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Front Cover and page 2.
Field Marshal Sir Thomas Blamey, painting by Sir William Dargie

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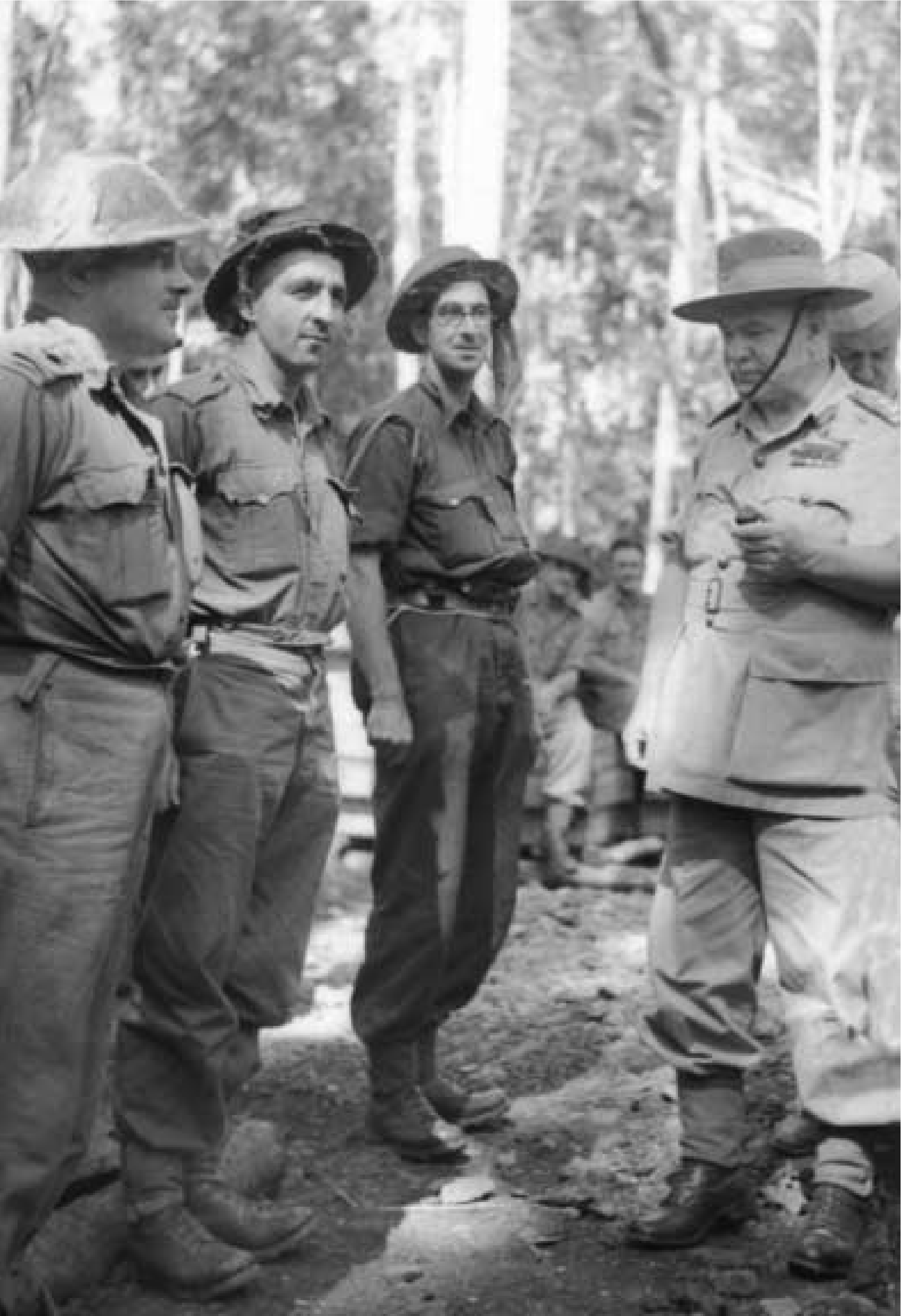
DEDICATION

This publication, on the 50th anniversary of his death,
is dedicated to the memory of the first Australian born military commander
to be appointed to the highest military rank of Field Marshal
in the Australian Military Forces on 8 June 1950 –

Field Marshal Sir Thomas Albert Blamey GBE KCB CMG DSO ED

Born 24 January 1884 – Died 27 May 1951



General Blamey with men of the New Guinea Force, 1942. *AWM Neg 013422*

FOREWORD

This Special Edition, published to mark the 50th anniversary of the death of Field Marshal Sir Thomas Blamey, is a tribute to a great Australian. Blamey has been described by his most recent biographer, military historian and former Army officer, Professor David Horner, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, as "Australia's greatest and most important soldier. Indeed he was a major figure in Australian history".

While some may question the accolade of "greatest", Blamey was undoubtedly a colossus in terms of his achievements spanning the two great wars of the last century. He was also unique among the highest level Allied commanders of the Second World War, in that he commanded at senior levels over the six long years of war from 1939 to 1945 including three and a half demanding years as Commander-in-Chief of the Australian Military Forces.

His importance in Australia's history extends beyond his command appointments in the Middle East and subsequently from 1942 to 1945, when our security was directly threatened for the first time as a result of the Japanese campaign in the Pacific. A major contribution between the great wars had been to provide the impetus to establish a well-structured Army together with an effective organisation and complex administrative and national support systems that included a necessary industrial, manufacturing and manpower planning base. His contributions to the development of mobilisation planning for Australia's defence capacity, national military strategy, and higher command arrangements was also both outstanding and far-sighted.

During the Second World War Blamey also displayed exceptional political acumen and a fierce determination in robustly defending Australia's political and strategic interests in the face of considerable military and political pressure to disperse his command in support of larger UK and US formations.

The Field Marshal Sir Thomas Blamey Memorial Fund and the Department of Defence are to commended for this timely reminder, particularly to those presently serving in the Defence Force today, of the outstanding national contribution of a great Australian military leader, whose achievements were finally recognised by his being appointed Australia's first and only native born Field Marshal in the 100 year history of our Australian Services.

Sir William Deane
Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia
Commander-in-Chief of the Australian Defence Force

The Field Marshal Sir Thomas Blamey Square.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

With the agreement of the Board of Management of the *Australian Defence Force Journal*, this Special Edition marks the 50th anniversary of the death of Field Marshal Sir Thomas Blamey GBE KCB CMG DSO ED. The publication coincides with the 27 May 2001 renaming ceremony of the original Blamey Square in the Defence complex at Russell Offices as "The Field Marshal Sir Thomas Blamey Square."

The idea for a Special Edition was proposed by the Field Marshal Sir Thomas Blamey Memorial Fund in Melbourne under the Chairmanship of Brigadier Ian Gilmore OBE and was passed to a Canberra based group of members to organise. This group included a coordinator, General Sir Phillip Bennett, and Professor David Horner, Major General Michael Keating, Major General Geoff Carter, Brigadier Paul Yonge and Lieutenant Colonel Len Boswell.

Our task was to select from the available records of all Blamey Orations a number of papers which, collectively, would present a true and balanced insight into the wide range of Blamey's outstanding contribution to the nation. The aim was to cover all of his major activities, interests and achievements as both a soldier and a civilian administrator, as well as a planner, leader and commander.

That objective has been met by the editorial group who express their appreciation to all authors and The Hon Justice Nicholas Paul Hasluck for their kind permission to incorporate the selected orations. The group is similarly indebted to the permission of the National President, Air Marshal David Evans and his Constituent Bodies of the Royal United Services Institute of Australia to republish those orations identified in this Special Edition as having been included in various RUSI magazines in previous years.

Allied with this Special Edition, the Memorial Fund has also arranged with the RUSI for a series of Blamey Orations to be given throughout Australia close to the time of the renaming of The Blamey Square in Canberra in May this year.

Finally, on behalf of the Chairman, Committee and Members of the Memorial Fund, I extend appreciation to Professor Horner for his considerable editorial contribution to this edition, as well as the publication in this Special Edition of his Blamey Oration given at the RUSI in Canberra on 2nd May 2001. His experience and advice has been invaluable, as has the professional assistance and cooperation of Mr Michael Tracey previous Managing Editor of the *Australian Defence Force Journal* and Mrs Irene Coombes as Editor.

This Special Edition has much to offer all military and civilian officers, senior non-commissioned officers and their equivalents on the achievements of Australia's most successful and influential senior military commander. Importantly, it highlights his outstanding national contribution post-World War I to the organisation, command and readiness of the Australian Military Forces for war in 1939.

It will also be of interest to all Australians to learn that General Douglas MacArthur, Blamey's Supreme Commander in the South West Pacific, wrote the following words in a letter on 15 December 1954 to former Lieutenant General Sir Edmund Herring supporting a memorial to Blamey in Melbourne:

"I have always felt that his services in the Second World War were not sufficiently recognized. What he did cannot be overestimated, and his contribution to the defeat of Japan marked him as one of the great soldiers of our time. Australia and, indeed, the whole free world owes him a debt of gratitude which would take symbolical form in this memorial."

This is indeed a fitting assessment of Australia's greatest and most important military commander.

This Special Edition of orations is therefore published to honour his memory and to give all Australians a greater understanding of his exceptional military and public service to our nation.

General Sir Phillip Bennett AC KBE DSO (Retd)
Project Coordinator

Major General Blamey with members of the 3rd Division Engineers Militia in camp at Wesburn, Victoria 1936.
AWM Neg PO 2475.001

Field Marshal Sir Thomas Blamey Centenary Oration

By Major General K. G. Cooke, AO, RFD, ED

Address to the Royal United Service Institution of Victoria, 24 January 1984.

There must be something special about a man who on the centenary of his birth and 33 years after his death can still trigger a gathering of so many people, including so many busy and distinguished people, in a Melbourne park on a Tuesday morning in January. So let us take a few minutes to review briefly the life of Thomas Albert Blamey to try and determine just how this can be.

He was born on 24 January 1884 on the outskirts of Wagga Wagga, the seventh of the ten children of Richard and Margaret Blamey. His father had tried his luck at farming, both in Queensland and New South Wales, but as was often the case the ventures ended in disaster due to the old traditional enemies of drought, bush fire and fluctuating cattle prices. He then settled in Wagga where he earned his living as a contract drover. His was a pioneer family so typical of the time and it exemplified the strength of our immigrant stock both before and since.

Young Tom was educated in Wagga, first at the government school and then for the last two years at the Grammar School to which he won a place on his pure ability. His upbringing generally was as you would expect; he had to help around the family property before and after school and on vacations he worked as a tar-boy in the local shearing sheds. As he grew older he went on several droving trips to help his father. His was a rugged but healthy life, designed to instil a familiarity with hard work and to develop a sense of self-confidence and self-reliance. Like many of our famous soldiers, he obtained his first taste of military life through the Cadet Corps. During his last two years at school he was the head cadet of his unit and showed an aptitude for leadership and military skills.

At the ripe old age of 16 he became a pupil teacher at the local school where he continued his interest in the cadet movement as an officer of cadets. Some people in later life may have found it hard to believe at times that the young Tom was a Methodist Church preacher and an active worker for church causes.

In 1903, aged 19, he decided to try his luck in distant fields and obtained a teaching appointment to Fremantle, Western Australia. He continued his association with the cadets and also with the Church and was close to entering the Ministry as his chosen full-time career when in 1906 he saw an advertisement offering entry to the Permanent Cadet Instructional Staff. He decided that this was for him and studied hard to finish third on an Australia-wide basis. Initially, however, he was rejected, not because of his ability but because the Army was reluctant to pay his cost of removal to Victoria and there were no postings then available in Western Australia. By a refusal to accept defeat combined with a good showing, even then, of his knowledge of staff duties, he managed to alter that decision and was enlisted into the cadet organisation as a lieutenant aged 22.

He married in 1909 on the princely salary of £250 a year. Since his first son was born in 1910 it must have been with some considerable relief that he was promoted captain in December 1910 and his pay increased to £ 375 pounds a year.

In 1911 he won, again by hard work, intensive private study and by burning the midnight oil, a much-coveted place to the Staff College at Quetta in India. After successfully completing that course his family returned direct to Australia where his second son, Tom, was born. Tom Senior went to the United Kingdom for further training and experience.

At the outbreak of war he was serving on the staff of the headquarters of a territorial division. When the first AIF was formed and sent to the Middle East it was natural that T.A. Blamey, then a major, should join Headquarters lst Division as a staff officer in Egypt. He was with it when it landed at Gallipoli on that historic 25 April 1915. He served there throughout the campaign, helping to raise Headquarters 2nd Division with which he served until the evacuation in December 1915.

Gallipoli Peninsula, Turkey. Major Blamey is seen using periscope, 3 May 1915.

AWM Neg G00943

In July 1916 he was promoted lieutenant colonel and appointed General Staff Officer Grade 1 of Headquarters lst Division for the campaigns in Europe. He commanded the 2nd Battalion for a short time and the lst Infantry Brigade only briefly. It was a source of personal regret to him that his skills as a staff officer were so much in demand that he was given little chance for command in the field.

When General Monash was appointed to command the lst Australian Corps on 1st June 1918 he selected Blamey to be his chief of staff with the rank of brigadier general. The combination of Monash and Blamey was responsible for some of the most outstanding victories of the War. The battle of Hamel was a world first for the successful integration of infantry, artillery, tanks and aircraft and provided a model for subsequent application by British and other armies. The battle of Amiens was said to be the blow which led to the shattering of the Hindenburg Line. A British military historian, Major General Essame, in *The Battle for Europe 1918* wrote: "Monash and Blamey unquestionably outshone all their British counterparts in ability and battle expertise". On Blamey, Monash wrote: "Some day the orders which he drafted for the long series of history making military operations upon which we collaborated will become the model for staff colleges and schools for military instruction". They did.

After World War I Blamey continued in the Regular Army becoming what was later known as the Deputy Chief of the General Staff. In 1925 he was asked to give up his military career to accept appointment as the Victorian Commissioner of Police. It was considered that the Police Force then was in need of stability, firm control and proper direction, which were not immediately available from within the force itself. Blamey agreed. At the same time he joined the militia, rising to the rank of major general and Commander of the 3rd Division in 1931, a posting he held until 1937. His term as Police Commissioner was a stormy one, beset with personal and political incidents. He resigned from the force in 1936.

Things then looked bleak for Blamey. As a man who then lacked influence he suddenly found that he also lacked friends and supporters. A number of real friends, who knew Blamey better and were loyal to Blamey the man, stood by him in those depressing years. During that period he refused to give in to adversity. He commenced, under a pseudonym, giving defence related talks on Radio 3UZ warning of the coming world conflict and of Australia's lack of preparedness. No doubt this helped to keep him in touch with military matters.

As international tension increased the Government looked for a man strong enough, experienced and capable enough to help in belated war preparations. Blamey was selected as the first Chairman of the Manpower Committee and Controller General of the Recruiting Secretariat. In the six months between September 1938 and March 1939 he was responsible for successfully effecting a doubling of the strength of the militia from 35,000 to 70,000 - a feat considered by many beforehand as an impossible achievement.

Then with the outbreak of hostilities and the raising of the second AIF there came the need to select a commander for the 6th Division - the first Australian force to leave for overseas. Blamey, who was then aged 55, was selected, not without controversy, over all others. Probably it was this appointment more than any other incident that made him the centre of jealousy and the subject of intrigue, which was to haunt him for the balance of his military life.

It represented, however, the start of what was, no doubt, to be the finest part of his long career. He was promoted lieutenant general in 1940 and general in 1941. He successively held the appointments of General Officer Commanding 6th Division, General Officer Commanding Australian Forces Egypt, Commander 1st Australian Corps, Commander

Anzac Corps in Greece, Deputy Commander-in-Chief Middle East, Commander-in-Chief Australian Military Forces and at the same time Commander of Allied Land Forces in the South West Pacific Area.

There are many things that can be said about this period of his life but I shall select just four matters upon which I shall briefly comment. First, he was the only land force commander in any Allied army to retain command throughout the war. He commanded the first Australian force to be raised for overseas service in September 1939 and was commanding the whole Australian Army six years later. That, in itself, in the military history of any country in the world, must be rated as an outstanding achievement.

Second, he fought hard throughout this period to protect the integrity of the Australian Army from the interference of and subjugation to its allies. He continually resisted powerful pressures in the Middle East, emanating from Churchill himself and flowing downwards, to prevent what he saw as the misuse of Australian troops. Similarly, he clashed with MacArthur and refused to give in to proposals to use Australian troops in the Pacific campaigns in ways he considered were against the best interests of this country and particularly of its soldiers.

Third, the nature of his responsibilities and span of control was perhaps unique and unbelievably demanding. He had to organise the Army from virtually nothing. He had to weld the volunteer AIF and the mainly-conscript militia into a single viable force. From his appointment as Commander-in-Chief in March 1942 until the end of the war he was obliged to retain responsibility not only for operations in the field but at the same time for the day-to-day organisation, administration and training of the Army at home together with the support of the total force. This breadth of responsibility did not occur in other armies and I doubt, indeed I hope, we would never put that load on another man again.

Fourth, it is interesting to consider just a few comments made about him by important contemporaries. Prime Minister Curtin, on Blamey's appointment as Commander-in-Chief and in answer to his detractors, said: "I want a commander of the Australian Army, not a Sunday school superintendent". Field Marshal Wavell, when Commander-in-Chief in the Middle East, said of Blamey: "He was probably the best soldier we had in the Middle East. Not an easy man to deal with but a very satisfactory man to deal with. His military knowledge was unexampled and he was a positive, firm and a very satisfactory commander".

In retrospect, is it not possible that the so called "faults" of which he was often accused may indeed have been a very necessary step in his development to make him just the man Australia needed in its time of danger? Could, for example, an over-sensitive person have carried it through? Could a man without supreme confidence in his own ability and the justice of his own cause have stuck it out? Could an individual without a resoluteness of character, strength of purpose, even stubbornness, have been able to resist the many pressures that were put on him?

Perhaps even what seemed to have been the most unfortunate of his experiences may have helped to shape him for the great demands the war placed on him. For example, in referring to Blamey's police career, Major General Sir John Gellibrand, said: "It widened his outlook and gave him a deeper insight into the greater problems of national life and military service". The most stringent test that can be applied to any person, particularly a wartime commander, is that of success or failure and there can be no argument Blamey did succeed.

I am not saying that no one else could have commanded the Australian Army at the time or even have done so with less controversy. What I am saying is that Blamey did command a victorious Army from start to finish, raising

and training it virtually from scratch, with at times little support and against many internal and external pressures. For that he deserves great credit and the gratitude of the nation. Did he get it? He did not! His services were terminated in November 1945 on just 14 days notice. He received no pension, gratuity or reward (except for his old car which had also survived the rigours of campaigning in the Middle East and the Pacific) until, in 1950 when, less than twelve months before his death, he was promoted to the rank of Field Marshal, the only Australian soldier before or since to have been so honoured.

During most of its history so far Australia has had an unfortunate tradition of not properly acknowledging its truly great men. Deakin, Hughes, Monash, Blamey, Bruce, Curtin, Chifley, Menzies are all names that come to mind yet we go out of our way to make legendary heroes of bushrangers and sportsmen. We eulogise many who display not the slightest trace of public spiritedness or social conscience and who possess many more obnoxious or damaging vices than were ever exhibited by the Field Marshal.

Perhaps as a nation we are changing. Maybe Australia is growing up. I do detect in recent times an emergence of national pride in this country and the ability to recognise the strength of a community leader while at the same time acknowledging that he or she is still a human being. In short, I believe we are starting to learn that we can have a superman with every man's weaknesses.

If so, then perhaps it can be of benefit to future generations to remember T.A. Blamey and learn the lessons that a study of his life will reveal. He should demonstrate to Australians of the future that a public figure, a leader, can have and indeed should be expected to have normal human attributes - weaknesses as well as strengths. Further, it will be seen that in this country it matters not what is one's origin or beginnings. It should become apparent that study, hard work, attention to detail, perseverance, a sense of achievement and a refusal to accept defeat will win through. It will become obvious that the highest positions in the land are open to those who try and are prepared to keep trying. Furthermore, students of Blamey would learn that Australia and Australians are not inferior to other countries and races, that we can and will stand on our own feet and, if necessary, pursue an independent line. Finally, they will see demonstrated the value of loyalty, both personal loyalty and group loyalty. They will learn that loyalty is a necessary ingredient of success and that if one expects to receive it then one must also give it, that it is a two-way arrangement.

In T.A. Blamey we have the embodiment of the real Australian character and therefore he forms an important part of our evolving history. It is our responsibility to ensure that his story is not forgotten, as has been the case with so many others, but that it is passed on to future generations to help establish and develop our ongoing traditions. What more fitting occasion is there than this, the centenary of his birth, to pledge that we shall ensure that the Blamey legend lasts for the next 100 years and beyond. So, in that way, he will continue to serve his country and contribute to the preservation of its way of life as he showed himself so ready and so willing to do during his lifetime.

Major General Cooke ED was Commander of the 3rd Division when he presented this paper. He was Chief of Army Reserves from 1985 to 1988.

Blamey as the 10th Chief Commissioner of the Victoria Police.
Photograph by kind permission of the Victoria Police

Sir Thomas Blamey: Chief Commissioner of the Victoria Police

By Chief Commissioner Neil Comrie, AO, APM

Address to the Royal United Service Institution of Victoria, 28 May 1998 by the Chief Commissioner of the Victoria Police.

I am extremely honoured to have been invited to deliver this oration because of Sir Thomas Blamey's very close connection with Victoria Police. He was the 10th Chief Commissioner since the force was formed in 1853; I am the 18th.

No Chief Commissioner has had an easy task. By its very nature policing is unpredictable, crisis-driven and often impacted by media reporting. My experiences with the modern media are regularly frustrating and sometimes a little tense. But I can always get rapid solace from an examination of Thomas Blamey's time in the chair. He was the subject of many media leaks from disgruntled members and it is little surprise that he actually drove the press from their comfortable room at Russell Street headquarters and forced them to line up with the public and get their news from the Enquiry Office counter! When I joined the force in 1967, the Press Room had already been re-established.

Blamey had come to the position highly regarded. Chief Commissioner Alexander Nicholson had limped along after the 1923 police strike. He suffered considerable ill health and his leadership had been soundly criticised by a 1924 Royal Commission chaired by Sir John Monash.

The Chief Secretary, Dr Stanley Argyle, had met the Inspector General of the Australian Military Forces, Sir Harry Chauvel, in an early morning stroll through the botanic gardens. Chauvel knew that Nicholson was to be replaced and recommended his deputy Thomas Blamey to Argyle. The Chief Secretary, who was still reeling from the fact that some of the Melbourne police had gone on strike, along with the three deaths and extensive rioting which had occurred, welcomed this. Blamey's appointment was also strongly supported by Monash who had a very close military relationship with Blamey during the First World War. On being asked to take on the Chief Commissioner's position, Blamey transferred to the militia and rose to command the 3rd Division with the rank of major general.

Blamey was seen as a decisive and skilful organiser whose appointment was well received by the business community many of whom had suffered financially during the strike because several insurance companies had avoided compensation payments by attributing damage to civil commotion which was excluded from coverage.

