landscape’ painter.

Gavin Fry has researched Hele’s work as a war artist in considerable depth and this is set out in the comprehensive narrative which accompanies the artwork. It is easy to see why Hele is known as the ‘soldiers artist’ — the majority of the paintings and sketches depict soldiers or groups of soldiers in action with great accuracy and clarity.

Whenever I think of Hele, I always think of his masterly painting of Lieutenant General Sir Edmund Herring, which looks out from the canvas with almost life-like accuracy and expression. For some reason this excellent painting is not included in the book. I am not the only person who regards this painting as one of Hele’s best assignments.

It is interesting to note how Hele’s technique changed from the brightness of the Western Desert studies to the near darkness of the jungle in New Guinea. In both theatres the battle scenes are excellently executed by a master artist.

The portraits of Mackay, Wynter, and Bostock are good; but not in the same class as that of Herring. The painting of Flight Lieutenant Middleton is also first class, as is The Return of the Meteor Jets in Korea.

The native warriors in New Guinea have not been forgotten — there are several life-like sketches which have considerable appeal.

Sketches of German, Italian and Japanese prisoners of war are included.

The book is designed to allow the wealth of the Memorial’s mammoth art collection to be more widely known and appreciated. It’s a very important objective and hopefully will be pushed ahead with some priority. Judging by the Hele story, which is excellent, the Murray Griffin story, which is next to be published should be appealing and successful. It’s a pity that Griffin’s paintings are nearly all locked away in the War Memorial whilst most Australians are not aware of his outstanding work with makeshift materials, whilst a prisoner of war in Asia.

Fry left Herring out of the Ivor Hele book. I hope he does not leave Lieutenant General Sir Vernon Sturdee out of the Murray Griffin story — one of Griffin’s best portraits.

Fry has done well and deserves assistance in hastening the work of our war artists being brought to notice. It’s been neglected for too long, whilst at times some rather inferior war stories seem to have no difficulty in obtaining assistance from the War Memorial.

FOOTNOTE
After Crete, Dr. Gaerte fought on the Russian front and was wounded three times. After the war he rejoined the German Foreign Service, and served in Melbourne for six years.
The writer became a Prisoner of War on Crete and spent the remainder of the war as a medic on various work parties in Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Germany, and was Liberated in May 1945.
BOOK REVIEW

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VIEWS OF VICTORIA IN THE STEPS OF VON GUERARD By Dacre Smyth
Published by Dacre Smyth Price $24.95

Reviewed by J. P Buckley, OBE

THIS excellent book illustrates Eugen von Guerard's paintings of the Victorian countryside and some towns during the latter part of the last century — together with Dacre Smyth's paintings, face to face, of the same subjects as they are today. Each painting is aptly described by prose or verse, which Dacre does so very well. He could also have been a successful poet or author or indeed a stained glass artist.

Readers of the DFJ will wonder why I have set out to review a book which is entirely devoted to art. Well, I have two compelling reasons: firstly, I do appreciate high-quality paintings which I can identify and understand; secondly, I have long admired Dacre as a gifted artist who is so very versatile in his choice of subjects — bridges, lighthouses, ships, and landscapes. How this painter turns out such high-quality work in such quantity is amazing.

My association with Dacre goes back many years, when I admired his dedicated and outstanding service in the RAN. It is of no credit to his seniors at that time, that he was overlooked for flag rank. I was the senior civilian officer of the Defence Department in Victoria for some 16 years, and it was taken for granted that Dacre would automatically be selected for a Rear-Admiral posting; due to the lack of perception of his superiors that was not to be. Early retirement gave him the opportunity to become an outstanding painter, whose obvious ability and qualities are readily acknowledged by Sir William Dargie and other elite painters in Australia. As I mentioned earlier, this talented person could have been a most successful writer or poet. The Navy's loss has been compensated by his contribution to Australian art.

Even though my knowledge of painting is limited, I can recognize quality and talent when I see it. Thus I am privileged to describe this book as an excellent publication which will appeal to many. Dacre's 50 paintings of Victorian countryside are brilliant in conception and superb in execution.

Von Guerard would have been very proud of his successor, in so successfully displaying the beautiful landscapes. Whilst the majority of the paintings display scenes in Western Victoria, there are still many as far east as Buchan.

Dacre Smyth can feel very proud indeed of his outstanding achievement in compiling an excellent record of the beautiful landscapes and townscape of the Garden State. Hopefully, there will be plenty of opportunity for country people to purchase this classic, because after all, most of the scenes are set in the country.

I am sending copies to friends in England who admire the work of this talented Australian artist.

Dacre held an exhibition of his paintings at the Age Gallery early in October, which was launched by Sir William Dargie.

The book is very well published and at a very reasonable cost — it's worth more!


