

THE PACIFIC

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About the electronic version

The Pacific

Author: Gillespie, Oliver A.

Editor: Kippenberger, Sir Howard K.

Creation of machine-readable version: TechBooks, Inc.

Creation of digital images: TechBooks, Inc.

Conversion to TEI.2-conformant markup: TechBooks, Inc.

**New Zealand Electronic Text Centre, 2003
Wellington, New Zealand**

Extent: ca. 1300 kilobytes

Illustrations have been included from the original source.

About the print version

The Pacific

Author: Gillespie, Oliver A.

Editor: Kippenberger, H. K.

War History Branch, Department Of Internal Affairs, 1952

Wellington, New Zealand

Source copy consulted: VUW Library

Official History of New Zealand in the Second World War 1939–45

Encoding

Prepared for the New Zealand Electronic Text Centre as part of the Official War History pilot project.

All unambiguous end-of-line hyphens have been removed, and the trailing part of a word has been joined to the preceding line. Every effort has been made to preserve the Māori macron using unicode.

Some keywords in the header are a local Electronic Text Centre scheme to aid in establishing analytical groupings.

Revisions to the electronic version

11 November 2004

Colin Doig

Added name tags around names of people, places and organisations.

31 August 2004

Jamie Norrish

Added link markup for project in TEI header.

4 June 2004

Jamie Norrish

Split title into title and series title.

August 19 2003

Virginia Gow, New Zealand Electronic Text Centre

Added Cover References and Backmatter tags

July 2003

Elizabeth Styron, New Zealand Electronic Text Centre

Added TEI header

THE PACIFIC

Contents

[covers]

[title page]

[frontispiece]

[title page]

Foreword p. v

Contents p. vii

List of Illustrations p. ix

List of Maps p. xii

CHAPTER 1 — Japan—Rise and Conquest p. 1

CHAPTER 2 — The Fiji Garrison

I: New Zealand's Responsibility p. 19

II: The First Force and its Work p. 26

III: From Pearl Harbour to Relief p. 42

CHAPTER 3 — Problems of Command and Employment p. 57

I: America Plans the Offensive p. 57

II: New Zealand Emerges in the Pacific Plan p. 65

CHAPTER 4 — Back to the Pacific

I: The Third Division Emerges p. 71

II: Move to New Caledonia p. 87

III: Life Among the Niaoulis p. 98

IV: Negotiations—Political and Service p. 103

V: Training for Combat p. 116

CHAPTER 5 — Three Island Actions

I: Vella Lavella p. 125

II: The Treasuries p. 142

III: The Waiting Period p. 159

IV: The Capture of Green Islands p. 168

CHAPTER 6 — The End of a Division p. 195

CHAPTER 7 — The Battle for the Solomons

I: Japanese Plans Defeated p. 204

II: The Turning Point p. 211

III: Crucial Action p. 216

IV: The Japanese Move Back p. 221

CHAPTER 8 — The Coastwatchers p. 228

CHAPTER 9 — Navy and Air Force

I: The Navy in the Solomons p. 240

II: The Air Force Story p. 245

CHAPTER 10 — Fiji Units in Action

I: Training a Brigade Group p. 261

II: Guerrillas in the Jungle p. 264

III: Battalions Move to the Solomons p. 272

CHAPTER 11 — The Smaller Garrisons

I: Fanning Island p. 288

II: Tonga p. 292

III: Norfolk Island p. 300

CHAPTER 12 — Occupation in Japan p. 307

CHAPTER 13 — Reflections p. 318

Appendix I p. 327

Appendix II p. 328

Appendix III p. 334

[section] p. 334

Annex I p. 336

Appendix IV p. 337

[section] p. 337

NZEF IP — 24 May 1943

Appendix V p. 341

Appendix VI p. 342

Appendix VII	p. 344
Appendix VIII	p. 346
Appendix IX	p. 353
Appendix X	p. 359
Appendix XI	p. 360
Appendix XII	p. 362
Bibliography	p. 363
Index	p. 365

THE PACIFIC

Contents

[covers]

[title page]

[frontispiece]

[title page]

Foreword p. v

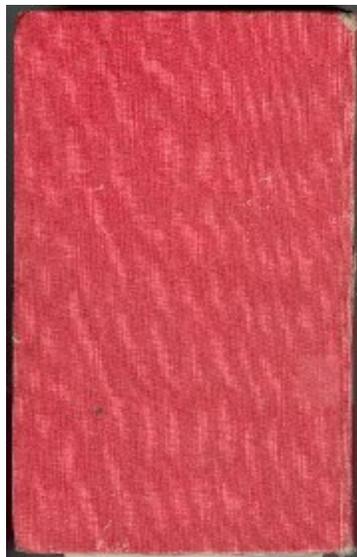
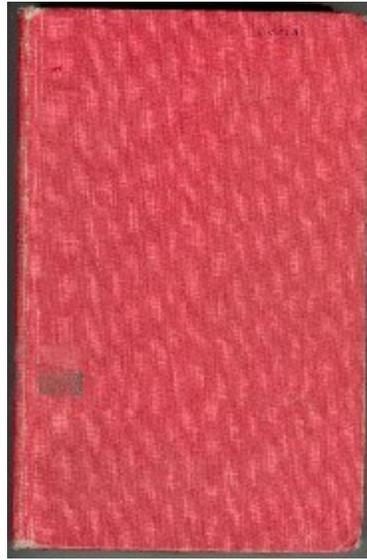
Contents p. vii

List of Illustrations p. ix

List of Maps p. xii

THE PACIFIC

[COVERS]



THE PACIFIC

[TITLE PAGE]

*Official History of New Zealand in the Second World War 1939–45 The
Pacific*

By Authority:

R. E. OWEN, Government Printer, Wellington, New Zealand

1952

THE PACIFIC

[FRONTISPIECE]



HEADING FOR THE SHORE OF VELLA LAVELLA
Kolombangara Island in the background

Heading for the shore of **Vella Lavella**. Kolombangara Island in the background.

THE PACIFIC

[TITLE PAGE]

Official History of New Zealand in the Second World War 1939–45

THE PACIFIC

Oliver A. Gillespie

WAR HISTORY BRANCH

DEPARTMENT OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS

WELLINGTON, NEW ZEALAND 1952

THE PACIFIC

FOREWORD

Foreword

NOW that this record of New Zealand's contribution to the war in the **Pacific** is finished, I feel that it does, in a modest way, reveal achievements which have not yet been adequately appreciated by the great majority of the public. It is a tribute, also, to the men who fought in a campaign which was singularly lacking in spectacle and heroics, but nevertheless required high courage because of the fighting conditions and strong powers of endurance to withstand a climate as exhausting by day as it was by night.

Although comparatively close at hand, the islands of the **Pacific**, particularly those on which the actual fighting took place, were much less familiar than the historic and more romantic regions of the Old World, and the war on those islands was never fought in terms of European violence and ingenuity. But, whatever the circumstances, the death of young men is just as distressing whether it occurs in the jungle or the desert or in a cypress-studded landscape.

My task in writing this book was made easier because of my long association with the land forces which went into the **Pacific**, first to **Fiji** in 1940 and then to **New Caledonia** and on to the **Solomons**, so that I had first-hand knowledge of both conditions and territory and all the attendant misery of the acute physical discomfort. I was fortunate, also, that I afterwards spent some years on the headquarters of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force in **Japan**, which enabled me to gather, from available sources, details of the Japanese account of the campaign.

A little of the material used here has been taken from two surveys I wrote for the New Zealand Army Board after I returned from the **Solomons**— *Pacific Story* and *Guadalcanal to Nissan*— and from the

thirteen volumes of **3 Division** unit histories which I edited before going to **Japan** in January 1946, but most of it has been extracted from official documents and files.

My sincere thanks are due to the staff of the **War History Branch** for the ready assistance given to me at all times during my search through files and documents. I should like also to express my gratitude to General of the Army Douglas MacArthur, who gave me permission to use any material I required from translated Japanese documents held by his headquarters in **Tokyo**; Lieutenant-General Sir Horace Robertson, Commander-in-Chief of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force, who permitted me to remain in **Tokyo** and freed me from all official duties while I searched Japanese documents; Major-General H. E. Barrowclough, who read my manuscript and spurred me with his enthusiasm; Colonel H. C. Parker, the Military Attache at the United States Embassy, **Wellington**, for checking some American details; Squadron Leader J. M. S. Ross, for information about the Royal New Zealand Air Force; Captain N. A. Fraser, for information about New Zealanders serving with the **Fiji Military Forces**; S. D. Waters, for some naval data; Miss P. M. Lissington, who wrote the official narrative on New Zealand's relations with **Japan** from 1900 to 1941; and to the narrative by M. B. McGlynn on New Zealand's manpower problems. The account of the activities of the Royal New Zealand Naval Squadron and Royal New Zealand Air Force in the **Pacific** is necessarily brief, as their histories will be told in separate volumes.

In order to keep this narrative in its proper perspective and make it as complete as possible, I have included the briefest practicable account of the part played by the American forces, Navy, Army and Air, of which the New Zealanders were a small part. It is inevitable, however, in works of this kind, that incidents of importance and acts of individual bravery should be overlooked. It was impossible also to record all changes of command; to do so would have cluttered the narrative with lists of names. For any such shortcomings in recording this not unworthy page of New Zealand history I apologize.

Wellington

June 1951

THE PACIFIC

CONTENTS

Contents

	PAGE
FOREWARD	v
CHAPTER 1:	1
CHAPTER 2: THE FIJI GARRISON—	
I: <i>New Zealand's Responsibility</i>	19
II: <i>The First Force and Its Work</i>	26
III: <i>From Pearl Harbour to Relief</i>	42
CHAPTER 3: PROBLEMS OF COMMAND AND EMPLOYMENT—	
I: <i>America Plans the Offensive</i>	57
II: <i>New Zealand Emerges in the Pacific Plan</i>	65
CHAPTER 4: BACK TO THE PACIFIC—	
I: <i>The Third Division Emerges</i>	71
II: <i>Move to New Caledonia</i>	87
III: <i>Life Among the Niaoulis</i>	98
IV: <i>Negotiations—Political and Service</i>	103
V: <i>Training for Combat</i>	116
CHAPTER 5: THREE ISLAND ACTIONS—	
I: <i>Vella Lavella</i>	125
II: <i>The Treasuries</i>	142
III: <i>The Waiting Period</i>	159
IV: <i>The Capture of Green Islands</i>	168
CHAPTER 6: THE END OF A DIVISION	195
CHAPTER 7: THE BATTLE FOR THE SOLOMONS—	
I: <i>Japanese Plans Defeated</i>	204
II: <i>The Turning Point</i>	211
III: <i>Crucial Action</i>	216
IV: <i>The Japanese Move Back</i>	221
CHAPTER 8: THE COASTWATCHERS	228
CHAPTER 9: NAVY AND AIR FORCE—	
I: <i>The Navy in the Solomons</i>	240
II: <i>The Air Force Story</i>	245

CHAPTER 10:	FIJI UNITS IN ACTION—	
I:	<i>Training a Brigade Group</i>	261
II:	<i>Guerrillas in the Jungle</i>	264
III:	<i>Battalions Move to the Solomons</i>	272
CHAPTER 11:	THE SMALLER GARRISONS—	
I:	<i>Fanning Island</i>	288
II:	<i>Tonga</i>	292
III:	<i>Norfolk Island</i>	300
CHAPTER 12:	OCCUPATION IN	307
CHAPTER 13:	REFLECTIONS	318
APPENDICES—		
I:	Special Order by Major-General H. E. Barrowclough, 19 October 1944	327
II:	Appeals for Assistance	328
III:	Directive to the Commander-in-Chief of the Pacific Ocean Area	334
IV:	Letter from General Barrowclough to General Puttick, 24 May 1943	337
V:	Special Order by General Barrowclough, 1 July 1943	341
VI:	Interview with Governor Laigret, 18 December 1943	342
VII:	Statement by Rt. Hon. P. Fraser on role of New Zealand's Armed Forces, September 1944	344
VIII:	Appreciation by Lieutenant-General E. Puttick on Withdrawal of 2nd or 3rd NZ Division, 19 February 1944	346
IX:	Appreciation by General Puttick on Strength of New Zealand Army overseas, 4 August 1944	353
X:	Telegram from Mr. Fraser to Mr. Churchill, 9 September 1944	359
XI:	Letter from Hon. W. Nash, New Zealand Minister in Washington, to President Roosevelt, 24 January 1944	360
XII:	Japanese Army daily ration	362
	Bibliography	363

THE PACIFIC

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

List of Illustrations

Heading for the shore of Vella Lavella	<i>United States Frontispice Army Signal Corps Official</i>	
		<i>Following page</i>
8 Brigade Group on 30 Battalion of 8 Brigade Group arrives in Fiji	<i>Rangatira</i>	16
Petrol tank in Sealark Hill, Suva		16
8 NZ Infantry Brigade defences on Fiji		16
Vice-Admiral R. L. Ghormley arrives at Namaka Aerodrome, May 1942		16
Third Division manœuvres in the Kaimai Ranges	<i>The Weekly News</i>	16
Sappers in the Kaimai Ranges	<i>The Weekly News</i>	16
The Kiwi Club, Bourail Beach	<i>NZ Army Official</i>	48
Training in New Caledonia	<i>NZ Army</i>	48
Review of 8 NZ Infantry Brigade, New Caledonia	<i>NZ Army</i>	48
Base Ordnance Depot, Bourail	<i>NZ Army</i>	48
30 Battalion headquarters, New Caledonia	<i>NZ Army</i>	48
37 Battalion cookhouse ovens, Taom, New Caledonia	<i>NZ Army</i>	48
The camp site of 22 Field Ambulance at Tinipp	<i>NZ Army</i>	48
Nurses' quarters, 4 NZ General Hospital, Boguen	<i>NZ Army</i>	48
Club at Base Training Depot in Tene Valley, New Caledonia	<i>NZ Army</i>	80
Embarkation Practice	<i>NZ Army</i>	80
The move to Guadalcanal	<i>NZ Army</i>	80
Boarding a Landing Craft (Mechanised),	<i>NZ Army</i>	80

Noumea		
Third Division training exercise, Mele Beach, New Hebrides	<i>NZ Army</i>	80
Gunners pulling a Bofors gun ashore at Mele Beach	<i>NZ Army</i>	80
Troops board the USS transport, <i>President Hayes</i>, Noumea	<i>NZ Army</i>	80
		<i>Following page</i>
14 Brigade Group landing, Point Cruz, Guadalcanal	<i>NZ Army</i>	80
Men of 36 Battalion on USS	<i>President Jackson NZ Army</i>	112
Below deck on the way from New Hebrides to Guadalcanal	<i>NZ Army</i>	112
Malaria Control Unit spraying 37 Field Park Company's camp, Guadalcanal	<i>NZ Army</i>	112
Henderson Field, Guadalcanal		112
US Marines following a trail on Guadalcanal	<i>US Official</i>	112
Ready for embarkation at Kukum Beach, Guadalcanal, before sailing for Vella Lavella	<i>NZ Army</i>	112
Loading rations at Guadalcanal for Vella Lavella	<i>NZ Army</i>	112
14 Brigade units landing at Vella Lavella	<i>US Army Signal Corps</i>	112
On Vella Lavella	<i>NZ Army</i>	144
A patrol from 35 Battalion at Pakoi Bay	<i>NZ Army</i>	144
Interrogation of a Japanese prisoner of war, Vella Lavella	<i>NZ Army</i>	144
35 Anti-Tank Battery at Maravari, Vella Lavella	<i>NZ Army</i>	144
Umomo Island shelled by 12 Field Battery	<i>NZ Army</i>	144
Carrier Platoon of 35 Battalion crosses Timbala Bay in a native canoe	<i>NZ Army</i>	144
Muddy conditions, Tangalan Plantation area, Nissan Island	<i>NZ Army</i>	144
20 Field Company's bridge over Joroveto River, Vella Lavella	<i>US Navy Official</i>	144

Landing Craft (Infantry) of the invasion convoy at Guadalcanal	<i>A. E. Tilley</i>	176
Landing Craft (Tank) beached at Mono Island	<i>NZ Army</i>	176
A 25-pounder damaged by enemy mortar fire, Falamai	<i>A. E. Tilley</i>	176
A Landing Ship (Tank) beached at Mono Island	<i>US Navy</i>	176
Foxholes in a bivouac area at Malsi Village, Mono Island	<i>NZ Army</i>	176
Unloading operations at Falamai	<i>NZ Army</i>	176
Embarking on a Landing Craft (Infantry) at Juno Beach, Vella Lavella, for Nissan Island	<i>NZ Army</i>	176
Landing craft entering the lagoon at Nissan Island	<i>US Official</i>	176
		<i>Following page</i>
Raid by 30 Battalion on Nissan Island	<i>US Marine Corps Official</i>	272
Wounded of 30 Battalion waiting to be taken off Nissan Island	<i>US Marine Corps</i>	272
New Zealand engineers forming a road through the jungle of Nissan Island	<i>NZ Army</i>	272
Tangalan Plantation	<i>US Official</i>	272
RNZAF Fighter Squadrons land on the fighter strip at Nissan	<i>NZ Army</i>	272
First Commando Fiji Guerrillas in the Solomons	<i>US Official</i>	272
Fiji Commandos officers' mess, Teneru, Guadalcanal		272
Ready to leave Stirling Island for return to New Caledonia	<i>NZ Army</i>	304
34 Battalion mess, Tonga	<i>A. H. Rendell</i>	304
Major-General W. H. Cunningham, first Commander in Fiji		304
Brigadier R. A. Row, Commander of 8 Brigade, and Sir Cyril Newall, Governor- General of New Zealand, on an inspection tour in the Treasury Group		304
Lieutenant-Colonel F. C. Cornwall, Brigadier L. Potter, Commander of 14 Brigade, and		304

Lieutenant-Colonel J. F. Moffatt on Nissan Island

Minister of Defence and senior officers on board a transport at Noumea 304

22 NZ Battalion controlling the Japanese repatriation center at Senzaki, Japan 304

New Zealanders watch Japanese farm labourers plant the new season's rice 304

THE PACIFIC

LIST OF MAPS

List of Maps

	<i>Following page</i>
3 NZ Division in the Solomons	208
Coastwatching Stations in the Pacific	240
Pacific War Tides	396
In Text	
	<i>Page</i>
Fiji	28
New Caledonia	92
Vella Lavella	128
Treasury Group	149
Nissan Island	175
Bougainville	275

The occupations given in the biographical footnotes are those on enlistment. The ranks are those held on discharge or at the date of death.

THE PACIFIC

CHAPTER 1 – JAPAN—RISE AND CONQUEST

CHAPTER 1

Japan—Rise and Conquest

JAPAN'S role in the **Pacific** was not considered of any great importance, and certainly created no sense of insecurity, until after her defeat of **Russia** in 1905, which gave her control of Port Arthur and of **Korea** on the mainland of **Asia**. From comparative obscurity, **Japan** had risen to a second-class world power by her victory in the Sino-Japanese war of 1894–95, after which increasing world opinion was directed on her industrial activities and on a rising population which began to worry other countries. Until 1905, however, New Zealand's attitude was favourable, and any talk of a 'Yellow peril' referred only to the Chinese. A noticeable change came after the Russian defeat. **Japan** rose to the position of a first-class power, and her menacing birthrate drew warnings from such people as Sir Robert Stout, who publicly voiced the fear of her competition in industry and a possible demand for lands for emigration. **Australia**, with her 'White **Australia**' policy, had long been stridently conscious of the threat from **Japan**—a threat which was not completely allayed by the Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1902, into which **Britain** was forced by her fear of Russian expansion and possible supremacy in the **Far East**, for at that time **Russia** was attempting to obtain by diplomacy what she has obtained today by political influence and force of arms—a controlling interest in **China**.

By 1909 this Alliance was showing signs of deterioration as the power of the German Navy increased the alarm of Great Britain. New Zealand offered a battle cruiser, *HMS New Zealand*, to assist in strengthening the British Navy as well as removing a little of the load from the British taxpayer, and during Parliamentary debates which followed a proposal to borrow £2 million to pay for this gift, speakers displayed some concern for what they described as dangers north of the Equator. By that time Japanese infiltration into the **Pacific** was unmistakable. Apart from her increasing trade with **Pacific** countries, Japanese were being employed in mounting numbers in the rich chrome and nickel mines of **New Caledonia**, a French possession sitting astride

most vulnerable sea lanes, and apprehension was displayed in 1911 that ultimately **Japan** might use that island as a base which would imperil both **Australia** and New Zealand. It all seemed like a pattern of things to come.

Her ultimate goal—supremacy in the **Pacific**—was the subject of newspaper articles pointing out such dangers. The renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance did nothing to stem a deepening mistrust of **Japan**, for in 1913 the **Rt. Hon. W. F. Massey**, Prime Minister of New Zealand, considered that such an alliance was not sufficient protection for this Dominion; therefore she must do something for herself.