General Blamey was appointed Chief Commissioner on 1 September 1925 aged 41. His initial term was five years and his contract was extended by three years in 1930. During his 11-year police career, Blamey survived five changes of government and an unprecedented challenge to his tenure of office. His fortunes depended largely upon the colour of the government with his most successful years under the conservatives whose values and view of the world he shared.

Labor politicians identified Blamey as a member of the establishment with little feeling for the working classes. Whereas in actual fact Blamey was born in Wagga as one of ten children and could never be described as being born with a silver spoon in his mouth.

A change of government in 1930 saw Blamey forced to re-apply for his own position while still under contract, no doubt quite an ordeal for a person such as Blamey. The Hogan Labor Government reduced the appointment from the usual five years to three and cut his salary by a third.

In 1933 with a change of government, the conservatives appointed him Chief Commissioner for life and returned his salary to the previous level. Ironically within three years he was forced to resign following the Royal Commission into the "Brophy" Affair – more about that later.

The Blamey period was marked by crisis. He often exacerbated problems by leaping to the defence of the men under him in a way which was suited to the military struggle but came back to bite the Chief Commissioner when corruption and malpractice was sheeted home.

Upon his appointment serious allegations of corruption were being laid against three detectives from the Licensing Branch. One inspired much publicity by going missing for several days and another turned up in a mental institution. Eventually they were charged. All were later convicted and jailed among continuing publicity. However Blamey was so highly regarded in some circles that his appointment as Chief Commissioner was of itself enough to end moves for an inquiry into alleged police corruption and maladministration.

Blamey was an extremely talented administrator. He could organise and deploy resources with well-planned effectiveness. Unfortunately, his personal lifestyle and ethical standards were incompatible with his position as the state's top law enforcer. Seemingly naively he expected the public and the press in particular to distinguish between his official position and his private life. It was very much a case of "do as I say rather than as I do" which posed particular problems for a person in his position.

Within the first two months of appointment, his police identification (Badge number 80) was used by a male to avoid arrest in a brothel in Bell Street, Fitzroy. The matter was raised in Parliament. This was followed by an internal inquiry in which the Chief Commissioner claimed his badge had been lost some days before the incident and was later returned anonymously to his mail point in the Naval and Military Club.

Very early in his term Blamey took on the Police Association. He did not believe that a trade union was in keeping with the role and duties of police. He thought the Police Association was run by communists and he regarded it with a real hatred. At one stage, Blamey had the Association's civilian secretary charged with an obscure offence against the Police Regulation Act – conspiring to induce a member to commit a disciplinary offence. The secretary received a term of imprisonment. On appeal, this was reduced to a fine.

Blamey established an annual police conference comprising 29 elected representatives to weaken the Police Association position. The Police Association supported the Labor Government, the Government that required the Chief Commissioner to re-apply for his position. Blamey never forgot nor forgave and as a result executive members were summarily transferred to Siberia stations in the Mildura district. The Police Association was taken out of business as an effective representative body for several decades.

In keeping with his personal values, Blamey used the police to crush the unemployed and other demonstrators during the depression years. In one notorious incident in 1928, police protecting strikebreakers used their firearms against a violent group of stevedores, wounding four including one seriously. Policing was difficult during Blamey's time – even the police took pay cuts.

On the positive side, Chief Commissioner Blamey was an exceptional leader of men and

able to persuade them to follow his direction which was fearlessly held. Among his many achievements were:

- Established the criminal records office and increased the usage of fingerprints and photographs.
- Increased the number and duties of policewomen.
- Sent two members to Europe to study crime investigation.
- Formed a bicycle patrol section.
- Formed a traffic control group of 60 men equipped with motorcycles.
- Extended the effectiveness of police training, increased the recruit course from one to three months and introduced a 12-month probationary period at its completion.
- Instrumental in having the Police Training Depot in St Kilda Road appointed as a State School (number 4443), with full-time education department teachers. (That site has been occupied by the Victorian College of the Arts since 1973.)
- Improved accessibility to the CIB for all members.
- Upgraded the police hospital and Russell Street gymnasium.
- Established a police institute and police provident fund.
- Tried to change the police promotions from seniority to merit.
- Enhanced the recording of ownership details at the Motor Registration Branch.

Most of these achievements have continued to operate to this day or lasted many decades after Blamey's resignation. Fingerprints and their classification have been a major crime investigation tool for many years. Blamey's emphasis on photographs was also particularly far-sighted.

It is a lot easier than in Blamey's time for overseas visits and inspections. In fact Victoria Police has become a centre of excellence in a number of fields, which is attracting an increasing number of professional visitors. As did Blamey, our belief is that the Force and the community benefit from operational police – often in the earliest stages of their careers but always highly motivated – travelling nationally and internationally.

Bicycle patrols have been developed and expanded to provide an urban service. I am sure he would have been impressed. Likewise, he was one of the first to recognise the importance of the motor car in carrying out police duties and in road safety. His was the first significant Traffic Operations Group. If computers had been around I have no doubt Blamey would have introduced "red light" and "speed cameras".

Blamey's early years as a teacher meant that he was horrified with the poor reading and writing skills of his Force, and with the standard of training provided to police recruits – a month of basic law and drill. Training was radically overhauled and members were placed on probation for 12 months.

Blamey's efforts are recognised as an early base upon which recruit training was launched. He was the first to use trained teachers and to provide a general education to Victoria Police recruits. The basic course still remains; however, the probationary period has been extended to two years. And further, any member inducted after 1 July 1997 will be required to successfully complete the Diploma of Police Studies conducted by Deakin University, as a prerequisite for confirmation of appointment as constable.

In relation to the CIB, he increased the strength, and developed selection processes which could withstand criticism. Several hundred men applied and the best of these were appointed. A very similar approach remains today.

Blamey was concerned with the welfare of members. The police hospital was inadequate with only one part-time nurse available. Blamey increased the number of nurses and appointed medicos who provided a highly professional medical service. That foundation

took the police hospital into the 1990s when it was discontinued in that form for unrelated reasons.

Blamey developed the Police Institute to provide quality goods and services to police at reasonable costs. I can clearly recall the late 1960s with the barbers giving short back and sides at the Police Institute under the auditorium at Russell Street. The Institute was part of the Russell Street culture until the early 1980s.

In July 1927, Blamey established the Police Provident Fund to provide finance to members overwhelmed with debt through factors beyond their control such as family illness. The Commonwealth Bank made an initial donation. A philanthropist, J. Alston Wallace, also made an anonymous donation leading to pressure from the press and the government of the day to expose the fund. Wallace's identity had to be revealed and both he and Blamey were the focus of media attention. Blamey stood firm and refused to return the gift.

The Provident Fund continues and has been used on many occasions over the past 71 years for the purposes for which Blamey considered it so necessary. It recently purchased two units in Carlton to accommodate members and their families in welfare emergencies. I think Mr Wallace and Sir Thomas would be smiling.

As with many before him and since, the Chief Commissioner could see the very obvious deficiencies of a seniority-based promotion and transfer system. His attempt to modify this was one of the lengthiest and casualty-strewn encounters both with the Police Association and the members. As always the difficulty was in trying to develop a scheme which could fairly and objectively assess members for positions and for promotion. Blamey was no more successful than others and there was much heat generated in the process.

The increasing numbers of motor cars had led to the establishment of the Motor Registration Branch which was part of Blamey's domain. He was instrumental in developing ownership certificates which were particularly useful in the increasingly challenging realm of car theft.

Blamey acted against police leaking information, especially detectives who were often commended at the expense of their colleagues. In short, he was before his time in recognising the damage that can arise from the misuse of media power. However, he also suffered from the close relationships which some police develop with the media because of their duties. The newspaper editors had long memories. After ten years of antagonism, they must have delighted in the hurdle which Blamey ultimately created for himself.

On 22 May 1936, Superintendent John O'Connell Brophy, the recently-appointed head of the CIB, suffered three gunshot wounds while in a chauffeur-driven car with two women in Royal Park. Initial reports from the Chief Commissioner's Office were that Brophy had accidentally shot himself. A sceptical press was then told that Brophy had been shot by bandits after going to the park to meet an informer – there was no mention of the women.

As time went on and different official explanations emerged, Blamey rapidly dug himself into a hole of mammoth proportions. The newspapers were as one in calling for blood. The Government required Labor support to govern and hence they appointed a Royal Commission to investigate this matter. Blamey was less than truthful with his evidence, supporting Brophy when it was clear to everyone that deception was involved.

Within a week of the Royal Commission report, Blamey was forced reluctantly to resign. Blamey's position was not helped by a contemporaneous claim from the Chief Justice of the Victorian Supreme Court denouncing improper police investigatory methods, especially in the interviewing of suspects.

In 1936, when he resigned, Victoria Police comprised 2281 policemen and 6 police-

women. Today that number is 9,600 sworn members including more than 1,400 policewomen.

In conclusion, it is of value to speculate how someone of Blamey's personality and style would survive as we approach the 21st century. It would not be unkind to say that the years of the total autocrat have well and truly passed. He was the last such Chief Commissioner. Policing is a very complex profession and a variety of ideas and approaches have to be considered. The Force consists of highly motivated and skilful staff both sworn and unsworn. All must be positively encouraged to do their best in serving the community.

A more formidable obstacle to Blamey would be the various tribunals and pressure groups which must be handled diplomatically. I am sure Blamey's first day in office would have generated a swag of applications to the Equal Opportunity Commission or industrial tribunals. His first week would have provided a fertile field of applications under the Freedom of Information Act. His first year would have attracted a bevy of Auditor-General examinations.

The Chief Commissioner's summary transfers of Association executive members, while expedient at the time, led a Labor government under John Cain (senior) in 1946 to legislate for protection for members which adversely affected the ability of Chief Commissioners properly to administer and discipline the Force for nearly four decades. While this has now been changed, the Association no doubt yearns for the times when it held the whip hand. On the other hand as we have seen in recent times, the Association is required to represent members in an increasingly difficult industrial environment which I am sure Blamey would not have envisaged.

As far as the media is concerned, Blamey would feel under even more threat. While the number of daily newspapers have been reduced from four to two, the Chief Commissioner and the Force face the unrelenting scrutiny of the electronic media including talk-back radio which exposes police action to immediate public scrutiny and comment. I wonder how Blamey would have handled this constant pressure?

There is still a widespread expectation that the Chief Commissioner must be cleaner than clean in his private and public life. Come to think of it, there is no private life during the period in which one is privileged to hold the office.

It is difficult to get an appropriate feel about the late 1920s and early 1930s. It was a time of high unemployment, when police pay and conditions were poor compared with other work. For example, police were only entitled to one day off per month; in 1946 it was increased to one per week. It was not until 1948 that police were granted Long Service Leave and a 40-hour working week with two days off every week. During the 1920s and 30s the connection between politicians and the Chief Commissioner seemed more direct. It is therefore improper to judge Chief Commissioner Thomas Blamey's contribution by the standards of the 1990s.

Commentators at the time felt that Sir Thomas Blamey did not want to resign but felt as Chief Commissioner for life he should brazen it out. No doubt that would have made him unsuitable to achieve high military honour which in another life was to cover him and Australia with glory.

His subsequent brilliant career as Australia's senior soldier capped off a remarkable commitment to two demanding professions – the military and policing. Field Marshal Thomas Blamey left his mark on both.

Neil Comrie was the Chief Commissioner of the Victoria Police from January 1993 until March 2001.

Governor-General Sir William Deane presenting the Army Banner, a gift from the Nation to the Australian Army on its Centenary. *Photograph: Sgt. W. Guthrie*

Understanding the Office of the Governor-General of Australia

By The Right Honourable Sir Zelman Cowen, AK, GCMG, GCVO, QC, DCL

Address to the Royal United Service Institution of Victoria, 24 June 1993

The national debate on the future constitutional shape of our country, whether as a continuing constitutional monarchy or as a republic, leads me to speak to you on the subject "Understanding the Office of the Governor-General of Australia" not to argue a case on one side or another, but so that you may have some picture of that element in our polity, at least as perceived by one who has occupied the Office: I was the 19th and the sixth Australian born and resident Governor-General from 1977-1982. It may be useful to have some appreciation and understanding of the Office as it has evolved over the near-century of the Commonwealth's existence.

First, because of the Institution's specific interests in defence, let me say something of the military aspect of the role of the Governor-General. Section 68 of the Commonwealth Constitution provides that "the Command in Chief of the naval and military forces of the Commonwealth is vested in the Governor-General as the Queen's representative". My successor in the office, Sir Ninian Stephen, explored the meaning of that provision when he spoke at a graduation ceremony at the Joint Services Staff College some years ago. On the face of it, he said, the Governor-General has "all the panache of a Boulanger, a general on a white horse, at the head of his armies with standard unfurled". Neither my successor nor I saw himself in such a description of the command-in-chief. Sir Ninian's research led him to consider a variety of views ranging all the way from the claim that as Commander-in-Chief, the Governor-General was "no more than a glorified patron"of the armed forces, to one which rather dramatically saw him as one who "as the ultimate possessor of the command function waits, finger on the button, for the report of the Senior Service officer"– or something like that. Sir Ninian concluded that with the evolution of institutions of responsible government, it was clear that a governor was not intended to have substantive powers of command. The debates in the Australian constitutional conventions of the 1890s in which the Commonwealth Constitution was debated and drafted show, pretty clearly, that the title of the Governor-General as Commander-in-Chief was intended to confer *titular* and not substantive command-in-chief. At the same time the role was seen as giving expression to a special and distinctive relationship between the Governor-General and the armed forces of the Commonwealth. In Sir Ninian Stephen's words it is:

> *a close relationship of sentiment, based neither upon control nor command but which in our democratic society expresses on the one hand the nation's pride in and respect for its armed forces and on the other, the willing subordination of the members of those forces to the civil power.*

That appears to me to express it very well. I have many recollections of the strength and warmth of feeling in the armed forces for the Governor-General as Commander-in-Chief and I have many special and distinctive memories of it. Over the years in office there were visits to Service institutions for a wide variety of purposes, and, from time to time, to take part in military exercises. My wife has a favourite picture of me in a Leopard tank, smiling hugely and looking like a cat given unlimited

cream, and somewhere among my possessions I have a licence to operate such a tank. I doubt whether it has any validity, and I am very unlikely to put it to the test, but I was pleased to receive it.

As I look back over the record of speeches and travels, there were many Service occasions. There were the graduation ceremonies of the various Service colleges and other military courses, there were presentations of colours, banners and guidons, there were awards for Service competitions like the Duke of Gloucester's Cup, there were attendances at Service dinners and functions, as well as at various R.S.L. and other like occasions. It was really quite impressive to look back at and to tally the number of speeches and functions which had a Service connection.

Apart from such activities and ceremonies, there were other links with the Services. In the household of the Governor-General there are serving military officers: the Comptroller of the Household and the aides. The comptrollers in my time were successively Army and Navy officers of lieutenant colonel and commander rank. The aides were of the rank of captain or equivalent, and there was one from each of the three Services, each serving for a year with a staggered succession. They were all career officers, and I took the view, with which I hope the Chiefs of Staff concurred, that these were significant appointments worthy of special attention in that they gave the selected man (and it happened that in my time they were all men) a view of the world and a distinctive social and educational experience which stood him in good stead when he returned to regular Service duties, and made his way up the Service ladder. The experience would serve him well if he were likely to progress to the higher Service levels. Of course it cannot be easy to identify the "flyer" so early in a Service career, but so far as it was possible, I hope that the post of aide to a Governor-General was seen as valuable in this educational-social experience role. I do not know whether it was possible to achieve what I hoped for, but among the aides were men of diverse abilities who, after accustoming themselves to an unfamiliar and very demanding role, derived significant benefit, experience and even enjoyment from the job.

All of this tells a story of the links of the Governor-General with the military side. I believe that the association was valued by the Services who, as Sir Ninian Stephen put it, recognised the "quite special relationship that exists between the Governor-General and the armed forces of the Commonwealth".

In my time, I went to sea in at least one of almost everything the Navy had; in doing so I had a day and a submerged lunch in an OBERON-class submarine. I was carried about the country daily in the aircraft of the RAAF's No 34 Squadron. I cannot say that I flew in one of everything the RAAF had, but I fulfilled my ambition to fly in a Canberra, one of the most beautiful aircraft to grace the skies. I have said something already about my many engagements with the Army.

At another level, I had many interesting meetings and talks with visiting senior military officers. The Governor-General receives many callers and this provides opportunity for substantial discussion, and some of the most searching and stimulating discussions were with senior servicemen. The meeting which remains most lasting in my memory was with Marshal of the Royal Air Force Lord Cameron who was then Chief of the British Defence Staff. I remember another discussion about terrorism with General Meyer, a US Army Chief. There were many of these meetings and what remains vivid in memory is the many-sidedness of the minds of these officers who exercised high command functions.

Let me now speak more generally of the Office of Governor-General. The Australian Constitution provided that the Queen should be Head of State. She was to be represented in the Commonwealth by a Governor-General who performed Head of State functions as her

representative and in accordance with the Constitution. Over the nine decades of this century both offices, the monarchy and the Governor-Generalship, have undergone significant change. In 1901 Australia was internally self-governing, but was still in many respects of colonial status, acknowledging allegiance to a monarch who was Queen of the entire Empire. Early in the century Australia in company with a small number of constitutionally advanced colonies achieved special status as a self-governing dominion. This was reinforced by her participation in the First World War, and in the inter war years the status of Australia and her sister dominions was redefined at a great Imperial Conference in 1926 to emphasise a relationship of equality with one another and with the United Kingdom. The essential link in this new structure was seen as common allegiance to the Crown. Following the end of the Second World War major changes took place within the diminishing empire and the expanding Commonwealth of Nations particularly in the passage to independence of former colonies led by India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Theirs was a different colonial history; to India independence was bound up with republican status. So in 1949 the question was posed whether India might be a member of the Commonwealth as a republic, and the answer given at a meeting of Prime Ministers of Commonwealth countries in that year was that she might do so. So it was that as other colonies came to independence they opted in a majority of cases, either at that time or later, for republican status. So it is that in the contemporary Commonwealth, Australia is one of a substantial minority among some states in acknowledging the Queen as Head of State.

Further it was agreed that individual Commonwealth states retaining the monarchy might redefine the style and titles of the monarch. Australia did so in 1953 and 1973; the Queen is monarch by separate and distinct titles in all those states in which she is constitutionally Head of State. In examining these arrangements, it can be said that there is special significance in the Queen's role as Queen of the United Kingdom; there as part of a long history she performs her Head of State role in person. It is impractical therefore for the Queen to undertake more than an occasional visit to each of the other states of which she is head. To assure the adequate discharge of her constitutional and ceremonial duties in these states she must have a representative permanently in place to perform those duties. Hence the role of the Governor-General assumes importance.

Now that role has changed over the course of this century. To take our case, the Governor-General was appointed by the monarch at the beginning on the advice of the Government; he came from the United Kingdom and returned to it at the conclusion of his term. He saw his responsibilities as twofold: in one aspect performing constitutional duties on behalf of the Queen; in another as the protector of British and imperial interests, acting in this aspect on behalf of the British Government.

Over time, there was increasing pressure from Australian governments for a voice in the choice of a Governor-General and after the end of the First World War there were pressures to redefine the Governor-Generalship in particular aspects. So in 1926 it was agreed at the Imperial Conference that Governor-Generals should stand in relation to their governments in the same relationship as did the monarch in relation to the United Kingdom Government. The clear point was that the Governor-General should not act at all as representative of the British Government; its interests should henceforth be the concern of a diplomatic agent, styled the High Commissioner for the United Kingdom.

As it happened it was an Australian initiative which established the rule for the choice and nomination of the Governor-General. In 1930, on the retirement of a (British) Governor-General, the Australian

Government resolved to recommend an Australian-born and resident citizen, Sir Isaac Isaacs to the King, George V, to be Governor-General. Isaacs was at the time Chief Justice of the High Court of Australia; he was the son of poor immigrants and had had a brilliant career in the law and politics. The King was resistant to the appointment of a local man, and the standing of the Australian (as contrasted with the British) Government to make the recommendation was challenged. The issue was highly controversial in London and Australia, but the Australian Prime Minister, J.H. Scullin, stood his ground and the King made the appointment, albeit reluctantly. The entitlement of an Australian (or other Commonwealth) Government to recommend the appointment of a Governor-General to the King was affirmed by an Imperial Conference in 1930. So it was that the modern Governor-Generalship was put in place. It did not follow that all Australian Governor-Generals must henceforth be Australian citizens, and it was not until the mid 1960s, with the appointment of Lord Casey, that a continuing practice of nominating Australian citizens was adopted. I was the 19th Governor-General; I was appointed in 1977 in succession to Sir John Kerr whose action in November 1975 in dismissing the Whitlam Government provoked a constitutional crisis and brought a visibility to the Office of Governor-General which it had never before had to any comparable extent. I was appointed on the recommendation of the Prime Minister, Mr Malcolm Fraser. A distinguished Australian historian has written that in practical terms Australia is a "crowned republic", since in practice all the significant powers and functions of the Queen are exercised by an Australian Governor-General whose sources of appointment and authority is in fact Australian. Indeed the critical functions are discharged by him: this was illustrated by what was done in 1975 in respect of the dismissal of Mr Whitlam. Sir John Kerr in his book *Matters for Judgement* made the point that the *action* was his; that he did not consult with or inform the Queen, though he advised her immediately after he had acted. So he wrote:

> *I did not tell the Queen in advance that I intended to exercise these powers on November 11. I did not ask her approval. The decisions I took were without the Queen's advance knowledge. The reason for this was that I believed, if dismissal action was to be taken, that it could be taken only by me and that it must be done on my sole responsibility. My view was that to inform Her Majesty in advance of what I intended to do and when would be to risk involving her in an Australian political and constitutional crisis in relation to which she had no legal powers and I must not take such a risk.*

The power which Sir John Kerr exercised is styled a "reserve" power; that is to say a power exercised by the Governor-General in his discretion and not on the advice of his Prime Minister. Such powers are comparatively rare, and in this case bitterly contested. There are a few: the power to choose a Prime Minister in those circumstances in which the configurations of party do not make the choice inevitable, and the power to refuse a Prime Minister's advice to dissolve the parliament. The definition of the reserve power has been a matter of debate; it was said that Sir John Kerr's exercise of the power of dismissal gave a fillip to the republican cause. The change to a republic would not, of itself, resolve the issue, however. With a president in place as Head of State, the problem which gave rise to the exercise of reserve powers would still remain and have to be faced. In Sir John Kerr's case, the problem in fact arose out of the relationships between the two Houses of Parliament.