Reviewed by André Kuczewski, McGill University, Montreal, Canada


Give back my father, give back my mother,
Give grandpa back, grandma back;
Give my sons and daughters back.
Give me back myself.
Give back the human race.

As long as this life lasts, this life
Give back peace
That will never end.

These words are from an English translation of a Japanese poem inscribed on the back of a memorial stone in a Hiroshima park. By any standard of the historical imagination, the
decision to drop two atomic bombs on Japan by the United States in the final twilight hours of the Pacific War was certainly the most hideous crime against peace and humanity that has gone unpunished from a tragic era whose sorrowful legacy is saturated with the blood of millions of innocent victims. August 6 and 9, 1945 were not days that finally put an end to the Far Eastern origins of World War II as many still believe. Rather they were days that irrevocably changed the nature of our planet. It is the ultimate story of the folly and inhumanity of war's inexorably brutal logic. For this paramount reason, it is a story that should never be forgotten as long as men are alive on earth.

Children of Hiroshima was first written in 1951, a time when the horrible memory of the atomic blasts were still hauntingly fresh in the minds of Japanese citizens. The book is a collection of 105 reminiscences selected from over 1000 short essays written by children who personally experienced the full fury of the explosion. In their own words they recall what took place on that fateful Monday morning to themselves, their families and friends.

Yoshiko Uchimura, a female grade twelve high school student (who was only in grade seven when the atomic disaster befell Hiroshima) perhaps best articulated the sentiments and emotions of her fellow compatriots when she poignantly wrote:

In the right hand, we have penicillin and streptomycin; in the left hand the atomic bomb and hydrogen bomb. Now is the time for the people of the world to consider more rationally this contradiction. (p. 265).

Hiroshima and Nagasaki is a more technical analysis of the subject although it is by no means devoid of humanistic or philisophic inquiry. Essentially the book represents a microscopic investigation by Japan's leading physicists, physicians and social scientists of the most up-to-date information on the immediate damage of the bomb—fatalities, wounds and physical destruction— and, more significantly, the permanent medical, genetic and psychological effects. The fundamental irony of what must definitely rank as mankind's most nightmarish invention, as this book so graphically points out, is the fact that "the A-bomb attacks were needed not so much against Japan — already on the brink of surrender and no longer capable of mounting an effective counteroffensive — as to establish clearly America's post-war international position and strategic supremacy in the anticipated cold war setting. One tragedy of Hiroshima and Nagasaki is that historically unprecedented devastation of human society stemmed from essentially experimental and political aims." (p. 335).

The contemporary message of these books is clear. The human condition cannot be allowed to endure the physical and spiritual agony that would savagely be unleashed should another nuclear device explode. While the subject of nuclear weapons and the arms race is one which has transcended the time elapsed since 1945, the moral of Children of Hiroshima and Hiroshima and Nagasaki seems more timely today than at any other period since the end of the Second World War. With the Pentagon and the Kremlin showing no signs of terminating the insane stockpiling of instruments of mass destruction and as anti-nuclear demonstrations take place in ever larger numbers, these two books are essential reading for all those concerned with sealing the fate of the behemoth that threatens to obliterate life from this planet.
the Korean War (Volume I — Strategy and Diplomacy) recently completed by Dr O'Neill. Predictably, "Cold War, Hot War" is a polemic criticising the nature of the official policy-making capacity of the time. As such, some of the views are quite controversial and worthy of considerable debate. The author assumes one has a full understanding as to the background of events. To be fair, the 'official history' should be read first to put things in better perspective.

For one thing, the author suggests the report by our military observer team (Rankin/Peach) was less than conclusive. One specific allegation was levelled that Syngman Rhee and General MacArthur manipulated the circumstances to suit their own designs. To be fair, the author recognizes that the then Mr James Plimsoll (a member of UNCURK) exercised considerable courage in making personal representations to Rhee so as to have South Korean Parliamentarians released after arbitrary arrest.

The book alleges that any attempt to formulate "a principled independent Australian position" was seen to be threatening to wider relationships. Dr McCormack contends that a commitment was not made so much to the United Nations as to Australia's own self-interest. In view of this the book might not find full acceptance unless one is disposed to the view that Dr McCormack holds — i.e. that it was all a terrible mistake and the seventeen nations should not have become involved in what he saw to be a civil war. For Australia's part there was little hesitation in that 70% of Australians polled supported a decision to commit troops.

Dr McCormack criticises the 'obscene' haste which saw Australia being the first of all nations (after the United States) to commit forces — a decision being announced on 26 July, 1950. The author effectively challenged old assumptions and alleges that the Government's case on Korea was 'distorted'. Such a spirited stance will no doubt provoke the sort of response he would seek.

All in all, while recognising the point from which the author makes his charges, the work is an interesting and brief outline of some of the important issues which the author feels have been hitherto neglected in our understanding of the topic. However, it must be read in conjunction with Dr O'Neill's official history and the usual grains of salt.