British colonies and dominions in the **Pacific** regarded **Singapore** as their protector; the might of the British Navy as their shield. Even until the fall of that great strategical base, the whole of British Pacific strategy was centred on and about it. The Imperial Conference held in **London** in 1909 urged the necessity for creating and maintaining a strong fleet based on **Singapore** for **Pacific** defence, but its establishment was delayed because of the rapidly increasing strength of the German navy and its menace in European waters. Massey at that time most forcefully advocated the creation of a strong **Pacific** naval force, and proposed that **Australia**, New Zealand, **Canada**, and South Africa should join together in forming a fighting navy in the **Pacific** which, he said, prophetically, 'would yet become the battlefield of the nations'. Because of the German menace, however, and before Massey's proposal bore fruit, the war of 1914-18 had broken on the world. **Britain's** action in maintaining a stronger fleet in Home and **Mediterranean** waters was justified, but the progress of the First World War provided **Japan** with her long-desired opportunity to establish herself in such strength and secrecy in **Pacific** islands north of the Equator that her bases there became her springboard in 1941.

Britain showed no great enthusiasm for Japanese intervention in the 1914-18 conflict and wished for none unless her Far Eastern and **Pacific** possessions were jeopardised, but all diplomatic persuasion failed to keep **Japan** neutral. She declared war on **Germany** on 23 August 1914, and on

7 October seized all the German-held islands north of the Equator, occupying the Pelew, Marianne, Caroline, and Marshall Groups, with **Truk** as the hub. **Australia** was prepared to send a force into the Carolines and Marianas before the Japanese move, but her troops were required in other theatres of war. **Japan's** precipitate action alarmed **Australia**, but this alarm was to some extent pacified by the British Government's statement that it would be more convenient to allow **Japan** to remain in the territory she had occupied until the end of the war, when the future of the islands would be decided. **Japan** became an ally, and ships of her navy protected convoys from **Australia** and New Zealand in the **Indian Ocean** and also did convoy work in the **Mediterranean**. ¹

The Japanese move to take advantage of British weakness in the **Pacific** in 1914 was so swift and determined that it suggested a preconceived plan of action. Moreover, she demanded a stern price for any military or naval assistance which was forthcoming. By 1917 **Japan** was firmly entrenched in the islands she had seized. Her possession of the Marianas and the Carolines was discussed at the Imperial War Conference in **London** in 1917, when **Japan's** retention of all former German islands north of the Equator was assumed, but she was not to move south of that line. At the Peace Conference at **Versailles** in 1919, **Australia** and New Zealand, with extreme reluctance, yielded to those concessions already pledged to **Japan**. From the time of her occupation of the former German territory, **Japan** adopted a secretive attitude concerning her activities there. Every obstacle was placed in the way of traders and shipping until, finally, whole groups of islands became lost to the world's intelligence except on charts and maps. Those island bases were not captured and opened to the world again until 1944-45.

Japan used the 1914-18 War to her great advantage, both in the islands and in **China**, but it was a price the British Commonwealth had to pay for its inability to maintain a major fleet in the **Pacific**. Even before the war ended, Japanese newspapers, influenced by a pro-German section of her politicians, insisted that it was **Japan's** 'duty and right' to

maintain peace in the East. Some of those same politicians demanded that the Allies withdraw the whole of their military and naval strength from **China**, Vladivostok, Mongolia, **Manchuria**, Siberia, and the South Seas and **India**, leaving **Japan** in control of the regions thus evacuated. Such statements were not rebuked by Ministers. In September 1918 the Mayor of **Tokyo** foresaw a possible war with Great Britain and the **United States** and prophetically stated: ‘**Japan** must bravely face the inevitable, even though she will ultimately be defeated.’

But he was not the only prophet, as Massey had been. When Admiral Lord Jellicoe toured the **Pacific** in 1919, he realised the relentless ambition of the Japanese and the beginning of fulfilment of their **Pacific** ambitions once they obtained mandate control of the Marshall and Caroline Islands. He realised then that the interests of **Japan** and **Britain** must inevitably clash. ‘In the event of war with **Japan**’ was Jellicoe's theme in suggesting **Pacific** defence and strategy for the future advice of the Lords of the Admiralty.

¹ The Japanese cruiser *Ibuki* helped to escort the Main Body of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force to Egypt.

At the conclusion of his tour in *HMS New Zealand*, during which he visited **Fiji** and the **Solomons**, Lord Jellicoe reported: ‘It is impossible to consider the question of naval strategy in the **Pacific** without taking account of **Suva** Harbour. This harbour holds a position of great strategic importance with reference to New Zealand and **Australia**. It should accordingly be strongly fortified and held. At first guns to meet a scale of attack of unarmoured vessels should be established and then heavy guns to meet a scale of attack of armoured vessels.’ A high-power radio station was also recommended by Jellicoe, who regarded **Fiji** as a most vital centre in **Pacific** communications. Except for the radio station, a commercial undertaking, nothing could be done in **Fiji** because of commitments at the Washington Conference, which also nullified Jellicoe's proposals to develop the **Tulagi-Gavutu** Harbour in the

Solomons into a major naval base. At the outbreak of war in 1939, **Suva** still remained the *dolce far niente* island outpost it was during Jellicoe's visit twenty years previously. Even by June 1941 the coast defences of **Fiji** consisted only of two 6-inch naval guns and two 4.7-inch guns covering the more vulnerable reef passages, and these had been emplaced after the outbreak of war. Jellicoe's report also made manifestly clear the weakness of both **Singapore** and **Hong Kong**, if they were attacked with determination by land and sea forces. Ships of the *Royal Sovereign* and *Queen Elizabeth* class, he pointed out, could not dock at **Singapore** if they were fitted with bulge protection against submarines, and both bases were extremely vulnerable to attack by submarines and coastal motor boats. First-class fighting naval units were consequently unemployable for **Pacific** defence unless **Singapore** were greatly extended and improved.

Through the years following 1914 **Japan** built up her navy and extended her naval bases on the mainland, particularly at **Kure**, **Yokosuka**, and **Sasebo**. The Washington Conference of 1921, after which, as Churchill commented, 'the British and American Governments proceeded to sink their battleships and break up their military establishments with great gusto', really gave **Japan** command of the seas in the **Pacific**, a command she never lost until 1943. That conference enabled her to maintain in the north-west **Pacific** a fleet superior in strength to anything Great Britain or the **United States** could maintain. It also guaranteed that the **United Kingdom** and the **United States** would not develop bases in the *status quo* area, which included **Hong Kong** and the **Philippines**; the island base of **Guam**, on which a huge defence scheme was halted; **Pago Pago**, in American Samoa; **Suva**, in **Fiji**; and **Tulagi** in the **Solomons**. Even when the treaty lapsed, Congress rejected plans for the refortification of **Guam**. A product of the Washington Conference was the Four Power Pact, signed by **Japan**, **France**, Great Britain, and the **United States** in 1922, and under its guarantee the signatory powers were to respect each other's property in the **Pacific** area. However, it did little except strengthen **Japan's** hand.

Changing political situations in Great Britain gravely affected the **Singapore** naval base which, by diplomatic manœuvre at the Washington Conference, had been excluded from the *status quo* area and could therefore be fortified without restraint. **Britain** decided to embark on a scheme of expansion and extension, estimated to cost £21,000,000, but this was abandoned when the MacDonald Government came into power. Massey, during discussions at the Imperial Conference in **London** in 1923, strongly protested, pointing out that such action gravely exposed New Zealand and **Australia** to attack, but MacDonald, pinning his faith in the League of Nations, insisted that the building of the **Singapore** base would have a detrimental effect on the foreign policy of Great Britain, whose task before the world was to 'allay international suspicions and anxieties'. The defeat of the MacDonald Government enabled the original plan to go ahead under Baldwin.¹ In 1927, under the Coates administration, New Zealand offered to contribute £1,000,000 towards the cost of the base, payable over a period of years at the rate of £125,000 a year. This brought a strong protest from Mr. **H. E. Holland**, leader of the Labour Party in New Zealand, but Mr. W. Nash, also a Labour leader, in an address to the Institute of Pacific Relations in **Honolulu**, told his audience that New Zealand public opinion supported the contribution because the British Fleet was one of the great securities for the peace of the world. The urge behind the New Zealand Government's offer was purely one of defence.

In 1929, however, MacDonald was returned to power in England and work on the base was slowed down, although the following year the Imperial Conference agreed to proceed with the dock and air base, but to postpone all other work for five years.

Japan's withdrawal from the League of Nations in 1933, on the question of the League's refusal to recognise the State of Manchukuo, increased British distrust of her intentions. By this time she had violated the Nine Power Pact of 1921 and the Paris Pact

¹ New Zealand's first contribution towards the cost of the

base was an offer of £100,000 (half the sum recommended by the then naval adviser) made in 1923. The following year, when a Special Service Squadron which included HMS *Hood* visited **Wellington**, Massey stated that if the **Singapore** Base did not go ahead he thought the Admiralty would ask New Zealand to contribute another cruiser in the **Pacific**. In either case (**Singapore** or a cruiser) it would cost about £250,000. That would make New Zealand's defence expenditure total just more than £1,000,000. In Massey's opinion that was not too much, though it sounded a lot.

of 1928 by overrunning Chinese Manchuria. From then on she extended her territorial activities on the mainland of **Asia** in an undeclared war on **China**, during which she seized provinces in North **China**, bombed **Shanghai**, sank the **United States** ship *Panay*, and sacked Nanking. New Zealand, with the rest of the world, was deeply concerned by these continued hostilities and by the extension of Japanese trade as she sought to obtain raw materials, particularly wool and scrap metal, from abroad. ¹

Mr. W. J. Jordan, New Zealand High Commissioner in **London** and the Dominion's representative to the League of Nations in 1937, protested on behalf of New Zealand against the bombing of Chinese towns, but his recommendation 'that members of the League use their influence to deter **Japan** from continuing her present form of aggression' was lost. That year he also addressed the Imperial Defence College on New Zealand's preparations for defence (they were not ambitious), and in a note to the Prime Minister, the **Rt. Hon. M. J. Savage**, said that after speaking of the proposals he would come back to the point that the best form of defence was the settlement of the country by contented and prosperous people. Savage attended the Imperial Conference of 1937, at which opinion still considered the British Fleet sufficiently strong to prevent any major Japanese operations against New Zealand or **Australia**. But events in **Europe**, and the growing truculence of **Japan** as she continued her undeclared war on **China** and moulded her policy on that of **Germany**, created uneasiness and misgiving in the South Pacific.

Mr. J. A. Lyons, Prime Minister of **Australia**, suggested in **London** a regional pact in the **Pacific**. Savage supported him and asked for an assurance from the British Government that the British Fleet, even if it were engaged in European waters, would also be sufficient to contain the Japanese fleet in Eastern waters. Obviously **Singapore** was still regarded as an impregnable base, though even by September 1940 there were only 88 first-line aircraft in **Malaya** and nine battalions of troops, whereas the estimated requirements were 336 aircraft and eighteen battalions.

¹ Prior to the 1914-18 War, Japanese-New Zealand trade interests were not extensive. New Zealand imports amounted on the average to £140,000 a year and her exports to £2000, rising to £60,000 in 1914. By 1928 the figures had increased considerably. In that year **Japan** purchased almost £600,000 worth of New Zealand wool, and New Zealand imports amounted to almost the same value. The figures declined until 1936, but by 1937 New Zealand exports rose to £3,132,000 (the highest ever reached) as against Japanese imports valued at £1,630,000. The Government restrictions imposed in 1938 caused a sharp decline in trade between the two countries; New Zealand exports fell away to £592,700 as against imports valued at £1,208,200. Wool was the commodity greatest in demand by **Japan**.

The first decisive move in an attempt to overcome weakness which daily grew more obvious, was initiated by Savage, who suggested that representatives of Great Britain, **Australia**, and New Zealand should meet to discuss the defence of the **Pacific** 'in its widest aspects, sea, land, and air'. This conference opened in **Wellington** on 14 April 1939 and was attended by senior representatives of the three fighting services from each country. A month previously **Czechoslovakia** had been absorbed and **Hitler** was still thundering over the air that he had no more territorial ambitions in **Europe**. The conference considered the defence of certain **Pacific** islands, and selected a limited number of island bases from which to maintain observation over a chain of islands between **Tonga** and **New Guinea**, so that the approach of any raiding forces could be advised. It was agreed, also, that **Fiji** was the most important island

in any defence scheme for **Australia** and New Zealand.

Recommendations made to the Government were that a third cruiser should be manned and maintained and New Zealand merchant vessels 'stiffened'; the **Royal New Zealand Air Force** to increase its output of trained pilots for the Royal Air Force; the regular and Territorial forces be increased, and detachments despatched to **Fanning Island** and **Fiji** as soon as war with **Japan** seemed inevitable. Questions of supply were also discussed, and it was recommended that liaison officers be appointed to the Defence Department in **Australia** and the War Office in **London** and that all reports be exchanged. Action was taken on some of those recommendations.

At the conclusion of the conference Major-General Mackesy, the British military delegate, was asked by the New Zealand Government to report on the Dominion's land forces. His report was depressing but inevitable in view of a policy which had shown little interest or enthusiasm in defence matters. His considered opinion was that the New Zealand Army had been allowed to become the Cinderella of the services and that New Zealand was incapable of repulsing any serious landing force. He recommended the immediate creation of a small regular land force of three infantry battalions and the expansion of the Territorial Force. Savage lost no time in appealing for men. On 22 May he asked for an increase in the peace establishment from 9500 to 16,000 men, another 250 for the coast defences, and for every able-bodied man from 20 to 55 years of age to register in the national defence reserve. Additional defence equipment, supplies of which were dangerously low, was ordered from overseas, but before that could be obtained or industry geared for its production, war had overwhelmed **Europe**.

Just as she fought for time in **Europe**, Great Britain fought for time in the **Pacific**, though **Singapore** was still regarded as the impregnable keystone of her defence. When the Commonwealth Prime Ministers met in **London** in November 1939, Churchill, then First Lord of the Admiralty, in a memorandum referring to the possibility of a Japanese attack against the base said, 'it is not considered possible that the

Japanese, who are a prudent people and reserve their strength for the command of the Yellow Seas and **China**, in which they are fully occupied, would embark on such a mad enterprise.' Nor did the British Chiefs of Staff reveal any great apprehension. In a review of the strategical situation they reported: 'We feel that the immediate danger to **Australia** and New Zealand is remote.' Churchill considered that **Singapore** could be taken only after a siege by an army of 50,000; the Chiefs of Staff felt that the Japanese would direct their attack against the mainland of **Asia**. The policy outlined at the **London** conference stated that, in the event of conflict with **Japan**, the three main objectives of the **United Kingdom** would be:

- (i) The prevention of any major operations against **Australia**, New Zealand, or **India**.
- (ii) To keep open sea communications.
- (iii) To prevent the fall of **Singapore**.

Mr. Peter Fraser, Deputy Prime Minister, attended the conference and expressed his apprehension concerning defences in the **Pacific**. At least two flying boats, he urged, should be made available to New Zealand to carry out reconnaissance in the islands should the necessity arise. At that time **Britain's** diplomacy aimed at a policy which would do nothing to antagonise **Japan**. In July the American-Japanese Commercial Treaty of 1911 was terminated. **Britain** considered denouncing the Anglo-Japanese Treaty, and New Zealand was prepared to break her trade agreement with **Japan**, but the British Government delayed action, fearing Japanese reprisals. After the outbreak of war with **Germany** on 3 September 1939, **Britain** endeavoured to prevent essential supplies of Malayan tin and rubber from reaching **Germany** via **Russia**, and **Japan** agreed. Even when **Britain** tightened the blockade against **Germany** in the **Far East** by intercepting and examining ships of all nations thought to be carrying cargo to Vladivostok, certain conditions were laid down so that **Japan** would not be offended. There was to be no interception of ships within sight of the Japanese coast or north of latitude 20° 21'; **Japan** was also requested to give an undertaking that certain specified war purpose commodities would not

reach **Germany** via **Japan** or Japanese territory or by Japanese transport. The British Government, conscious of its weakness should the British Fleet be called on to fight in the **Pacific**, did its utmost, diplomatically, to keep **Japan** out of the war. The situation in **Europe** grew bleaker through 1940 as the German armies swept into **Norway**, **Denmark**, **Holland**, **Belgium**, and **France**. In the grim days of May 1940 Churchill took over from Chamberlain, but all he could offer was his historical quartet, 'blood, toil, sweat, and tears'. In France, three days after Churchill's leadership was assured in England, Reynaud took over from Daladier, but nothing could stem the German tide. Between 27 May and 4 June the British armies were saved from annihilation by the **Dunkirk** evacuation, and on 22 June **France** signed an armistice with **Germany**.

The fall of **France** shattered British Commonwealth defence in the **Pacific**, and **Japan** again quickly seized her opportunity, just as she had done in 1914. **General Hata** declared in **Tokyo**: 'We must not miss this rare opportunity.... **Japan** must act drastically against the powers who obstruct her policy'. She demanded that **Britain** cease supplies to **China** and withdraw her garrison from **Hong Kong**. Demonstrations against British nationals in **Japan** became more frequent. The British Ambassador in **Tokyo**, Sir Robert Craigie, endeavoured to prevent **Japan** from entering the war on the side of **Germany** and **Italy**, with whom she had become partners under the Pact of **Berlin**, a military alliance signed on 27 September 1940. He attempted to obtain some declaration from the **United States** on Anglo-American policy in the **Far East** and suggested certain lines of action, including joint assistance to **Japan** in bringing about peace with the Chinese Government. **Japan** was to undertake to remain neutral in the European war and to respect the territorial integrity of the **Netherlands East Indies** and British, French, and American possessions in the **Pacific**. The British Government decided to act on Craigie's suggestions and was supported by the New Zealand Government, which also wished for some clear indication of the Far Eastern policy of the **United States**. But none was forthcoming. The **United States** Government would not take any action which might

commit her to war in the **Far East**, though she raised no objection to Great Britain's exploration of a possible settlement with **Japan** on terms acceptable to **China**, 'consistent with principles for which the **United States** stands'. Public opinion in **America** was being carefully nursed and nourished by Roosevelt, though certain action had been taken to assist Great Britain. Fifty of her older destroyers had been exchanged for bases in British territory in the **West Indies**, **Newfoundland**, and Bermuda on a 99 years' lease and granted 'freely and without consideration'. British and American war supplies were reaching **China** via the **Burma Road**, which the British refused to close when first requested to do so by **Japan**. New Zealand and **Australia** supported this action, but the outcry in **Japan** was such that **Britain**, hard-pressed by events in **Europe** and the **Middle East**, closed it to war supplies for three months on 18 July, opening the road again on 17 October. New Zealand protested against this concession, fearing the danger of a policy of appeasement, and that it might antagonise **America**. During those critical months, when the **Battle of Britain** was raging and the German submarine attack on British shipping was being intensified, there was a change of Government in **Japan**. **Prince Konoye** took over an administration which was more aggressive and pro-Axis than ever, basing its actions on the assumption that the British Empire was 'effete and ripe for dissolution'.

There was no improvement in Anglo-Japanese relations through the first six months of 1941. An indication of New Zealand's attitude was revealed in February when Mr. Kakafuji, the Japanese consul, called on Mr. Fraser, now Prime Minister in succession to Mr. Savage. He was left in no doubt regarding this Dominion's action in the event of trouble. New Zealand, Fraser forcefully told his visitor, would play her part fully with other members of the Commonwealth. In London the British Foreign Secretary, Mr. Anthony Eden, made clear to the Japanese Ambassador that **Britain** could not agree that **Japan** alone was entitled to mediate in Far Eastern disputes or was entitled to dominate all the peoples of the **Far East**. The existing tension, he said, had been created by the unexplained movements of Japanese forces in **Formosa**, Hainan, **Indo-China**, and the South **China** Sea. ¹

Although there was no public assurance from the **United States** of active armed support, the American Government did consider freezing Japanese credits. By June 1941 she had moved three battleships, four cruisers, nineteen destroyers, and one aircraft carrier from the Pacific Fleet to the **Atlantic**, and by so doing possibly lessened the disaster of **Pearl Harbour**. This action was regarded favourably by both **Australia** and **New Zealand**, who welcomed it as a deterrent on **Japan** by the implication that the **United States** would enter the war to help Great Britain, but both countries

¹ Early in 1939 **Japan** seized the island base of Hainan and later moved into the Spratley Islands, which were uncomfortably close to **Borneo** and the **Philippines**. Then, following the outbreak of war in **Europe**, she continued to creep along the Chinese coast in the Kwangtung Province (which menaced **Hong Kong**, particularly by an attack on **Canton**), and at Yamchow and Nanning, on the French **Indo-China** border. It was a policy she had adopted since 1931. Each time the Western powers were involved in a crisis in **Europe**, **Japan** took advantage of it in the East.

wanted at least six American capital ships and two aircraft carriers to remain in the **Pacific**. The Lend-Lease Act, ¹ providing for much-needed assistance, was signed on 11 March 1941, and American naval vessels assisted British convoys in American waters. **United States** marines had also landed in **Iceland**. Though she did everything to avoid a conflict through 1941, Great Britain considered black-listing large Japanese firms and denouncing the Anglo-Japanese commercial treaty. **New Zealand** cautiously preferred the last-named action because 'circumstances are now exceedingly delicate and any unnecessary irritation at this present juncture would be unwise.'