The events of November 1975 have focussed attention on the exercise of constitutional and political power by a Governor-General; the critics of its exercise in

defining the acceptable role of a Governor-General frame it in terms that it should be "purely ceremonial and divorced from the exercise of real political power", that he has (or should have) no real powers "but to open fairs, cut ribbons and the like". The language of such people is that of ceremony and it distracts attention from the fact that by a due attendance of business of his office, by the exercise of functions and influence within acceptable limits, a Governor-General can, in appropriate cases, exercise an effective influence on the processes of Government. In the Australian context, my own experience of the workings of the Federal Executive Council illustrates this. In the Council, week by week, the Governor-General presides, advised and attended by ministers. A great deal of governmental business was done, including the making of regulations, orders, proclamations and a wide range of appointments as well as other diverse governmental business which was required to be overseen and approved there. Sir Paul Hasluck who had wide experience of the work of the Executive Council from two sides – as a minister as well as a Governor-General – has written in some detail about its work, and much of his experience, which is certainly extensive, corresponds with my own. The Governor-General can and I believe does play a useful role in requiring clear and ample explanation for what is proposed. In my case, having seen and studied the papers I would ask questions of officers in advance of Council meetings to satisfy myself that I understood what was being done and that it was being done regularly. I would raise questions with the attending ministers in the Council so that they could take into account the doubts, questions and concerns of the Governor-General before they formally tendered advice to him. The Governor-General's experience in questioning proposed actions and procedures and in raising points, as that experience grew, was intended and I think was calculated to serve the interests of regularity which in the press of big, busy and complex government, may not always be assured. As I said in a speech to the National Press Club in Canberra shortly before I left the office in July 1982, such activity and conduct on the part of the Governor-General allow him to play a useful and, it may be, an important role in government which is consistent with a meticulous respect for the principle that the Governor-General acts on the advice of ministers. A vigilant and inquiring Governor-General comes to be recognised as such in the departments which have the responsibility for preparing and conducting substantial government business. This is specially true in the busy work of the Executive Council; it is true also of other areas of business in which the Governor-General plays a part. Approval of a document or of a course of action which falls within his purview is not to be regarded as a mindless, unenquiring, mechanical endorsement.

Further let me say that the description of the ceremonial role of the Governor-General as "chief ribbon bestower and chief ribbon cutter" tends to diminish the significance and often to obscure the character of what is done in this demanding area of the Governor-General's activity. Questions are sometimes raised as to whether an appointee is "too well qualified", as if to say that the office calls for no substantial qualities of mind. Once again, my experience corresponds with that of Sir Paul Hasluck. What was asked of me in a wide range of activities made a full call upon my physical and intellectual capacities. In my speech at the Press Club I said that it appeared to me to characterise the Office of Governor-General as trivial and empty. As with the monarchy so too with the Governor-General – much time and energy and care go into the performance of a wide range of non-constitutional, non-political and in this sense ceremonial duties and activities. This is what the famous 19th century writer, Walter Bagehot, spoke of as the "dignified" role of the monarch. If observers

are pleased to call this "ribbon bestowing" and "ribbon cutting", let it be recognised that the bestowing of ribbons is a recognition of significant and diverse community service by individuals and that is no poor thing, while the many ceremonies and openings (the ribbon cutting) are associated with events in the life of the nation from the broadly national to the local. They take the Governor-General to many places in a vast nation continent; they lead him in speech to an interpretation and identification of many significant activities, issues and occasions. The openings, the meetings in which the Governors-General participated were not infrequently those of national and international bodies, of professions, industries, of specialists, of academic bodies, of learned societies.

From the earliest days of the Commonwealth's existence the Governors-General have recognised the importance of travelling through the nation and have been clear about the reasons. Lord Hopetoun, the first Governor-General, saw this as providing a needed national focus in the early days of Australian federation. In an early speech he promised to demonstrate "to the many that they are living under one central government". Right up to the present day his successors have followed this course and for the same reasons. At an earlier time it was done, often arduously, by slower means of transport. In our day, jet aircraft annihilate distance. While this may relieve the rigour, it makes possible an ever-expanding opportunity for travel all over the country.

Much time and energy go into the discharge and into the preparation for the discharge of such duties and I believe that it is the case that the Governor-General, like the monarch, makes his major contribution through the continuing and, I hope I may say, the committed performance of these duties. I believe that through this work, the Governor-General offers encouragement and recognition to Australians many of whom may not be very powerful or visible in the course of daily life, and to the efforts of individuals and groups who work constructively to improve life in the nation and community. Sir Paul Hasluck has said that Australians both expect and appreciate statements by a Governor-General on matters of current concern at a level different from that of party political controversy, and I shaped what I said in accord with that. Knowledge, experience and capacity were constantly tested and called upon in responding to what was asked and expected of me. As well I saw, as did Hopetoun in the beginning, that a major role was performed by the Governor-General in the discharge of a large number of functions all over Australia. The responses were often quite remarkable and were certainly moving. It cannot easily be better put than in Hasluck's words, that the Office of Governor-General is the highest single expression in the Australian Governmental structure of the idea that Australians of all parties and walks of life belong to the same nation. Recognition of this places heavy burdens and responsibilities on the Australian who holds the office.

In the discussion of the republic, I have often wondered what I – an Australian and Australian nominated Governor-General – would have done which would have been significantly different had I been a constitutional president of an Australian republic. Not much, I think, in substance.

Sir Zelman Cowen was Governor-General of Australia from 1977 to 1982.

Blamey and National Security

By Brigadier P.J. Greville, CBE, BE

A revised paper based on an address to the United Service Institute of Queensland, Brisbane, 15 May 1996.

In the euphoria following the successful mounting of the XXVII Olympiad, Australians would do well to ponder a few words from the speech prepared by Sir Thomas Blamey in the days before he was to receive his Field Marshal's baton from the Governor-General:

> *A few words on our future. The spirit and hard work of our pioneers made it possible for us to enjoy life in our Australia, and their young, generous, and brave descendants volunteered twice in this century to serve their country in its need.*
>
> *Our nation's future is, unfortunately, not yet secured, and its sons must consent to accept whatever responsibilities fall on them, and draw strength for their discharge from the traditions of their predecessors.*

Blamey was too ill to deliver this speech, but it was not an idle thought. According to John Hetherington, he had spoken widely about our nation's future to many community groups, giving a wider expression through an article in the Melbourne *Herald* on 4 June 1947. In it he stated his ideas about preparing a nation for an uncertain future.

> *No system of military defence can be considered adequate under modern conditions which does not lay the foundations for the preparation, not only of the armed forces but of the whole nation.*
>
> *In such a scheme every class of the community must be considered and the part they must play – first, in the armed forces which will take the first shock of war; second, in the organisation of the nation to supply those armed forces; and, third, in the organisation of the whole community to ensure the maintenance and welfare of the country.*
>
> *It is not essential at this stage that a huge proportion of the national income should be diverted to the purpose. But it is essential, if we are to be realistic at all in the matter, that the foundations should be laid and the essential framework of the machinery be provided.*
>
> *Unless this conception is accepted and applied, the money expended will be largely wasted, and the nation will be no more prepared to meet the position than it was in 1939.*

Last year, 2000, the Australian Government issued a public discussion paper, *Defence Review 2000 – Our Future Defence Force*. It is obvious that the Government considers defence begins and ends with the armed forces and sought answers to the following questions:

- What do we want our armed forces to be able to do?
- Where do we want our armed forces to be able to operate?
- What is the best way to structure the Defence Force?
- What is the best way to spend the Defence budget?

Compare this restricted outlook to that of our great wartime Commander-in-Chief, who spoke of the need to prepare not just the armed forces but of the whole nation; the need to plan not just for the fighting but for the supply of the armed forces and for the maintenance and welfare of the community. Furthermore, if we were not to waste money, the essential framework of the machinery to conduct a war must be in place.

Defence under Modern Conditions

Since Napoleon, war has been conducted in four dimensions, which can be defined as operational power, logistic capability, technology and social power. No successful strategies for the long-term security of Australia can be formulated without taking into account all four of them.

All four will be looked at, but space prevents the full spectrum to be covered. Under operational power, we will look briefly at the direction of the armed forces and the legislative environment in which they may have to operate. Under logistic capability we will examine our potential for arms production. We will examine briefly our technological base and finally the Australian community.

Operational Power

Blamey's appointment as Commander-in-Chief was unceremoniously terminated in November 1945 by Prime Minister Chifley. However, in re-establishing the Military Board, the Minister for the Army, Frank Forde, sought Blamey's advice. Blamey responded with a balanced proposal for the direction of the armed forces in peace, which centred about the need for the minister to preside over an Army Council. This council was to consist of the minister as President, the Chief of the General Staff as Deputy President, the Commanders of Eastern and Southern Commands (one of whom was to be a member of the Citizen Military Forces) and the Secretary, Department of Army.

There was much merit in Blamey's proposal, particularly his insistence that the minister preside over the council, which was tasked with the preparation of the Army for war. He believed that the pre-war Military Board had failed abysmally in preparing the Australian Army for the 1939-45 war. His advice was not accepted; however Forde did establish two types of Military Board meetings, namely general and ordinary meetings. A general meeting was one presided over by the minister, to be held at least every two months, at which the more important policy and administrative aspects would be considered and resolved. Ordinary meetings would be presided over by the Chief of the General Staff and deal with the details of Army administration. During the first meeting of the Military Board after its restitution, partly in answer to Blamey's concerns, Forde declared that:

> *Peace-time for an army department can have only one meaning – preparation time, planning for war. If the whole army administration, both civil and military, can become indoctrinated with the idea then I think the most dangerous aspects of unpreparedness will be avoided. If the army administration, both civil and military, concentrate on appreciating what it will be called upon to do in war, visualising its requirements in war and planning accordingly, then I think that whatever may be the condition of our material preparations, vital time will be saved because the departmental outlook and plans will be tuned to war needs.*

This is a far cry from the ideas behind the reorganisation of the Defence departments of 1974, which forms the basis for the existing organisation. The architect of that reorganisation, Sir Arthur Tange, in justifying his proposals, stated:

> *I am talking about peacetime and I am talking about advice and accountability to the government in peacetime. There is of course some tendency, and I imagine it is natural, to assume that at all times we should be organised for total war and in total war the organisation I am talking about, and the place that I am talking about of civilians, would be substantially changed, but one is bound to say "for how many years in the past 73 has Australia been involved in total war?"*

If Australia had not been involved in total war since 1945, the Australian Army had troops on active service for almost every year between 1945 and 1972. Blamey would have objected in no uncertain terms. The higher defence machinery since 1974 has been fatally flawed and the constant fiddling with it over the subsequent 27 years has done little to clarify the command and administrative structure.

According to section 30 of the *Defence Act*, “the Defence Force consists of three arms, namely the Naval, Military and Air Forces of the Commonwealth”. The Defence Department is responsible for the administration of the Defence Force. The mobilisation of a nation for war is the responsibility of the Government, involving the coordination of military, strategic, economic, financial, external and internal affairs. In war, Cabinet is responsible for the overall prosecution of the war, which is why in the 1939-45 war, Churchill as Prime Minister became the Minister for War and why, in Australia, Prime Minister Curtin assumed the role of Minister for Defence. In peace, the Government, not the Department of Defence nor the Defence Force, is responsible for the formulation of Defence policy.

Blamey would doubt that either the Government or the Department of Defence is organised efficiently to play their part in the evolution of Defence policy. The recent passage of legislation to enable the Defence Force to operate in certain circumstances on the mainland of Australia, is a prime example of how slothful government can be in carrying out its part. In 1925, my father, a corporal of the Queenscliff garrison, was deployed to protect Commonwealth property in Melbourne during the police strike. The moral dilemma facing the soldier in military aid to the civil power in a federation such as Australia has been known since then. When Malcolm Fraser called out the military to secure a route from Sydney to Bowral in 1978 there was no legal framework in which the soldiers could operate. During the 1980-90s the ADF carried out numerous exercises in the northern regions of Australia against small bands of “enemy” who were carrying out raids against isolated communities and vital assets. The Army had no legal framework to enable it to employ roadblocks, search property, arrest suspicious persons and carry out other aspects of such operations. It took an improbable terrorist threat to the Olympic Games to jolt the Government into providing legislation. Regrettably the public are none the wiser about the need for such legislation. At no time did the Government take the trouble properly to explain its legislation or the need for it. For all its pretensions, the media coverage was woeful.

There is much more legislation needed to cover a number of situations that could occur in Australia. Each State and the Northern Territory has quite different emergency legislation, leaving a legal minefield for police forces and the ADF to operate within. A few lawyers are needed to provide a basic system and then political will at state and Federal level to produce legislation. It is the least the Government can do.

Logistic Capability

During the 1939-45 war, from a very weak industrial base, Australia manufactured many items of war required by our Army and the forces of the USA. After the war, successive governments supported the expansion of the industrial base and in some respects those gains are still extant. More recently, the thrust for “free trade” and a global economy has seen much of our light manufacturing industry destroyed. A case can be made for preserving vital parts of it.

Blamey was interested in the practical side of military input into our armaments industry. In a letter to the Minister for the Army on 22 September 1944, he urged the selection of suitably qualified Army officers to attend the Military College of Science in the United Kingdom. He wrote:

> *The proper development of equipment for use under active service conditions requires a considerable number of specialist personnel within the Army. Apart from those directly needed in actual manufacture, there is a need for officers who have both experience in the use of the equipment concerned, and have adequate scientific or technical knowledge to be able to deal with the research, design and inspection aspects of the warlike stores required for the Army and to improve the link with production authorities. The Military College of Science in the UK conducts courses for the training of officers for this special purpose, that is the study of the problems relating to design, development, manufacture and inspection of equipment.*

Blamey urged that two officers be selected annually to attend the Military College of Science. Forde accepted this proposal and the Army has continued the practice until recently, when it created its own courses. Graduates from that establishment staff our present equipment development staff and inspection service, or quality assurance service as it is now called.

Blamey, as C-in-C, supervised the establishment of lines of communications from south-eastern Australia to the north. We had never had this responsibility before; the process was slow, painful, manpower intensive and involved many processes and skills previously not part of the Army's scope. He and his successors were determined to retain that capability. As part of the "rationalisation" processes, to which the Army has been subjected repeatedly for over a quarter of a century, this capability has been lost or dissipated. Events in East Timor exposed a gap in our logistic capability; perhaps a proper examination will overcome these shortfalls.

The Opening of the John Curtin School of Medical Research (JCSMR) at the Australian National University. Among those in attendance were Robert Menzies and Howard Florey.

Photograph by kind permission of Photography JCSMR

Technology

Concerned about the difficulties in treating wounded and sick soldiers in New Guinea Blamey sought the advice of Howard Florey, the noted Australian pathologist who did much to make penicillin and other antibiotics available to patients. With the agreement of Prime Minister Curtin, he invited him to Australia. Florey wrote to Blamey on his return to the UK in January 1945, thanking him "for the extraordinarily efficient and kindly way I was treated by all the Army under your command".

Before that, on 24 October 1944, Blamey had written to the Prime Minister confirming the recommendations he had made in informal discussions with Curtin relating to Sir Howard Florey. Blamey stressed that the importance of contemporary science both from a wartime and reconstruction point of view was such in Britain and elsewhere, that Australia could not hope to attract the best men to work here unless the facilities offered for work were better than in the old countries. He went on to recommend that a National University be founded with a National Medical Research Institute. As he stated:

> *I am more and more impressed with the necessity for putting a stop to the drainage of outstanding Australians to posts in other countries. There will be very little future for Australian science if the drainage continues, and it can be said with assurance that adequate provision for the employment of Australians of world rank in Australian laboratories would have the effect of energising and enhancing the quality of Australian contributions in nearly every field of intellectual endeavour.*

John Hetherington claimed that the very first letter on the ANU's registry is the one from General Blamey to the Prime Minister. There is no doubt if he was with us today, the Field Marshal would be urging our present Prime Minister to heed the request of our Chief Scientist, Dr R.J. Batterham, to provide the necessary funding to enable Australian research to be effective. A further brain drain is not in our best interests for peace or war.

The People

After the fall of Singapore, Curtin addressed the nation and stated:

> *The organisation of a non-military people for the purposes of complete war must necessarily effect a revolution in the lives of the people. A transformation so great as that, which the government regards as imperative, is inevitably beset with many difficulties, and must create many problems. It may be marked by some degree of confusion.*

Blamey recognised this, as his Melbourne *Herald* article demonstrated: "That every class of the community must be considered and the part they must play."

Since Blamey and Curtin, the population of Australia has undertaken great changes in numbers and ethnic profile. From a predominantly British population of about seven million in 1945, the population is now close to 19 million, made up of the most diverse pattern of peoples of any nation in the world. Our society has absorbed these changes peacefully and generally with tolerance. How would it cope with war?

Writing in a different context, April Carter makes the point:

> *The difficulties and dangers of racial, religious or class divisions do not however necessarily lead to the conclusion that only a homogenous, religiously united and classless society can conduct resistance. These barriers may be largely overcome by a unifying purpose arising from the struggle against a common evil, by nationalism, by mutual tolerance or by political unity and political skill.*

The Aborigines are the element of Australian society genuinely isolated and alienated. Aborigines who have served in the armed services have performed well. There

have been few, if any reports about discrimination or prejudice in the Army – which means that if it did occur, it was rare. On the other hand, at the very first Military Board meeting after the 1939-45 war, the Chief of the General Staff ordered an investigation into reports that Aboriginal ex-servicemen were being stripped of their savings including their deferred pay by State and Territory administrations.

In 1965, two Army officers, Jol Langtry and Colin East, published an article in the *Army Journal*, suggesting the formation of a largely Aboriginal-manned unit to guard our vacant north. This imaginative but otherwise unexceptional article caused a political storm. By 1981 the Army had formed Norforce, a largely Aboriginal-manned unit, designed to patrol our still largely unoccupied north. It is now a prestige unit.

Shortly after the election of the Howard Government, the Army was invited to assist isolated Aboriginal communities with housing and services. This program has been very successful, many communities receiving much needed facilities and in the process, many in the communities have been trained in the skills necessary to maintain those facilities. Above all, both the communities and soldiers have gained mutual confidence and respect for each other, the building bricks for "reconciliation".

The present Government is correct in giving priority to improving the health, education and economic prospects of Aborigines. But until Australian Aborigines find their individual and corporate place in Australian society, we shall not be a cohesive nation. Until the Aborigines develop their full potential, the nation will be below its optimal strength. The numerous outstanding Aborigines in arts, politics, law and sport are living proof of their innate talents. The wider community must ensure that those who fail to reach their potential do not fail from want of opportunity or encouragement.

As a nation, we have difficulty in identifying a likely enemy or a probable threat. No one can be certain about the future. In the meantime we should follow our most distinguished soldier's advice and lay the foundation for mobilising "every class in the community".

Conclusion

Blamey was recognised by his admirers and detractors alike for his strategic grasp and his staff abilities. In this short paper, attention has been given to wider and less known aspects of his knowledge. Despite his onerous wartime duties, he was not content to simply fight the battle, but was looking to the future of his country.

Blamey, the professional soldier, recognised the place of the citizen army. The regular Defence Force, particularly the Army, is but the vanguard of the national defence force.

Blamey, the soldier, emphasised the need for the civil branches of government to be able quickly to change to a war economy and mobilise the technical, supply, transportation and manpower resources for war.

Blamey took an active interest in the post-war immigration program knowing that we would no longer be a homogeneous, religiously united society. Today he would be working for a nation whose citizens possess a unifying purpose, based on a good humoured, mellow nationalism, which can only be nurtured through mutual tolerance.

Brigadier Greville's last appointment was Commander 4th Field Force Group and 4th Military District, from 1977 until 1980.

Manpower Limits on the Australian War Effort

By The Right Honourable Sir Paul Hasluck, KG, GCMG, GCVO

Address to the United Service Institution of Western Australia, Perth, 24 May 1990

I am not a military historian and have no qualifications to write about Blamey the soldier or to make any assessment of him as a military commander. In this paper I will try only to make some contribution to an understanding of the conditions in which Blamey worked during the last phase of his career when he was Commander Allied Land Forces in the South West Pacific Area (SWPA). I will draw on my research and writing as one of the authors of the civil series of the *Official History of Australia in the War of 1939-45,* supplemented by knowledge gained in personal experience in wartime administration.

You will recall that early in the war, under the Menzies Government, Blamey was chosen for high command and, in sequence, was appointed GOC 6th Division, Second AIF, GOC 1st Australian Corps and Deputy Commander-in-Chief in the Middle East. After war began in the Pacific, he was recalled to Australia and in March 1942 was appointed by the Curtin Government as Commander-in-Chief of the Australian Military Forces (C-in-C AMF).

One preliminary question concerns the extent to which a military commander has any responsibility or opportunity for forming policy regarding the conduct of a war. Does he simply carry out a directive given to him by the rulers of a nation or does he share in the decisions or try to influence the decisions about the best way to win the war, the choice of military objectives and the size of forces to be used? I leave those questions floating in the air and draw your attention to certain circumstances that, in the case of Blamey, limited what he could do in his office of C-in-C AMF.

One limitation was set by a change in the nature of the Australian war effort. After the fall of Singapore, and in the face of a rising threat from Japan, the nation was organised for "total war" (to use a phrase current at the time). The whole resources of the nation were now engaged in war. There was a great diversion of manpower. Many new controls and restrictions on production, supply and consumption of commodities were imposed. Successive decisions were made on what activities should have priority. Many aspects of the daily life of the community were brought under official direction. All these changes were necessarily accompanied by the organisation of new instrumentalities and new administrative arrangements.

Total war means that the conduct of the war is inseparable from the leadership of the whole nation. In practical terms, the Prime Minister and War Cabinet take command and the politician supersedes the military commander.

In theory winning the war means defeating the enemy. The military answer to the question of how to do it is simple and direct. The political answer is more complex.

The political leader still has to govern the nation as well as direct the war effort. Let me illustrate the point by taking an extreme example. At a time when peril still seemed great, Prime Minister John Curtin decided that there had to be a limit to any further restrictions on horse racing. A military commander might fail to see how the Japanese

Army is brought nearer to defeat by a decision to allow the continued production of feed for race horses, the continued employment of stable hands and the regular diversion of large crowds from the job of winning the war to attempts to back winners. The political leader apparently sees the connection or accepts the necessity.

In spite of the commitment of the nation to total war, the Prime Minister and War Cabinet faced limitations on their power even firmer than those set by domestic political considerations. Australia was in alliance with powers stronger than herself and could not act independently from the alliance.

After Japan and the United States had entered the war, decisions were made, at the level of Churchill and Roosevelt, for a worldwide division of strategic responsibility between Great Britain and the US. As part of these decisions, the US became responsible for the Pacific Area. Subsequently, with the disappearance of Wavell's command in the ABDA area, decisions were made by the US in March 1942 to divide the Pacific area, on grounds of strategy, into the SWPA and the Pacific Ocean Area. General MacArthur was designated Supreme Commander of the SWPA and Admiral Nimitz was designated Supreme Commander of the Pacific Ocean Area. The Australian Government had no part in any of these decisions and was told about them after they had been made.

After MacArthur had arrived in Australia from the Philippines, it was suggested to Curtin by President Roosevelt that the Australian Government might nominate MacArthur as Supreme Commander of all Allied forces in the SWPA and assign Australian forces to his command. This was a courteous way of obtaining Australian endorsement of a decision already made.

MacArthur was hailed by the Australian Government as a deliverer. In committing Australian forces to his command, Curtin made the limitation that any power to move Australian troops out of Australian territory should be subject to prior consultation and agreement with the Australian Government and an understanding that Australia retained the right to refuse the use of forces for any project which it considered inadvisable. In effect, Australia might be able to withhold its forces but it was narrowly limited in the ways in which it might employ them.