AUSTRALIAN WOMEN AT WAR by Patsy Adam-Smith. Published by Nelson.

Reviewed by J.P. Buckley, OBE

"AUSTRALIAN Women at War" is a history of how Australian women have responded to war during this century. It records the outstanding achievements of their contribution in World War I which was even surpassed by their effort in World War II.

Patsy has left no stone unturned in her research to give full coverage of the dedication of Australian women to handle any trade, profession, or field of human endeavour to further the war effort. It must rank as one of the most researched books published since the war. She talked to hundreds of women involved during the war years.

Not only is the narrative interesting and comprehensive; but it is supported by over 500 photographs which have been carefully selected to make it easy for the reader to gauge the magnificent performance of Australian women when they had the motivation to defend their country.

In late 1942 and part of 1943 I served as Director of Design, Research and Development at LHQ. This position necessitated frequent visits to all types of war production facilities. I was amazed to see the dedication and efficiency of the women working in ammunition and gun production, in fact most of the employees in some of the factories, were women. Later in 1944 and 1945 I visited many similar factories in England and Scotland. It was my firm belief that Australian women could hold their own with their British cousins in their contribution to the war effort, both in war production and in the Services.

The author has given a mass of statistics including Enlistment Figures for Women 1939-45 and numbers of women serving in civilian occupations etc.

"Australian Women at War" is a great tribute to Australian women. It is expressed so well and so fully by a woman who has done much for her country, both in war and in peace.

Patsy is well loved and respected by all ex-servicemen and women. The book is a welcome addition to Australian history. It will be an important reference book for those who wish
to study and salute the war effort of our women. Patsy is proud of them — all ex-servicemen feel the same way; especially about the brave nurses who shared many bombings and other unpleasant experiences with the troops, yet were always so dedicated in their treatment of the sick and wounded.

Patsy doesn't say so; but the Army owes much to Major-General Victor Stanke, Adjutant-General during the war years, who had the vision to create and nurture the AWAS, which made a most significant contribution to the war effort. Colonel Sir Alfred Kemsley, that sage of World War II is my informant about General Stanke's part in launching the AWAS.

Hopefully the book will be studied by the present generation. What did you do in the War grandma? — can be given a proud answer by most of those who served Australia in its hour of need.

An excellent book.

THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE, an illustrated history by George Odgers. Publishers — Child & Henry, 240 pages, hard cover with dust jacket, illustrations, photographs and index — price $27.50

THIS book is the second of a series of three the author is publishing on the Australian services and follows his story on the Navy.

As the sub title suggests it is an illustrated history, and covers the period of Australian Military aviation from the first experiments by Lawrence Hargrave which resulted in his historic flight in 1894, right up to the current role of the RAAF.

It is therefore an ambitious concept trying to cover so much history, and will no doubt satisfy the reader who seeks an overview of the Australian air role.

For the purist however the section dealing with Australia's contribution to World War II could be regarded as somewhat lacking in balance when it is seen that the European and Middle East theatres of war where the great preponderance of the major air battles occurred, receives 33 pages, whilst 39 pages are devoted to the various campaigns against Japan. This is not in any way to denigrate the Australian contribution to the Pacific air war which was quite magnificent particularly between 1942 to the end of 1943 when the RAAF battled against daunting odds with totally inadequate equipment. The fact is though that the greatest concentration of Australian aircrew manpower was in Europe and the Middle East, even though a high percentage of the men served with other British Commonwealth squadrons instead of Australian, which makes the task of the author even more difficult.

Similarly in World War I, although the four Australian Flying Corps squadrons receive their due recognition, very little attention is given to the many outstanding Australians who served in the RFC and RNAS Australia's two top air aces, Captain R. A. Little and Major R. S. Dallas for instance barely rate a mention, and deserve far greater recognition than they have received hitherto in any stories on Australian World War I air exploits.

Australia's involvement in the Berlin airlift, Korea confrontation and Vietnam all make interesting reading as well as the multitude of tasks the RAAF is called upon to carry with very slender resources.

The book is lavishly illustrated and the front and end pieces contain the badges of the RAAF which make a most attractive display. At the risk of being churlish though what a pity the great RAAF squadrons formed under the Empire Air Training Scheme which did so much to enhance the Australian reputation could not in some way have been included.

George Odgers is to be congratulated on his persistence with books on various aspects of Australia's military involvement, because it is a part of our heritage which the Australian community today knows far too little, despite its importance in the total scene of Australian history.
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Illustrations
Army Audio Visual Unit, Fyshwick, ACT

Photography
D.P.R. Stills Photo Section

Published by the Australian Government
Publishing Service, Canberra, for the Department
of Defence.

© Commonwealth of Australia 1985
ISSN 0314-1039
R 82/1097(13) Cat. No. 85 1451 8