While diplomatic discussions were in progress **Japan**, whose troops were already in the country, demanded naval and air bases in **Indo-China**, to which the submissive Vichy Government agreed. On 26 July 1941 the British and **United States** Governments and the Netherlands

East Indies Government issued orders freezing all Japanese credits. On the same day the British Government terminated the Anglo-Japanese commercial treaty. New Zealand took similar action on 27 July.

Japan was not deterred by such action, though her naval chiefs were gravely concerned about declining oil and petrol supplies after the imposition of an embargo by the **United Kingdom** and **United States** in July. By negotiation and intrigue she obtained a controlling interest in **Thailand**, thus directly menacing **Malaya**, gaining it in face of diplomatic moves by Great Britain and the **United States** and appeals from **Thailand** for assistance. On 13 April 1941 she signed a non-aggression pact with the **USSR**, using that as a weapon to exert pressure on the Netherlands East Indies Government for economic concessions—principally in rubber and oil—which the Dutch firmly opposed. New Zealand urged the necessity for guaranteeing the military security of the Dutch Indies, but Great Britain replied that she was in no position to do so without the necessary support of the **United States** Government, which was still non-committal.

Fearing Japanese reaction, the Dutch had declined to attend staff talks at **Singapore** when British, Australian, and New Zealand service chiefs met there in November 1940 and discussed Far Eastern defence problems. However, when Great Britain intimated her strategical interest in the **Netherlands East Indies**, Dutch officers did attend secret staff conversations but without political commitments on either side. New Zealand expressed disappointment that a full guarantee could not be given to the Dutch, but it

¹ The Lend-Lease Act gave the Government of the **United States** authority to furnish aid to nations whose defences were deemed by the President to be vital to the defence of the **United States of America**.

was obvious that without definite public assurances of American aid Great Britain could not commit herself too deeply in the **Netherlands**

East Indies. In the event of attack Great Britain was too weak, particularly in land- and carrier-based aircraft, to defend her long lines of communication. The penetration of German armies into **Russia** at this time was also disturbing the war planning in **London**.

Late in 1941 the **United States** took the lead in negotiations with **Japan** in order to try to avert a clash, though her attitude and assistance to **China** governed any definite concessions to **Japan**. Craigie, in **Tokyo**, was of the opinion that **Prince Konoye** wished to meet President Roosevelt to discuss a possible settlement of the **United States-Japanese** conflict. The **United States** rightly maintained that any settlement involving **China** must provide fully for the sovereignty and territorial security of that country, otherwise permanent peace in the **Pacific** would be impossible. Konoye seems to have been perfectly sincere in his desire to avoid a conflict, and Craigie pointed out that the Japanese Prime Minister could only retain support for his policy if the meeting with Roosevelt took place quickly. But it never did—Konoye's Government fell on the issue of the **Washington** conversations, and General Tojo and his extremists took over.

Early in November Mr. Saburo Kurusu was despatched to **Washington** by his Government to assist the Japanese Ambassador, **Admiral Nomura**, in his conversations towards a settlement, but it soon became evident to Mr. Cordell Hull, **United States** Secretary of State, that all **Japan** wanted was time and the speedy removal of economic pressure. Mobilisation orders to the Japanese **Southern Army** were issued secretly in **Tokyo** on 6 November, and the areas to be seized were decided on 20 November, while the **Washington** conversations were taking place. Had this been revealed, the plans of the Japanese High Command would have been wrecked. What Japan hoped to gain from the **Washington** talks was a restoration of commercial relations such as existed before her credit was frozen, a supply of oil, and pressure from the **United States** on the Netherlands Indies Government to force it to supply **Japan** with petroleum and other products. Great Britain agreed with the **United States** that all **Japan** sought was 'the speedy removal of economic

pressure but not the speedy settlement of anything else'. Hull put up counter proposals, which the Chinese regarded as 'disastrous' and Great Britain as none too satisfactory. New Zealand was kept fully acquainted with these negotiations and supported the British Government. Hull's suggestion included the Japanese withdrawal of the bulk of her troops from **China**, and in return referred to the possibility of the **United States**, Great Britain, and the Dutch Governments giving 'some relief from economic pressure'. He considered this suggestion might lead to a wider settlement and gain valuable time. In view of Chinese opposition, which took the form of a direct appeal to Roosevelt by General **Chiang Kai-shek**, who considered that any relaxation of the embargoes would cause Chinese morale to collapse, Hull handed to the Japanese Ambassador a final plan, containing a proposal for a mutual declaration of the national policies of their two countries. This plan, 'a broad but simple settlement covering the entire **Pacific**', was in two parts, the first of which contained the proposed mutual declaration of policy, affirming the desire of both countries for lasting peace, the sovereignty of all **Pacific** nations, principles of commercial equality and opportunity, and an agreement to support and apply certain principles in their economic relations with each other. The second part set out in ten paragraphs steps to be taken by both countries to give effect to this plan, the more important of which were:

1. The Government of the **United States** and the Government of **Japan** will endeavour to conclude a multilateral non-aggression pact among the British Empire, **China**, **Japan**, the **Netherlands**, the Soviet Union, **Thailand**, and the **United States**.
3. The Government of **Japan** will withdraw all military, naval, air, and police forces from **China** and from **Indo-China**.
4. The Government of the **United States** and the Government of **Japan** will not support militarily, politically, and economically any government or regime in **China** other than the national government of the Republic of **China**, with capital temporarily at Chungking.
7. The Government of the **United States** and the Government of **Japan** will respectively remove freezing restrictions on Japanese funds in the **United States** and on American funds in **Japan**.
8. Both Governments will agree upon a plan for stabilisation of the

dollar-yen rate and will allocate funds adequate for this purpose, half to be supplied by **Japan** and half by the **United States**.

After reading this document Kurusu intimated that his Government would be likely 'to throw up its hands', but he and the Ambassador asked to see the President and were received by him the following day.

The situation was then critical. The Japanese were reinforcing their troops in **Indo-China**, and reconnaissance planes of the Royal Air Force reported sighting Japanese transports off the Kra Isthmus. The Commander-in-Chief, **Far East**, Air Chief Marshal Sir Robert Brooke-Popham, asked permission to move into the isthmus if it could be proved that the Japanese were entering that territory, but the British military advisers were still afraid that any such action might involve **Britain** in war. Although time was running out, the British Government hastily sought the views of the **United States**, as well as the Commonwealth Governments. New Zealand suggested that the Thai Government should consider the possibility of inviting **Britain** to defend the isthmus, in collaboration with Thai forces, and, if American support were assured, an attempt should be made to forestall a Japanese occupation. Roosevelt assured **Britain** of support if **Japan** occupied the isthmus, and the British Government instructed Brooke-Popham to despatch troops if a landing was apparent or if the Japanese violated any part of **Thailand**. Instructions were also issued to Brooke-Popham to put into operation plans agreed on at the **Singapore** Conference if the Japanese attacked the **Netherlands East Indies**.

These plans were the outcome of American, Dutch, and British conversations (not made public at the time) held in **Singapore** from 21 to 27 April 1941, at which New Zealand was represented by Commodore W. E. Parry, RN, ¹ Air Commodore H. W. L. Saunders, ² and Colonel A. E. **Conway**. ³ Their fulfilment would have altered greatly the course of the **Pacific** war, but they were shattered first by the attack on **Pearl Harbour** and then by the fall of **Singapore**. During the conversations agreement was reached, though without political commitment, on the employment and disposition of all forces in the Indian and Pacific Oceans and in

Australian and New Zealand waters, but a subsidiary interest was the security of Luzon, in the northern **Philippines**, as it was envisaged that threats to **Malaya** and the **Netherlands East Indies** could be outflanked, providing submarines and air forces could still operate from Luzon bases. The plans also outlined British and American commands and the operations of the **United States Pacific Fleet**, based at **Pearl Harbour**, against Japanese mandated islands and her sea communications, should an attack develop against the **Netherlands East Indies**. Should Luzon fall, American naval and air units were to fall back on **Singapore**. But **Singapore** fell first.

¹ Admiral Sir Edward Parry, KCB, RN; born 8 Apr 1893; commanded HMS *Acbilles* 27 Jan 1939–15 Oct 1940; Chief of NZ Naval Staff, First Naval Member of **NZ Naval Board**, and Commodore Commanding NZ Squadron, 1 May–15 Oct 1940; Chief of Naval Staff and First Naval Member, 15 Oct 1940–30 Jun 1942; commanded HMS *Renown* 1943; Director of Naval Intelligence, Admiralty, Jul 1946–May 1948; Commander-in-Chief and Chief of Naval Staff, **Royal Indian Navy**, Jul 1948–Oct 1951.

² Air Chf Mshl Sir Hugh Saunders, KCB, KBE, MC, DFC, MM, Legion of Merit (US); **Paris**; born Johannesburg, 24 Aug 1894; Chief of Air Staff, **RNZAF**, 1939–41; AOC No. 11 Group, Fighter Command, 1942–44; commanded **RAF**, **Burma**, 1945–46; AOC-in-C Bomber Command, 1946–47; C-in-C Air Forces, Western Europe, 1950–51; Air Deputy to Supreme Allied Commander, **Europe**, 1 Apr 1951–.

³ Brig **A. E. Conway**, CB, OBE, m. i. d., Legion of Merit (US); **Whakatane**; born Reefton, 7 Apr 1891; Regular soldier; Canterbury Regt, **1 NZEF**, 1914–16; Adjutant-General, NZ Military Forces, 1940–46.

On 6 December information was despatched from **Singapore** that two Japanese convoys, consisting of 35 transports escorted by eight cruisers and ten destroyers, had been sighted off Cambodia Point, sailing north-

west. Even then the British Government hesitated, presuming that another warning might have some effect. A draft note, in which all Commonwealth Governments and the Netherlands Government concurred, was accordingly despatched to Sir Robert Craigie in **Tokyo**. After referring to the deep concern of the British and American Governments at the rapidly growing concentration of Japanese forces in **Indo-China** and the failure of any satisfactory Japanese explanation, the note read:

There is no threat from any quarter against **Indo-China**, and the concentration is only explicable on the assumption that the **Japanese Government** are preparing for some further aggressive move directed against the **Netherlands East Indies, Malaya, or Thailand**. The relations between the Governments of the British Commonwealth and the Netherlands Government are too well known for the **Japanese Government** to be under any illusion as to their reaction to any attack on territories of the **Netherlands**. In the interests of peace His Majesty's Governments feel it incumbent upon them, however, to remove any uncertainty which may exist as regards their attitude in the event of an attack on **Thailand**. His Majesty's Governments have no designs on **Thailand**. On the contrary, the preservation of the full independence and sovereignty of **Thailand** is an important British interest. Any attempt by **Japan** to impair that independence or sovereignty would affect the security of **Burma and Malaya**, and His Majesty's Governments could not be indifferent to it. They feel bound, therefore, to warn the **Japanese Government** in the most solemn manner that if **Japan** attempts to establish her influence in **Thailand** by force or threat of force she will do so at her own peril, and His Majesty's Governments will at once take all appropriate measures. Should hostilities unfortunately result, the responsibility will rest with **Japan**.

President Roosevelt also informed the Thai Premier that the **United States** would regard the invasion of **Thailand, Malaya, Burma, or the Netherlands East Indies** by **Japan** as a hostile act. That same day he also addressed a message to the Emperor of **Japan** in a last-minute attempt

to avoid conflict. Roosevelt stressed the danger of Japanese moves in **Indo-China** and the fears of other states in the South Pacific, finally assuring the Emperor of **America's** desire for peace.

At 7.50 a.m. on Sunday, 7 December 1941, ¹ all further negotiations ended with a surprise attack by Japanese submarines and carrier-based aircraft on **Pearl Harbour**, the **United States** naval base in the Hawaiian Islands and the only powerful base, British or American, east of **Singapore** in the **Pacific**. Nineteen ships were

¹ The timing of the attack given is **Honolulu** time. Eastern standard time would be 1.20 p.m. Because of the international date line which passes through the **Pacific**, the date on which the attack was made was 8 December in New Zealand.

hit; the **Arizona** and the **Oklahoma**, both battleships, were lost—the first was wrecked, the second capsized; three other battleships sank in shallow water and three light cruisers were damaged but were later made seaworthy, as were three seriously damaged destroyers. Fortunately the three aircraft carriers based on **Pearl Harbour** were absent on manoeuvres and survived to play a decisive role later in the **Pacific** war. Only 52 out of 202 navy aeroplanes were airworthy after the attack, which rendered the American Pacific Fleet impotent as an immediate fighting force. The Navy, Army, and **Marine Corps** lost 2335 officers and men killed, missing, and died of wounds, and 1143 wounded. The Japanese lost 29 pilots. Had the Japanese concentrated on the destruction of shore installations such as oil supplies, repair shops, and storage depots with the same intensity they reserved for ships of war, American recovery would have been delayed and the **Pacific** war consequently prolonged.

Several hours after the attack, the Emperor's reply, containing assurances of peace, was delivered to the **United States** Ambassador in **Tokyo**. At 2.05 p.m. on 7 December the Japanese envoys presented themselves at the State Department in **Washington** and fifteen minutes later handed to Mr. Hull their country's formal reply to the American

proposals of 26 November. This document, though it contained declarations of **Japan's** desire to promote peace, accused the **United States** and Great Britain of obstructing a settlement in **China** and by so doing, the document alleged, 'ignored **Japan's** sacrifices in the four years of the **China** affair, menaces the Empire's existence itself, and disparages its honour and prestige'. The document concluded that the **Japanese Government** could not accept the proposal as a basis for negotiation.

Hull knew that **Pearl Harbour** had been attacked an hour previously. He finished reading the document and then, in words almost as historical as Churchill's 'blood and sweat', forcefully told the envoys, 'In all my 50 years of public service I have never seen a document that was more crowded with infamous falsehoods and distortions—infamous falsehoods on a scale so huge that I never imagined until today that any Government on this planet was capable of uttering them'.

Documents produced during the war trials in **Tokyo** revealed that plans for the execution of the war were well in hand while American and British diplomats were attempting to keep **Japan** neutral. In an 'Outline of Japanese Foreign Policy' dated 28 September 1940, the day after **Japan** signed a military alliance with **Germany**, the establishment of 'Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere' was defined as follows:



BRIGADE GROUP ON RANGATIRA leaving Wellington for Fiji on 28 October 1940

A brigade group on Rangatira leaving for **Fiji** on 28 October 1940

30 NZ BATTALION OF 8 BRIGADE GROUP ARRIVES IN FIJI
The first troops to occupy Namaka Camp (Western area)



30 New Zealand Battalion of 8 Brigade Group arrives in **Fiji**. The first troops to occupy **Namaka Camp** (Western area)



FACE OF PETROL TANK SUNK
IN SOAPSTONE OF SEALARK
HILL, SUVA

FACE OF PETROL TANK SUNK IN SOAPSTONE OF **SEALARK HILL**,

II NZ INFANTRY BRIGADE
DEFENCES ON FIJI
Wiring at low tide on Suva waterfront





VICE-ADMIRAL R. M. GHORMLEY ARRIVING AT NAMAKA
AERODROME IN MAY 1942
The group includes (from left to right) Squadron Leader G. R. White,
Group Captain G. N. Roberts, Brigadier L. Potter, Admiral Ghormley,
Vice-Admiral J. S. McCain, Major-General O. H. Mead, and Colonel
E. T. Selzer.

Vice Admiral R.M Ghormley arriving at Namaka Aereodrome in May 1942. The group includes (from left to right) Squadron Leader G. R. White, Group Captain G. N. Roberts, Brigadier L. Potter, Admiral Ghormley, vice-admiral J.S. McCain, Major-General O. H. Mead, and Colonel E.T. Selzer.



THIRD DIVISION MANOEUVRES IN NEW ZEALAND
Mud in the Kaimai Ranges

Third Division Manoeuvres in New Zealand. Mud in the [Kaimai Range](#)



Sappers in the Kaimai Ranges building corduroy roads in bush

In the regions including French Indo- **China**, Dutch East Indies, the Straits Settlements, British Malaya, **Thailand**, the **Philippines**, British Borneo and **Burma**, with **Japan**, Manchukuo, and **China** as centre, we should construct a sphere in which the politics, economy, and culture of those countries and regions are combined.

*(a) French Indo- **China** and the Dutch East Indies:* We must, in the first place, endeavour to conclude a comprehensive economic agreement (including distribution of resources, trade adjustment in and out of the Co-prosperity Sphere, currency and exchange agreement, &c.), while planning such political coalitions as the recognition of independence, conclusion of mutual assistance pacts, &c.

*(b) **Thailand**:* We should strive to strengthen mutual assistance and coalition in political, economic, and military affairs.

A further document dated 4 October 1940, by which time the Dutch had refused the economic concessions demanded by **Japan**, gave details of a 'Tentative plan for policy towards the Southern Regions', of which the first paragraph read:

Although the objective of **Japan**'s penetration into the Southern Regions covers, in its first stage, the whole area to the west of **Hawaii**, excluding for the time being the **Philippines** and **Guam**, French Indo-**China**, the Dutch East Indies, British Burma and the Straits Settlements are the areas which we should first control. Then we should gradually

advance into the other areas. However, depending upon the attitude of the United States Government, the **Philippines** and **Guam** will be included.

French Indo- China:

(a) We should manœuvre an uprising of an independence movement and should cause **France** to renounce her sovereign right. Should we manage to reach an understanding with **Chiang Kai-shek**, the **Tonking** area will be managed by his troops, if military power is needed.... According to circumstances, we should let the army of **Thailand** manage the affairs of Cambodia.

(b) The foregoing measures must be executed immediately after a truce has been concluded with **Chiang Kai-shek**. If we do not succeed in our move with **Chiang Kai-shek**, these measures should be carried out upon the accomplishment of the adjustment of the battle line in **China**. However, in case the German military operations to land on the British mainland (which is to be mentioned later) takes place, it may be necessary to carry out our move towards French **Indo-China** and **Thailand** regardless of our plans for **Chiang Kai-shek**. (This is to be decided according to the liaison with **Germany**).

The **United States**, the Governments of the British Commonwealth, **China**, and the **Netherlands** declared war on **Japan** on 8 December 1941, New Zealand's actual declaration being made at eleven o'clock that morning. **Japan's** formal declaration of war on the **United States** was made after her attack on **Pearl Harbour** and simultaneous attack on **Malaya**, **Hong Kong**, **Guam**, the **Philippines** and Wake Islands. These attacks crumbled the weak defences of the Allied powers. **Guam**, where defences were being hastened, fell on 13 December. **Thailand** became a Japanese ally on 21 December. The Wake garrison held out against great odds until the 23rd. **Hong Kong**, with a garrison of 12,000, surrendered on 25 December—a crippling loss to the Allies in both power and prestige. Two British capital ships—the *Prince of Wales*, a new battleship, and the *Repulse*, a battle cruiser, were lost on 10 December in an attempt to destroy, without air cover, a Japanese convoy off the Malayan coast. It was probably the worst ending of an old year ever experienced in the history of the British Commonwealth. By 23 January

1942 the Japanese had occupied **Borneo**, **Timor**, the **Celebes**, and a part of **New Guinea**. **Singapore** surrendered on 15 February and her garrison of 60,000 was lost. **Rangoon**, **Burma's** chief city, fell on 10 March, and the retreat to **India** had begun. British, Dutch, American, and Australian naval units heroically attempted to stem the tide while the Japanese pressed their attack on the **Netherlands East Indies**, but their forces were destroyed in the Battle of Java Sea on 27 February and landings were almost unopposed. The remnants of the Dutch army were finally overthrown near **Sourabaya**.

By 9 March the Japanese were in full control almost to the coasts of **Australia**, and all the immense and vital stocks of tin, rubber, food, quinine, and oil had been lost to the Allies. Small garrisons of American troops held out until 6 May on Corregidor, the last remaining foothold to surrender in the **Philippines**. Bataan had been abandoned on 9 April. By that time General Douglas MacArthur had been evacuated to **Australia**, where he landed on 17 March. Resistance had been courageous but hopeless against overwhelming numbers and the organisation and unified command of the Japanese, whose infiltration tactics and air superiority overwhelmed every line of Allied defence. By the middle of 1942 the Allies were defending on a line which enabled them to retain only a corner of **New Guinea** beyond the immediate Australian mainland, with island garrisons in **Fiji**, **New Caledonia**, **Tonga**, and **Samoa** beyond New Zealand. While the **United States Navy** held off further attacks and repaired its strength, troops and equipment moved into the island bases in readiness for the deciding conflict of the **Pacific** war, the battle for **Guadalcanal**.

THE PACIFIC

CHAPTER 2 – THE FIJI GARRISON

Contents

I: New Zealand's Responsibility p. 19

II: The First Force and its Work p. 26

III: From Pearl Harbour to Relief p. 42

THE PACIFIC

I: NEW ZEALAND'S RESPONSIBILITY

I: New Zealand's Responsibility

INFLUENCED to some degree by the Jellicoe report of 1919, New Zealand acknowledged **Fiji** as her immediate outpost in the **Pacific**, but without specifying any particular or possible aggressor. This was reiterated in every appreciation of the defence situation and in every recommendation of her Chiefs of Staff through the pre-war years, though little was done except to commit those recommendations to paper. Any fortification of **Fiji** by Great Britain was hampered by the provisions of the Washington Conference of 1921, which applied equally to the American base of Pago Pago in Eastern Samoa, though before the outbreak of war in 1939 certain action had been planned to meet a situation which involved New Zealand in her first conflict in the **Pacific**.