Then MacArthur obtained Australian agreement to detailed working arrangements under which the Allied forces in the SWPA were organised into five subordinate commands namely, Allied Naval Forces, Allied Land Forces, Allied Air Forces, United States Army Forces in Australia responsible for administration and supply, and United States Forces in the Philippines. Blamey was named Commander Allied Land Forces.

At the time these arrangements were made, the ground forces in Australia numbered 38,000 Americans, 104,000 of the AIF and 265,000 of the Australian militia. Thus, at the beginning, the preponderance of troops in the Allied Land Forces under Blamey's command were Australian. The situation would change as the US war effort gathered strength.

At that stage of the war, Curtin and MacArthur shared a primary purpose of halting the Japanese southward thrust and driving them back. The first military task was to make Australia secure. Then the Allied forces could prepare for the counter-stroke.

From the outset, the Australian Government pressed both Washington and London to assign more troops, more aircraft, more ships and more weapons to the SWPA. Although in this quest for additional forces the Australian Government sometimes used the argument about launching an offensive from Australia, and occasionally Curtin also used the same flourish in speech-making, it is apparent from the decisions made and the official documents that during 1942, the Australian Government's outlook on the war was influenced more by the need to defend Australia from attack than

by any planning for an offensive. There was an over-riding fear, probably not fully justified, that Japan intended to invade Australia.

In the middle of 1942 the Australian Government learnt that a great deal of high-level planning between Roosevelt and Churchill and by the Combined Chiefs of Staff in Washington had already resulted in decisions to concentrate first on the war effort against Germany and to fight a holding war in the Pacific. There had been no consultation with Australia before those decisions were made. It is apparent that the UK, US and Australian governments saw the war against Japan from different standpoints. Curtin feared an invasion of Australia. Churchill and Roosevelt thought a large-scale invasion was unlikely. They saw the greatest immediate danger was the threat from Germany. Australia experienced its own anxieties about the Japanese threat more sharply than the Great Powers saw them and conversely the Great Powers saw the shape of a worldwide conflict more broadly than Australia did. The Great Powers made the decisions on high policy.

In keeping with the defensive view of the Australian Government, Blamey's organisation and deployment of Australian ground forces in 1942 concentrated on the protection of Australia. The reorganisation between March and May 1942, resulted in June in the following distribution of Australian infantry brigades and American infantry regiments: two in New Guinea, eight in Queensland, 15 in the south-eastern States, three in the Northern Territory and three in Western Australia.

In September 1942, after further reorganisation, Blamey still found "the situation in regard to the defence of Australia a ground for serious misgiving". He wanted 25 divisions. At the time he had 12, made up as follows: seven Australian divisions, three Australian armoured divisions being organised and two American divisions. They were distributed as follows: two in New Guinea, one in the Northern Territory, two in Western Australia, four in Queensland and the other three in New South Wales and Victoria. He supported the Government's pressure for the return of the 9th Division from the Middle East.

The main military events in the SWPA in the 15 months after the fall of Singapore and Java were the checking of the Japanese Army at Kokoda and Milne Bay; operations on the northern coast of Papua, and Naval engagements in the Coral Sea, the Bismarck Sea and Midway. In June 1943, Curtin said that the "Battle of Australia" had been won and that the security of Australia had been assured. He spoke of the "Battle of Australia" as though it were analogous to the Battle for Britain in the German air attacks of 1940 but, of course Australia had not been subjected to anything comparable to the German assault on Britain. In the view of some war historians, his recognition that Australia was now safe may have been rather belated but nevertheless Curtin's announcement marks June 1943 as a significant point in the history of Australian policy on the conduct of the war in the Pacific. Up to that time, the uppermost thought in the mind of Curtin and the War Cabinet had been to make Australia safe. After that date it became necessary for them to make decisions on the Australian war effort as part of a wider contribution to victory. What was clear is that up to that stage Curtin had chosen a limited operational role for Australian troops and the safety of Australia was a clearer purpose than aggression against the enemy. Blamey, both as C-in-C AMF and as Commander Allied Land Forces planned and organised within that policy. He accepted the limits on his generalship.

Another circumstance that limited Blamey's influence on shaping policy was the close relationship established between Curtin and MacArthur, with the Secretary of the Defence Department, Shedden, acting as the intermediary. MacArthur's influence on Curtin

General Sir Thomas Blamey with General MacArthur and the Prime Minister, Mr Curtin.
AWM Neg 042766

and on Australian policy was more direct and more immediate than any influence that Blamey had. Curtin was Defence Minister as well as Prime Minister and the functioning of the War Cabinet was centred on the Defence Department. The three Service ministers were members of the War Cabinet but their departments functioned in close liaison with - in many respects one might say in subordination to - the Defence Department. The Chiefs of Staff of the three Services directed their advice on policy to the Government either through a Chiefs of Staff Committee, which was serviced by the Defence Department, or through the Defence Committee on which they sat alongside the Secretary of the Defence Department. The Chief of the General Staff was responsible for presenting the views of the C-in-C AMF in the War Cabinet. Thus the Defence Department and, under its tutelage, these two committees were a screen between the C-in-C and the War Cabinet.

These circumstances are directly relevant to the way in which decisions on Australian military operations were made after June 1943. Broadly speaking, from that point onwards the C-in-C had a steadily decreasing influence on decisions about the conduct of the Australian war effort. In April 1943 he had proposed a reorganisation of the forces and this was referred to the Defence Committee for examination so that the demands of the Services could be correlated with other aspects of manpower requirements. In effect the Army became a claimant alongside munitions, civil industry and production either for export or for domestic consumption.

A general election was held in July and August 1943. In that campaign Curtin said in effect that the defensive phase of the war was over. The nation had been saved. For the future the aim of the Government would be a balanced war effort. He said that Churchill and Roosevelt had given assurances on the vigorous prosecution of the war in the Pacific theatre and Australia could look to them for assistance in those things for which her capacity was insufficient and concentrate on those for which Australia was particularly fitted such as the production of food. The election campaign statements were in keeping with War Cabinet decisions. At a meeting on 13 July 1943, War Cabinet had accepted a statement presented by Curtin setting out the principles which should govern what Australia did in the future. The statement commenced by pointing out that the danger of invasion had decreased; Australian defences had been strengthened and aid had come from abroad.

Thus the broad strategic situation which governed the nature and scope of the nation's war effort had changed.

The guiding principles adopted by War Cabinet in July 1943 were generally designed to keep the war effort within Australia's physical capacity. As regards the Army, there would be three infantry divisions for offensive operations and "adequate forces for the defence of Australia and New Guinea and for the relief of units in New Guinea". The strength of the forces would be governed by "the available manpower, the capacity to maintain wastage and the coordination of manpower required for other needs". From that date onwards the Army had no priority in the allotment of manpower and the flow of recruits to the Army was limited by successive decisions on manpower in general.

At this point, I will make a digression to consider two other factors that had a bearing on the deployment of Australian troops. One of these factors was the distinction made between the AIF and the CMF regarding service overseas. The AIF was a volunteer force for service anywhere and the CMF was raised by compulsory service for home defence. Early in the war an amendment of the *Defence Act* had placed beyond doubt the liability of the CMF to serve in Papua and New Guinea as well as in the Australian continent so while the fighting was in Australian territory, the AIF and CMF were engaged on common tasks of home defence. Difficulty would arise, however, if a change from the defensive to the offensive carried the war beyond the Australian mainland and the external territories.

I shall not enlarge on this topic, which is a story of political manoeuvres rather than of military planning, but draw attention to the fact that until the passage of the Defence (Citizen Military Forces) Bill in February 1943, this distinction between AIF and CMF remained. Even after the Bill became law, the operational role of Australian land forces was still a limited one.

Curtin faced and overcame the arguments of the anti-conscriptionists in his own party but he won the argument by limiting the area in which the combined forces could serve. The legislation confined the conscripted forces to an enlarged South West Pacific zone. Curtin himself still envisaged a limited role for Australian troops. Various statements revealed that he expected the Australian troops to relieve American troops in bases and re-occupied territory when the Americans moved forward.

Another factor to be noted in passing is that when the Allied Land Forces in the SWPA gained added strength from the arrival of more American divisions, there was a natural ambition among American divisional commanders to live up to the responsibilities and opportunities of high rank rather than to subordinate themselves and their American troops to an Australian C-in-C. In February 1943, MacArthur partly solved this problem by naming the American Sixth Army as a task force directly responsible to him and not to Blamey. Progressively, as American troops took over the main task, the effective meaning of Blamey's title as Commander Allied Land Forces was reduced. It was MacArthur, not Blamey, who made decisions on the deployment of forces. Blamey's role in the planning and command of any offensive was reduced by force of circumstances and the increased American presence as well as by Australian policy.

On returning from this digression to the War Cabinet decisions of July 1943, we will recognise that the three Australian infantry divisions being maintained for offensive operations would necessarily be allotted tasks distinct from those to be undertaken by the American component of Allied Land Forces in any northward advance. Their role for the remainder of the war was further affected by the fact that from July 1943 onwards, Australia's contribution towards winning the war became more and more that of a provider

of goods and services rather than that of a fighter, and consequently the flow of new recruits to the Army was limited.

I submit for your consideration the question whether the Curtin Government had full mastery in the conduct of the war effort in the last two years of hostilities. Early in 1943 it had become apparent that Australia's war effort was getting out of hand. Immediately after the Japanese attack in December 1941 and the succession of military disasters, major diversions of manpower were made. While there was fear of invasion, the claims of the armed services were paramount. Then progressively it was realised that a total war effort brought additional requirements of manpower in munitions, shipbuilding, aircraft production and works. The increases in the American forces based in Australia brought demands for buildings and other establishments, transport, auxiliary services and a wide range of supplies. During 1942 a drastic reduction in the production of goods and services for the civilian population and a strict rationing system, coupled with a great increase in the employment of women, helped in releasing more manpower both for the armed services and for war industries.

There is room for some criticism of the Government over its handling of manpower problems but in making any criticism one should recognise that control of manpower is a matter of political judgments on priorities and not simply a matter of doing arithmetic about supply and demand. Furthermore, the allocation of manpower is not simply a matter of responding to the demands which are most urgent. The response to one demand usually creates a new demand. As a simple illustration, a decision to put more men into the armed services because of fear of invasion immediately creates a demand for manpower to provide the soldiers with uniforms, weapons, transport, munitions and other supplies. The welcome increase in Allied strength created new demands on Australian manpower for the production of food and the construction of works for the non-Australian component of Allied forces. Even the extension of manpower controls created a demand for more clerks to give effect to manpower decisions. Each newly created authority became a claimant for manpower.

I shall not elaborate on the difficulties of manpower administration or enter into a discussion of manpower priorities. It is enough for the purpose of this paper to record that conditions at the end of 1942 and the incomplete mastery of the Australian war effort forced the Government in the second half of 1943 into a reconsideration of the role of the Australian armed forces. When its thinking was dominated by fear of invasion and when there were few Allied troops in Australia, the Services had been given first place in the calls on manpower. Now that the danger had lessened and the demands on manpower had become more complex and the cumulative decisions on allotment of manpower had produced a tangle of conflicting claims, policy had to be reviewed. Broadly speaking, from this time onwards the Army had to struggle for recruits and then, for lack of recruits, it had to reduce the establishment and eventually discharge soldiers for the sake of industry.

May I quote a passage I wrote as one of the authors of the Official War History about the position in the middle of 1943. The Australian Government was faced with the necessity of making a major decision on the nature of the Australian war effort. The problem came to them as one of a shortage of manpower, mingled with numerous other considerations.

> *The War Cabinet usually sent the manpower question back to their officials with directions to examine the best possible use of resources, to re-examine their programmes and to tighten controls. The problem was returned to them very much in the shape of an argument between various authorities and interests as to who should*

have the most human bodies. The political question became one of allocation. This meant restrictions of some activities, curtailment of services and renewed raking through the oft-raked heap to try to discover more manpower. Yet never does it appear to have led to the attempt at a synthesis. Gradually and of necessity, and through the course of successive and sometimes conflicting decisions on various minor questions the nature of the Australian war effort began to change, but at no time does it appear that at the highest level the over-all question was considered: "in the present situation and having regard to our present resources and obligations what can Australia best do to win the war?" ... The successive decisions of War Cabinet were neither comprehensive nor constant. They answered a number of little questions as they arose and never faced the big question. They revealed no over-all view . . . the political historian, writing after the event, however, finds as the central feature of the whole manpower situation a constant uncertainty in the Prime Minister and the War Cabinet regarding the exact nature of the Australian war effort. The adjustment of conflicting claims was attended with a large measure of administrative efficiency. The reason why there were so many conflicting claims, persisting over so long a period of time, was due to the absence of clear, firm, exact and prompt determinations on policy by those responsible for the higher direction of the war in Australia. It was the old problem of deciding the nature and extent of the Australian war effort, of shaping and imposing on the nation a conscious purpose in the conduct of the war ... The only conclusion which is justified by the political study of the manpower administration of 1942 and 1943 is that Australia found herself in a new role not because Curtin or anyone else had planned it that way but because of Curtin's acceptance of events. The course of the war and the pressure of affairs were determining what Australia would do.[1]

The outcome of successive decisions on the bids for manpower was a progressive adjustment of the war effort. From October 1943, the Army was required to release men for other war purposes. Later decisions restricted the monthly intake of new recruits. The re-organisation of the Army continued. As a result of the manpower decisions and of other causes of wastage, it was reported at the end of April 1944 that the Army had a net loss, since October 1943, of over 44,000. A total of 47,000 had been discharged, 1802 had died and the monthly intake had been little more than half of the manpower allocation of 1500 a month. Incidentally this allocation of 1500 comprised 550 men and 950 women a month. A considerable number of units on the mainland had been disbanded in order to make up the strength of the offensive force. I would remind you of the difficulties of maintaining a combat force in tropical conditions. As an example, during its campaign on the northern coast of New Guinea leading to the surrender of the Japanese the 6th Division lost 442 officers and men killed in action or dying of wounds. Another 1141 were wounded. Admissions to hospital because of sickness were 16,203.

In May 1944, the Minister for the Army put the position bluntly that the Government should inform MacArthur that the AMF would "have to be relieved of a substantial portion of its present task in providing garrisons in New Guinea and elsewhere, and the operations of the offensive force must be delayed in order that the provision of the necessary manpower can be arranged". He wrote further that the Government should decide whether the Army's direct contribution to operations in the SWPA should be reduced and the "food front" maintained and increased.[2] Some indication of this part of the manpower problem additional to the demands of Australian industry is given

by an estimate at this time that in June 1944, 100,000 Australians would be employed to meet the needs of the US forces.

The diversion of manpower to production of supplies continued and at the same time the present and prospective demands on Australia for supplies increased still further as the result of decisions on high policy by Churchill and Roosevelt. For example, one prospective additional demand was that which would follow the basing of some British forces on Australia for the final phase of operations in the Pacific.

At the end of June 1944 Curtin, on his return from a visit to London for a Prime Ministers' Conference and discussions with Churchill and with the Combined Chiefs of Staff in Washington, had a conference with MacArthur in Brisbane. The outcome was agreement that Australia's service commitments were to be limited to six divisions, plus naval and air forces. During the last three years of hostilities, the decisions of the Australian Government on the Australian war effort were dominated by the problems of manpower. In this paper we are concerned only with the effect of these decisions on Blamey's role as C-in-C AMF and as Commander Allied Land Forces. My impression from research among the documents is that Blamey had a declining influence on such decisions. One factor was that in the preparation of documents for consideration by War Cabinet and Production Executive and the Advisory War Council, the Service claims were submitted through the Chiefs of Staff and the Service Ministers and the documentation about the Army's needs was not as effective as the more strongly argued presentation on the manpower situation by the civilian advisers such as the Ministers in Production Executive, and the officials on the Manpower Directorate, the Department of War Organisation of Industry and other functionaries. The civilian advisers had more facts and more expertness than the soldiers and were closer to the scene where decisions were made. In practice the Manpower Directorate, through the War Commitments Committee, exercised more authority over defence uses as well as non-defence uses of manpower than did the defence services.

Gradually, too, the clerks were taking over from the soldiers. I do not mean this in a way disparaging to the civilian functionaries. They were all doing their appointed jobs. More and more, however, one sees that in any discussion related to the shaping of the Australian war effort there were new arguments, clearly presented, that did not give priority to the fighting man. For example, under the Lend-Lease arrangements for obtaining military supplies it was envisaged that there would eventually be a balancing of the monetary value of what Australia had received against what Australia had given. The appropriate clerks produced arguments about increasing supplies from Australian production. When it was clear that eventually we were going to win the war, more and more attention was given to post-war reconstruction at home, the procedures of demobilisation and the practical problems of giving effect to the politically attractive slogan of full employment after the war. What the Government did about manpower now was seen in relation not only to defeating the Japanese but to ensuring a smooth transition to peacetime Australia. The diligent clerks and advisers and such influential ministers as Chifley and Dedman ensured that such particular problems were placed before the Government more clearly and strongly than any proposals about the Order of Battle for Australia's armed forces.

Another element was the view held by the members of the War Cabinet about the war effort in general. They were not single-minded on the subject of fighting. I do not think it would be unfair to say that ministers in the Curtin Government thought that Australian forces should do enough fighting to deserve respect and to earn a place in the peace

settlement and post-war discussions but that their primary task - and perhaps for some it was the sufficient task - was to keep Australia safe with the help of Allies. Let stronger nations do the rest.

Furthermore, if this was the bent of Curtin's own mind - and my own view is that it was - he was confirmed in this limited view about the war effort by the fact that the principal allies and co-defenders of Australia, the US and the UK, also allotted to Australia the task of provider once the first phase of extreme danger had passed.

Furthermore, the influence of MacArthur on Curtin also tended to reduce the need for Australian forces. MacArthur clearly wanted an American victory and the reconquest of the Philippines by forces wholly or predominantly American. As I have previously indicated, the rapport that had developed between Curtin and MacArthur may have had its advantages in the earlier phases of the danger from Japan and the cooperation between the US and Australian forces but, as the war progressed and the situation changed, it also had the consequence that Blamey and the Australian Defence Committee were not always immediately and fully aware of their discussions and the implications for Australian defence policy.

All in all, the Australian Government depended on London and Washington for broad military and economic strategy and on General MacArthur for tactical initiative in the SWPA. Blamey had a reduced role to play as Commander Allied Land Forces and a declining influence and limited opportunity on decisions affecting the strength and the role of the AMF.

One might take a lofty geopolitical view of the situation and say that this was the unavoidable outcome of the fact that the major Allied supply base in this remote segment of a world war had to be in a continent with a large area and a relatively small population. Keeping closer to the records of the War Cabinet, however, the verdict would be that there was an incomplete mastery by the Curtin Government of the Australian war effort. They responded to pressures but were not in full command of their own policy.

Just in case I have been rather too dismal in presenting such a story, perhaps I should end on a lighter note. As a senior officer of the Department of External Affairs I saw something of wartime policy-making. At one stage I had a personal glimpse of the manpower procedures when an interdepartmental committee was formed to assist the Department of Supply in screening the great number of requests for supplies being made from various Allied authorities. Most of the work of the committee was to make a preliminary judgment on priorities and on the capacity of Australia to provide the goods. My role on the committee was simply to give advice on any considerations or obligations of foreign policy that might place one request ahead of another. Mostly I listened to arguments and facts presented by other departmental representatives about capacity to supply. I recall that at the end of a meeting in Sydney one morning one of my colleagues on the committee remarked cynically: "When my children ask me: What did you do in the Great War daddy? I will say: I sat in a back room in Sydney, doing all the arithmetic to make sure that American sailors in the South Pacific could get ice-cream, pork and turkeys when all of the rest of us went without them."

NOTES

1 Paul Hasluck, *The Government and the People, 1942-1945*, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1972, p. 296.

2 ibid, p. 421.

Sir Paul Hasluck was Governor-General of Australia from 1969 to 1974.

Informal portrait of Brigadier General Sir T. Blamey, on horseback, entering the Chateau at Ham-sur-Heure, Belgium, 14 April 1919. *AWM Neg E005060*

Field Marshal Sir Thomas Blamey and the Australian Army

By Professor David Horner

Address to the United Service Institution of the Australian Capital Territory, 2 May 2001

It is fitting that the 50th anniversary of the death of Field Marshal Sir Thomas Blamey coincides with the centenary of the formation of the Australian Army. For Blamey dominated the first half of the history of the Australian Army and his great gift to the Australian nation was the creation, for the first time, of a truly national army. It was an army that had included one in ten Australians and had fought successfully to defend the nation against outside attack in the greatest war in our history.[1] When Blamey had joined the Army in 1906 it had consisted of disparate militia units and a tiny permanent force. By the time he became a field marshal in 1951 the Army had fought two world wars and was engaged in the Korean War. And Australia now, for the first time, had a regular army that drew its officers and non-commissioned officers from Blamey's wartime army.

Blamey's elevation to field marshal was more than a tribute to Australia's part in two world wars. It was recognition that Australia had become an independent country. It would make its own decisions about its security, it would have a standing army of its own that could implement those decisions, and it could produce commanders who understood Australia's own particular strategic situation. Blamey had played a major role in bringing about these developments. In that sense his appointment as field marshal signified a coming of age of the nation and its Army. No single person can claim to have brought about all these outcomes, but Blamey's role had been more important than that of any other.

This paper is not intended to provide a short biography or outline of Blamey's career. Rather, by examining the milestones in the development of the Australian Army, and by drawing attention to Blamey's role in each of them, it seeks to demonstrate his influence over that development.

Let us look at the period before the First World War. At first glance it might seem that Blamey joined the Army in an unusual way. In 1906 the new federal government decided to establish cadet units in all schools of the Commonwealth. Blamey was successful in an examination to appoint officers to a small cadre of training and administrative staff. But in the context of Defence policy at the time this method of joining the Army was not unusual. The *Defence Act 1903*, passed by parliament in 1904, had set the new nation's defence policy, which stated that Australia was to base its defence on a part-time voluntarily enlisted militia. Apart from training and administrative staff, and the staff for the coastal forts, there were to be no permanent soldiers. The raising of cadet units – to provide basic training and to feed into the militia – was in tune with this philosophy. Already the Prime Minister, Alfred Deakin, was considering the introduction of compulsory service in the militia. Eventually, in April 1910 Blamey was transferred from supervising cadets to an appointment on the headquarters of the 2nd Infantry Brigade in which he supervised militia training. Due to changes of Government the compulsory scheme for cadets and militia was not introduced until January 1911. Blamey then became brigade major of the 12th Area Brigade, responsible for administering part of the compulsory scheme. A critic might have commented that none of this was real

soldiering as we would understand it. But it was all that soldiering consisted of during this period.