In 1936, when the **British Overseas Defence Committee** considered schemes of defence in the **Pacific**, it was presumed that New Zealand would provide the necessary military force for **Fiji**, since that Crown Colony was obviously unable to defend itself. As the rising tide of German power became more ominous in **Europe** and the Japanese menace created apprehension in the East, more attention was devoted to **Fiji** and the possible aggressor was named. In their comment to the New Zealand Government on the deliberations of the Committee of Imperial Defence in 1938, the New Zealand Chiefs of Staff—Major-General J. E. Duigan,¹ Commodore H. E. Horan, RN,² and Group Captain H. W. L. Saunders—expressed the opinion that **Fiji**, and not **New Guinea** or the **Solomons**, would be the more likely objective should the Japanese press an attack in the South Pacific. 'We feel that in the past insufficient attention has been paid to these islands,' they noted in a memorandum to the Organisation for National Security, outlining defence

¹ Maj-Gen Sir John Duigan, KBE, CB, DSO, m.i.d.; born NZ

30 Mar 1882; served South Africa, 1900–1; **1 NZEF** 1915–18; Chief of General Staff, NZ Military Forces, 1937–41; died 9 Jan 1950.

² Rear-Admiral H. E. Horan, CB, DSC; born **Ireland**, 12 Aug 1890; served First World War, 1914–18 (DSC, Aug 1914); Chief of NZ Naval Staff, 1938–40; captain HMS *Leander*, 1940; Combined Operations Headquarters, 1941–43; Rear-Admiral (retd.) commanding Combined Operations Bases (Western Approaches), 1943–46.

measures for **Fiji** and **Tonga**. An early precautionary measure was an air survey in November 1938 by a **Royal New Zealand Air Force** expedition which visited outlying island groups north of **Fiji**. Alighting areas for seaplanes were buoyed on the lagoons of Fanning, Christmas, Hull and Gardner Islands in the Line and Phoenix Groups, and airfield and building sites were pegged out on the last three islands. This was all part of a scheme in which a series of landing fields radiated from **Fiji** through the **Pacific**, so that aircraft could be flown to any desired area should the necessity arise, as it did later. Four routes were planned: A, through the Gilbert Group; B, through the Phoenix Group; C, to **Samoa**, the Northern Cook and the Line Groups; and D, through **Tonga** and the **Cook Islands**.

Concrete plans for the defence of **Fiji** were resolved at the Defence Conference held in **Wellington** in April 1939, when conditions in **Europe** were rapidly deteriorating. These followed the recommendations of the Chiefs of Staff in 1938 and were approved by the New Zealand Government the following June. Heads of all three fighting services recognised **Fiji** as the key to the South West Pacific, as Jellicoe had visualised it earlier. They appreciated that an enemy force, strongly established in the group, could subdue and contain **Auckland** and most of the **North Island** by air, and that surface craft and submarines stationed at **Suva** could sever the Australian – New Zealand – American shipping lanes. Communication by submarine cable between the American continent and New Zealand and **Australia** would also be lost.

As a result of this conference New Zealand undertook to maintain aerial reconnaissance along the line **New Hebrides— Fiji— Tonga**; establish and man an air base in **Fiji**; provide material and key men for the **Fiji Defence Force**; despatch an infantry brigade group to the colony when it was required and arrange for the construction of two landing fields—one at **Nandi**, on the west of the island of **Viti Levu**, and the other at **Nandali**, near **Nausori**, 15 miles from **Suva** on the Rewa River. The proposed capital expenditure for these projects suggests that New Zealand was acutely conscious of her responsibilities; future events confirmed it. Financial responsibility for the defences of **Fiji** was arranged on a pool basis—the **Fiji** administration contributing £500,000 a year, half of which was advanced on loan by the United Kingdom Government. New Zealand was to meet any expenditure over and above that amount.

Maintenance costs for the forces established in **Fiji** were met by the New Zealand Government, but a solution to financial questions concerning the defence of the Crown Colony was not reached without lengthy negotiations by Treasury officials and long despatches between the three governments concerned—the **United Kingdom**, New Zealand, and **Fiji**. Separate agreements were reached on the cost of various works and installations—for example, the capital cost of the airfields was met equally by the New Zealand and United Kingdom Governments, whereas the cost of the marine airport at **Lauthala Bay** was met by New Zealand and **Fiji**. The preliminary estimates, drawn up as a result of the **Wellington** conference in 1939 but which afterwards required much adjustment between governments, provided for the following costs:

Navy £25,680—of which £20,000 was set aside for oil storage tanks.

Army £290,000—including £245,000 for buildings.

Air£692,000—including £400,000 for the purchase of new aircraft, if they could be procured.

The proposed annual expenditure was estimated at:

Navy £8750—which included £3000 for pay and rations.

Army £1,156,000—including £876,000 for pay and rations.

Air £180,000—including £60,000 for pay and rations.

A meteorological organisation costing £3300 was also recommended and later approved, New Zealand to pay 50 per cent of the cost, the **United Kingdom** and **Fiji** each 20 per cent, and the **Western Pacific High Commission** 10 per cent. These estimates also required adjustment as the scheme matured. ¹

Fiji's small defence organisation, consisting of a headquarters, signal unit, and one weak Territorial battalion under the command of the Commissioner of Police, Colonel J. E. Workman, was little more than a token force, but it provided the framework for expansion on the outbreak of war in **Europe** when, like so many other Empire outposts, she began hurriedly to put her small military house in order. The size of it is indicated by the Governor's authority, signed in September 1939, raising the full-time officers from one to four. New Zealand began immediately to honour her commitments. Five hundred rifles and sets of web equipment were sent to arm the new recruits. At the end of September HMS *Leander* made a hurried dash to **Suva** with two heavy guns, which were unloaded and emplaced under cover of darkness. They were dummies, carried ashore by two sailors. It was part of the policy of deception forced on authority by circumstance in those first confused days of the war. Four instructors followed in November—Captain H. G. Wooller, WO I D. W. Stewart, WO I C. E. Burgess,

¹ By the time the **United States** assumed command in **Fiji** in 1942, £805,237 had been spent on the defences of the Crown Colony. At the end of the war **Fiji** owed New Zealand a debt of £768,580 4s. 5d., but her debt of £2 millions owed to the United Kingdom Government was cancelled.

and WO II C. Turner. Stewart and Burgess afterwards became captains with the Fijian forces, and served with them in the **Solomons**. Then, on 5 June 1940, New Zealand decided to raise and train an

infantry brigade group for **Fiji**, the force to consist of 2908 all ranks, increased before departure to 3053. This scheme was originally envisaged as a combined garrison and advanced training ground for reinforcements for 2 NZ Division in the **Middle East**, the First Echelon of which had left New Zealand on 6 January. It provided for the relief of the men after six months' service, after which they were to return to New Zealand to become reinforcements for the force in Egypt. Later events in the **Pacific** required drastic modification of this scheme.

Before the arrival of the brigade in **Fiji** a good deal of preliminary work had been either outlined or accomplished. Early in 1940 work began on the airfields at **Nandi** and Nandali by New Zealand construction units. Two modest 4.7-inch naval guns from the **United Kingdom** replaced the dummies and were sited on Mission Hill behind **Suva** by Lieutenant-Colonel F. N. Nurse, Royal Australian Artillery, and two New Zealand instructors, Battery Sergeant-Major A. Wainwright and Sergeant S. Wilce, who left New Zealand in October 1939 to organise and train staff and men for this coastal battery. When Major B. Wicksteed, RNZA,¹ took over command of the battery in March 1940, the guns startled **Suva** residents in their trial shoots, the range of 10,500 yards enabling shells to fall beyond the reef which protected the harbour. Wicksteed took ten trained New Zealand gunners with him to hold key posts and mould the native Fijians who had been selected for training. General satisfaction was expressed by the townsfolk that some defence was at last obvious, even though these guns would have been about as useful as a catapult against the heavy armour of a modern warship.

Meanwhile, a desirable martial spirit had exercised the Territorial Force, which had been increased to 31 officers and 743 other ranks, who were guarding vital points in the **Suva** area when they were not training; 11 officers and 286 other ranks were similarly employed and disposed over the **Lautoka**-Mba-Vatukoula area. Major C. W. Free, MC,² a New Zealand officer who had been in the Indian Army, joined the headquarters in August 1939 as staff officer G, and the number of instructors from New Zealand, both infantry and artillery, was increased

to sixteen by 1940. When the

¹ **Lt-Col B. Wicksteed**; born Stratford, 29 May 1910; Regular soldier; commanded 33 Hy Regt, Sep 1942–Jul 1943; 17 Fd Regt, Nov 1943–1944; British Commonwealth Forces in **Korea**.

² **Maj C. W. Free**, MC; born Reefton, 6 Feb 1893; Indian Army; GSO 1, 8 Bde Gp (**Fiji**) 1940–41; died Johannesburg, 18 Apr 1944.

Niagara was sunk outside **Auckland** on 19 June 1940, Captain G. T. Upton's ¹ arrival at **Suva** was delayed, but only long enough to enable him to replace some to his kit. He took over command of the **Suva** Regular Company on 13 July 1940, and remained with the **Fiji** Defence Force until the end of the war, ultimately commanding a battalion. But **Fiji** was deplorably short of equipment at that time. Gunners practised their gun drill, with some degree of reality, on two ancient three-pounder guns discarded years previously and salvaged from a Public Works store; connecting rods from a captured 1914–18 German machine gun were brought out of the museum to enable a Vickers gun to operate.

Much the same state of affairs existed with a coast watching system which had been organised by the civil administration to cover the islands of the group and report the presence of hostile shipping. Natives maintained a twenty-four hour watch at the more important vantage points, relaying their information by a variety of methods to a central station at **Suva**, where it was examined and the more important facts sent on to New Zealand. Efficient wireless equipment was lacking, and weather played havoc with the two-way sets then in use on only a few of the more important outlying islands, such as **Kandavu**. The long-distance telephone system on **Viti Levu** was little better than wireless and so temperamental from a variety of reasons as to be useless quite often. On many distant island stations communication was by canoe or pre-arranged smoke signal, a system much at the mercy of unpredictable elements. Breakdowns in this primitive system were frequent and

inevitable, but it was the only one possible at the time and until more efficient equipment became available. Natives, often without shelter, were wonderfully loyal. Though they were unaccustomed to long and boring hours of this voluntary work in all weathers, they performed a magnificent task, reporting the movements of ships and aircraft in a queer formula devised for their use. It is not surprising that they did not pick up the German raider *Orion*, which cruised off the group from 19 to 23 July 1940. Communications were not satisfactorily or efficiently organised until 1941, when Mr. **L. H. Steel**, of the New Zealand Post and Telegraph Department, took them in hand when he was appointed Controller of Pacific Communications, with headquarters in **Suva**.

Deterioration of relations with **Japan**, and events in **Europe** after the fall of **France**, hastened the **Fiji** defence preparations and the departure of a force to the Colony. At the end of July the three New Zealand Chiefs of Staff, General Duigan, Commodore W. E.

¹ **Lt-Col G. T. Upton**, DSO, Bronze Star (US); **Auckland**; born **Auckland**, 8 Oct 1912; journalist; CO 1 Bn, **Fiji** Infantry Regt, Dec 1943–Feb 1945.

Parry (who had replaced Horan as Chief of Naval Staff), and Air Commodore Saunders sailed for **Fiji** in HMS *Achilles*, accompanied by Colonel W. H. Cunningham, CBE, DSO, ¹ who had been called up from the reserve of officers to command the new brigade, and Major E. R. **McKillop**, ² of the Engineers. They spent four days considering troop dispositions and defence measures and conferred with the Governor, Sir Harry Luke, KCMG, before returning to **Wellington**, where they recommended the immediate despatch of the brigade to garrison **Viti Levu** and certain assistance in men and material to the Kingdom of **Tonga**. Cunningham and McKillop remained in **Fiji** selecting camp sites and drafting preliminary details of a defence scheme before returning to New Zealand in August.

On 20 September, seven days before **Japan** signed a military alliance

with **Germany** and **Italy**, **Cunningham**, promoted to the rank of Brigadier, opened his headquarters at **Ngaruawahia Camp**. Although his command was officially designated 8 Infantry Brigade Group, it became B Force for purposes of organisation and despatch. Meanwhile, **McKillop** returned to **Fiji** to supervise and push forward the construction of camps in which to house the brigade. He was followed in August by an engineer unit originally destined for the **Middle East**— **18 Army Troops Company** under Major L. A. **Lincoln**,³ which also acted as advanced party for the main force. By the time the engineers arrived, **McKillop's** small army of 500 **Fijian** and **Indian** labourers was altering a landscape which had not suffered such mutilation for centuries, as they toiled from dawn to dusk seven days a week preparing camp sites. In a region where typhoid fever and dysentery were prevalent, hatted and mosquito-proof camps were essential. Major J. R. **Wells**, **NZMC**,⁴ preceded the main force and prepared a voluminous report which recommended the chlorination of all drinking water, fly-proofing of food stores, mess huts, and kitchens, in addition to septic tanks and underground drainage for camp areas. These were necessary if the

¹ **Maj-Gen W. H. Cunningham**, CBE, DSO, ED, m.i.d.; **Wellington**; born **Wellington**, 24 Sep 1883; barrister and solicitor; **1 NZEF** 1914–19; commanded 8 Bde Gp, 1940–41; GOC **Fiji**, 1940–41; GOC Pacific Section, **2 NZEF**, 1942; Crown Prosecutor, **Wellington**.

² **Col E. R. McKillop**, CMG, OBE; **Wellington**; born **Invercargill**, 26 Jul 1895; civil engineer; **1 NZEF** 1915–19; Staff Engineer, HQ B Force (**Fiji**) 1940–41; Deputy Commissioner, Defence Construction Council, 1941–45; Commissioner of Works, Ministry of Works, 1945–.

³ **Lt-Col L. A. Lincoln**, ED, m. i. d.; **Auckland**; born **Auckland**, 14 Sep 1902; civil engineer; OC 18 A Tps Coy (**Fiji** and **Egypt**) Jul 1940–Jan 1942; 7 Fd Coy **NZE**, Jan–Sep 1942; seconded to **British Army** Sep 1942; CRE No. 56 (Works) RE, **Syria**, Aug 1943–Nov 1944.

⁴ **Lt-Col J. R. Wells; Ashburton**; born Waihola, Otago, 28 May 1893; surgeon; Medical Officer, **NZMC**, 1917–19; 8 Bde Gp, Sep 1940–Mar 1941 (7 Fd Amb and OC Mil Hosp); Medical Officer **2 NZEF**, Egypt, 1941–42; HS *Manuganui*, Dec 1942–May 1943; SMO Waiouru, **Burnham**, and Papakura Military Camps, 1943–45.

health of troops was to be maintained in a climate where broken skin turned to septic ulcers, and the continual bites of mosquitoes led to dengue fever and constant irritation. Because supplies of fresh meat, butter, and vegetables were almost unobtainable in **Fiji** and required by the civilians, most of these perishable stores were brought from New Zealand. It was some months, however, before the medical recommendations could be made fully effective.

There was much preliminary work to be done in great haste in both New Zealand and **Fiji**. Cunningham was unable to build up a fully trained staff, and the greater part of his brigade strength was retained from the Third Echelon, then being trained and equipped for service in the **Middle East**. Many of his headquarters staff and the battalion commanders had seen service in Egypt and **France** in 1914–18 and were referred to as 'retreads' by the younger generation. During organisation, also, components of the brigade were widely scattered. The 29th Battalion and **30 Battalion** were trained and partly equipped at **Ngaruawahia** and Te Rapa. Two reinforcement companies, which by a process of evolution became the Reserve Battalion and then the 34th, **35 Field Battery**, **20 Field Company**, and **4 Composite Company**, ASC, were all at **Papakura**. At Trentham **7 Field Ambulance** and various details such as Pay, Records, Ordnance, Provost, and Signals were assembled for departure, so that units knew little of each other until they reached their destination. All of them were short of much essential equipment, and some of the men had been in camp only a few days before they sailed. They drew their equipment as it came to hand, some of the men visiting the quartermaster's stores as many as fifteen times. The fact that they were the first members of **2 NZEF** to be issued with New Zealand made battle dress was little compensation for the long delays in obtaining

equipment. Infantry units took turns in borrowing machine guns for training. Because of its distance from New Zealand and the task to which it was assigned, Cunningham's small force included units which normally were associated with a higher formation. It was equipped and maintained from New Zealand's own meagre supplies, which at that time were not sufficient even for her home defences.

Appointments to 8 Infantry Brigade Group on its arrival in **Fiji** in November 1940 were:

Officer Commanding	Brig W. H. Cunningham, CBE, DSO
GSO 1	Lt-Col C. W. Free, MC
GSO 2	Maj J. H. Irving
Construction and Works	Lt- Col E. R. McKillop
AA and QMG	Maj G. T. Kellaway, MC
Supply Officer	Capt R. C. Aley
Intelligence Officer	Lt O. A. Gillespie, MM
Transport Officer	Lt C. A. Voss
Signals Officer	Lt L. C. Stephens
Pay	Capt W. P. McGowan
Records	Lt G. A. R. Johnstone
Provost	Lt A. L. Downes
Dental Officer	Capt H. A'C. Fitzgerald
29 Battalion	Lt-Col H. J. Thompson, MC
30 Battalion	Lt-Col J. B. Mawson, MC
Reserve Battalion (afterwards 34 Battalion)	Maj F. W. Voelcker, MC
35 Field Battery	Maj C. H. Loughnan, MC
20 Field Company, Engineers	Maj R. J. Black, MC
4 Composite Company, ASC	Maj A. Craig
7 Field Ambulance	Lt-Col P. C. Davie (also senior medical officer)

Early in 1941 several changes took place and the staff was slightly increased: Free returned to **India** and his place was taken by Lieutenant-Colonel J. G. C. Wales, MC; Lieutenant Noel Erridge arrived to become Ordnance Officer, and **Matron G. L. Thwaites** arrived with a small nursing service with which to staff the military hospital.

THE PACIFIC

II: THE FIRST FORCE AND ITS WORK

II: The First Force and its Work

When New Zealand troops of the brigade landed in **Fiji** on 1 November 1940 they made history. It was the first time a defence force from a self-governing dominion had been sent to garrison a Crown Colony of the Empire. The brigade moved there in three flights, the first leaving **Wellington** on 28 October in the *Rangatira* after the traditional speeches of farewell from the Governor-General, Lord Galway, the Prime Minister, the Hon. P. Fraser, and the Minister of Defence, the **Hon. F. Jones**. HMS *Monowai*,¹ a converted cruiser, was both escort for the convoy and transport for the field artillery. After disembarking troops at **Suva** the *Rangatira* ran a shuttle service, transporting the remaining two flights, one of which went direct to **Lautoka**, in the west. By the end of November the brigade was established in **Fiji** and enduring all the initial discomforts which attend a military expedition organised and despatched in haste, particularly to a hot and exhausting climate. **Fiji**, 1100 miles north of New Zealand, was new and unknown territory to most members of the force who were making their first acquaintance with the tropics, and in circumstances which gravely

¹ In September 1941 the King approved the designation HMNZS for all ships of the **Royal New Zealand Navy**.

disillusioned them as reality dispelled any romantic guide-book nonsense about tropical islands.

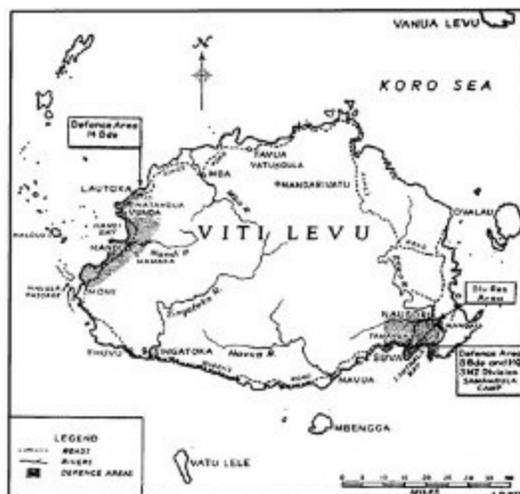
The Crown Colony of **Fiji**, consisting of 250 islands, was ceded to Great Britain in 1874. Thakambau, an influential chief, had previously offered the territory to **Britain** for the modest sum of £9000, and also to the **United States**. The British Government rejected the first offer; accepted a second. The **United States** Government did not even bother to

reply. The group lies in the hurricane belt, 15 degrees south of the Equator. Temperatures range from an average of 91 degrees in summer to 62 degrees in winter. One feature of the group, like so many other **Pacific** islands, is that each island has its wet and dry side, with a vastly differing rainfall. In the eastern area, which has an exhausting, humid climate, the average is 120 inches a year and sometimes 200 inches; in the west 70 to 80 inches fall annually. **Suva**, port, capital, and seat of Government, spreads its homes and gardens over a peninsula on the eastern coast of **Viti Levu**, the largest and most populous island, with the shopping areas and Government buildings on the water-front. Vanua Levu, the second largest island, lies to the north but is sparsely inhabited. Smaller islands of varying size, some of them merely atolls and banks, dot the seas around the two large islands. Coral reefs act as a natural defence line, with openings only at mouths of rivers and freshwater streams. The group is so situated that all trans- **Pacific** shipping lines converge on **Suva**, a town of 13,000 inhabitants, mostly Indian and Fijian. In addition to a moderately good harbour inside the reef, there is a vast stretch of protected water known as **Lauthala Bay** where, on the outbreak of war, a seaplane base was being constructed. New Zealanders watched the arrival there of the first regular American clippers on the trans- **Pacific** service, which ceased with the attack on **Pearl Harbour**; but work on the base continued and it proved an invaluable asset during the war years.