In 1912 and 1913 Blamey attended the Staff College at Quetta in present-day Pakistan. His attendance represented several developments in the Australian Army. First, in 1908 the British War Office had issued a memorandum seeking to get each self-governing dominion to send officers to the British Staff College to improve cooperation between the British and dominions armies. This relationship was to last for 50 years and was to figure prominently in Blamey's career. Second, with an eye to the future, the Australian Army wanted to establish a professional officer corps of its own. Third, at Quetta Blamey wrote a major essay on defence problems in the Pacific, arguing that an attack upon the Empire in the Pacific was "unlikely except in the case of complication in Europe", in which case "naval assistance in the Pacific may not be available. It is essential therefore, that the Empire should possess sufficient naval strength in the Pacific at all times to guarantee it security".[2] These crucial issues were to dominate the defence debate in Australia for the next 30 years, and Blamey was right. In 1941 Japan attacked when there were "complications" in Europe. But in 1913 Blamey found that few were interested in the problems of the Pacific; as he wrote bitterly, there was not "a blighter who cares two figs for the strategical problems of Australia or the people".[3] It alerted him to the reality that on matters of defence Australia had to look after its own interests.

In general terms, then, before the First World War Blamey was closely involved with the development of the Army as a militia force, but also played his role in establishing a professional officer corps. And already he was showing interest in broad defence policy. He was not present in Australia when, after the outbreak of the First World War, the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) was formed in August 1914, but he joined it in Egypt in December 1914.

The Gallipoli landing and the subsequent campaign is a defining point in the history of the Australian Army, and Blamey was closely involved in it. As the intelligence officer on the headquarters of the 1st Australian Division he helped plan the operation and went ashore several hours after the first landing, accompanying the divisional commander, Major General William Bridges, and the chief of staff, Colonel Brudenell White. Because of the nature of operations at Gallipoli, he often visited the front line and saw exciting action during a night reconnaissance patrol. Blamey left Gallipoli late in July and returned late in October as AA&QMG of the 2nd Division, remaining there until early December. He was therefore well placed to observe the qualities of Australian soldiers and also to see the outcome of poor planning decisions

The Gallipoli campaign did not fully bring out the problems of modern technological warfare, but these were revealed in tragic fashion on the Western Front the following year. During the attack at Pozières in July 1916 Blamey was chief operations officer of the 1st Division, although the extent of his role is not fully clear. He supervised the planning and the preparation of the operation order, but the divisional commander, Major General Harold Walker, also had firm views about how the attack was to be conducted.[4] In the official history Charles Bean refers to Walker, "in conjunction with Colonel Blamey," drawing up plans for the second phase of the attack – the one which actually took the shattered remnants of Pozières.[5] Blamey's own account, written in early August 1916, is a remarkable mixture of pride in the men, but boastfulness about his own performance. Despite acknowledging the casualties he is optimistic of the outcome, and appears not fully to appreciate the horrors of the battle. Perhaps he was already showing a

capacity to put aside his feelings to ensure he approached his task with a clear head.

Displaying great ability as a staff officer, in May 1918 Blamey, was promoted to brigadier general and appointed chief of staff of the Australian Corps, commanded by Lieutenant General Sir John Monash. The Australian Army had come a long way from the chaos of the first day at Gallipoli and the slaughter on the Somme in 1916. Two years of fighting in France and Belgium had resulted in terrible losses, but the Australians had gained knowledge and experience. Able leaders had come to the fore, and they had learned to scrutinise the plans of their British superiors. They saw that artillery was the dominant force on the battlefield and that an infantry assault must closely follow the creeping barrage.

Under Monash the Australian Corps had its finest hour. After the brilliant small set-piece attack at Hamel on 4 July 1918, it took part in the major British offensive of 8 August. With the Canadians, the Australian Corps became the spearhead of the British offensive. For the first time an Australian general had to manoeuvre five divisions, maintaining artillery support, deploying tanks, bringing forward supplies, changing the point of attack, applying relentless pressure. Both at Hamel and in the latter stages of the advance, the Australians fought side-by-side with Americans – a foretaste of future cooperation.

While not as obvious as at Gallipoli, the legacy of the Australians Corps' final campaign has perhaps been equally profound. Australia's military leaders learned that battles are won by training and careful planning. Monash proved to be an outstanding commander and a brilliant planner, while his chief of staff, Blamey, was highly efficient. Later his orders would become a model for use at the British Army's staff college. Thereafter careful planning, attention to detail and a concern to preserve Australian lives generally would mark Australian military operations. The First World War set a firm foundation for the further development of the Australian Army and Blamey was heavily involved in setting that foundation.

After the First World War the development of the Australian Army was determined, to a large degree, by a conference of senior officers, chaired by Lieutenant General Sir Harry Chauvel, in January 1920. The officers concluded that Australia's security rested on two factors: its membership of the British Empire, and "Australia's own ability to prevent an invading enemy from obtaining decisive victories pending the arrival of help from other parts of the Empire".[6] The conference therefore recommended a citizen army of five infantry and two cavalry divisions, in a force totalling about 180,000 all ranks. For the first time Australia would form divisional headquarters and staffs in peacetime. Other recommendations covered resources, organisation, mobilisation, training and finance. On 1 May 1921 the Army introduced its new divisional structure, but faced by financial constraints the Government failed to approve any of the proposals for new equipment and the force was always under strength. Successive Army chiefs were to use the report as a guide for building the Army over the next ten years. It is not generally appreciated that as Director of Military Operations Brigadier General Blamey "was charged with the staff work of the conference and was responsible for the preparatory studies and drafting".[7] Later in the year, as Deputy Chief of the General Staff, Blamey was responsible for introducing some of the proposals from the senior officers' conference.

The central feature of Australian defence policy between the wars was the Singapore strategy, by which, in time of threat, Britain would send its main fleet to the Far East, to be based at a new naval base to be constructed at Singapore. Australia therefore did not need to form a large Army, but rather should have a Navy that could work with the Royal Navy – indeed become part of it. As the Australian

Army's representative in London between December 1922 and January 1925, Blamey was closely involved with the early development of the Singapore strategy. He was particularly interested in the size of the proposed military garrison at Singapore. In May 1923 he wrote to the Chief of the General Staff, Lieutenant General Sir Brudenell White, in Australia, that a British Staff College exercise dealing with the possibility of a hostile force landing at Singapore had concluded "that the Japanese could land a force of 100,000 plus supplies for three months within a period of seven weeks which would transpire before the main fleet could arrive from European waters". Blamey observed that the strength and location of the garrison was "a very big question and one which may interest us very greatly". White replied that this was also his view and the matter was "very serious".[8]

In August 1923 Blamey reported that when Singapore had been developed sufficiently to take capital ships Britain planned to build up its China fleet. He commented, however, that "a Pacific power" (Japan), which might operate against Australian ports would have a "fleet large enough to ensure the defeat of this British fleet", and the Australian Government needed to keep this in mind when considering the need for coast defences. Blamey thought Britain had not taken this possibility into account.[9]

In October 1923 the Australian Prime Minister, Stanley Bruce, attended an Imperial Conference in London. It established the parameters for cooperative empire defence that became fundamental to Australia's defence policy for the rest of the inter-war years. From the Army's perspective, the key issue was the defence of Singapore. The new CGS, Lieutenant General Chauvel, informed Blamey, who was Bruce's military adviser, that plans had been made to send a special force overseas but, if the militia were mobilised, equipment would not be available for the force. Referring to the possibility that Blamey might be questioned about whether Australia could supply a portion of the Singapore garrison, Chauvel advised that this could be provided by voluntary enlistment, if the Government agreed, but troops would be "largely untrained and would require intensive training after arrival".[10] In view of Australia's efforts to reinforce Singapore in the Second World War and the fate of the untrained troops sent there in January 1942, these comments made in 1923 are of particular interest. Advised by Blamey, Bruce questioned the British officials about the problem of defending Singapore, but eventually conceded that, "while I am not quite as clear as I should like to be as to how the protection of Singapore is to be assured, I am clear on this point, that apparently it can be done".[11] Based on his letters to White and Chauvel, it is doubtful whether Blamey would have supported this view.

In September 1925 Blamey transferred from the Regular Army to the Citizen Military Forces (CMF) and took up the appointment as Chief Commissioner of the Victoria Police. In May 1926 Blamey, as a CMF officer, took command of the 10th Infantry Brigade, and in March 1931 assumed command of the 3rd Division. He retained command until May 1937. As the Australian Army was based on citizen forces, Blamey was therefore in a key position to influence its development. In a period of 11 years as a senior CMF commander he trained many officers who would later fill senior command appointments in the Second AIF. He helped keep alive units that would both contribute men to the Second AIF and later serve in their own right in New Guinea.

It is less well known that in the late 1930s Blamey was a member of the Council of Defence. Following the First World War the Council had been re-established with the Prime Minister as chairman and several senior ministers and the Service chiefs as members. It had also been the practice to summon three former senior AIF officers who happened to be located in Melbourne – Monash, Chauvel and

White – to attend the Council meetings. When Monash died in 1931 Blamey was added, but initially this meant nothing because the Council did not meet at all from November 1929 to June 1935.[12] In 1935 the Government revived the Council of Defence, with Blamey as one of its coopted members, thereby exposing him to the key policy issues affecting the defence of Australia. At its second meeting, in August 1936, for example, during a discussion of the expansion of the militia, Blamey said that the recent expansion had enabled commanding officers to "clear out a lot of 'dead wood' in their units".[13]

In the first few years after the Council of Defence was reconstituted Blamey did not play a central role in its discussions. As the CGS, Major General John Lavarack, was the Army's chief spokesman and as Blamey was not yet on the retired list he had to be careful not to undermine his chief. Nevertheless, by 1938 clearly he had different views from Lavarack. He was more inclined to support the Government's policy of relying on naval defence, but was quick to point out shortcomings in the training and readiness of the militia. As the Council meetings became more frequent, Blamey became more involved in high-level defence issues.

If the First World War set the foundation of the Australian Army, the Second World War, after the inter-war interregnum, continued the building process. Initially of course, the development mirrored that of the First World War. Soon after the outbreak of the war Blamey was appointed Commander of the Second AIF and he raised the 1st Corps and the 6th and 7th Divisions before he joined them in the Middle East in June 1940 and became commander of the AIF there. The 9th Division later joined the AIF in the Middle East, while the 8th Division went to Malaya and the islands.

In the Middle East the Australian Army, in the form of the Second AIF, reconfirmed its earlier reputation for first class battlefield performance. There were some notable differences from the First World War in which the First AIF had a British commander, (Lieutenant General Sir William Birdwood) for the duration, a British corps commander (also Birdwood) until the last six months of the war, and half a dozen British divisional commanders. In the Second World War it would have been unthinkable to appoint a British officer to command an Australian division. As commander of both the AIF and of the 1st Australian Corps, Blamey had a heightened sense of responsibility to the Australian Government, and was much more willing to challenge the British high command than his First World War predecessors. In this sense the Australian Army started to come of age as the army of an independent nation. Admittedly, this was still within an imperial framework, and it was within this framework that Blamey was appointed Deputy Commander-in-Chief in the Middle East, Lieutenant General John Lavarack commanded British and Indian forces in Syria, and Major General Leslie Morshead commanded British forces in Tobruk.

There were also differences operationally. For the first time the Australian Army had to deal with withdrawal and defeat. (Gallipoli is excluded from that description as the troops there did not feel that they had been defeated.) In the Middle East the Australians were chased out of Greece, forced back into Tobruk and scattered in Crete. But they recovered from these setbacks – brilliantly in Tobruk, leading to greater success at El Alamein. As on the Western Front in the First World War, the Australians played a crucial role in what was then the main theatre. The Australians were generally self-contained, but did not have their own armoured units, except for the divisional cavalry regiments, and they still relied partly on the British for logistic support.

While Blamey was serving with the AIF in the Middle East, and Major General Gordon Bennett was commanding a small AIF force in

Malaya, there was another Army in Australia. This included AIF units in training, permanent units and the Citizen Military Forces (CMF). The outbreak of war with Japan in December 1941 led to the bringing together of all these forces as one Australian Army, known as the Australian Military Forces (AMF). When Blamey arrived back in Australia in March 1942 he was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Australian Military Forces.

Much has been made of the shameful two-army policy – the split, even antagonism, between the volunteers of the AIF with their operational experience and the conscripted militiamen who preferred to remain at home. This portrayal is an exaggeration. By 1942 not all the AIF had served in the Middle East or even overseas, and not all of the militia were national servicemen. The CMF included volunteers, such as those who were too young to serve in the AIF, but nonetheless still fought on the Kokoda Trail. In practical terms, by mid to late 1942 there was one army. It is true that militia units could not serve beyond New Guinea, but that restriction was largely overcome in February 1943 with changes to legislation. Where sufficient members volunteered, militia units changed their designation and became AIF units. For the purpose of officer promotion and seniority the AMF was considered as one army; the seniority of officers in the AIF and the CMF were rationalised. All the officers of the Staff Corps – the regulars – who had not already been seconded to the AIF or the CMF were appointed or posted to appropriate positions on the war establishments of the AIF or the CMF.

Organisationally Australia had one national army with Blamey commanding all of it, including the 9th Division that had remained in the Middle East. It was a very substantial army. It included two armies, three corps, 14 divisions and seven lines of communication areas. While Australia still relied on overseas suppliers for some weapons and vehicles, the Australian Army was largely responsible for its own logistic support. At its peak, more than 500,000 Australians were serving in the Army at one time.

It is true that Blamey and the Army had to operate within the Allied command structure, by which General Douglas MacArthur commanded the South West Pacific Area, and hence commanded all the Army's operational units except those in the Middle East. Within that structure, however, the Australian Army formed the bulk of the land forces. In mid 1942 Australia provided MacArthur with 13 divisions while he had only two US infantry divisions. The Australian Army carried out most of MacArthur's land operations in New Guinea in 1942 and 1943. By early 1944 the Australian Army had been reduced to eight infantry divisions, while the US Army in the South West Pacific consisted of seven infantry divisions, three separate regimental combat teams and three engineer special brigades. When MacArthur assumed responsibility for the forces in the Solomons in the third quarter of 1944 he had 18 American divisions. In the last year of the war Australia had six divisions, all of them engaged on operations. Although this was now considerably fewer divisions than the Americans had in the South West Pacific Area it was still a very large army. Australia was the only country to have more army units in action in May 1945, after Germany surrendered in Europe, than before.

During the Pacific War Blamey and his senior commanders had to learn how to work within an alliance with the Americans. Lessons were learned about coalition warfare that were to guide Australian strategic planners and military commanders for the next 50 years. At lower levels commanders learned about allied cooperation in the field.

Operationally, the Australian Army came of age in the Pacific War. In 1942, on the Kokoda Trail and at Milne Bay, it fought battles in which the direct security of Australia was at stake. In 1943, in the Salamaua, Lae, Finschhafen campaign, it conducted a series of

amphibious and airborne operations involving the coordination of sea, land and air resources. Up to five Australian divisions took part. The Army had to develop concepts for jungle warfare, particularly concepts for logistic support in a difficult environment. To meet operational requirements the Army changed the establishment of its divisions to jungle formations, and raised new units such as commando regiments. In 1945 it conducted several large-scale amphibious operations.

One of the great changes in Australia's strategic policy took place after October 1943. Before then, in the First World War, in the Middle East in 1940-1942, and in the South West Pacific in 1941-1943 Australia deployed forces overseas to assist its allies to win the war or, in the case of 1942, directly to protect Australia. But in 1944-45 Australia deployed its forces on operations that did not contribute directly to the winning of the war. The operations included the landings in Borneo by the 7th and 9th Divisions in 1945 and the operations in New Guinea, New Britain and Bougainville by the 6th, 5th, 3rd and 11th Divisions in late 1944 and 1945. These campaigns were fought for political or strategic reasons – to give Australia a seat at the peace table, to meet the demands of an alliance partner, to show that we could liberate our own territory, or to release troops for further campaigns. The campaigns were a forerunner of Australian operations in Korea, Malaya, Borneo and Vietnam in the following 20 years. They were to be conducted by regular army units that could be sent overseas at short notice without raising a volunteer expeditionary force as in the past. Blamey understood the new strategic environment that was emerging in late 1943 and 1944, and in January 1944 he wrote several papers about Australia's long-term strategic problems.

Although Blamey resigned as Commander-in-Chief in November 1945, the army that he developed and commanded between 1942 and 1945 provided the backbone of the army that appeared after the Government delivered its first post-war defence policy in 1947. After the First World War regular officers had had to revert to their substantive ranks. After the Second World War every effort was made to recognise the contribution and experience of the regular officers who had carried heavy responsibility during the war. Initially the post-war army was based on a revived CMF supported by a newly raised Australian Regular Army, but by 1958 the Regular Army had supplanted the CMF as the main component

It is unlikely that Australia will ever again have an Army as large as the one Blamey commanded in the Second World War. Nor is it likely that the Army will ever again conduct as many operations, or deploy forces on so large a scale. But just as the First World War laid the foundations for the Australian Army, the experiences of the Second World War provide the benchmark of what Australia could achieve in raising and sustaining a world-class army.

It is worth pondering whether there were any other Australians who came close to matching Blamey in the way he played a major role in the development of the Army over a period of almost 40 years. There is no doubt that General Sir Brudenell White was the dominant figure in the Army's first 20 years, but his influence waned after he relinquished the appointment of CGS in 1923. One contender is Lieutenant General Sir John Lavarack, described by his biographer, Brett Lodge, as the "Rival General". Like Blamey, he attended Staff College before the First World War and although he did not serve at Gallipoli he held senior staff appointments during that war. Between the wars he was more influential than Blamey, particularly during his tenure as CGS from 1935 to 1939. But during the Second World War his commands – the 7th Division, the 1st Australian Corps and the First Army – were always overshadowed by Blamey. In 1944 he became the Australian Army representative in Washington.

Another contender is Lieutenant General Sir Vernon Sturdee. He served at Gallipoli and later became a senior staff officer on Field Marshal Haig's headquarters in France. A staff college graduate with service in London, he was a senior staff officer in Army headquarters during the 1930s. As CGS from 1940 to 1942 he was responsible for the defence of Australia during the grim days before Blamey returned from the Middle East. In 1942 he went to Washington, and in 1944-45 he commanded the First Army in New Guinea. As Acting Commander-in-Chief and then CGS from late 1945 to April 1950 he set the course for the Army's development in the post-war period. Neither Lavarack nor Sturdee carried the breadth of responsibilities borne by Blamey over a long period, and both were subordinate to Blamey at key times.

I began my 1998 biography of Blamey with this statement: "Field Marshal Sir Thomas Blamey was Australia's greatest and most important soldier." I went on to add that he was a major figure in Australian history. I noted that he was probably not Australia's most accomplished battlefield commander, nor a great innovator or reformer. He did not reshape the Australian Army and leave a new organisation as his legacy. He was not loved or even admired as an effective leader of men. For that matter, he was not respected for his honesty and upright character. Why then, I asked, is he the only Australian to become a field marshal?

A few reviewers challenged my statement about Blamey being Australia's greatest soldier. They thought that that accolade belonged to Sir John Monash for his battlefield command in the First World War. It is not the purpose of this paper to argue in detail the case for Blamey being the greatest soldier. To do so I would need to analyse his command performance in a series of operations and campaigns, although I hope that I did so successfully in my biography. More importantly, I would need to analyse his performance at the strategic level, advising the Government, administering and training the Army, and allocating resources. These achievements would have to be balanced against his weaknesses – his jealousy of rivals and his ruthless concern to maintain his own position. I believe that, on balance, Blamey comes out in front on this scorecard. As Peter Hastings has argued, Blamey's gift, that made him "tower over contemporaries and rivals" and made him "the very model of a modern major general," was "his capacity to understand and play politics".

> Who else at that time could have assumed the enormous burdens of C-in-C which require that the incumbent not only knew a great deal about running an army, had a fundamental grasp of strategy and tactics and could oversee the cumbrous administrative machine, but could also deal with a wartime Labor government, frightened politicians, an uncertain civil population, and a principal ally represented by a US general who was not only devoted to denigrating Australia's role and achievements but had the willing ear of Australia's government? Rowell was a far better staff officer, Lavarack a clever organiser, Robertson a more daring soldier, Morshead a sounder. But there wasn't one of them from Berryman to Herring who could have come within striking distance of taking on the job. Not even Sturdee.
>
> But those very capabilities Blamey possessed depended for their effectiveness quite often upon a relentless, destructive side of him ...[14]

This leads to another dimension of Blamey as commander where I believe he failed the Australian Army. A military commander does not just have to make the right decisions, plan his campaigns carefully and fight for his soldiers' and nation's interests. He also has to foster the Army's ethos. While the Japanese Army, by its conduct towards Allied prisoners, might seem to have relinquished any right to

respect and correct treatment, it was nonetheless important that the Australian Army continue to fight and treat the Japanese according to the laws of war. Furthermore, the Australian Army had to treat the civilians in re-occupied areas with dignity and care. It is not suggested here that the Australian Army failed in this regard, but its conduct in the occupation of Japan was not always blameless.

With these considerations in mind an Army's leader must set an example with respect to values, and it is this area the Blamey failed as a leader. While the stories of Blamey's womanising and drinking grew with the telling, they demeaned him in the eyes of many soldiers. Perhaps after the Badge 80 incident as Police Commissioner Blamey was always going to carry that burden. But the incident over Lady Olga Blamey's defiance of the Government in early 1941 when she refused to return to Australia from the Middle East, and the evacuation of his son from Greece, created the impression that Blamey would always look out for himself. At the root of Lieutenant General Sydney Rowell's argument with Blamey in 1942 when he was dismissed from command in New Guinea was his perception of Blamey's personal conduct. On the other hand upstanding officers such as Lieutenant Generals Sir Edmund Herring and Sir Iven Mackay and Major General Sir Ivan Dougherty retained their high regard for Blamey – perhaps a little naively. Professor Robert O'Neill has commented: "Perhaps the most poignant reflection on his military career is the unlikelihood of his ever being held up to young soldiers as an example on which to model themselves".[15]

It would be humbug and hypocrisy to suggest that all top military leaders should live blameless lives. Even MacArthur, while being moralistic and apparently religious, kept a young Eurasian mistress when he was Chief of Staff of the US Army and secretly accepted US$500,000 as "recompense and reward" from the Filipino people during the last days on Corregidor.[16] But Blamey seemed to believe that his private conduct would have no impact on the effectiveness of his command; as one writer put it: "The cynical may say that Blamey's heaviest handicap was not his private life, but the fact that it fell so far short of being private".[17]

For all that, Blamey created and commanded an army that fought with skill and bravery in a score of campaigns. Many soldiers might not have liked him, but they followed Old Tom's orders, confident of the outcome. As Jo Gullett, a distinguished junior officer of wide experience, put it, "It was Blamey's gift that he was able to provide the Australian citizen soldier with the leadership, training and discipline to see this bitter task through to the end. It was his nature too that, devoted as he was to the soldier, he was never a loved or even very popular figure ... But he was trusted and obeyed".[18] Blamey's importance rests on two pillars - a very long period of service in crucial appointments, and high command when, for the only time, Australia was under direct threat.

Blamey lived in the era of great commanders and great wars. He was a contemporary of MacArthur, Eisenhower, Nimitz, Patton, Montgomery, Slim, Wavell and Alanbrooke. It was a time of revolutionary change in warfare. Born in the horse era, Blamey's military career covered the introduction of indirect artillery fire, motor vehicles, tanks, planes, telephones, radios, chemical warfare, signals intelligence, radar, submarines, aircraft carriers and finally nuclear weapons. He was born when New South Wales was a British colony and was old enough to be aware of Federation in 1901; when he died Australian independence was unchallenged and all three Australian Services had proud heritages of their own.