Cunningham decided to defend the two most vital areas on Vitu Levu—the **Suva** Peninsula in the east, with its harbour facilities, communications, cable link, supply depots and stores, and the Nandali airfield, 15 miles away on the left bank of the Rewa River; and the Namaka area in the west which included the small town and port of **Lautoka**, the **Nandi** airfield (later to play a vital part in **Pacific** strategy), and the Navula Passage, the entrance to **Nandi** anchorage, which was overlooked by the barren, rolling hills of Momi. These two zones were 150 miles apart, linked by one circular coastal road and, when it was organised later, a modest air service, operating when weather permitted between the two airfields. The confusing jumble of densely wooded hills

of Viti Levu made cross-country communication impossible.

Cunningham's problem was to defend those two vital zones with the inadequate force at his disposal, and its solution was made more difficult by the lack of armament and transport and the necessity of dividing his engineers, medical, signal, and supply units to service each zone. There were problems on a Government level also, for accommodation and public utilities were lamentably short in a remote island catering for seasonal tourists and a small white population of only 4000 Europeans.



Cunningham's plan of two defended zones on the island of Viti Levu in Fiji is indicated by the shaded areas. They were joined by one narrow coastal road

Cunningham's plan of two defended zones on the island of **Viti Levu** in **Fiji** is indicated by the shade areas. They were joined by one narrow coastal road.

Two principal camp sites were selected, one at **Samambula**, four miles from **Suva**, beside the golf links where undulating country met all reasonable requirements, and at Namaka, 17 miles from **Lautoka**, in the western coastal region of sugar-cane and pineapple plantations. Hutted camps were not ready when the force arrived, despite the sweating efforts of the engineers, and units went under canvas. Heavy rain, falling in warm grey torrents almost daily, hindered construction work in the **Suva** zone, and the immediate camp areas soon bred a profane familiarity with the adhesive qualities of **Fiji** mud. Earth-moving equipment, heavy or light, was not available, and picks and shovels were not wielded with any great degree of urgency by natives long accustomed to leisurely movement in the heat. Progress was faster in the dry Namaka area, where a camp of 400 Public Works type huts was

constructed.

Force Headquarters opened in the basement of Government Buildings in Suva until suitable accommodation was constructed early in the New Year round Borron's House, a private residence crowning a hill overlooking the town and the long, creaming surf ceaselessly breaking along the reef beyond. The 29th and Reserve Battalions, with ancillary services, were stationed at Samambula in tents, gradually taking over the standard 84 ft by 21 ft huts as they were finished at McKillop's constant urging. Headquarters staff was housed in hotels in the town or at Nasese, a Fiji Defence Force camp some distance away, and from which they marched to duty each morning in a lather of perspiration until a transport truck was made available to them. The 30th Battalion went direct to Lautoka from New Zealand, travelling from ship's side to camp area in the Colonial Sugar Refining Company's unique railway, the only one in the Colony and used principally for hauling cane to the crushing mill. The immediate fortification of the area, with 50 miles of coastline, was put in hand by Mawson,¹ who also became area commander. On 6 November Cunningham was appointed Commandant of the Fiji Defence Force, with operational control over all land forces in Fiji, Tonga, and Fanning Island. Fiji units were absorbed into his command, 1 Battalion remaining in the Suva area and 2 Battalion at Namaka under Mawson. However, the Fiji Defence Force retained an administrative headquarters, under Lieutenant-Colonel J. P. Magrane, when Workman relinquished command after Cunningham's arrival.

At Cunningham's first unit conference on 4 November, areas were allotted and defence roles defined. The immediate task was the denial to a possible enemy of the beaches and harbours in both zones. Four of 35 Battery's 18-pounder guns were despatched to Momi to defend the Navula Passage between the mainland and Malolo Island; the remaining two guns were sited at Lami village to cover the entrance to Suva Harbour and assist the fixed guns sited on Mission Hill behind the town. Belts of barbed wire were erected inland along the waterfront at low-water level on the more vulnerable beaches. These were covered by machine-gun

¹ **Lt-Col J. B. Mawson**, MC, ED; born 26 Sep 1891; headmaster; Wellington Regt and NZ Machine Gun Corps, 1915–18; CO 30 Bn, 1940–41; died 20 Apr 1951.

emplacements, and systems of trenches designed as alternative positions in the defence scheme. Roads were constructed by the engineers through both zones to give the battalions greater tactical mobility. By and large the Colony derived benefit from these defence preparations, for they gave it a fulfilled public works programme unthinkable in years of peace. These new roads, to this day commemorating the names of the first commanders, Cunningham and Mead, enabled the ASC to site supply dumps at strategical points throughout the defended areas in accordance with Cunningham's policy of building up a three months' reserve of oil and petrol and six months' reserve of rations, slowly accumulated as they arrived from New Zealand. The influx of thousands of troops naturally strained the limited public amenities of **Suva** and created some difficulty, particularly in the supply of water and electric power to camps and barracks. Unaccustomed to the heat and constant sweating, each man used an average of 80 gallons of water a day which even a bountiful rainfall could not hope to replenish. Restrictions were ordered by Cunningham, who was required to satisfy both civil and military authorities.

Much had been accomplished by the turn of the year, mostly by hard labour and the vigorous use of pick and shovel. Major difficulties were overcome, and the men became hardened to heat, mosquitoes, rain, and improvisation. Those who were allergic to the tropics never became accustomed to any of these things and voiced their sentiments in long, outspoken letters home. Soon their bodies were burnished to the colour of mahogany as they toiled in shorts, hat, and boots securing the defence lines. Gunnery and air problems were discussed by the commander with Colonel A. B. Williams, DSO, ¹ Director of Artillery at Army Headquarters, and Group Captain A. de T. Nevill, ² of Air

Headquarters, who were among the first senior officers to arrive for consultations—Williams to advise on the siting of fixed guns; Nevill on air services. Two 6-inch naval guns intended for the defence of Lyttelton Harbour had been diverted to **Fiji** by the New Zealand Government to replace the 4.7-inch on Mission Hill. The smaller guns were then transferred to a site which also commanded the harbour entrance but from the opposite side. Engineers sealed off the defence zones with road blocks and arranged for the demolition of bridges on

¹ **Brig A. B. Williams**, DSO, m.i.d., Legion of Merit (US); **Cambridge**; born **Rotorua**, 4 Feb 1892; Regular soldier; NZ Fd Arty, 1915–19; CRNZA Army HQ, Dec 1939–Feb 1942; NZ Army representative, Combined Chiefs of Staff, **Washington**, Feb 1942–Oct 1943; Commandant, Central Military District, Oct 1943–Dec 1944; Northern Military District, Mar 1945–Apr 1947.

² **AVM Sir Arthur Nevill**, KBE, CB, Legion of Merit (US); **Wellington**; born **Dunedin**, 29 Apr 1899; **RNZAF**; AOC RNZAF HQ, **London**, and attached Coastal Command, **RAF**, 1942–43; Vice-Chief of Air Staff 1944–46; CAS 1946–51.

their boundaries. The **Suva** Girls' Grammar School was taken over and transformed into a military hospital, with Matron Thwaities ¹ in charge of a nursing staff which worked long hours to cope with ailments provoked by heat and a violent change of climate, and made worse by an epidemic of measles which coincided with the arrival of the force.

Shortages were the predominating worry, but these could not be met immediately by New Zealand, though appeals had been made overseas for additional equipment. Clothing was a problem which caused irritation among the men. Much of the tropical kit with which they had been issued—shorts and shirt suitable for the climate—was ill-fitting and bore the date of their manufacture in 1917. This was remedied later by the employment of Indian tailors, but in the intervening periods many of the men equipped themselves with more presentable garments made by local tailors. Increased issues of better fitting shirts, shorts, tunics, and long

trousers stilled the complaints and pointed a moral for the equipment of similar expeditions. Tunics which buttoned closely to the chin were later discarded in favour of open-necked shirts.

During the early months of the **Fiji** expedition, complaints reached New Zealand from those who were returned unfit for further service and others who wrote petulantly about the unsuitability of both clothing and rations, the attitude of the white residents, the lack of recreational facilities, and the high prices of tobacco and drinks. Cunningham, in one of his replies to the Minister, pointed out that such complaints 'put senior officers to unending trouble endeavouring to answer the unanswerable. Complaints of a general nature, incapable of exact answer, exasperate one beyond endurance, particularly in this climate'. **Davie**,² the senior medical officer, who had protested that many of the men sent to **Fiji** were unfit and that their ailments were aggravated by the heat and the prevailing conditions, reported very fully on a series of these complaints, stating that the few white residents of the Colony welcomed troops to their homes in a way unheard of in New Zealand. He concluded that the majority of the men were as happy as they could be without the stimulus of actual fighting. Investigation usually revealed that the complaints came from the usual small percentage of malcontents without which no armed force is complete. Generally speaking, the soldiers realised

¹ Matron Miss G. L. Thwaites, RRC; born NZ 23 Jun 1899; Matron, Military Hospital, **Suva**, Nov 1940–Aug 1941; **Waiouru** and **Trentham Camp Hospitals**, 1942–43; HS **Maunganui** Dec 1944–Mar 1946.

² **Lt-Col P. C. Davie**, ED, m.i.d.; born NZ 6 Jul 1887; surgeon; Medical Officer RAMC 1915–18; CO 7 Fd Amb (**Fiji**) Oct 1940–Oct 1941; OC NZ Troops HS **Orani** 1941–42; CO 2 Fd Amb (NZ) 1942–43; died Dec 1949.

their responsibilities. When Brigadier F. T. Bowerbank,¹ Director-

General of Medical Services, visited the force early in 1941 he reported that the health of the troops was good.

The authorities did all they could to provide amenities, and the residents themselves responded with enthusiasm. Churches of all denominations opened clubs and organised dances and concerts; the small European colony of Government officials and business and professional men opened their hospitable doors as wide as they were able; trading companies organised weekend picnics, and golf and tennis clubs offered the use of their courses and courts. YMCA representatives began in a modest way in the camps and provided some relief from boredom in the evenings. Finally a New Zealand Club, erected on the Suva waterfront by the National Patriotic Fund Board, provided a rendezvous for all, day or evening, and here the women of Suva emulated their Trojan sisters in hours of work.

During weekends and holidays parties of soldiers visited the more distant villages, where they were received by the hospitable Fijians and initiated into traditional kava-drinking ceremonies. From time to time, also, representative Fijians, smart in spotless white *sulus* and coats of European cut, visited the military camps bearing gifts of fruit and vegetables which supplemented menus not overburdened with fresh foods, most of which came from New Zealand and much deteriorated on the way. Refrigerated space was at a premium during the first year, but large cool-stores finally overcame the food problem. The New Zealand soldier dislikes being deprived of his customary meat, potatoes, and butter in generous quantity, and he soon grew tired of native fruits like pawpaw and pineapple, and vegetables such as yam and dalo were not to his taste. An endeavour to provide fresh fruit and vegetables from Fijian sources cost £500 a month. These were only a few of the growing pains of garrison duty on which 8 Infantry Brigade embarked without adequate provision and little advance preparation.

Although training was hampered by the shortage of mortars, grenades, and sub-machine guns, a certain amount was accomplished and provided relief from the construction of defence works. The brigade

was still short of 66 of its motor vehicles in December. Picks, shovels, and other digging implements were so short that units took turns in using those available, and other construction material was obtained from the **Fiji** Public Works Department on

¹ Maj-Gen Sir Fred T. Bowerbank, KBE, ED, m.i.d., Grand Officer Order of Orange-Nassau (**Netherlands**); **Wellington**; born Penrith, England, 30 Apr 1880; **NZMC** 1915–20; DMS Army and PMO Air 1934–39; Director-General of Medical Services (Army and Air), Army HQ, Sep 1939–Mar 1947.

a ‘beg and borrow’ basis. However, through 1941, the force was built up and the defences improved as equipment slowly reached **Fiji**, but the distance from any active sphere of operations and the effects of the heat could be noticed in the attitude of the soldiers to service in the Colony. Digging and wiring, route-marching and guard duties, limited tactical exercises by day and night drained their enthusiasm and increased their desire for relief. In the sunbaked, waterless region of Momi, infested with flies and mosquitoes, and among the dry sugar plantations of Namaka, units of **30 Battalion** and **35 Battery** endured great physical hardship, relieved now and then by visits to lovely Sawani Beach, one of the few which really conformed to the standards of the tourist pamphlets. But it was a grim period for the men.

As soon as Force Headquarters was established at Borron's, with offices grouped round the main building on the hilltop, a combined operations centre was organised for the smoother and more efficient dissemination of all intelligence information pooled by representatives of the three services. Lieutenant-Commander P. Dearden, RN, ¹ whose service in the 1914–18 War had been summarily interrupted at the Battle of Jutland when his ship blew up, arrived in January to assume the duties of resident naval officer which, until then, were performed none too satisfactorily by **Fiji** Customs officials. The naval officer routed all shipping which passed through the group as part of the routine to avoid loss from enemy raiders, both surface craft and submarines, any

knowledge of whose presence in and around the group was essential to naval intelligence in New Zealand. Coastwatching was also linked in with naval intelligence, and a workable system gradually emerged from the more primitive though useful original.

Reports from untrained but enthusiastic Fijian coastwatchers were responsible for much fruitless investigation but, however fantastic, they were never disregarded. Submarines invariably proved to be floating coconut logs, including one which was reported to have taken on fresh water and vegetables in an unfrequented bay, and another with the crew busily engaged in cleaning the hull on the beach. Suspicious lights were fishermen on the reefs, using flares at night as they have done for centuries; one aeroplane, complete with navigation lights, was a weather balloon released by Flight Lieutenant W. R. Dyer, of the meteorological staff; gunfire proved to be thunder, which it closely resembles in the tropics, and, on one occasion, a stranded whale threshing madly on a reef.

¹ Lt-Cdr P. Dearden, RN (retd.); **Waipukurau**; born NZ 30 Nov 1897; sheep farmer; Resident Naval Officer, **Fiji**; HMNZS *Philomel* (executive officer).

All such reports were investigated by air, if the weather was suitable. Squadron Leader D. W. Baird, **RNZAF**, ¹ operated a small air force detachment consisting of two de Havilland 89s and two de Havilland 96s which had formerly served a civil air line in New Zealand, and a Moth for training. Two of these aircraft were stationed at **Nandi** under command of Squadron Leader G. R. **White**. ² In addition to identification of ships in waters round the group, Baird's aircraft maintained a regular service between the east and west zones and made reconnaissance flights to **Tonga**. The first of many alarms that German raiders were off the coast occurred on 25 November 1940, when a coastwatcher at Momi reported an unidentified armed merchant cruiser off the coast. Battle stations were occupied by **30 Battalion** with commendable speed, and Flight Lieutenant E. N. Griffiths, who was afterwards killed while piloting an

Airacobra, flew over the ship and identified her as HMS *Monowai*. When night operations began on a brigade scale in 1941, Baird, who was also air adviser to Cunningham, flew his training Moth over the defences, dropping dummy bombs of homely flour as the troops moved to their positions in the early hours of the morning.

During January and February of 1941 the men experienced their first real rainy season, when the warm, moisture laden atmosphere produces mildew overnight inside hats and boots and even on tin trunks. With it came persistent hurricane rumours but, as none had visited **Fiji** for some years, they were ignored. February opened with oppressive heat and torrential rainstorms, producing conditions which, in the tropics, breed short tempers and imaginary slights and a disposition to procrastinate—conditions rather difficult to control and collectively referred to as *malua*. On 19 February the meteorological section of the **RNZAF** issued a warning that a storm of some violence might be expected as the erratic course of a hurricane was plotted, zigzagging at sea between **Fiji** and **Tonga**. It broke the following morning—the worst hurricane experienced in **Fiji** for twenty-one years. Warnings were issued to all units as the day broke with leaden skies and an unusual gusty wind. All tents were struck in both areas, canopies were removed from motor vehicles, and buildings were hurriedly wired and strutted to withstand a gale.

¹ **Gp Capt D. W. Baird, AFC; Wellington; born Bangor, Northern Ireland, 23 Dec 1910; RAF (1931–37) and RNZAF (1938–); commanded RNZAF, Fiji, 1940–41; 490 (NZ) Sqn, West Africa, 1943; Director of Flying Training 1945–46; Director of Operations and Flying Training 1950–51; Director of Reserves 1951–.**

² **Wg Cdr G. R. White; Raupare, Hastings; born Wairoa, 11 Nov 1905; civil airways pilot.**

By nine o'clock the wind increased to tremendous force, driving in

from the sea a wall of warm grey rain which stung like hail. Two hours later the hurricane was raging at its height. Huge trees toppled and snapped; palms bent so that their crowns of fronds swept the earth like dusters; sheets of corrugated iron whisked through the air like postage stamps or were wrapped round tree trunks like paper. At 11.15 a.m. the wind reached 110 miles an hour, but as the recording instruments broke at that time no accurate record was ever established. Telephone and power lines went down under the weight of wind and wreckage. One military line survived until midday, and when it broke headquarters was isolated from all units except by a wireless link which maintained communication with Namaka only with extreme difficulty.

Late in the afternoon, when the hurricane dissolved in heavy rain, the landscape looked as though it had been stripped by locusts. Tangles of branches, wreckage, and wires blocked streets and roads. Three ships in the harbour, which had escaped from Nauru Island when their convoy was shelled on 6, 7 and 8 December by the German raiders *Orion* and *Komet*, were driven high on mudbanks. Two aeroplanes, exactly half the RNZAF's strength in the Pacific, were wrecked on the Nandali airfield, where they had been tied down. Six buildings were blown down in Samambula Camp, and others, including officers' quarters at Borron's House and a motor transport workshops at Samambula, were leaning at crazy angles. Camps in the Namaka area escaped with heavy flooding, though the Nandi River rose 30 feet.

That evening the quartermaster's store at Samambula caught fire because of the faulty handling of petrol, destroying a quantity of equipment and ammunition. The day's damage was estimated at £1725 but no lives were lost, though escape from injury was miraculous. One supply convoy, returning by the northern coastal road from Namaka, was trapped by swiftly rising water and marooned for 36 hours, as were other parties moving along the south coast road, where bridges were washed away and slips prevented all traffic for several days. Calls for assistance were made on all units, and for a week gangs of infantrymen cleared debris from roads and streets, often with borrowed saws and

axes. Engineers went to the aid of the **Fiji** Public Works Department, and men from Signals assisted the Post and Telegraph Department to restore and repair their grievously damaged services in both town and country. A special message from the Governor expressed the thanks of the Colony for military aid. Torrential rain continued through April, blocking roads and flooding coastal areas. Forty inches fell in twenty-three days, sometimes at the rate of two inches an hour, which hindered both work and training.

In an effort to give variety to garrison life, 29 and 30 Battalions periodically exchanged areas throughout the year. A tour of duty in the **Suva** area certainly broke the monotony of life at Momi and Namaka. Early in May full-scale manœuvres, made as realistic as possible despite shortages of equipment, began with alarms at midnight or the early hours of the morning. At the end of that month Cunningham submitted to New Zealand a list of equipment still vitally necessary for the efficient operation of his force. This included two 18-pounder guns to complete the establishment of 35 Battery; mechanical transport for both 35 Battery and **34 Battalion**, which had now emerged from the chrysalis of the Reserve Battalion; fighting and training equipment, including twelve Lewis and four Vickers machine guns for **34 Battalion**; trench mortars and Bren guns for all infantry units; medical supplies which were lamentably short; signals equipment; and tools for **20 Light Aid Detachment** which, at the end of six months' exacting work, kept the brigade's limited transport on the roads only with the greatest difficulty.

Manœuvres were interrupted by the first of the reliefs, two sections (1708 all ranks) of which arrived on 23 and 29 May in the *Rangatira*, escorted by HMS *Achilles*. The remaining 1500 members of the relief did not arrive until the following August. The first departing troops sang their way lustily out of **Suva** and enjoyed leave in New Zealand before going on to join **2 Division**, which by then had been blooded in the Greek campaign and was ending the ill-fated but valiant attempt to hold Crete. Only senior and administrative officers and non-commissioned officers of the original brigade remained in **Fiji** when the relief was

completed. The new arrivals, for the most part untrained, contributed little to the efficiency of the force, as training had to begin again at the individual, platoon, and company level. A shortage of efficient non-commissioned officers was relieved by the formation of a training school at Natambua, commanded by Major J. H. Irving, whose place on headquarters staff was taken by Major A. J. Moore.