That era has now passed. It is unlikely that Australia will again have a commander of Blamey's stature and influence. He was one of the major figures in establishing Australia's first 50 years as an independent nation. The

Australia that we know today was shaped largely by the experiences of the Second World War. Post-war policy-makers were concerned to establish an independent capacity to make assessments about international affairs, to seek security within a wider framework of alliances while retaining an independent defence capability, and to build up a larger population and industrial base. They knew that it was necessary to have an army that could be deployed overseas at short notice to meet the Government's political and strategic aims. The Australian Army that evolved in the 1950s and 1960s and which led to the present-day Army was shaped by these influences and played its role in them. These were issues that concerned Blamey and which guided his conduct in the Second World War. They have also continued to concern policy-makers through to this day. In this respect, Blamey's legacy has persisted well past his death half a century ago.

NOTES

1. During the Second World War 735,781 Australians served in the Army from a population of about seven million. *Official Year Book of the Commonwealth of Australia, No 37, 1946 and 1947*, Commonwealth Government Printer, Canberra, 1949, p. 1150.
2. "The British Empire and the Pacific Problem", Australian War Memorial (AWM), 3DRL6643, item 5/33.
3. Blamey to James Blamey, 3 January 1914, AWM, PR85/355, item 2.
4. Report on the Operations of First Australian Division at Pozieres, AWM, War Diary, HQ 1st Australian Division.
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Military Leadership

By General Sir Francis Hassett, AC, KBE, CB, DSO, LVO

Address to the Royal United Services Institution of New South Wales, 22 April 1993.

No man reaches the rank of field marshal, as Sir Thomas Blamey did, without displaying leadership qualities. While this address is not specifically about Blamey's leadership – although I have some comments on it – I am sure that, of all subjects, he would have approved my concentrating on military leadership. Military leadership is at the heart of military service and in his career Blamey epitomised military service. My talk is about military leadership not as an abstract thesis but as a result of practical observations from over 40 years of service. I have held appointments at most of the command levels the size of our Services permit, and have also observed others at levels of command from unit to army.

My opinions of some senior commanders are, like most people's, based on what I have been told or have read. I had only limited personal contact with men like Blamey and none with others such as MacArthur. Hence my comments are qualified. Very few people are privy to the pressures imposed on senior commanders in war, and it should be recognised that commentators and historians are usually only partly informed. Further, hindsight is usually the clearest sight, but even if the facts are later fully known and correct, commanders must be judged on what at the time they believed to be the facts, not on what history later shows to have been the facts.

I have had experience as a platoon commander and acting company commander in peace. Later, as an adjutant, brigade major, battalion commander and divisional chief of operations, I have closely observed the extra demands imposed on commanders in war. During my service, I commanded the 28th Commonwealth Brigade in Malaya. This was a semi-war type of command. We were chasing the remaining Communist terrorists in Malaya, and at the same time preparing for our SEATO role in Laos. I held other senior appointments, but without doubt the most exciting and enjoyable appointments were commanding 3RAR in Korea, with the command of the Commonwealth Brigade running a close second.

Qualities of Leadership

Most courses on military leadership deal with about 11 desirable leadership qualities: motivation, courage, decisiveness, responsibility, initiative, integrity, judgement, knowledge, loyalty, selflessness and ability to communicate. But there is an infinite variety of interpretation and emphasis that can be placed on each of these qualities. The challenge for a military leader is that he has not only to possess these qualities himself, but also to instil them in others.

I want to comment very briefly on just four qualities because I believe they have a special application to the Australian soldier, and make him the outstanding soldier that he can be. Well-trained and well-led Australian soldiers, with the New Zealanders and the Germans, were, in past conflicts, the best soldiers in the world. The qualities are: courage, commonsense, initiative and mateship.

Courage is usually held to be the most important leadership quality, on the premise that without it other soldierly virtues do not really matter. There is no place for a cowardly leader in any army. Further, Australian troops expect to be led from the front. As Field Marshal Slim once said, it is not a case of "go on" but "come on". I have always thought that physical courage is much to the fore in the

Australian soldier. I have seen much bravery, but little cowardice. If an Australian soldier knows what he has to do and why, then he will do it. He respects courage as soldiers do the world over.

The biggest problems arise when troops are very tired, exhausted by the strain, noise and sights of battle. Inertia and lethargy set in, even though all are aware that inaction could be highly dangerous. That is when a good leader is effective, not by oratory or histrionics, but by quiet reasoning and example. One should not forget as a commander that too much battle stress for too long will render soldiers incapable of efficient performance. That is why troops must be rested or relieved periodically. The signs are there when good officers and men begin to do the wrong thing, or fail to react effectively. Sometimes troops have to be driven beyond this point, but the commander must realise that there is a price to pay.

One can condense a lot of leadership qualities under the heading of commonsense – judgement, responsibility, intelligence, knowledge. There is not much to say about this basic and well known quality, except to emphasise that most Australian soldiers I have known were down to earth, sensible, men and possessed commonsense to a large degree.

Initiative is an area where the Australian soldier scores heavily, and it helps lift him to the top of the worldwide soldiering tree. How many armies of the world would you rate highly, but put down the list because of a known lack of initiative? The Japanese soldier for example, no matter how much we disliked him, was well trained, brave, hardy and prepared to die, but less effective because of lack of initiative or restraints imposed at the various levels of command. The Australian soldier has in all our wars been highly rated for his initiative – and rightly so.

The fourth quality is mateship. The Australian soldier fights better because he is part of a team of mates, a team he knows will not let him down, a team which will come to help him, whenever it is practicable, when he is in trouble. He gains strength from them and they from him.

Command at the Various Levels

In dealing with command at the various levels, I shall be talking about infantry, because most of my regimental experience has been with infantry, but any points I make have relevance to leaders in any arm of any of the Services.

Platoon Commander

It is very important for a young officer not to miss this experience. It is surprisingly easy to do this. In peacetime, officers are usually not long in lieutenant rank, currently it is four years, and in war often an even shorter time. There are other jobs in lieutenant rank, some of them very attractive. Once a captain, the opportunity for platoon commander experience has gone for good. Service as a platoon commander is part of learning one's trade or profession. A senior officer without this type of experience is a bit like a master builder inexperienced in any of the skills such as bricklaying, or plumbing, or carpentry. So my advice to young officers is to try to gain this experience, even though some other job may seem more attractive at the time.

Senior commanders need more than purely military skills. Those who aspire to senior command must be well educated in order to hold their place with leaders in other fields. The Defence Academy is now a well-accepted degree granting body. It must never be forgotten, however, that the purpose of a Defence Force is to fight, to defeat an enemy in wars that are becoming increasingly technical and complex. The Academy's role is to produce young Service leaders, not an army of academics. It is well aware of this.

There were some good soldiers on the RMC Staff in my cadet days including Lieutenant General Sir Horace Robertson, then a lieutenant colonel and the senior military

instructor. But as far as we were concerned in the very early days of the first year at RMC, the dominating power was WO1 "Dusty" Mortimer, ex-British Army. He took us for drill, which took up most of our time when we were not doing physical training. As a young, half-developed 16-year-old I found all this a touch strenuous. The first remark ever directed at me from the RSM was when he bellowed "Staff Cadet 'Assett, your rifle seems too 'eavy for you".

On graduation, I spent a year in Darwin with the Darwin Mobile Force (DFM) – the best small force I have ever seen. Following the Depression years a lot of young men were jobless or in dead-end jobs, and some of the more adventurous opted for service in the DMF. There were some 3000 applicants for the 250-strong force, hence the degree of selectivity was very high. During the war about half of the DMF other ranks were commissioned and the other half were WOs or senior NCOs. From those commissioned, one became a brigadier, one a colonel and there were several lieutenant colonels.

Among the many things I learned with the DMF was that it is important for young officers to appreciate that Australian soldiers are not robots or automatons. Most are thinking and creative people with much commonsense and initiative. I have always respected Australian soldiers and the views they hold. This does not mean management by consensus. Battle, for example, frequently requires instant and total obedience. The platoon commander must command and, using a somewhat hackneyed phrase, must be seen by the soldiers to be in command.

When we are young leaders I think we all wonder just how we will perform if we have to lead troops in battle. Most of us fear pain, death or mutilation. We know that it can be hard to be brave in the dark, or when no one can see, that it is hard to go that extra yard, hard to screw up one's courage yet again. All this is true, but the spark has to come from someone and that someone is usually the leader.

I think most young leaders can be reasonably confident about their own likely performance. To begin with, the troops will be looking to them, expecting them to do the right thing. This is a great incentive. We gain courage from each other. That is why the team, the unit, can be very strong. I think young leaders find that when in action they have to think quickly about what has to be done, and then have to see that it is done. The mind takes over as the leader concentrates on the task in hand, and he can dissociate himself from whatever unpleasantness is happening around him. Concern, shock and perhaps grief come later.

Company Commander

Company commander is about the highest level of close direct personal contact with soldiers. It is a big job for a young man responsible at times for the lives of a large group of soldiers. It is a very enjoyable and responsible job, worth striving for. The company commander has to care for some 120 soldiers, usually a mix of the good, average and indifferent, each soldier an individual in his own right, who should be treated as such. The company commander should aim to know most of his soldiers by name, and something of their background. Some will have had a poor early life and few opportunities. By patience and guidance a company commander, or indeed any commander, can help shape their future.

In war it is an exacting job. Not only is a company commander responsible for directing his company, but he is usually dangerously involved personally. His battalion commander frequently depends on him for objective, reasoned judgements, which may have to be made in stressful, hazardous circumstances. A battalion commander might have to carry one or two weak officers somewhere but never, in my view, as a rifle company commander. If I

had to nominate the five key appointments in a battalion in action, I would say the CO and the four rifle company commanders.

I once talked to Field Marshal Cassels about this when he was commanding the Commonwealth Division in Korea. We have all heard that if you want to get a quick view of the quality of a unit, go first to the Sergeants' Mess and gauge the standard there. Cassels took the line that if he wanted to assess the quality of a unit, brigade, or division, he looked at the standard of the company commanders. As a divisional commander in action, he considered he could reach down and sort out the battalion commanders, if it were necessary, but the 40-odd company commanders were really beyond his reach and he had to get them right in the periods out of action.

Battalion Commander

Command of a battalion in action is generally regarded as a pinnacle of Army leadership. I remember that Major General "Jacky" Stevens used to say that if an officer could command a battalion well in action then he could command anything. A battalion commander should know well his officers and senior NCOs. He is closely involved in action, and can have an immediate and direct effect on the lives and actions of over 800 men. There is no other command appointment, or indeed any other appointment, quite so rewarding.

I was fortunate to have commanded 3RAR in the Korean War. This war was unusual in that it involved almost constant contact, something like World War I as opposed to World War II. It is the last time Australians fought a conventional war as part of a brigade, a division and a corps, with all that that implies in terms of large-scale operations, with supporting arms also on a large scale. At that time 3RAR was part of 28th Commonwealth Brigade, which in turn was part of 1st Commonwealth Division and the US I Corps. It was a very fine battalion – a mix of experienced "K" Force volunteers, those who volunteered for a year's service in Korea, many of whom had experience in World War II, and enthusiastic young regulars. The young learned from the old hands, who set a fine fighting example.

There was much movement and fighting in the first year of the war, including Kapyong and Maryang San, which are pretty well known, and then two and a half years of static, trench warfare, not so well known. This little known phase of the static war was no picnic – constant shelling, frequent patrol clashes and raids, living in foxholes, and fierce fighting on the Hook on the very eve of the armistice.

My predecessor, Bruce Ferguson, in *The Battle of Kapyong* said: "With no one to turn to for advice in whatever situation I might find myself, it was the loneliest command ever allotted to any Australian battalion commander on foreign soil". He was right, and I found myself in the same situation. It is dangerous to send, as Australia did, a single combat unit to a major war without any sort of national command back-up, particularly if it is a fast moving and intense war, as in Korea in 1950-1951.

A battalion commander has his hands full commanding his battalion in action, and has little time to devote to national problems in personnel and equipment or, even more importantly, to ensure that his battalion is being sensibly tasked. A more senior man is required in country. At Kapyong, for example, only the steadfastness of the battalion got it out of an extremely dangerous situation, when overall coordination of the battle was lacking. US tactics are different to ours. British commanders still look on Australians as great "shock troops" and are not averse to using them as such.

Very little can match the feeling of commanding a good battalion in action. This must seem a very strange statement – that matters such as death, mutilation, stress, fear,

fatigue, hunger, thirst, grief, the whole gamut of physical and mental hardship – could even remotely be thought as a wonderful, not to be missed experience, some sort of game played for high stakes. It is as hard to understand, I suppose, as is, at a much lesser level, say rock climbing, caving, or diving amongst sharks. But we go to war primarily to defend our country. Once committed, it becomes a case of kill or be killed, and certain things happen which a soldier remembers with pride, either in his own actions or the performance of others.

Some of us put together a monograph, *The Battle of Maryang San*, describing a battalion battle in the Korean War. It is well known that Australian soldiers talk little about their experiences and innermost feelings in battle, except amongst themselves when relaxed at reunions and such. On this occasion they wrote freely. The following give a small indication of what infantry fighting is like, but even more they bring out the initiative and leadership shown at the junior levels – the sections and the platoons:

> *The fighting (it was a six day battle) was a sequence of stories of ordinary soldiers pushing on hard, plugging gaps, rescuing their mates, ignoring wounds to stay in the fight.*
>
> *We attack the eastern face of the objective – the steepest slope. The enemy reacts violently with mortar fire – the reserve section is badly hit. I pass Alby Hart, wounded and holding on to a tree for support. The CSM, steady, urging us on – a mortar round sits me on my backside – I check the radio, it has a hole in it but it still works. The enemy cracks, he has had more than enough.*
>
> *I was proud of my Vickers section for what they achieved. They never complained, they carried some enormous loads and did their best to assist whoever they supported. We were shelled from start to finish and at one stage the Chinese were coming straight at our weapon pits. They were Australians and they fought and died for what they believed was right.*
>
> *As one leader went down another straight away took his place. Had leadership faltered, had there been hesitation at any stage by individuals, then the attacks would have failed.*
>
> *In all that heavy fighting against counter-attacks, the troops remained steady and aggressive. In isolated cases where individuals felt they could not sustain the effort any longer, they were strengthened by the courage and determination of their mates. The wounded were an inspiration.*
>
> *We had survived and believed we had given our best. We were tired but very proud. Our soldiers were tenacious, they showed great initiative and courage, and individuals acted spontaneously for the common good whenever a problem arose. For many of us who were young at the time, we dated our maturity from this battle.*
>
> *Most of all I remember the qualities of the soldiers. Never once did they falter or query any orders or instructions given them. They had faith in their leaders, their mates and in themselves.*
>
> *I shall never forget the look on the faces of the men as they stood over their fallen mates.*

It is this sort of atmosphere and teamwork that builds fine battalions. Robert E. Lee, that great Confederate leader who embodied all the soldierly qualities I am attempting to describe, said, "It is well that war is so terrible – we would grow too fond of it."

Brigade Commander

Command of a brigade is also a marvellous job. I believe it is perhaps one of the easier command appointments. By the time he is a brigadier, the commander has usually mastered the purely military aspects of his profession – if he can command a battalion, for example, then he can command a brigade – but he is not yet heavily involved in the civilian/-

governmental/political arena. From this point on, however, he becomes increasingly involved in such issues.

I had two halcyon years as Commander of the 28th Commonwealth Brigade in Malaya in the early 1960s. The brigade's role was to clean out the remaining Communist terrorists in Malaya, mostly holed up with the aborigines in the Betong salient south of the Thai border. We also had a SEATO role in Laos, to fly in and hold the airfield at Seno, just across the Mekong River from Savannaket in Thailand, against any North Vietnamese or Chinese incursion.

During my first year in command, it was a very large brigade group, about 5000 strong including the Ghurkha battalions and their large training depot. The British, New Zealand and Australian battalions were deployed at Malacca, Taiping and Ipoh. In my second year we were concentrated at Terandak, and became a normal type of brigade group of British, New Zealand and Australian troops.

It was a large and interesting area of command, with the battalions sufficiently deployed not to get in one another's way, particularly in off duty time. There was an element of danger to keep soldiers on their toes when engaged in jungle operations, without the heavy casualties which often accompany conventional army clashes. The Emergency, however, was clearly winding down and I was seeking another form of activity to keep the brigade busy.

I had become absorbed in the nature of French operations in Indo-China. I wanted to know more about how to organise, equip and train a force to conduct this type of warfare. The fact that our SEATO role could involve us in such a war was a big incentive and gave a valuable focus to our training with its many worthwhile implications. This was in 1960. No Western power, including Australia, had given this type of warfare much serious thought. In Australia we were on the Pentropic battalion organisation – a big unit, lots of road bound transport and a big logistic tail. In 1964, then DCGS, I helped persuade the CGS that the Pentropic organisation had to go.

During the two years I was commanding 28th Brigade, we developed an organisation and tactics suitable for our SEATO role, but never really to my satisfaction. It was easy to assess the Vietminh tactics and work out what to avoid, but what to do was harder. One important tactical requirement was that we had to have cross-country mobility, to avoid roads and tracks, because of danger of ambush, which had cost the French dearly. This imposed a need for the equipment to do this, and in 1960 it was hard to envisage a scale of equipment, mostly helicopters and air, that would enable us to operate this way.

As an Australian commanding a Commonwealth brigade, and initially being under command of GHO in Singapore, I had more freedom of action than a brigade commander as part of a division normally would. Hence I was not under any tight strictures as to the type of training the brigade should be carrying out, nor were its training activities closely monitored. I pushed the brigade hard in my two years of command. Just how hard I did not really appreciate until, years later, I read the draft official history of the brigade in my time, and saw that, though the British units liked their time in Malaya, they were pleased to get back to the British Army of the Rhine to have a bit of rest!

There was not much else that was new in the leadership field. My predecessor, later General Sir John Mogg, set me a good example, as indeed had Field Marshal Cassels in earlier years, and that was to be careful to be even-handed with the units and sub-units, particularly in a multi-national force. In my case my task was not to be seen to be in any way partial towards the Australians – in fact, to be harder on them. This approach was pretty much standard. The New Zealand battalion knew, for example, that when the brigade had a new NZ commander, they were in for a hard

time compared to the Australian and British units.

Leadership at Senior Level

The qualities of leadership at junior level carry over into leadership at senior level. There is however a change of emphasis in some qualities, and others come into play. Physical courage is still a factor, but moral courage could be a more frequent requirement. I will talk mainly about higher command in the South West Pacific Area (SWPA) in World War II, as this is best known to most, and Vietnam was a special sort of war. Although large forces were engaged in Vietnam operations, they were dispersed and the demands on senior commanders were different to those imposed on say, Wavell in Libya, or Morshead at Alamein.

MacArthur

Our senior land commander during World War II was General Douglas MacArthur, held by many to be a supreme commander of excellence, a master strategist, and for his work in occupied Japan, an outstanding diplomat and statesman. But there were critics of MacArthur. Even his supporters recognised that MacArthur was a thespian – an actor. When Eisenhower was asked if he knew MacArthur he replied, "Yes, I studied drama under him for some years in the Philippines." MacArthur was said not to have a staff but a court where he was a giant amongst the pygmies. The harshest criticism that I have read about MacArthur was when it was said that he was a false giant among real pygmies. Having said that, one must recognise his great charisma and his at times spellbinding oratory.

My personal view is that Australia was in some ways unlucky to have a man like MacArthur as our principal adviser to Government during the island battles from 1942 onwards. And it was a pity that our Government, properly concerned but unfamiliar with things military, should have given him so much autonomy in matters of national interest and relied on him so much. Blamey could see, even if Curtin did not, that MacArthur was clearly less concerned about Australia's interests than he was about America's and his own. To a point, this is understandable.

MacArthur's ego led to misrepresentation of facts and the seeking of quick victories to enhance his image. He committed the cardinal sin of a senior commander in that he knew nothing of the conditions under which his troops were fighting, for example over the Kokoda Track and at Buna, Gona and Sanananda. Even worse, he made no attempt to find out – to see for himself. He paralleled those justly vilified World War I generals who ran the war from the comfort of chateaux safe behind the lines, and committed soldiers to mud, wire and sheets of machine-gun fire. MacArthur's glory-seeking led to undue pressure on Blamey and others to seek quick victories in impossible conditions which in turn led to Australian soldiers being unfairly criticised, which is bad enough, but also to unnecessary casualties, which one can only condemn.

In a situation like this senior commanders can do one of two things. They can make themselves conversant with the conditions and tasks being set by them or, if they cannot do that, they must trust their battlefield commanders to do their job without undue interference. MacArthur erred on both counts. He neither made himself aware of the conditions under which his men were fighting, nor did he leave the task to his experienced and capable forward commanders who did. Many of his orders were rhetorical and unrealistic. He appeared to think that attacks could be made by regiments on a broad front – impossible in that sort of terrain.

It gives me no pleasure to speak of MacArthur in this fashion. But study of leadership includes the bad as well as the good. I think it interesting to reflect on the way the character and personality of a senior leader can

shape the nature and conduct of battles Assume, for example, that Eisenhower, not MacArthur, had come to Australia as C-in-C SWPA. Accept that Eisenhower was not only a very good general, but also a very good man. That he commanded his Allied Headquarters for "Overlord" efficiently and harmoniously. That he appeared to subscribe to the sentiment that there is no limit to the amount of good one can do if one does not care who gets the credit.

Several things could have happened. Eisenhower would have set up an integrated headquarters of Americans and Australians. This is what Roosevelt and Marshall wanted but MacArthur ignored, as was his wont if he did not agree. There would also have been Americans on Blamey's headquarters – once again resisted by MacArthur, but favoured by Curtin and Blamey. There would have been increased efficiency and less friction and distrust in the upper echelons of power. Eisenhower, with Blamey, would have made it clear to Curtin and the Government that the C-in-C AMF, Blamey, was not the battlefield commander – that Rowell was a good commander and had things under control in PNG. Blamey would not have been sent to New Guinea to take charge of the operations there. Rowell would not have been sacked.

There would have been no unfair criticism of the fighting qualities of Australian soldiers. Pressures for hasty victories would not have happened in the way they did. There would have been fewer casualties. The Australians fighting in the islands would have had good, well-deserved publicity. MacArthur controlled the communiqués and, for a long time, there was no mention of the Australians. Eisenhower, a man generous of spirit, would have acceded to Curtin's fervent wish for a worthwhile role for the Australians in the advance by the Americans through the Philippines. Those great fighting divisions, the 6th, 7th and 9th, would have had a role more appropriate to their skills as opposed to the "backyard war" roles at Aitape, Wewak and Borneo.

All these things could have happened – perhaps not quite as I have said. I have simply sketched in this scenario to illustrate how the personality of a senior commander can shape the way wars are conducted and battle fought.

Australian Commanders

There are a number of good Australian commanders who are useful role models for study. As in history it is more appropriate to discuss those who are no longer with us. I would first make the point that there is an inclination to think that our wars ended in 1945. But for the Regular Army they did not. In fact, from 1950 onwards our Army was at war of some kind for almost 20 years in Korea, Malaya/Borneo and then Vietnam. This period produced a number of extremely good commanders, and a high standard exists in the Army today.