The defence scheme was drastically modified after a visit from General Sir Guy Williams, KCB, CMG, DSO, military adviser to the New Zealand Government and a former area commander in England with considerable experience in preparing and devising anti-invasion measures. After spending a week inspecting the defences of both **Fiji** and **Tonga** in July, he returned to **Wellington** and advised that operational control of all defence measures in both groups should be undertaken by New Zealand. Such an agreement, in which the United Kingdom Government concurred, was signed in **Suva** on 18 November by the **Hon. F. Jones**, Minister of Defence, the **Hon. J. G. Coates**, Minister of the War Cabinet, and **Sir Harry Luke**, Governor of **Fiji**. From that date New Zealand assumed responsibility for the defence of British possessions in the South West Pacific, and was accorded the power to approve all defence works.

Before this agreement was signed, Cunningham was irked in the execution of his defence plans by long delays in obtaining approval for both works and expenditure from the New Zealand War Cabinet and the Governor of **Fiji**. The Chiefs of Staff, including Lieutenant-General **E. Puttick**,¹ who had returned from the **Middle East** and replaced **Duigan** at Army Headquarters, and **Mr. Foss Shanahan**, secretary to the Organisation for National Security, accompanied the Ministerial party and inspected the island's defences. It was also the occasion for conferences with officials on costs, expenditure, and other subjects arising from New Zealand's participation in **Pacific** defence.

The Williams report went very thoroughly into the state of the brigade, listing its deficiencies but commending the work accomplished and the high morale of the troops. It also emphasised the unit shortages

of light automatic weapons, first-line transport, and signal equipment; the army required at least 400 beds; the aeroplanes had an operational radius of only 250 miles; reinforcements had been sent to **Fiji** after only ten days' training. His recommendations included a supply of 3-inch mortars and armoured vehicles; three months' basic training for all men sent to **Fiji**, petrol supplies to go underground; the blocking of all subsidiary channels through the reefs; the development of **Fiji** as a naval and air base, and the establishment of wireless communication linking islands of the **Pacific** with a central station in **Suva**. Williams based his appreciation of any Japanese attack on **Fiji** at a strength of one infantry brigade with tanks, supported by carrier-based aircraft and naval vessels. His most important recommendation was an extension of the minimum tour of duty to one year, since the relief of the garrison every six months made efficient training impossible.

This report emphasised the difficulties under which Cunningham worked. New Zealand did its best to repair the deficiencies by putting the Williams recommendations into operation as quickly as

¹ Lt-Gen Sir Edward Puttick, KCB, DSO and bar, m. i. d., MC (Greek), Legion of Merit (US); **Wellington**; born **Timaru**, 26 Jun 1890; Regular soldier; NZ Rifle Brigade 1914–19 (CO 3 Bn); commanded 4 Inf Bde, Jan 1940–Aug 1941; 2 NZ Div (**Crete**) 29 Apr–27 May 1941; CGS and GOC NZ Military Forces, Aug 1941–Dec 1945.

possible, but 24 Bren guns, 12 Lewis guns, and some Thompson sub-machine guns did not arrive until September. ¹

There were large quantities of other stores, including signal equipment, still required for **Fiji**, and **Tonga** was still short of 75 rifles and 24 Bren guns for its small garrison. Completion of defence works was pressed forward throughout the year.

Before the end of July twenty-two soldiers, selected volunteers from the brigade, were despatched as companions to fifteen wireless operators

from the New Zealand Post and Telegraph Department to maintain stations scattered through the Gilbert and Ellice Groups, north of **Fiji**. This series of coral atolls extended almost to Japanese-held territory in the Marshall Islands, from which information was urgently desired by both War Office in **London** and the Army Department in Washington. These men were the first New Zealanders killed and taken prisoner by the Japanese, and their dauntless story is told later in this volume.

Japan's provocative attitude lent a spur to activity both above and below ground. Cunningham's plan of defended zones transformed twelve square miles of the **Suva** Peninsula into an area rather like a moated, mediaeval castle on the grand scale, but in this instance enclosing the whole town and the immediate countryside and villages. It was flanked by two rivers, the Lami on the right, the **Samambula** on the left, and between them anti-tank ditches linked such natural features as ravines, swamps, and hills, extending five and a half miles inland to Prince's Road to include a new 300-bed military hospital erected at **Tamavua**, all supply and petrol depots and the water pumping stations, as well as deep and spacious underground quarters for the use of the Governor and his staff in an emergency. Along seven and a half miles of vulnerable beaches, a six-foot concrete wall, requiring 460 tons of cement, acted as a tank stop should the enemy enter over or through openings in the reef. Belts of barbed wire and trench systems provided alternative lines of defence behind the beaches.

¹ A list of the deficiencies as at 1 September 1941 included the following major items:

Motor cycles	83
Trucks, 15- or 20-cwt.	33
Water trucks, 15-cwt.	3
Trucks, 30-cwt.	29
Trucks, 3-ton	72
Bren guns	192
Grenades No 36 (25 per cent smoke)	6000
Mortar bombs, 3-inch	1500

Mortars, 3-inch	18
Bren carriers	42
Rifles	400
Carbons for searchlights, positive	2000
Carbons for searchlights, negative	700

Such a definitely enclosed area was not possible at Namaka and Momi, where an undulating plain ran back from sandy beaches to low hills, but the best use was made of natural features, belts of barbed wire, and demolitions to protect camp areas, the airfield, and a 50-bed hospital at Namaka. Momi became a separate area under the Namaka command, and the two 6-inch naval guns emplaced there in May were enclosed in a system of wire and trenches. **Suva** was regarded as the last line of defence for the Colony should an attack develop, and any force moving from Namaka to **Suva's** aid was ordered to take the northern coastal route because of the vulnerability of the southern road from the sea.

Any detailed account of the work accomplished in constructing these defences implies long hours of manual labour by all troops of all units, including the medical units, and it continued with deadly monotony for months. The achievements reveal the story—one of constant burrowing into the soapstone, a variety of soft rock found in **Fiji**, and removing the spoil in barrows; and wiring and digging and filling sandbags. In September 1941, before **30 Battalion** returned to the western area to permit **29 Battalion's** return to the more civilised region of **Suva**, the 30th had used '21½ miles of barbed wire, and made 330 knife-rests, erected 4200 stakes for wiring the beaches and mangrove swamps, cut 2500 feet of mangrove posts for roofing, and filled and used 25,500 sandbags'. Fifty-five defence posts with bullet-proof overhead cover had been constructed, fire lanes 950 yards long and nine yards wide had been cut through mangrove swamps, and twelve storage tunnels each 15 feet by seven by six had been gouged in the soapstone hillocks. Later, when it arrived, **35 Battalion** erected 18,000 yards of barbed wire in a month. These figures indicate, in a modest way, the

work done by units which at the same time continued with their training. They also indicate the extent of the fortifications in **Fiji**—fortifications which were never used but anticipated an enemy attack. Men frequently worked in the evil-smelling mud of the mangrove swamps, sometimes knee-deep in water. They assisted the engineers by removing spoil from underground excavations, where compressors chattered incessantly. One task of some magnitude was the completion, by the end of October, of ten tunnels, each measuring 100 feet long, 10 feet wide and 10 feet high, for the storage of 150,000 gallons of reserve petrol for the air force.

Until the New Zealanders left **Fiji** they continued these burrowing operations, which included the construction of a complete underground hospital with an air-conditioned operating theatre and wards opening off a central corridor; ammunition and food stores; and three giant petrol tanks in Sealark Hill, behind **Suva** Harbour, where men worked night and day in shifts to complete them. These bulk tanks were the biggest single excavation undertaking by the engineers, whose activities were directed by Major W. G. **McKay**¹ when McKillop returned to New Zealand in 1941. They ranged from 50 to 70 feet deep, one with a diameter of 58 feet and two of 48 feet. An operational headquarters was also excavated in the hill on which Borron's House stood. It contained chambers for the accommodation of all staffs and signal equipment, and was used frequently during trial manoeuvres. In the western area, which contained harder rock, the engineers could not penetrate so far underground, but their work was just as arduous as they built shelters for headquarters, air force, and hospitals. The duplication required by the two zones in **Fiji** weakened the force and increased administrative worries.

In the last months of 1941, visits of **United States** aircraft and ships of war indicated both the vital importance of **Fiji** and the trend of events, though it was impossible to convey to the men as they toiled and trained far from scenes of more obvious activity, any information concerning diplomatic talks and the mounting delicacy of the political situation with **Japan**. Such visits, pointers to coming events, were

conducted without publicity. When the **United States** cruiser *Chicago* and five destroyers called at **Suva** on their return to **Pearl Harbour** after visiting **New Zealand** and **Australia**, few people were aware that they had made a secret test dash across the **Pacific**. Not until long afterwards was it revealed that a **Tongan** coastwatcher reported the ships. He was night-fishing far from the shore and was almost swamped by the wash as destroyers passed on either side of his frail canoe. Late in October two **United States** flying boats, carrying military and naval staff officers bound for the **Philippines**, called at **Suva** during a flight to investigate alternative air routes should hostilities cut the route to the **Philippines** via Wake and Midway Islands. An earlier air visitor was the old Empire flying boat 'Calypso', which, as A. 1811, was used by the **Royal Australian Air Force** to patrol from **Port Moresby** to **Tulagi** in the **Solomons** and **Vila** in the **New Hebrides**, and made one trip to **Suva**.

From these tours of investigation the importance of **Fiji** as a vital **Pacific** base was confirmed, and when, on 17 November 1941, certain sections of the American Neutrality Act were repealed by Congress a request was made to the **New Zealand Government** to

¹ **Maj W. G. McKay**, OBE, m.i.d.; **Apia, Western Samoa**; born **Hokitika**, 3 Dec 1901; engineer; **CRE Pacific Section**, **2 NZEF**, Dec 1941–Aug 1942; **OC 20 Fd Coy NZE**, Aug 1942–Mar 1944; **British Forces in India**, 1944–45; **South-East Asia Command** 1945–46.

construct three airfields in the **Namaka** area, capable of accommodating the largest service aircraft. Because of the urgency of the request, **New Zealand** acted swiftly, and by the end of November 440 men of the **Public Works Department** reached **Namaka** to begin work on extending the existing field to take the **Liberators** soon to arrive. They were the first of 1219 **Public Works** men to reach **Fiji** for employment on this project. ¹ Following earlier discussions with **General Puttick**, all assistance, including rationing and quarters, was provided by **Brigadier Cunningham's** headquarters.

The successful completion of this project was one of New Zealand's most important achievements in the **Pacific** theatre of war. Three airfields, each with a runway measuring 7000 feet long by 500 feet wide, with revetments and servicing areas, were asked for, the first to be ready by 15 January 1942, the other two by 15 April. Their estimated cost was £750,000, repayable by the **United States** Government. They required one and a half millions yards of earth-works and 20,000 tons of cement, and the estimated time for completion was five months. The airfields were ready before that time. The first three Flying Fortresses landed at **Nandi** on 10 January; three Liberators followed on 23 January, and until the end of the war the Namaka area was a scene of intense air activity as fields were still further extended to cope with the demands of increasing traffic. **Fiji** had begun the vital role (which it still holds) as a staging centre for aircraft moving to and from New Zealand, **New Caledonia, Samoa, Tonga, Australia, and America.**

From the day the first New Zealand Public Works men arrived in November, construction went ahead without delay as bulldozers, carry-alls, tractors, and a fleet of trucks swiftly altered the landscape. For months the Namaka area lay under clouds of dust which mounted higher and higher in the hot air and tranished all green vegetation for miles around. Although a blackout was imposed in **Suva** after the Japanese entry into the war, such precautions were impossible in the west, where huge arc-lights illuminated the landscape as work continued through the night. Trouble was anticipated and the provost officer, Captain A. L. Downes, prepared for it, but the civilians and servicemen worked amicably side by side, despite vastly differing rates of pay, conditions, and privileges which provoked much discussion at the time. Some difficulties concerning rates of pay and conditions did arise among the civilian workers from New Zealand, but they were smoothed out by the timely arrival by air of the Prime Minister and the **Hon. P. C. Webb,**

¹ These Public Works men were organised into what was known as the **Civil Construction Unit**, directed by Mr. **A. F. Downer**, a civil engineer appointed by the Ministry of Works, to

which he was responsible.

Minister of Labour. Peace reigned after three undesirables were returned to New Zealand. Not all these men desired to play a combatant role should the necessity arise, but 600 of them were armed with American rifles and Browning machine guns and trained for emergency operations. Authority for the construction of a flying boat base at **Lauthala Bay, near **Suva**, had been given by 5 December 1941, and this work was also pressed forward with speed. The nucleus of an American Catalina squadron was operating there by March 1942.**

THE PACIFIC

III: FROM PEARL HARBOUR TO RELIEF

III: From Pearl Harbour to Relief

There was not one anti-aircraft gun in the South West Pacific in November 1941 and the strength of the defences would not have deterred the most irresolute enemy. Pago Pago, the American naval base in Eastern Samoa, was as hamstrung by international agreement as were British bases. At the end of that month Cunningham's force, increased slightly during the year, totalled 4943 all ranks, made up of 8 Brigade Group and the **Fiji** Defence Force units, of which 945 were native troops. Artillery support consisted of six 18-pounder guns (some of which had been experimentally mounted on motor trucks in an effort to give them greater mobility) and fixed coastal defences of four 6-inch and two 4.7-inch naval guns. Air strength had been slowly increased under Group Captain G. N. Roberts, AFC, ¹ who relieved Baird in July, and consisted of six Vincents, two old **Singapore** flying boats of doubtful quality, three de Havilland multi-engine civil type machines, and one Moth trainer. The **Fiji** ship *Viti*, a small vessel which took the Governor round his scattered island domains, and five patrol launches constituted the naval strength based on **Suva**. In **Tonga** there were 462 native troops, commanded by nine New Zealand officers and warrant officers. These made up the defence force which had been organised by Lieutenant-Colonel R. Bagnall ² during his brief command. They were equipped with rifles and two Vickers machine guns and supported by two 18-pounder field guns. A detachment of 110 New Zealanders held **Fanning Island**, where one 6-inch naval gun had been emplaced to defend the vital cable station. In Samoa one New Zealand warrant officer had 150 native under his command. **Rarotonga**'s force consisted of 100 natives and one

¹ Air Cdre G. N. Roberts, CBE, AFC, Legion of Merit (US); **Auckland**; born Inglewood, 8 Dec 1906; company representative; commanded **RNZAF** in **Fiji** and **Tonga**, 1941-42; Commander NZ

Air Task Force, **Solomons**, 1944–45; General Manager, Tasman Empire Airways, Ltd., 1946–.

² Lt-Col R. Bangall; **Lower Hutt**; born England, 19 Jan 1884; Indian Army (retd); CO **Tonga** Defence Force, Feb–Jul 1941.

European officer, Captain Gladney, a local resident, with two Vickers machine guns as their only armament.

Small detachments of Australians acted as coastwatchers and guarded vital points on Nauru and Ocean Islands. **Australia** had also sent a small cavalry detachment, No. 3 Independent Company, to roam the unfrequented coastal regions of **New Caledonia**, where the collective armament had been increased from one old mountain gun to four 65-millimetre guns carried on lorries, two 37-millimetre guns, four 3-inch mortars, and 32 machine guns. Three hundred men of doubtful fighting quality, armed with rifles and two machine guns, had been mobilised in **Tahiti**, where three old 47-millimetre and two old 65-millimetre guns had been resurrected for action. New Zealand coastwatchers maintained a lonely vigil throughout the Gilbert and Ellice Islands, and in the Phoenix, Tokelau, **Samoa**, Line, Cook and Tongan Islands, and farther south, in the Kermadecs and Chathams. Petrol supplies for both aircraft and army motor transport totalled 118,300 gallons held in **Fiji** and another 20,000 gallons held in **Tonga**.

There was little or no difference in this state of affairs when **Japan** ended all speculation of her intentions when she struck at **Pearl Harbour**. Plans for manoeuvres on a brigade scale in **Fiji** had been outlined some time previously and worked out by Lieutenant-Colonel Wales, GSO 1, ¹ and troops moved into their defence positions in brilliant moonlight on the night of 7 December. As they prepared a soldierly breakfast of bully beef and smoky tea in their mosquito-infested trenches and splinter-proof machine-gun posts early the following morning, news of the attack was being broadcast to the world. Because of the international date line the attack on **Pearl Harbour**, which

occurred at 7.50 a. m. on 7 December, **Honolulu** time, became 1.20 p. m. on 7 December in **Washington**, 3.20 a. m. on 8 December in **Tokyo**, and 6.20 a. m. in **Suva** and **Wellington**. One junior artillery officer who was fraternising with a short-wave enthusiast from **Suva**, was the first to receive the news. He lost no time in passing it on.

New Zealand's available forces at the outbreak of war with **Japan** consisted of HMNZS *Leander*, ready for sea at **Auckland**, HMNZS *Monowai* refitting at **Auckland**, and HMNZS *Achilles*, on her way to **Singapore**; 13,250 men were in camp, including reinforcements (600 of them intended for **Fiji** and others for **2 Division**), the Army Tank Brigade, recruits and training cadres. Four

¹ **Brig J. G. C. Wales, MC; Auckland; born London, 26 Aug 1886; Bursar, King's College; 1 NZEF 1914–19; GSO 1 B Force, Mar 1941–Jul 1942; Commandant, Fiji Defence Force, and Commander Pacific Section, 2 NZEF, Jul–Oct 1942; commanded Fiji Military Forces, Nov 1942-Sep 1943.**

thousand six hundred fortress troops were mobilised—1000 each for **Auckland, Wellington, Lyttelton, and Port Chalmers**, and one company of 120 each for the Bay of Islands, Great Barrier Island, **Waipapakauri**, and **Nelson**, to protect aerodromes near the coast. Eleven thousand Territorials entered camp on 15 December and by the 28th 28,850 men were in camp, with preparations for an increase to 39,350 by 10 January. Forty-four converted machine guns, none too new, were issued to the Home Guard units. Navy reopened 24 coastwatching stations round New Zealand. The Air Department had 10,500 men in camp and in training, including 2155 despatched to air training centres in **Canada**, 2512 to the Royal Air Force, and 450 in **Fiji**. The only operational aircraft available were 36 Hudsons and 29 Vincents; all others, including 62 Harvards, 143 Oxfords, and 46 Hinds were used for training, though some of them could be used operationally in an emergency. In answer to immediate calls to the **United Kingdom** and **United States** Governments for urgent war materials to meet the needs of New Zealand forces both

on the home front and in the **Pacific**, field guns were diverted from the **Middle East**, mortars from South Africa, rifles, ammunition, and signal equipment from **America**, Bren guns from **Canada**, and machine guns, tractors, rifles, and binoculars from the **United Kingdom**.

New Zealanders of 8 Brigade Group in **Fiji** were the only troops in the **Pacific** at their battle stations when war broke with **Japan**, and they remained there for three days, until the excitement wore off. There was little incident other than daily routine, but aircraft increased their dawn and dusk patrols with the machines still available. ¹ The first shot was fired by a sentry at a motor patrol boat which, ignorant of the startling turn of events, quietly chugged to its moorings in the dawn of the following day and did not answer the challenge; the second when HMS *Gale*, a small coastal steamer commissioned for service, arrived from New Zealand on Christmas Day and had a shot put across her bows by the shore battery when she failed to give the correct recognition signal as she approached the harbour entrance.

¹ Japanese resident in **Fiji** and **Tonga** at the outbreak of war were detained and sent to New Zealand for internment. Prisoners of war captured in the **Pacific** were interned in a camp at **Featherston**, 41 miles from **Wellington**. This camp, established in 1942 on the site of a military camp of the 1914–18 War, covered 60 acres and was controlled from Central Military District. Except for the inevitable restrictions of captivity, prisoners lived in a standard of comfort equal to and frequently exceeding that of New Zealand soldiers serving abroad. On the morning of 25 February 1943 certain ringleaders provoked a mutiny among the prisoners. They refused to work, adopted threatening attitudes, and finally attempted to stone the guards, who opened fire on them. Forty-eight Japanese were killed or died of wounds and 61 were wounded. One of seven New Zealand guards wounded by ricochets died of his injuries and eleven were injured by stones hurled by the mutinous Japanese.

The movement of Japanese naval craft in waters north of **Fiji** was confirmed by the coastwatches in the Gilberts on 9 December, when

they reported the presence of enemy ships and aircraft from carriers round their islands, and from that date, until they were either killed or taken prisoner, information of vital importance came from the men of those remote stations. December the 9th was a memorable day. A flight of five Hudson aircraft, the first reinforcements despatched from New Zealand, circled **Suva** before going on to **Nandi** and coincided with the arrival there of two long awaited 18-pounder guns, to complete the complement of field guns for 35 Battery, and four 4.5-inch howitzers. But the 10th brought the dreary news that two British battleships, HMS *Repulse* and HMS *Prince of Wales*, had been sunk off the coast of **Malaya**, sealing the fate of **Singapore** and leaving the whole Pacific Ocean open to the Japanese navy, until the stricken **United States** naval forces could be reorganised, after **Pearl Harbour**, to oppose the threat. In the midst of those grave days New Zealand supplied the **Fiji** Treasury with £30,000 worth of £5 notes and £50,000 worth of £1 notes, all overprinted, to meet a temporary shortage of currency caused by the demands of the garrison forces.

New Zealand's declaration of war with **Japan** at eleven o'clock on the morning of 8 December was quickly followed by preparations to expand the force in **Fiji** to two brigades and to strengthen all artillery, both field and anti-aircraft. War Cabinet approved the despatch of a further 3500 men and considerable quantities of supplies. For the remainder of December and January, two exceedingly hot and busy months, men and materials arrived in the Colony.

Units of Cunningham's force were brought up to strength by reinforcements speedily despatched in two voyages of the *Wahine*. On Boxing Day, **27 Mixed Anti-Aircraft Battery**, under Major J. A. Pym, MC, reached **Suva** with four anti-aircraft guns which had been dismantled from the harbour defences of **Auckland** and **Wellington**. They were the first to reach **Fiji**. Three battalions—the 35th, commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel W. Murphy, MC,¹ the 36th, commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel J. W. **Barry**,² and the 37th under Lieutenant-Colonel A. H. L. Sugden³—formed at **Burnham**

¹ **Lt- Col W. Murphy, CBE, MC; Auckland;** born NZ 16 Jan 1894; Regular soldier; Otago Regt 1914–19; CO 35 Bn, Jan 1942; GSO 1 3 NZ Div, 1942; AA & QMG Aug 1942-May 1943; Commandant, Papakura Military Camp, Jun 1944–Jun 1946; Area Commander, **Auckland**, Jun 1946–Mar 1948.

² **Lt-Col J. W. Barry, MBE; Wanganui;** born England, 2 Apr 1893; Regular soldier; CO 36 Bn, Dec 1941–Jun 1943; Commander N Force (**Norfolk Island**) Sep 1942–Apr 1943; Area Commander, **Wanganui**, Sep 1943-Apr 1947.

³ **Col A. H. L. Sugden, m. i. d.; Trentham;** born Geraldine, 23 Mar 1901; Regular soldier; Commandant Army School of Instruction, **Trentham**, 1940–41; CO 37 Bn, Dec 1941–Jul 1944; Commandant Army School of Instruction, Apr 1945–Jan 1947; Area Commander, **Wellington**, Jan–Mar 1947.

Camp from the 8th Reinforcements for the **Middle East**, were organised and despatched to Cunningham's force; and in **Fiji** itself 2 Territorial Battalion was called up for full-time service. The new units made the voyage in a convoy of four ships—the *Matua* and the *Rangatira*, which went to **Lautoka**, and the *Wahine* and the *Monowai* to **Suva**, all under the escort of the cruisers *Australia*, *Perth*, and *Achilles*. The ships reached their destinations on 6 January and returned to New Zealand for the second flight, which arrived in **Fiji** on 14 January, the *Port Montreal* replacing the *Matua* on the second trip.

The new brigade commanders and their staffs flew to **Fiji** on 2 January, in the same aircraft which took Brigadier K. L. **Stewart**,¹ Deputy Chief of the General Staff, for consultation and inspection. On 6 January Cunningham relinquished command of 8 Brigade Group and two days later was promoted Major-General commanding the Pacific Section, **2 NZEF**, the official title of the force, which was not given divisional status until later. By the end of the month reorganisation was almost complete, and the new defence areas allotted to the expanded force. Command of **8 Brigade**, which remained in the **Suva** area, passed to

Brigadier L. G. **Goss**² until the arrival of Brigadier R. A. **Row**³ late in February, after which Goss became New Zealand liaison officer on MacArthur's headquarters in **Melbourne**. Brigadier L. **Potter**⁴ took over the newly formed 14 Brigade for the defence of the western area, and established his headquarters at Namaka. In strengthening **Fiji**, New Zealand denuded herself of much of her available artillery. 'We have sent the only four heavy anti-aircraft guns and the only four Bofors guns we possess', Fraser cabled to Churchill, then in **Washington**, on Christmas Eve 1941. He did not say that the New Zealand guns had been replaced temporarily by dummies.

¹ **Maj-Gen K. L. Stewart**, CB, CBE, DSO, m. i. d., MC (Greek), Legion of Merit (US); **Wellington**; born **Timaru**, 30 Dec 1896; Regular soldier; **1 NZEF** 1917–19; GSO 1 2 NZ Div, 1940–41; Deputy Chief of General Staff, Dec 1941–Jul 1943; commanded 5 Bde, Aug–Nov 1943, 4 Armd Bde, Nov 1943–Mar 1944, and 5 Bde, Mar–Aug 1944; p. w. 1 Aug 1944–Apr 1945; commanded 9 Bde (**2 NZEF, Japan**) Nov 1945–Jul 1946; Adjutant-General, NZ Military Forces, Aug 1946–Mar 1949; Chief of General Staff, Apr 1949–Mar 1952.

² **Brig L. G. Goss**, CB, Legion of Merit (US); **Wellington**; born **Geelong**, Aust, 30 May 1895; Regular soldier; **1 NZEF** 1917–19; GSO 1, Army HQ, 1939–41; commanded 8 Bde Gp Jan–Mar 1942; Assistant Chief of General Staff, Army HQ, May–Nov 1942; commanded 15 Bde, Nov 1942–Jul 1943; 8 Bde, Dec 1943–Sep 1944; Deputy Chief of General Staff, Sep 1944–Jul 1946.

³ **Brig R. A. Row**, DSO and bar, m. i. d., Legion of Merit (US); Upper Hutt; born **Christchurch**, 30 Jul 1888; Regular soldier; **1 NZEF** 1914–19 (CO 3 (Res) Bn): commanded 8 Bde, Mar 1942–Dec 1943.

⁴ **Brig L. Potter**, CBE, DSO, m. i. d.; **Tauranga**; born **Auckland**, 13 Sep 1894; Regular soldier; **1 NZEF** 1916–19; commanded 14 Bde Gp and Western Area, **Fiji**, Jan–Jul 1942; commanded 14 Bde, 1942–44; Commandant, Central Military District, Dec 1944–Jun

Reorganisation in **Fiji** brought about many changes in appointments and an extension of the two defended zones so that battalions took over areas formerly held by companies and platoons, but basically the plan of defence remained the same, though the mobility of the force was increased by the arrival of motor transport, so long anticipated. Cunningham's headquarters remained at Borron's House, where the accommodation was proportionately increased. Eighth Brigade took over a private residence, Hedstrom's House, at **Tamavua**, as its headquarters and gouged itself an underground operations room in the soapstone nearby. Fourteenth Brigade's operational headquarters was excavated in a feature known as Black Rock, which commanded a vast sweep of country overlooking Namaka, the airfields, and the beaches of the **Nandi** anchorage, and was made reasonably secure by the use of 50 tons of cement. Potter became the area commander, with the responsibility for defending 1000 square miles of country, extending from Momi to a line north of **Lautoka** and taking in such vulnerable localities as Thuvu, near Singatoka, where the coral reef merged with the foreshore. It was indicative of the vast stretches of territory which were included in the **Fiji** defence scheme.

By the end of January the force had been stepped up to 7600 all ranks, with units disposed through the areas they were to hold until their relief later in the year. In a hot and exhausting introduction to the tropics, the men dug, excavated, and erected belts of barbed wire through days and weeks of unremitting toil. Like the earlier arrivals they suffered all the discomforts of mosquitoes, dhobie's itch, prickly heat, septic sores, and tinea which were to harass them during the whole of the **Pacific** campaign. ¹

¹ These extracts from the letter of an NCO give an idea of conditions as seen by a new arrival and a sense of humour which redeems all discomfort: 'In early January I arrived at **Suva**. After a very early rising and a wait of about six hours on the deck of

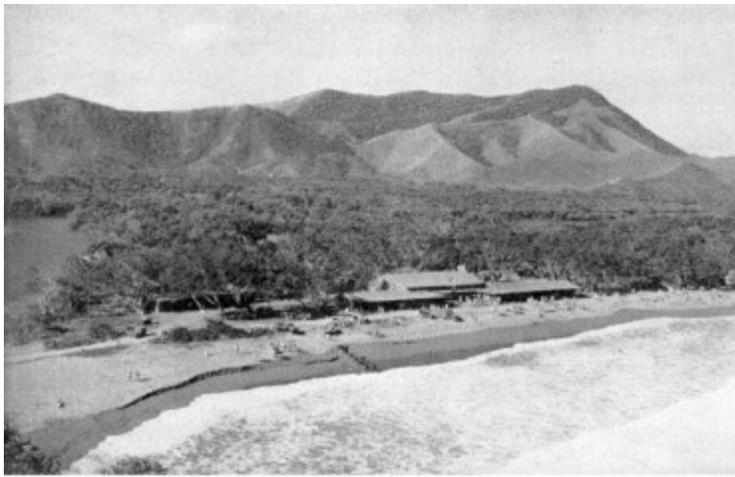
the *Wahine*, with full pack up, we disembarked and climbed into an 8-cwt truck which had been standing in the sun for hours. It was like an oven and we frizzled like pork chops in a casserole. I was given a job in the orderly room at headquarters. Soon the new arrivals were helping with the excavation of more tunnels in underground headquarters. It was back-breaking work pecking away at the soapstone in the tropic heat. At times we were all called on to do our share of digging. For one week when there were rumours of the approach of Japanese ships, the whole camp was mustered at battle stations in the early hours of the morning, while at night we were all engaged in digging pits and gun positions. But there were many amusing incidents to record, for instance when Gosney's mosquito net caught fire half an hour after midnight and Allen rang the general alarm instead of the fire alarm. There were the Saturday mornings when we went down to Death Gully, the hottest place in **Suva**, to do our rifle shooting. There was the morning of the full-scale invasion rehearsal when the noise of the planes drowned the newly-installed hooter and we all stood in the open watching the performance until one of the officers came lumbering down the hill, red in the face and very much annoyed, and ordered us to our battle stations. That was the day the Hindu dhobi lost all his workmen and we lost all our laundry. And those were the days when we were well fed. There were times when the mess tables, loaded with cucumber, tomatoes, spring onions, water-melon, bananas and pineapples, looked like a harvest festival.'

In the final reorganisation of the two brigades, in which unit commands were retained by some of the former officers, the 8th was made up of 1 **Fiji Battalion** (commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel J. B. K. Taylor, a New Zealander from the **Fiji Civil Service**), the 34th, the 36th, and two companies of 2 **Fiji Battalion** (under Lieutenant-Colonel F. G. Forster), two fixed coastal batteries, **35 Field Battery** (increased to four 18-pounders, four 25-pounders, and four 4.5-inch and four 3.7-inch howitzers), **7 Field Ambulance** (now commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel W. D. Stoney Johnston after the return to New Zealand of Davie), **20 Field Company Engineers** (Captain S. E. Anderson), **4 Composite Company, ASC**, and **36 Light Aid Detachment**.

Potter's brigade group was made up of **30 Battalion** (commanded by

Lieutenant-Colonel J. H. Irving, who took over when Mawson returned to New Zealand), **35 Battalion** (command of which passed to Lieutenant-Colonel G. H. Tomline, MC, when Murphy went almost immediately to headquarters as GSO 1), **37 Battalion**, the remaining companies of 2 **Fiji Battalion**, one fixed coastal battery at Momi, **37 Field Battery** (commanded by Major W. A. Bryden and made up of four 18-pounders and four 4.5-inch and four 3.7-inch howitzers), **27 Mixed Anti-Aircraft Battery**, **23 Field Company Engineers**, **16 Composite Company, ASC** (Captain R. Gapes), **2 Field Ambulance** (Major E. N. d'Arcy), **Namaka Hospital** (Major P. C. E. Brunette), and section of ordnance workshops. As divisional reserve, **29 Battalion** was stationed at **Nausori**, beyond the **Suva** perimeter, to deny the use of the Rewa River bridge and to defend the Nandali aerodrome, where P.39s (Airacobras) of an American pursuit squadron of 60 officers and 600 men under Colonel Edgar T. Seltzer maintained some of their machines, the remainder being at Namaka. They were the first Americans to reach **Fiji**, where they arrived at the end of January 1942.

Artillery during the whole of the **Pacific** campaign was always an involved problem since the force had under its command fixed coastal batteries of naval guns and also defended base aerodromes, tasks not normally required of a division in the field, but island warfare demanded revolutionary changes in prescribed war establishments. The artillery organisation of the forces in **Fiji**, later repeated in **New Caledonia**, was perhaps the most involved of all the New Zealand island undertakings. The fixed coastal batteries of the **Fiji** artillery, sited in each zone to defend the ports, anchorages, and the more vital openings through the reefs leading to them, came under area commanders for operations but were administered from headquarters. At the time the force artillery was relieved by



THE KIWI CLUB, BOURAIL BEACH, opened by the National Patriotic Fund Board as a rest centre for men of the 3rd Division after they had returned from the Solomons

The Kiwi Club, Bourail Beach, opened by the National Patriotic Fund Board as a rest centre for men of the 3rd division after they had returned from the Solomons.

TRAINING IN NEW CALEDONIA Mortar Platoon of 29 NZ Battalion carrying full equipment up Mount Tonta

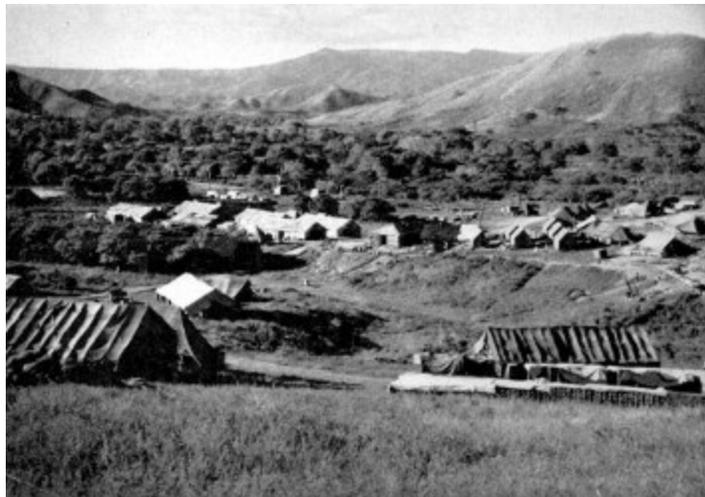


Training in New Caledonia. Mortar Platoon of 29 NZ Batallion carrying full equipment up Mount Tonta



REVIEW OF 8 NZ INFANTRY BRIGADE
Dubois Memorial Field, Bouloupari, New Caledonia

Review of 8 NZ Infantry Brigade. Dubois Memorial Field, Bouloupari, New Caledonia.



BASE ORDNANCE DEPOT, Bourail, typical of New Zealand camps in
New Caledonia

Base Ordnance Depot, Bourail, typical of New Zealand Camps in New Caledonia



30 NZ BATTALION HEADQUARTERS among niaouli trees, Koumac,
in northern New Caledonia

30 NZ Battalion Headquarter among niaouli trees, Koumac, in northern New Caledonia



THE COOKHOUSE OVENS, 37 NZ BATTALION, Taom, New Caledonia

The Cookhouse Ovens, 37 NZ Battalion, Taom, New Caledonia



THE CAMP SITE OF 22 NZ FIELD AMBULANCE AT TINIPP
The hospital is in the centre

The camp site of 22 NZ Field Ambulance at [Tinipp](#). The hospital is in the centre.

NURSES' QUARTERS, 4 NZ GENERAL HOSPITAL, BOGUEN



Nurses' Hospital, 4 NZ General Hospital, [Boguen](#).

the Americans, it consisted of these fixed coastal batteries, heavy and light anti-aircraft batteries (both fixed and mobile), and field batteries. Circumstances also altered the functions of the infantry and other services. For example, in **Fiji** the ASC issued rations on seven different ration scales at one time and supplied not only the New Zealand force but also Americans, New Zealand civilians working on the airfields, Fijian soldiers and labourers, and Indians employed on camp staffs.

Alarms came frequently during the earlier months of 1942 as signals from **Wellington** and **Washington** warned of a possible attack. Reports from the coastwatchers in the Gilbert and Ellice Islands recorded any activity in those waters, and there were moments of excitement in **Suva**, as on the afternoon of 16 January when HMS *Monowai*, outward bound for New Zealand, reported an attack by enemy submarine soon after she passed beyond the protection of the reef. Shots were exchanged as the vessel zigzagged, and she reported that a conning tower broke the surface of the water. Although aircraft searched the area until darkness fell, no trace of the submarine was disclosed and no confirmation of the attack could be obtained from Japanese sources, though it must be added that several enemy submarines operating in the South Pacific at that time never returned to their base.

A fleet of these underwater craft kept headquarters at **Truk**, in the Caroline Islands, moderately well informed of Allied activities in the **Pacific**, and native coastwatchers were often correct with their quaintly expressed reports that they had seen strange aircraft and ships. Much of the information attributed to fifth columnists really came from Japanese submarines, which cruised about the **Pacific** and surfaced off the islands to launch their aircraft which made reconnaissance flights, usually just before dawn. On 19 March 1942 native coastwatchers on **Kandavu**, an island on the outer rim of the **Fiji** Group, reported that a large bird had settled on the water and entered a ship, which immediately sank. It was an aircraft from submarine I-25, which had also reconnoitred **Auckland** and **Wellington** some days previously. On 21

May an aircraft from submarine I-21, which patrolled the **Pacific** until it was sunk in the Marshalls in 1944, was chased into the clouds by American aircraft stationed at **Nandi**.

Until the arrival of radio direction-finding apparatus late in the days of the force, detection of these elusive craft was difficult. From February 1942 until September 1943, 23 Japanese submarines, of which 14 carried aircraft, operated round the Australian and New Zealand coasts as well as in waters round **New Caledonia, Fiji, Tonga, Samoa,** and the **New Hebrides**. Even after enemy reverses in the **Solomons** they continued to patrol south, but in decreasing numbers. These submarines reported the arrival of the first big convey of American troops in **Fiji** on 10 June 1942, and they sighted the convoy 200 miles south of **Suva** carrying the first reinforcements to strengthen Cunningham's force earlier in the year.

All such information was passed by radio to Japanese naval headquarters in the Caroline Islands and transmitted to **Tokyo**. Moving to and from **Truk** to refuel and revictual, Japanese submarines made the following voyages: From February to March 1942 submarine I-25 reconnoitred the **Auckland** and Wellington Harbours, the east coast of **Australia, Suva,** and Pago Pago; in April I-25, I-27, and I-29 investigated **Suva, Sydney, Auckland,** and **Noumea**; in June and July I-22, with I-27 and I-29, again reconnoitred the New Zealand and Australian coasts, sinking one ship; throughout July and August I-11, I-175, I-174, I-169, and I-171 sailed round **New Caledonia, Fiji, Samoa,** and the east coast of **Australia,** sinking five ships; in October I-15, I-17, I-19, and I-26 patrolled the New Caledonian coast; I-21 returned there in November and stayed until early December; in November I-31 and I-7 reconnoitred **Suva, Pago Pago,** and **Espiritu Santo,** in the **New Hebrides**. From July to the end of September 1943 five of these submarines returned and investigated waters round **Fiji, New Caledonia,** and the **New Hebrides**. I-17 was sunk in August 1943.

If men and materials were haphazard in reaching **Fiji** before **Japan** entered the war, they came in quantity afterwards, even if quality was

lacking. Some of the motor transport impressed in New Zealand was despatched without reasonable inspection of either its cleanliness or its serviceability and was condemned on arrival. As evidence of the haste, animal droppings still covered the floors of many of the vehicles. By the end of January the first American supplies arrived, including 3900 rifles, 24 two-inch mortars, 98 Thompson sub-machine guns, and 118.30 machine guns, as well as field telephone cable, telephones, switchboards, 23 wireless sets, and 200 mines to block the openings through the reef. Two thousand of the rifles and the .30 machine guns were sent on to New Zealand. Blackouts, previously imposed but lifted at the request of the Governor when the citizens complained of the stifling discomfort, were again enforced. Tactical exercises by the brigades tested their own mobility and the state of the defences. One such exercise by **8 Brigade** assumed all the elements of reality by coinciding with the arrival of an American convoy at **Suva**. The exercise began just before midnight of 8 March, when units occupied battle stations on receipt of information that an enemy convoy was approaching **Fiji**. Early next morning reports were circulated to units that the **Nandi** airfields were being bombed. This news, carried with the speed of gossip to the civilian population, produced a mild panic when aircraft of the force made low-level runs over camps, roads, and assembly points. Indians hastily loaded their belongings on trucks, cars, handcarts, and even bicycles and fled to the hills, blocking road traffic and indicating conditions which would attend a genuine attack. After that experience all orders concerning exercises were prefaced with the word 'Practice'.

By the end of June there were 10,000 New Zealanders in **Fiji**. This in itself created an acute accommodation problem, happily overcome by building native style huts called *bures*, which had the added advantage of assisting the general scheme of camouflaging all camps and defences, because these *bures* were sited to resemble small native villages. Troops helped with this camouflage by making nets from vau bark to cover gunpits and supply depots, and by planting such creepers as 'mile a minute' which quickly covered any newly broken ground. This plant spread with astonishing speed. One excused duty soldier who had times

to watch it verified that it grew at the rate of 14 inches a day.