Morshead

I have always admired Sir Leslie Morshead's approach to soldiering. He knew soldiers, how they thought and felt, and did all in his power to ensure that they were well trained and equipped, and fighting to a sound plan. He protected his 9th Division from some unsound British tactics and efforts to break it up into small packets for use under British commanders. He was an aggressive commander who constantly worked to bring the enemy to battle. He set his men difficult tasks and drove them hard, accepting casualties as an inevitable part of war. His troops admired and respected him. He had a capacity for making points in simple language soldiers would heed.

Vasey

George Vasey is a good role model as a commander of Australian troops. He had a great touch with them. Without losing any of their respect, he could put himself at their level, talk to them, and demonstrate that he was

General Sir Thomas Blamey, Commander-in-Chief of the Allied land forces in the South West Pacific meets war correspondents during a visit to the far north of Australia. *AWM Neg 012416*

much concerned with their safety and well-being. With all, he was a good tactician and a hard driving commander constantly seeking, like Morshead, to bring the enemy to battle. A colourful personality, he always wore his red cap when up front, not to grandstand but simply because he wanted his soldiers to know he was there. His language was colourful also – "Bloody George" as he was known. Yet this was not one whit offensive, even to the chaplains. It is hard to take exception to anyone who habitually answered the phone by saying "its bloody old George here."

All this sounds much like an uninhibited extrovert, but he was not. He was an intensive and sensitive man. As commander in Crete, he faced and handled well a desperate situation. The 7th Division, shocked at the removal of General Allen during the early phase of the Kokoda Track fighting, soon realised they had a good replacement commander in Vasey. He also performed very well in the difficult situation facing him at Buna/Gona/Sananda, and again at Nadzab and the Ramu Valley. He had an Australian style of heroic leadership which was outstandingly successful. His death in a plane accident in March 1945 caused much sadness.

Blamey

Those Australians who aspire to senior command in future years should focus on Field Marshal Blamey's leadership in World War II. Blamey was held to be a controversial soldier, lauded by some, held to be flawed in some qualities by others. The problems he faced could very well be the ones our future military leaders will face. Blamey was involved in the raising, training and operations of a large army, some of it prepared to defend Australia, some of it overseas.

He had to work in the shadow and dominance of a brilliant, charismatic but sometimes biased Allied leader, General MacArthur. He had to cope with the ambitions of some subordinates, a government unversed in things military and the ever-critical Australian public. It is this sort of task that will confront our future military leaders. It is a task more complex than that faced by our other famous general, Monash, who commanded a corps of five divisions, as part of a group of Allied armies on a single front. A monumental task indeed, and brilliantly executed, but straightforward in relative terms.

The leadership qualities which Blamey displayed, or is sometimes accused of failing to display, are a good indicator of the attributes required of senior military leaders in any future war. I will mention some of them, but this is not an exhaustive list.

Physical and Mental Robustness

Field Marshal Wavell placed physical and mental robustness as the first of many qualities required of a general. Certainly the stress of leadership in war can be very great, and we have many examples through history of leaders being worn down to the point of error in decision making or even collapse. Most great military leaders were either naturally rugged or developed some approach or technique that enabled them to go on longer than most, or recover more quickly, if temporarily down. Whatever the approach, it is important for a senior commander to get fit and stay fit.

Blamey had great stamina. He was under enormous pressure for almost six years of war, and particularly so during the last year or two. At that stage he was facing a somewhat hostile Government under Prime Minister Chifley, was being pushed to one side by MacArthur, and there were rumblings in the militia formations about the value of the island campaigns. He remained a dominant force, though perhaps he was, at some 60 years of age, beginning to tire. I believe the consensus was that had the war not ended in August 1945, he would have soon retired, with Morshead assuming command.

Presence

The quality of presence is loosely defined – not good looks, though appearance plays a part – a combination of manner and manners, an air of authority, of command. Most senior commanders in war had it, or developed it. MacArthur had presence – tall, lean, handsome, well turned out, intelligent, articulate, well mannered and so forth. It is said of another American, General Marshall, that when he entered a room, all went quiet. Field Marshal Slim was always an imposing figure, a quiet yet forceful man of obvious character, he had the bearing of a leader. General Vasey had great presence and a wonderful touch with soldiers. There are, of course, many other examples, and there are also exceptions to any general rule.

Short and thickset, Blamey made his presence felt when you got within range, so to speak. I had to face him once, when he was displeased with me. I haven't forgotten it, 50 years later. Prime Minister Menzies said of him, "None matched him in power of command [presence in this context], a quality hard to define but impossible to mistake when you meet it." He did radiate power, to a degree I have seen in few men. One could feel it. Of course, he was the C-in-C, and known to be ruthless when it was required, but it was more than that. In any group of Australian Military Forces (AMF) officers, he was unmistakably the leader.

Public Relations

It is a senior commander's responsibility, a part of his leadership, to ensure that his soldiers get proper recognition for the job they are doing, by the use of the media, visits of dignitaries and so forth. Soldiers doing a dangerous job should not be forgotten. There was a particularly bad instance of this happening towards the end of World War II, when MacArthur was controlling the official communiqués. Blamey did not seem to accept the importance of public relations, nor did he appear to wish to protect or enhance his own image. This was a pity. No one in high office can ignore public opinion. In Blamey's case it seemed to me that, on some points of criticism, he had reasonable answers but often did not care or bother to explain.

Professional Competence

Into this quality we can compress all the leadership qualities. It is comprehensive – rather like the military offence "Conduct to the prejudice". There is little doubt about Blamey's professional competence. Here is a description of him by one of his admirers, it is an excerpt from John Hetherington's book:

A great military brain ... such an intellect is a complex, brilliant force ... it works on a vast scale; it has an unerring sense of the right man, an indispensable quality to delegate authority utterly, an infinite capacity for calm, for making instantaneous decisions, no sense of regret for mistakes made, a surgical ruthlessness in dealing with inefficiency or disobedience or stupidity, recognition of the ultimate good and an entirely unshakeable, unalterable purpose of getting there.

Whether that is an absolute description of Blamey is, perhaps, arguable. It is, however, a useful description of some of the rare and brilliant qualities required of a senior commander in time of war.

From what I know of the circumstances leading to Blamey's appointment to command in 1939, he was easily the best soldier offering – selected by Menzies, and backed by men such as Street, Casey, Gullet, Brudenell White and Shedden. He was a brilliant man, and had a brilliant record from World War I as Monash's chief of staff. He was worldly, used to dealing with the British, and strong enough to stand up to them. Importantly, he understood government and how to work with it.

It is said of Blamey that he was sometimes reckless in his personal behaviour and careless about his reputation. One would like all our leaders to be men of total probity. But history shows that this is not always the case. Many outstanding men had some foibles – Churchill with his whisky, Menzies with his so-called intolerance and aloofness, Wellington with his "publish and be damned" approach, Montgomery with his conceit, MacArthur with his thespian antics, Napoleon with his almost everything.

But in the final analysis, what is required? The answer is a strong, competent leader. Minor frailties are perhaps not all that important. Lincoln asked the question when it was said that Ulysses Grant drank too much: "What brand of whisky – I'll send some to the other generals". Prime Minister Curtin said "The Government wants a military leader, not a Sunday School teacher."

Blamey has been dubbed a controversial soldier. I think this a wrong label. A controversial man certainly, but his military competence has never been seriously challenged. Blamey raised the Australian Imperial Force, trained it and commanded it and the AMF in various theatres in difficult situations. He was a brilliant, tough commander. Not so much at ease as a field general, who must be young, fit and able to move freely about the battlefield, but outstanding in the complex military political sphere of high command. Calwell said of him in this role: "The next man to Blamey is like a curate to a bishop".

Blamey was unmistakably and indisputably the AMF's commander. Every soldier knew it. To do this for almost six long years was a magnificent performance. He was Australia's greatest general. He deserved his field marshal's baton.

General Hassett was Chairman, Chief of Staff Committee, from 1975 to 1976 and Chief of the Defence Forces Staff from 1976 to 1977. This paper was prepared as part of a presentation which included a question and discussion period. The paper is not therefore, in itself, complete nor has it been updated with more recent writings. It remains, however, as suitable background to the points General Hassett wished to make. At the time of the presentation there had been much talk about the need for higher education of officers and the organisation for command at senior levels. It was thought timely to comment on the most testing areas of leadership at the regimental level – command in battle.

Officer Cadet Craig Johnston receives the "Field Marshal Sir Thomas Blamey Staff Prize" from Lieutenant General (later General Sir Phillip) P.H. Bennett, AO DSO at the Officer Cadet School Portsea Graduation Parade, June 1982.
Photograph by kind permission of LTCOL C. Johnston

Blamey and Training for War

By General Sir Phillip Bennett, AC, KBE, DSO

Address to the United Service Institution of Victoria, Melbourne on 28 July 1983

On 18 November 1982 I had the honour of being present at the unveiling of two commemorative plaques in the forecourt area of the Russell Defence complex in Canberra. They serve to designate that area as the "Sir Thomas Blamey Square"[1], and are intended to honour the only Australian ever to be awarded a field marshal's baton, the man we honour here today.

There are, of course, other places and other ways in which Field Marshal Sir Thomas Blamey's memory is commemorated – the statue near the entrance to Government House in Melbourne is probably the best known. Blamey Crescent and Blamey Place in the Canberra suburb of Campbell are two others that readily spring to mind.

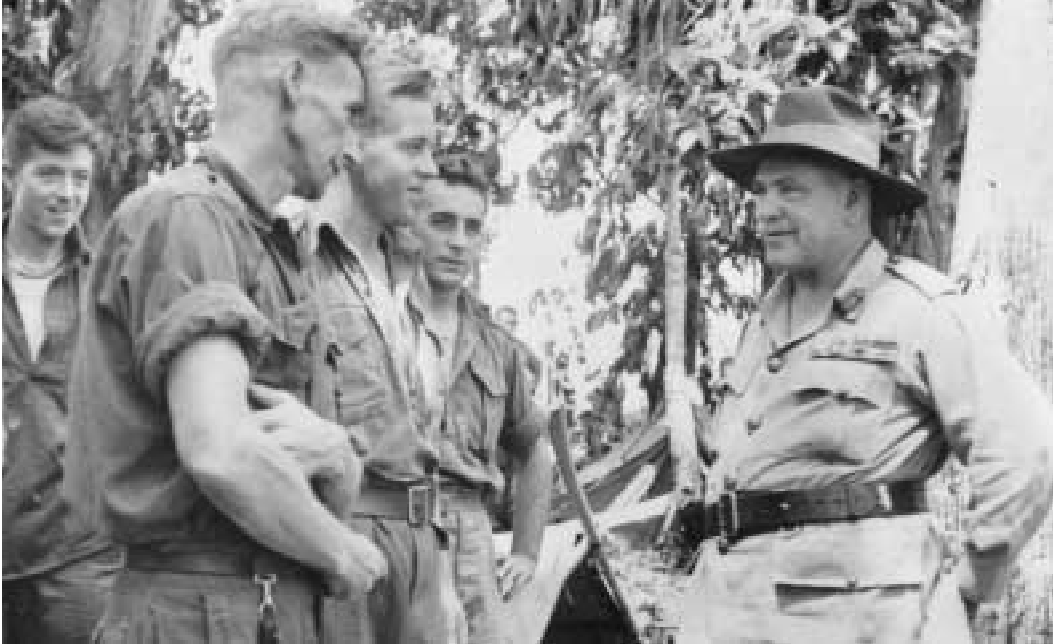
But it is another living form of commemoration which is of particular interest to me – the system of Blamey Awards that are made annually to graduates of Army training organisations. They are presented to the top four graduating cadets from the Royal Military College of Australia, Duntroon, and the Officer Cadet School, Portsea, for outstanding performance, as well as to the two Army Reserve majors who excel in their courses for promotion to lieutenant colonel. The Blamey Fund specifically devotes its limited resources to setting up these awards in the area of military training because training is an inherent function of command. It is also particularly appropriate that Blamey, the "commander", should be remembered in this way.

In 1983, the Army, as in Blamey's time, recognises that its main role in peace is to prepare for the wars we hope will never happen. This preparation for war is achieved through effective training; because an army must train to fight and to win. We therefore owe it to Australia, and particularly to our soldiers, to provide effective and realistic training, and to do so within practical economic constraints.

Blamey was no stranger to training. From the time he joined the Army soon after Federation, until he retired in 1946, the training of himself, individuals, units, and even armies, must have shared equal effort for him as in fighting campaigns and dealing with all the complexities of politics and higher command. As a staff officer in the First AIF, as a militia officer and CMF divisional commander in those years of scarcity between the wars, as the Victorian Commissioner of Police, as the GOC First Australian Corps of the Second AIF, and then finally as Commander-in-Chief from 1942, Blamey appreciated the value of realistic, effective training. He also recognised the difficulties in achieving it.

Blamey was also no stranger to the use of technology. His support of advanced military technology of the day in the planning for the Battle of Hamel in July 1918, which involved the use of combined arms and aircraft, is now described in British and Australian military history as the "first modern battle". The resounding success of this battle was largely due to his grasp of the potential of coordinated combat power on the battlefield. He was able to persuade Monash to modify his original plan to incorporate the combined use of infantry, tanks, artillery, air observation and even limited air raids to achieve all of his objectives as planned.

Blamey also had a mind open to scientific and technological answers to military problems. His support for the development of the periscope



General Sir Thomas Blamey talking to troops at a Regimental Aid Post on the Masaweng River area, New Guinea, 1944. AWM Neg 016400

rifle at Gallipoli; the dropping of supplies to isolated outposts by parachute on the Western Front; and the measures he took to overcome malaria, his single greatest problem during the New Guinea campaign in the Second World War, are all further examples of his vision and lateral thinking. Blamey's expansive mind was also able, in the latter days of the war, to grapple with the training of Australian youth in the science and technology of the future. The result of his interest, along with others, was the setting up of the Australian National University in Canberra in 1946.

The training problems faced by Blamey and his subordinates in the early stages of World War II have important lessons for us in 1983. This is illustrated by an example from the Second AIF, in particular the 6th Division. When this formation left Australia for the Middle East in January 1940, training had not progressed beyond platoon level. In addition, of the initial 20,000 enlistees into the Second AIF, 50 *per cent* had completed little or no field training, 25 *per cent* came from the militia, and most of them at that time would have had only an average of 18 days training each year. Arriving in the Middle East in February 1940, the 6th Division finally conducted its first divisional exercise in November and then made an impressive debut in action at Bardia in January 1941. Since then, the raising of the Regular Army in 1948 has sensibly avoided this long training preparation time for any initial Australian force deployed overseas.

As GOC 1st Australian Corps in the Middle East, Blamey's policy was not to meddle in the training being carried out by the formations under his command. He regarded training as a command responsibility, the detailed conduct of which should rightly be left to subordinate commanders. As a contemporary of Blamey once said, "He believed he was there to give advice and to watch an exercise. However, he left nobody in any doubt of the standard he required, or of the penalty awaiting anyone who failed him".

Let me now dwell for a short time on the relationship between training and technology. I

do this by suggesting first some differences and similarities between 1983 and the early period of the Second World War – a period when Australian military history is dominated by the figure of Blamey. These differences and similarities assist in understanding why the Australian Army today must apply technology to enhance its capabilities and training systems.

Blamey, both a Permanent[2] and Militia soldier, embodied the citizen soldier tradition of the Australian Army, a tradition which is maintained today, with half our manpower in the form of Reservists. But I can acknowledge immediately a major advantage which we now have over Blamey's day. The average annual training of a militia soldier on the eve of World War II was 18 days. In 1983, Army Reservists trained for an average of 38 days, a most substantial and necessary increase.

A further difference between Blamey's Second AIF and today's Army is that, whereas Blamey could call on the services of only 2000 permanent soldiers to raise a much larger citizen army, we presently have a Regular Army of about 32,000. This gives us a core force which can not only raise a much larger citizen army, but also provide a sustainable, operational-ready force of about a light brigade to handle a wide range of low level contingencies should that be required.

In comparing our situation now with that period, there are both differences and similarities in relation to the uncertainties that faced Australia. As in Blamey's day, we face a variety of threats, some that could arise with little or no warning. But today, due to changes in the regional power balance and especially to the capabilities conferred by technology, those threats can materialise far more rapidly. We need, therefore, a more capable element of the Army at a high state of readiness. The Falklands War, if it did nothing else, also serves to remind us of the need to maintain a high standard of individual and collective training in our regular component of the Army on which we must rely for initial deployments.

Perhaps the most significant difference from Blamey's time is the advance in available technology. This has caused the nature of warfare to change dramatically and this change is likely to continue at an even faster rate. Advances in technology have enabled the production of weapons and weapon systems with increasing lethality and effectiveness. While this can arguably reduce the combat manpower required, it can be used to make existing manpower much more effective – a particularly relevant factor for Australia, given our relatively small population base and a potentially large operational area to defend in time of threat and to continually monitor and control in peacetime.

The Australian Army therefore needs to remain abreast of technological developments. We should also aim to be regarded by our neighbours as the regional leader in the use of technology. In that way our Army will be seen as an effective and credible deterrent. On the negative side of this high technology approach is the fact that such equipment and training generally costs more, takes longer to procure, and requires a more sophisticated training and support effort.

This leads me to the important relationship between technology and training I spoke about earlier. We need a high technology Army but this is costly to acquire and maintain. We also require high technology training aids and methods to simulate the operation of expensive equipments. The Army must react quickly and effectively to a relatively low level of threat and be able to expand rapidly to meet higher levels of threat. To achieve that we must devise ways of effectively and realistically training large numbers of people in a far more cost-effective way in a limited timeframe.

As Blamey realised in his day, training and technology in the Army are inextricably linked. Let me now be more specific on how we can use technology. We can use it in two ways: to teach and test, and to manage our training resources better.

Computer-assisted instruction has much to offer. It allows the brighter soldier to progress at a rapid pace while the soldier having problems can receive the undivided attention of the instructor. It also allows more students to be taught more effectively by fewer instructors. We can use war gaming – again not a new concept. What is new is that those aspects of war games once carried out by large staffs of controllers and usually taking a relatively long time to make the necessary assessments and decisions, can now be carried out using well designed computer based war gaming programs in a fraction of the time.

Today, the rapidly escalating cost of training and training resources is a continuing restraint. This includes the rising cost of training support, particularly ammunition, safety and environmental factors, wear and tear on expensive and complex weapon systems and their associated maintenance costs. In the realm of teaching, technology can simulate the flight of a bullet, missile or shell from a rifle, a launcher or a gun. It can also simulate aircraft or a tank in a tactical situation, and the complete range of mechanical or electronic failures that maintenance staff need to understand to keep equipment operational. It is now obvious that the proper integration of simulation into training will lead to the higher skill standards we need to achieve.

In relation to simulation, which again is not new, we have come a long way from gunners in Blamey's time doing gun drill on logs at Puckapunyal in the First World War, from Australian infantry in the Second World War using wooden representations of weapons painted in different colours to identify different weapon types, and from battalions using light vehicles to simulate helicopters in preparation for Vietnam. Let me say, though, that there will always be a place for such innovative ideas within the Australian Army due to ever-present limits on available resources.

The second way we can use technology in training is to manage those resources. Because of our perennial peacetime budgetary problems, we must maximise every dollar we spend on training. Many policy-makers outside Defence are unaware of the size and complexity of the Army's training system. In the 1983 training year, Training Command, with approximately 3500 regular staff and 3000 Army reserve training staff in 33 Army schools, units and training groups, conducted over one thousand courses for 28,000 students. These activities do not include a large program of collective training carried out in units and formations which often use common training facilities and staff. The advent of the microprocessor, now in widespread use in schools, universities, businesses and even in our homes, allows us to coordinate and control these resources far more efficiently, often using fewer people.

But what I find most interesting and of particular value to the Army, is what could be described as a by-product of the use of technology in training, and that is evaluation. The use of technology in training allows us to evaluate two things. Whether we have taught the soldier what we set out to do and whether or not what we wanted him to learn was itself relevant to the anticipated operational environment. Let me explain by giving you two examples.

The first concerns the use of safe laser beams to simulate direct fire weapons, for example, rifles, and automatic weapons. Current collective tactical training can take the form of two-sided dry or blank firing exercises, or simple one-sided exercises occasionally incorporating live firing. But none of these can usually represent the real combat environment and the training value of preparing soldiers for war can be much improved.

A blank round can be used to initiate the laser systems I describe. Thus reloading, fire control and resupply are practised, and the element of noise remains. On each soldier or vehicle participating are laser sensitive receivers to disable a weapon if the soldier or vehicle is hit or, by emitting a particular sound, tell the

soldier and umpire that he is under fire and had better do something about it.

There are disadvantages such as the laser's inability to penetrate foliage and a lack of mine and artillery simulation, but the potential of simulation can only be described as revolutionary. Individuals and commanders can now experience a higher level of essential survival skills such as fire and movement, terrain appreciation, use of cover and concealment, control of fire and integration of weapon systems at levels of skill only previously achieved in combat situations.

More evolutionary than revolutionary is the application of technology to war gaming. This is the other important value of technology in training where the aim is to use war gaming to make training more realistic for the teaching and testing of commanders and their staffs without the expensive involvement of unit manpower and equipment.

These two examples illustrate the feedback technology in training can provide. From field exercises using simulators and laser devices, we can not only assess whether the soldiers we train are learning and implementing skills correctly such as weapon handling and use of ground, but also whether the way we are teaching them is effective. In war games, commanders learn to appreciate the complexities of manoeuvring large forces, and their staffs become heavily involved, all without units and soldiers taking part. In addition, in reviewing the results of these war games, we can assess whether organisations are properly structured, equipped and manned. Thus, with technology, not only can we train, we can evaluate our effectiveness.

The nature of war has changed dramatically since Blamey's time but there are a number of aspects of warfare that remain vital. Regardless of how much technology is absorbed into the Army and however sophisticated its command systems become, as in Blamey's day, leadership, physical fitness, an ability to endure stress and basic soldierly skills will never be replaced. In the Army we look on technology as a tool for use by the trainer as part of a mix of techniques and not as an end in itself. As well, technology planned for introduction into the training system will take some time to occur and there will never be enough of it. Because of this, commanders must continue to be innovative to make up for our present lack of technology and to be prepared to use their initiative to get the best out of technology as it is introduced.

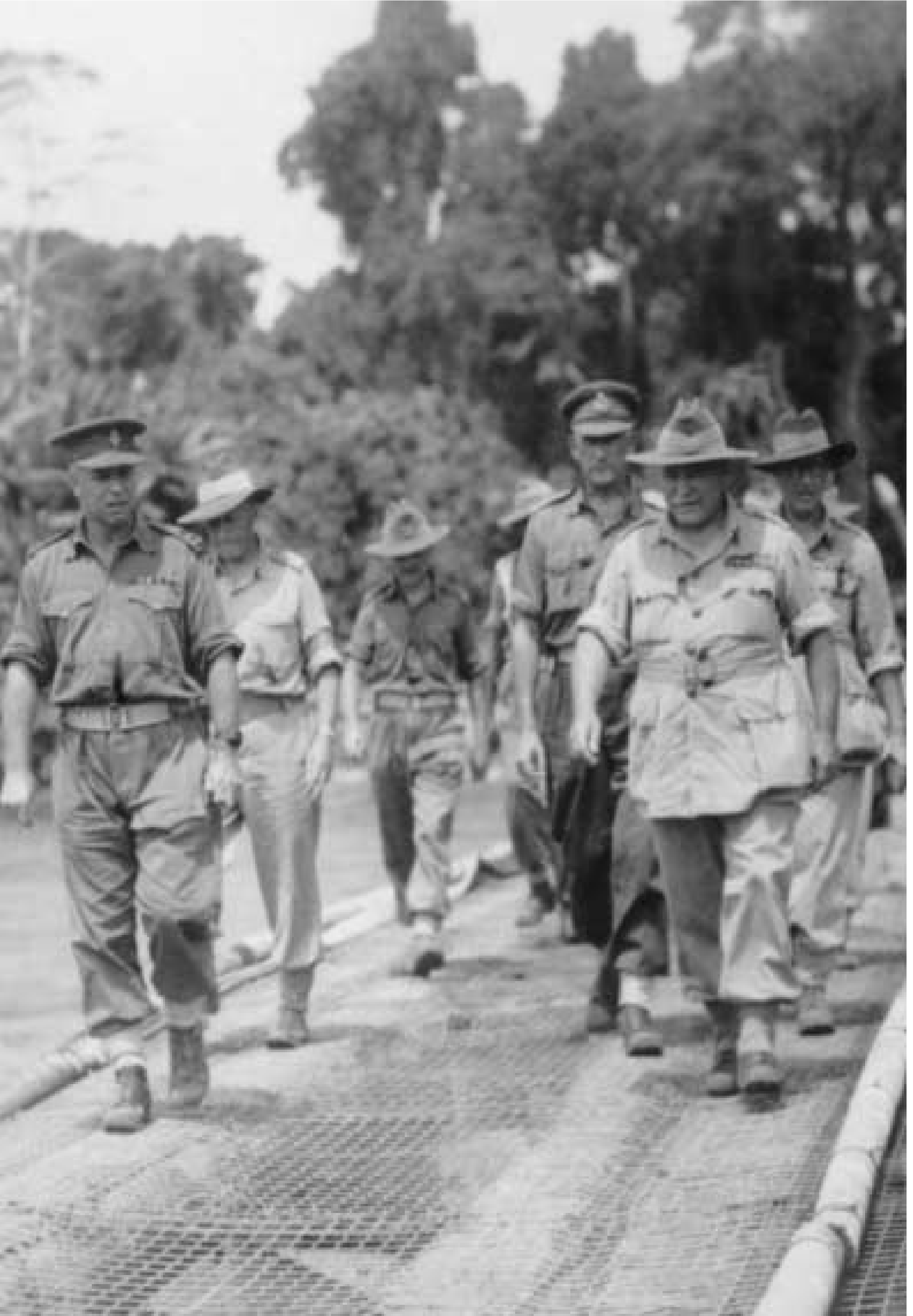
Looking back on what I have said today, my message confirms Blamey's understanding that combat power, training and technology are inextricably related. The Australian Army and our defence infrastructure must embrace technology in training so that our force-in-being can be ready to fight; so that we can select the best technology to meet our needs; and, finally, so that we train effectively within a realistic training budget.

I firmly believe that Field Marshal Sir Thomas Blamey would approve of the plans we have in train today. Your Army is still in good shape and we are making progress in many important areas.

NOTES

1. Renamed and rededicated as "The Field Marshal Sir Thomas Blamey Square", on 25 May 2001.
2. Before 1946, when an Interim Army was established, full-time members of the Army were enlisted in the Permanent Military Forces. The PMF consisted of The Staff Corps, The Australian Instructional Corps, Fortress Artillery, Fortress Engineers, Signals, Medical, Veterinary, Service and Ordnance.

When this address was given General Sir Phillip Bennett was Chief of the General Staff with the rank of lieutenant general and in this address describes the situation in the Army at that time. He was Chief of the Defence Force from 1984 to 1987.



General Sir Thomas Blamey Commander-in-Chief Allied Land Forces South West Pacific area, accompanied by Senior Officers on his way to visit forward troops in South Bougainville. AWM Neg 090036

Anzac Values – The Path Travelled and the Road Ahead

By Major General P.R. Phillips, AO, MC

Address to the Royal United Service Institution of Victoria, 28 October 1999.

Almost 50 years ago, Sir William McKell, then Governor-General, undertook a journey from Yarralumla to the "Repat" Hospital at Heidelberg. Accompanied by Prime Minister Robert Menzies, his task was to present a rare, indeed an unprecedented, honour to an Australian soldier who lay there gravely ill. That soldier was of course Sir Thomas Blamey, the man whose name and fame and memory we celebrate today – the man who on that day was to receive the scarlet and gold baton of a Field Marshal of the British Empire.

Only once before had such rank been bestowed on a Dominion soldier. Never before and never since has an Australian been so honoured. Nor – since the 1995 UK *Betts Report* recommended that the rank be abolished – is it likely to occur in the future.

Blamey was unable to stand – so weak that he had been carried from his bed to a chair and so ill that he was unable to speak more than a few words. It is a pity because the speech he had prepared, and yet was unable to deliver, expressed feelings and emotions that Blamey's rank and responsibilities had kept hidden for many years. Within his address he had intended to say: "Our nation's future is, unfortunately, not yet secured and its sons must consent to accept whatever responsibilities fall on them, and draw strength for their discharge from the traditions of their predecessors".

I thank you for the invitation to present the 1999 Blamey Oration for it gives me the opportunity to speak on these two exact themes. First, the traditions or, more broadly, the values of our Anzac legacy and, second, the likelihood of our sons and daughters using them, living them, to shape the Australia of the new millennium.

At the outset, I must say how incredibly fortunate I believe we are – as a country, as a people - to have the Anzac tradition on which to build our identity. From amid all the grief, the loss and the sacrifice our nation gained, in the words of Charles Bean, "a possession forever. In the end", he said, "ANZAC stood and still stands for reckless valour in a good cause, for enterprise, resourcefulness, fidelity, comradeship and endurance that will never admit defeat". Prime Minister John Howard said of these words of Bean that, "I can't think of a more beautifully evocative description of what I always thought the Australian spirit to be".

History could have dealt with us less kindly. Imagine what might have been if we had faced the Japanese threat in 1914 rather than in 1942. Make no mistake, only rarely does history bestow upon a country events which, in one stroke, crystallise its national character and provide standards by which it can measure its future actions. I can think of only two other comparable examples – the American War of Independence and the French Revolution.

The United States is still animated by the zeal for democracy, independence and free enterprise that provoked its secession from Great Britain. The War of American Independence, celebrated on 4 July, galvanised their nation and set a pattern, a standard, for American behaviour and American success

evident to this day – "Duty, Honour, Country" says it all for a West Point freshman.

Similarly, France glories still in the revolutionary cry of "*Liberte, Fraternite, Egalite*". Now I agree that dealing with Parisian taxi drivers can somewhat fray the concept of fraternity and equality! But, seriously – any fair assessment of French history since that time, including her contemporary role in building a united Europe, will determine she has remained true to those creeds. As Verdun and the ghosts of nearly two million Frenchmen attest, France was bled white this century in defence of its own freedoms and those of other nations. It is a spirit that continues to characterise France's very being as a nation.

Like these two events, Australia's involvement, its achievement, the values learnt in war define each one of us here today and indeed each one of our countrymen. And strangely, the life course of one man remained in step with Australia's military progress and the maturing of the Anzac tradition. On the day Thomas Blamey was born, his hometown newspaper, the Wagga Advertiser carried the story of "Chinese" Gordon's expedition to the Sudan – a campaign that was to see Australia take a first step in international conflict. The growing confidence of Australian soldiers in the Boer War, exemplified by Victoria's own Colonel Tom Price, was matched in bravado by the then 15-year old Tom Blamey, who presented himself at the recruiting depot only to be told to go home and grow up!

Then came Gallipoli, both Blamey's and Australia's real baptism of fire. By 1918, he was a total professional, as was the Army in which he served. A new war layered upon his well-merited reputation laurels in Greece, in the Middle East, and then defending Australia itself in the Pacific. Blamey's experiences and adult life itself spanned the tumultuous period in which our country gained its identity. There would be few that could argue against the contribution he made towards that gift.

So what are these values, born or matured in war, and yet still with us to serve as a national legacy? Sir Charles Court, former Premier of Western Australia, listed them in a recent speech to the Victorian RSL's State Conference:

Courage in Adversity	Patriotism
Compassion	Reliability
Service	Fortitude
Self Reliance	Work Ethic
Mateship	Self Esteem
Integrity	Innovation
Loyalty	Fairness
Generosity	

And the list could go on. Few would argue with them. They come from the heart, the mind and the spirit, and they owe much to our old maiden aunts, "Faith, Hope and Charity". They owe much to the lessons learnt in taming our great harsh land, in the face of great adversity, by a small population. They owe much to bush egalitarianism and to the shared hardship of the original "diggers" – the old gold miners. They owe much to our Celtic and convict past that brought with it a larrikin streak, a nonchalant air and a delight in puncturing pomposity. Sir Charles Court reminded that, "Some of their exploits were not only pioneering, they were breathtaking in their fortitude and innovativeness . . . the spirit of ANZAC had been honed in their private lives. It equipped them to perform with great courage and valour when confronted with the unknowns of a vicious war – often not well equipped and often inadequately trained".

Talking recently to some former national servicemen, who had served in Vietnam, I was intrigued to hear why they held to the view that the Australians performed so much better than their allies in South Vietnam. Because as they said, "we just had to live up to the spirit of Anzac" and "we were better disciplined" – interesting comment from a generation that has largely struck the word "discipline" from its vocabulary and replaced it with "tolerance".

Former Chief Justice of the High Court, Sir Gerard Brennan, says in a recent article on Australian values that egalitarianism bespeaks tolerance. I can accept that – tolerance is to be applauded, even though it may not be one of the four great virtues. I cannot accept tolerance, however, when it is manifest as an excuse for apathy or moral cowardice, nor to put rights ahead of responsibility.

Let me underscore the more important Anzac values, as I see them. Among these is the refusal to give in – a determination to succeed whatever the adversity, however great the odds. Our military annals are full of examples – from Elands River during the South African War to Long Tan and, without exception, the household names on which much of the legend is built-Gallipoli itself, Villers-Bretonneux, Kokoda, Tobruk . . .

I remember my delight as a child at the story of Sir Leslie Morshead, appointed as Tobruk's Fortress Commander by Wavell on Blamey's recommendation. Prior to the first onslaught Rommel had ordered leaflets to be dropped on the Australian positions, calling for their surrender and promising good treatment to any digger emerging waving a white handkerchief. With magnificent understatement Morshead's operational log noted that "due to the dusty conditions and the general lack of water, apparently no white handkerchiefs were available".

We possess a heritage of courage. Not just battlefield valour, although 96 Victoria Crosses over 99 years and names like Jacka, Derrick and Newton attest that Australians have been generously gifted with physical bravery. Men and women like Simpson, Dunlop and Bullwinkel added a new dimension to that virtue, rooted in the stoicism of the pioneers. And indeed, decisions of command, like those made by Monash and Blamey when the lives of thousands of men were put at stake, demand yet another brand of courage again.

In many ways, courage is a manifestation of selflessness – the great Christian virtue – a willingness to put oneself at risk for the benefit of others. Courage goes hand in hand with loyalty. And it was loyalty for which Blamey should be better remembered – though the testimony of 300,000 lining the route of his funeral cortege says it all. As individuals, as a nation, the trait of selflessness is a consistent thread throughout this century. It should never be forgotten that apart from a few months in early 1942 when Australia itself seemed in imminent danger, the vast majority of our 102,000-war dead was killed defending the freedoms and homelands of other peoples.

That appalling casualty rate was accepted by Australian parents, wives and voters because they accepted, as our soldiers did, that tyranny and injustice cannot be permitted to triumph – here or half way around the world. It underlines that Australian society was and, I would argue, is essentially a decent and honourable place.

In Australia everyone is basically "given a go". We quietly but firmly demand personal liberties and even now, as in the response to events in East Timor or far off Turkey, we rise to the occasion in time of crisis or need. I understand that, statistically, ordinary Australians give more to deserving charities than anywhere else in the world and our citizens volunteer in their tens of thousands for activities like beach patrolling, bush fire fighting and emergency relief.

Whatever the adversity, in war or peace, humour seems to find its place. Again I would rate it as a core value of the Anzac tradition – a way to lighten the situation, mask fear or pain or, as commonly, just for the sake of it. I recall an anecdote recounted by one of my predecessors as National President of the RSL, Sir William Keys. Bill took part in the vicious fighting on Tarakan before being wounded and finding himself in hospital during a visit by the "Old Man" – Blamey himself. Next to Bill lay a young Australian, badly wounded by a burst of machine-gun fire. His treatment required blood, saline and pharmaceutical drips going

into his body with other tubing coming out to drain his wounds. Sir William recalls that the digger, upon being approached by the Commander in Chief of his country's military forces, announced loudly, "I'm the Tarakan Telephone Exchange – what number would you like, Sir?" General Blamey strode on!

This larrikinism is a hallmark of the Anzac legend, expressing the individualism for which our soldiers, sailors and airmen have become famous. It is our "point of difference" and many claim that it has contributed to our success on the battlefield. Great commanders understood it – indeed cultivated it. Learning from their outstanding success at Hamel, Monash and his then 34-year-old chief of staff, Brigadier General Blamey, ensured that in-depth explanations to ordinary soldiers about objectives and proposed tactics were part of the preparation for all major operations. In Monash's own words, "each man understood his part and understood also that the part which others had to play depended upon the proper performance of his own".

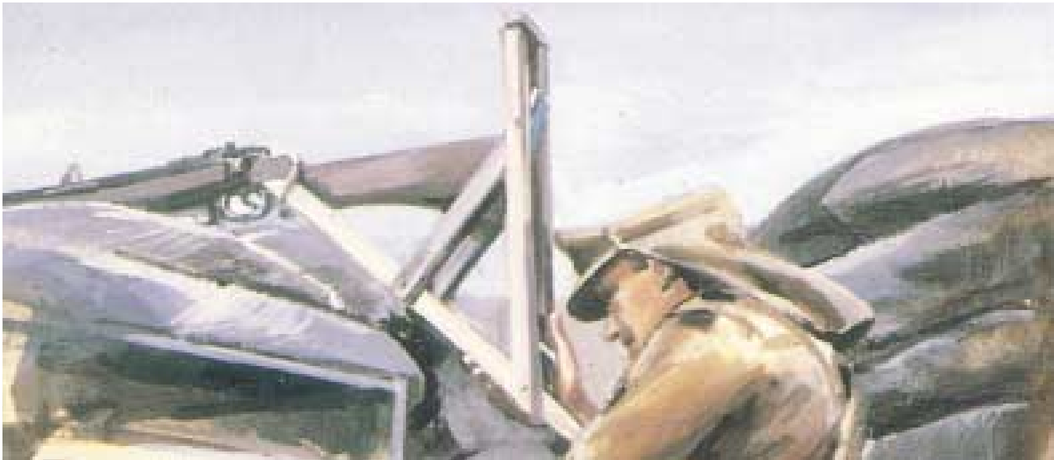
Blamey also understood that Australian soldiers valued independence too highly to submit to mindless discipline. During the next war, he was to spend much time in the Middle East defending his command from official complaints by British officers who were less than enthusiastic about Australian discipline. In this he sometimes had allies – when the English General "Jumbo" Wilson confronted a visiting Robert Menzies soon after the capture of Benghazi, Menzies retorted simply, "I understand that the Italians found them very troublesome". This spirit of independence is important if patriotism is to survive in the face of globalisation, if national pride is to be maintained in a society not given to great passion.

Maybe innovation and ingenuity come from the refusal to accept convention. Certainly, new tactics pioneered by Monash and Blamey in 1918 that melded infantry, armour, artillery and aircraft into a single strike force changed modern tactics forever. The resourcefulness of Australian prisoners of war comes to mind – it set them above many of their fellow prisoners. The ordinary digger's capacity to scrounge bits and pieces, creating ingenious inventions is also well recorded. Blamey had a personal hand in one of the more notable ideas during the Gallipoli campaign. Visiting the trenches with Charles Bean, Australia's official war correspondent, Major Blamey came across two men of the 2nd Battalion, in Bean's words. "messing about with some bits of wood stuck on the end of a rifle". Asked what it was, they explained it was a primitive periscope allowing the rifle to be aimed without exposing the firer to danger.

Bean was unimpressed at the time but Blamey arranged for its inventor, Lance Corporal Beech, to be seconded to his headquarters to progress the idea. Within a few days, the pattern was perfected and periscope rifles began to be used throughout the Australian trenches. Blamey was always a man who could see opportunity and in his own gruff way, always respected the ordinary soldier's commonsense approach to life and war

So there we have it – with some anecdotes I have tried to illustrate what I view as the essence of the Anzac spirit – courage, determination, self belief, humour in adversity, ingenuity, a respect for results not rank, and all glued together by the bond of mateship. The spirit of Anzac is not a spirit of war; it is the true spirit of Australia. And I have no doubt that our success at the highest levels of world sport and in other fields of endeavour owes much to this spirit.

It was a powerful mix and there remains only the question of whether it retains its potency. Will our sons, in Blamey's words, "draw strength from the traditions of their predecessors?" My answer to you is yes, completely. I do not believe for a moment that the essence of our national character has changed at all. The times certainly, standards,



Periscope Rifle. *Painting by Jeff Isaacs.*

fashions, the calls placed on the young, the world itself – these are profoundly changed, but not us as a people. When the need arises, the Australian people, the Australian spirit rallies.

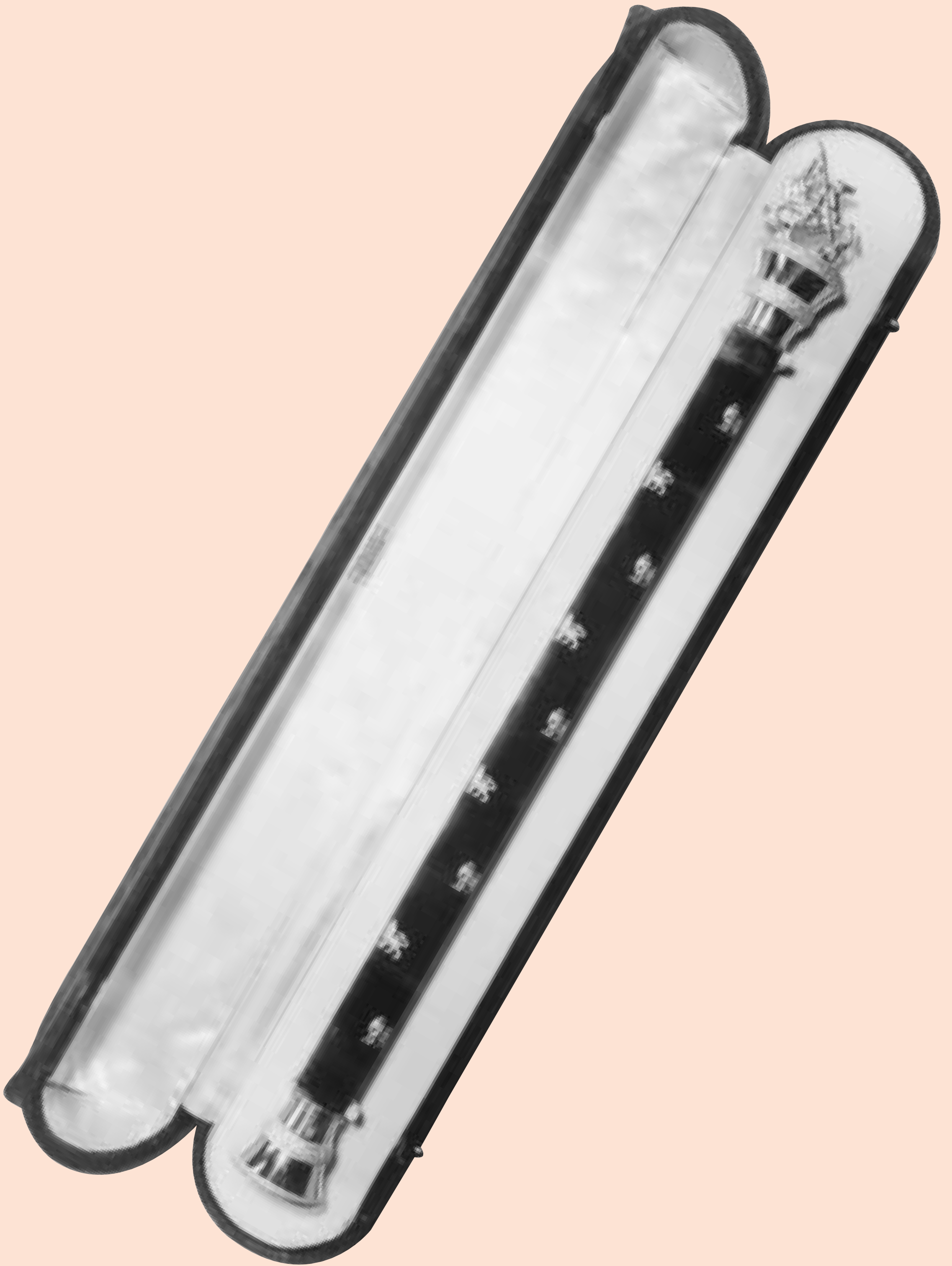
The Anzac values I have listed are as relevant today as they were then and as relevant in peace as in war. Sir Gerard Brennan says that "national values define the identity of the people ... they are a charter of the society's future". Ingenuity, determination, courage and confidence are virtues that ensure success in whatever field of endeavour they are found – business, sport, on the land, in education.

One caution, however, I must offer. We cannot take the preservation of the Anzac spirit for granted. It needs to be nurtured in the proper development of our youngsters and in the professionalism of our Defence Force. Our heroes, our leaders, our role models, our great sports men and women must be and be seen to be people of values. And if national values are to be of worth, they must be shared. My great personal concern with our nation is that the post-war era has seen the abandonment of much of the great tradition of shared Christian values – absolute values – that underpinned good government.

As our late Governor-General, Sir Paul Hasluck, said in his memoirs, "many in our society do not hold to even the possibility of absolute rights and wrongs. Increasingly", he said, "people judge what is right by what is legal and what is wrong by what is illegal". In these circumstances, our governments have a grave responsibility to maintain traditional moral standards in legislation. And we, all of us, have a part to play.

Despite my caution, I am so captured by the young people that I see in this country, that I am sure they will innately draw from the Anzac heritage to build their future. I have no doubt that it would be the wish of Field Marshal Sir Thomas Blamey that they do so. I leave you with the last line of the speech he never gave, which read: "I can no longer lead them, but I commend those familiar army words, in which was so often combined all that was best of exhortation and encouragement – 'Carry on'."

Major General Phillips is the National President, Returned & Services League of Australia. He retired as Assistant Chief of the General Staff-Personnel in 1991.



The Field Marshal's Baton presented to General Sir Thomas A. Blamey, GBE KCB CMG DSO ED.
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