Change was the very nature of the force as heat and conditions took toll of all ranks. In March, General Cunningham was invalided home and Major-General O. H. Mead, CBE, DSO,¹ took over command on the 9th. Cunningham's health had been impaired by bouts of dysentery and the exhausting worries attending an expedition short of men and materials. Like so many other commanders forced to accept such circumstances, he shouldered out of the way many of the early difficulties and conditioned the situation for those who followed. His legal knowledge was of immense value in negotiations with the civil administration and in the tactful reduction of initial problems. Lack of unified command in **Fiji** meant that many questions of policy had to be referred to New Zealand for decision, often long delayed.

Although the air component was part of the **Fiji** defences and operationally under the commander of the forces, its control was retained by Air Headquarters in New Zealand. A desirable unity of control was not attained until the **United States Forces** Took over and their system of island commands came into operation.

¹ **Maj-Gen O. H. Mead**, CBE, DSO, m. i. d.; born Dunedin, 24 Jan 1892; Regular soldier; **1 NZEF** 1914–20 (commanded 1 Bn and 3 (Res) Bn); Commandant, Southern Military District, Oct 1940–Feb 1942; GOC Pacific Section, **2 NZEF**, 25 Feb–25 Jul 1942; lost at sea in aircraft accident, 25 Jul 1942.

Although reinforcements continued to arrive and strengthen the force after Mead took over, he asked for another brigade group and a divisional reserve of one armoured regiment, one motorised battalion, and one 25-pounder battery, none of which could be supplied by New Zealand. The air component was deplorably weak for the work it was called on to perform, and the navy still practically non-existent. But a large building and construction programme went ahead as materials became available, and in order that these should be satisfactorily

distributed, a priorities committee consisting of army, air, and civilian engineer representatives was set up under the direction of Colonel F. W. **Furkert**,¹ former chief of the New Zealand Public Works Department, to apportion them for defences, aerodromes, roading, tunnelling, and building.

When additional ground units could not be made available to Mead, Fijian guerrilla units were formed. These developed from a suggestion made earlier by Major J. V. M. Cauty, MM,² a company commander of **29 Battalion**, and they gave a desirable mobility lacking in a force called on to defend long stretches of vulnerable beach. They came into being as news of the Battle of the Coral Sea and the fall of Corregidor reached the force, and from them emerged the Fijian commandos who fought later in the **Solomons** with distinction. Three groups were recruited and organized to work from established bases in the interior, so that in the event of an enemy landing at any point on the coast, they could harass the invaders by destroying their lines of supply and communications. Cauty himself took the western zone, where the more open country permitted the use of horses, Captain P. G. **Ellis**³ the eastern zone, with headquarters on the Rewa River, near **Nausori**, and Lieutenant C. W. H. **Tripp**⁴ the **8 Brigade** zone, with headquarters at Navua. Each unit consisted of about 200 Fijians and thirty New Zealand non-commissioned officers selected for their self-reliance and initiative. Formative difficulties developed as the units began the hard and intensive training required of them in this rugged country. At first the Fijians, a naturally happy and generous people, thought it a grand game with everything so lavishly provided, and the army's insistence on a ration scale was incomprehensible to them. A week's supply of food disappeared during a night's party with friends from neighbouring villages. They felt humiliated when

¹ **Col F. W. Furkert**, CMG; born Ross, 1876; consulting engineer; Engineer-in-Chief and Under-Secretary, Public Works Dept, 1920–32; died 26 Sep 1949.

² **Maj J. V. M. Cauty, MM; Suva; born Wellington, 24 Jul 1896; farmer; NZ Rifle Bde 1914–19; Commandant 3 NZ Div Jungle Training School, New Caledonia.**

³ **Maj P. G. Ellis; Christchurch; born Timaru, 26 Nov 1899; grain merchant; OC 2 Commando, Fiji Guerrillas, 1943–44.**

⁴ **Maj C. W. H. Tripp, DSO, Silver Star(US); Gore; born Timaru, 22 Feb 1902; farmer; OC 1 Commando, Fiji Guerrillas, 1943–44; wounded 12 Jyk 1943.**

admiring relatives watched them training with sticks instead of the more spectacular rifle. Their desire for uniforms could not be gratified immediately, and only time and infinite patience overcame these and other problems. Even before the force left **Fiji**, these guerrilla units proved the worth of their training and gave promise of their future usefulness. During manœuvres conducted by Brigadier F. L. Hunt, ¹ who was temporarily commanding **8 Brigade** during Row's absence in New Zealand from sickness, a band of these guerrillas effectively held up the advance of a battalion through rough, wooded country.

Meanwhile, by March 1942, American forces had begun to move into the **Pacific** in some strength to bases in **Australia, New Caledonia**, and Eastern Samoa. Increasing numbers of senior officers passing through **Fiji** examined the defences and the island's possibilities as a staging base. The port facilities of **Suva** were strained to their utmost when it became a revictualling base for the **Anzac Naval Force** ² and for American convoys carrying men and supplies to their newly created garrisons. On one occasion half a million pounds of fresh meat arrived from the **United States** and was stored until ships called to pick it up. There was no surplus space in the cool-stores of the town or the camps.

Official reports came, too, of the first American offensive action—hit-and-run raids on enemy strongholds in the Marshall Group, Wake and Marcus Islands, and a raid on **Tokyo** by aircraft from the American

carrier *Hornet* on 18 April. Despite them, however, the Japanese continued to move south, and in June were constructing an airfield on the northern coast of **Guadalcanal**. Intelligence information to the force in **Fiji** suggested that any Japanese attack was based on the strength of one division with tanks, and that it would be supported by four aircraft carriers and strong naval units. Preparations to meet it were intensified and practice alarms were held. That demoralising edict known as 'denial of resources to the enemy' also went forth, and plans for the destruction of supplies, roads, bridges, and petrol were committed to paper. But it never came; the proposed Japanese attack ordered on 18 May 1942 was cancelled in July.

¹ **Brig F. L. Hunt**, OBE, m. i. d.; **Wellington**; born Leeston, 30 Nov 1890; Regular soldier; Otago Regt 1915–16; **2 NZEF**, Egypt, 1940–41; commanded 8 Bde, 3 NZ Div, May–Jul 1942; 16 Bde Gp (**Tonga**) Feb 1943–Feb 1944; held appointments of Director of Military Training (1942), Adjutant-General (1946), and Quartermaster-General, Army HQ (1946–48).

² The **Anzac Naval Force**, established in February 1942 under the command of **Vice-Admiral H. F. Leary**, USN, operated during its brief existence in waters between **Fiji** and **New Caledonia**. It consisted of HMAS *Australia*, flagship of Rear-Admiral J. G. Crace, RN, HMAS *Canberra*, USS *Chicago*, HMNZS *Achilles*, HMNZS *Leander* and two US destroyers, *Lamson* and *Perkins*. With the exception of *Canberra*, these ships assembled at **Suva** on 12 February. The force was disbanded in April 1942.

By that time American forces were moving into **Fiji**, as well as **New Caledonia** and the **New Hebrides**. On 12 May Mead was notified that the defence of the Crown Colony and other islands in the South Pacific area was under the command of Vice-Admiral R. L. Ghormley, **US Navy**, who had been appointed the month previously to the South Pacific command. four days later Ghormley passed through **Fiji** on his way to New Zealand, where he established his headquarters at **Auckland**. Mead flew to Namaka to meet him. These personal inspections of the defences

of **Fiji** and of units already in **New Caledonia**, as well as staff talks with individual commanders, were invaluable to his future planning.

Although reinforcements and armament as approved by War Cabinet in April Continued to reach **Fiji**—900 men were sent in May and another 1700 at the end of June—the decision to relieve the force by the American **37 Division** had already been taken. On 6 June the American advanced party arrived, followed on 10 June by Major-General R. S. Beightler and 5700 members of his Ohio division in the transports *President Coolidge*, which was afterwards lost in a minefield off the **New Hebrides**, and *Santa Lucia*. Another 3200 men of the division reached **Suva** from New Zealand before the end of June, after which the *President Coolidge* ran a shuttle service between **Suva** and **Auckland**, carrying New Zealanders home and bringing up the remainder of **37 Division**. Beightler and Mead agreed that all New Zealand personnel with the **Fiji** Defence Force and the guerrilla units should remain in **Fiji**, and that 1035 New Zealanders manning the fixed coastal and anti-aircraft defences should remain until they were relieved by American units. The relief of the force coincided, ironically enough, with the emplacement of eight 3.7-inch anti-aircraft guns from New Zealand, the first of which fired a trial shoot on 19 June.

At the time the force handed over to **37 American Division** in 1942 the principal staff appointments and commands were:

Force Headquarters

General Officer Commanding	Maj-Gen O. H. Mead, CBE, DSO
GSO 1	Lt- Col W. Murphy, MC
GSO 2	Maj S. S. H. Berkeley
GSO 3 (Operations)	Capt J. G. Warrington
GSO 3 (Intelligence)	Capt O. A. Gillespie, MM
AA and QMG	Lt-Col J. G. C. Wales, MC
DAQMG	Maj R. C. Aley
DAAG	Capt S. F. Marshall
Commander Royal Artillery	Lt-Col J. P. Joyce, DCM
Fixed Coastal Artillery	Lt-Col B. Wicksteed

ADMS
CRE
CRASC

ADDS
DADOS
Base Paymaster
Provost Marshal
Divisional Signals Officer
Camp Commandant and Legal Staff Officer
Records Officer

Col A. C. McKillop, ED
Maj W. G. McKay
Lt-Col. F. G. M. Jenkins, DCM
Maj H. A'C. Fitzgerald
Capt M. S. Myers
Capt W. P. McGowan
Capt A. L. Downes
Capt. J. L. J. Gettins
Capt D. A. Solomon

2 Lt P. H. Robinson

8 Infantry Brigade

Officer Commanding Brig F. L. Hunt
Brigade Major Maj R. J. Eyre
Staff Captain Capt I. H. MacArthur
1 Fijian Battalion Lt-Col J. B. K. Taylor
34 Battalion Lt-Col F. W. Voelcker, MC
36 Battalion Lt-Col J. W. Barry
35 Field Battery Maj C. H. Loughnan, MC

14 Infantry Brigade

Officer Commanding Brig L. Potter
Brigade Major Maj S. A. McNamara, DCM
Staff Captain Maj P. L. Bennett, MC
30 Battalion Lt-Col H. A. Pattullo, MC
35 Battalion Lt-Col C. F. Seaward, MC
37 Battalion Lt-Col A. H. L. Sugden
37 Field Battery Maj W. A. Bryden

Divisional Reserve

29 Battalion Lt-Col A. J. Moore

The change-over was effected without incident and began an association with American forces which was to endure for some years. In Fiji, also, New Zealand military forces came under American command for the first time. While the relief took place, the works and defence programme continued without interruption. The incoming Americans brought with them such a quantity of equipment, from artillery to field furniture, that the New Zealanders were justified in wondering how they

had achieved so much with so little. Potter returned to New Zealand with the second relief draft and opened an advanced headquarters in Quay Street, **Auckland**, pending the arrival of Mead. At six O'clock on the morning of 18 July operational command in **Fiji** passed to Beightler.

Mead remained in **Suva** to observe amphibious landing operations by **United States** navy, army, and air units on the beaches of Koro Island, which he had helped to select for this first and only rehearsal of the landing on **Guadalcanal**. He then left on the morning of 25 July to pay a farewell visit to **Tonga**, but the Hudson aircraft in which he and his aide-de-camp, Lieutenant J. C. Leslie, were travelling was lost in a tropical storm after reaching the island. An inquiry revealed that the aircraft, low in fuel after flying in torrential rain which made any observation impossible, had been accidentally directed south of the island by an American officer operating radio location, who mistook other aircraft from a carrier in the neighbourhood for the New Zealand Hudson. No trace of the aircraft or its occupants was ever found, though sea and air searches were maintained for some days afterwards. Flying Officer D. A. Anderson, Pilot Officer C. G. Ibbotson, Sergeant R. H. W. Wybourne, and Leading Aircraftsman A. N. Clayton went down with their machine.

When command in **Fiji** passed to the Americans, 58 New Zealand officers and 210 other ranks, nearly all specialists, remained with the **Fiji** Defence Force, for which New Zealand was also requested to provide a commandant. Wales was selected and appointed on 18 July with the rank of Colonel, with promotion to Brigadier the following November. He established his head-quarters in a separate camp off the main highway at **Tamavua**, from which he administered his triple command.

The majority of the men of what was now **3 Division** were not sorry to leave **Fiji**. Some of them had been there since November 1940. What they had accomplished without the aid of heavy equipment, of which they had little enough until they inherited some left behind when the **Civil Construction Unit** returned to New Zealand in May, astonished the Americans as they examined the defence system. Work and climate had taken their toll but most of the men were remarkably fit, though in

1942 the DDMS had protested that too many Grade II men were being sent to **Fiji**, where heat and conditions aggravated minor weaknesses. The work of the force suffered from a curiously undeserved lack of publicity from any official correspondents and photographers, and no broadcasting unit sent home to New Zealand those singularly uninspired personal messages from men carrying out a task lacking in both glamour and spectacle. An occasional amateurish photograph did appear in the New Zealand newspapers, but it only revealed a crowd of husky Fijians in snow-white *sulus* and European coats presenting gifts of fruit and vegetables to the soldiers. The Force received the unselfish co-operation of every Government department in **Fiji**, particularly from the Public Works Department, without whose aid still more work would have fallen on the sunburned shoulders of the New Zealanders, and the Colonial Sugar Refining Company, whose narrow-gauge railways saved miles of marching and haulage.

THE PACIFIC

CHAPTER 3 – PROBLEMS OF COMMAND AND EMPLOYMENT

CHAPTER 3

Problems of Command and Employment

I: America Plans the Offensive

AN unbroken series of retreats and territorial losses of the greatest strategical importance and significance followed the fall of **Singapore on 15 February 1942, as the Japanese thrust continued to the south and ultimately reached the **Solomons** in April. Although America was quick to act after the attack on **Pearl Harbour**, time and space dictated action and strategy in the **Pacific**—time to organise men, assemble materials, ships, aircraft, and naval support for a global war which meant fighting not only on two fronts but in several widely separated theatres; space because of the vast distances over which men and materials had to be carried before they were committed to action.**

Time and space were also influenced by command. Soon after **Japan's entry into the war a unified command was created in the South West Pacific under General Sir Archibald Wavell, who took over what was known as the ABDA area (American, British, Dutch, and Australian). His deputy commander was an American, and Admiral Thomas C. Hart, commanding the **United States Asiatic Fleet**, commanded all naval forces. Wavell's command included **Burma, Malaya, the Philippines, Netherlands East Indies, Dutch New Guinea** and, later, **Northern Australia**. Beyond this area, east of the **Philippines** and **Australia** and **New Zealand**, the defence of the **Pacific** became the responsibility of the **United States Navy**.**

In January 1942 the Anzac area was created. This was an addition to the Pacific Ocean area to include East **Australia, **New Zealand**, and part of **New Guinea**, and was still the responsibility of the **US Navy**, which assigned **Vice-Admiral H. F. Leary** to command the first Anzac naval force. When **Singapore** fell the ABDA command was dissolved, and a **Dutch commander-in-chief** took over for a brief period until the fall of **Java**.¹ Once more the**

¹ These commands existed for only brief periods and were created in an attempt to meet a situation which changed radically almost from day to day. But they were soon dissolved, for they were never satisfactory in meeting a grave situation which not only involved the use of all three services of the countries concerned in stemming the Japanese advance, but also had to satisfy the demands and wishes of Governments and the most senior officers.

strategic boundaries were shuffled, this time into two spheres of responsibility—the **Indian Ocean**, including **Burma**, became the British sphere, and the **Pacific Ocean**, including **Australia** and **New Zealand**, fell to the **United States**.

An attack could not be mounted quickly in the **Pacific**, however urgent the necessity to stem the seemingly overwhelming Japanese tide. The main Allied bases, in **Australia** and **New Zealand**, were at the end of a long ocean haul of more than 6000 miles from **United States** ports, and only a slightly shorter haul to **Fiji**, **New Caledonia**, and the **New Hebrides**, some of the more important subsidiary forward bases. After transshipment at those bases, there was another 1000- to 2000-mile haul to the immediate battle area through submarine-infested waters. And at that time, particularly, there were not enough ships, landing craft, aircraft, men or supplies to mount an attack in any great force. Even when it came, the required strength to mount an offensive was dribbled across the **Pacific** under navy protection for assembly and final preparation at hastily organised and constructed advanced bases. Moreover, almost the whole of the Allied strength at that time had been committed—either in preparation for a resumption of the attack in **Egypt**, where in June the British had been forced back beyond the **Egyptian** frontier, or in preparation in the **United Kingdom** for the landing on the **Normandy** coast. **Russia**, too, was causing some concern. She was being hard pressed by the German thrusts to **Stalingrad** and **Sevastopol**, and the Allies were therefore sending her all the assistance they could afford in supplies and war materials. It was also the generally

agreed Allied plan to defeat **Germany** first, because of the fear that she might first produce an atom bomb or develop other defensive weapons of equal destructive power, after which the full Allied strength could be turned against **Japan**.

Because of vital shortages, the first phase of the **Pacific** war was indecisive and unspectacular. From the attack on **Pearl Harbour** to the Battle of Midway was a defensive phase; it was followed by a holding phase and finally an offensive phase, which did not really begin until 1944, when the full force of armament and highly-trained fighting services had been assembled, and after lessons learned in early conflict had been absorbed by units not yet committed to battle. Nor was **Pacific** strategy fully developed until after the first foothold had been obtained in the **Solomons**. This evolved as a series of giant pincer movements to eliminate the bases of **Rabaul** and **Truk** in preparation for the thrust into the **Philippines**. As the **Pacific** offensive developed in 1943, three giant spearheads converged on the arsenals of **Japan's** inner defence line. MacArthur's force, which included Australians under General Sir Thomas Blamey and Americans under Lieutenant-General Walter Krueger, thrust through **New Guinea** and **New Britain** to **Rabaul**; and Americans, first under Ghormley and later under Halsey, and including New Zealanders under Major-General H. E. **Barrowclough**,¹ slowly fought through the **Solomons** to the same objective. Coming in on the right flank through the islands of the Gilbert and Marshall Groups, an amphibious American force struck at successive islands on the way to **Truk**, the key to the whole Japanese defence system and secured by a series of interlocking island bases. That was the early broad plan of the campaign.

Through all the phases of this campaign New Zealand played her part, which began before **Pearl Harbour** by garrisoning **Fiji** and other **Pacific** islands. Small though they were compared with **America's** vast resources in men and material, ground forces of 3 New Zealand Division, aircraft of the **Royal New Zealand Air Force**, and ships of the **Royal New Zealand Navy** lent their courage and strength to the long and arduous battle. New Zealand also provided bases and training grounds and

supplied fresh foods in such quantity that, according to General Marshall, 'In **Australia** and **New Zealand** American forces obtained almost all their food requirements locally'. **New Zealand** also despatched vast quantities of fresh foods to the forces in the **Pacific**.²

Through early 1942 a series of mutually supporting island bases was built up through the **Pacific**, extending from the **New Hebrides**, where a huge naval base capable of undertaking heavy repair work on damaged ships was established at **Havannah Harbour** on **Efate**, to **New Caledonia** (the largest military and supply base), **Fiji**, **Samoa**, and **Tonga**. These rear islands were not regarded as impregnable bases, but they were sufficiently strong if an attack developed to enable their garrisons to hold out until help arrived. On 2 July the **United States** Joint Chiefs of Staff ordered the Allied forces to mount a limited offensive with the men and ships then available, but before that could be done the vexed question of command had still to be settled.

By the end of March 1942 the division of the **Pacific** into two commands had been agreed—the South West Pacific area, which included the **Philippines**, the South **China** Sea, the **Netherlands East Indies** (except **Sumatra**), the **Solomon Islands**, and **Australia**

¹ **Maj-Gen H. E. Barrowclough**, CB, DSO and bar, MC, ED, m. i. d., MC (Gk), Legion of Merit (US), Croix de Guerre; **Auckland**; born **Masterton**, 23 Jun 1894; barrister and solicitor; NZ Rifle Bde 1915–19 (CO 4 Bn); commanded 7 NZ Inf Bde in **UK**, 1940; 6 Brigade, May 1940-Feb 1942; GOC **2 NZEF** in **Pacific** and GOC 3 NZ Div Aug 1942-Oct 1944.

² By 31 Dec 1943, under reciprocal lend-lease aid, **New Zealand** had supplied 113,886 tons of food, including butter, meat, vegetables, eggs and milk, valued at £11,190,000, to the **American** forces, as well as vast quantities of stores and war materials.

and waters to the south, under **MacArthur**, with headquarters in

Australia, to which he had been ordered by his Government before **Singapore** fell; and the Pacific Ocean area under Admiral Chester Nimitz, Commander-in-Chief of the **United States Pacific Fleet**, with headquarters at **Pearl Harbour**.

Nimitz's area was again subdivided into three—the North, Central and South Pacific areas, which made the situation confusing to readers of the daily news. Most of the established Allied bases were in the South Pacific area, which lay south of the Equator and west of 110 degrees West, joining MacArthur's command off the east coast of **Australia**. This area of more than one million square miles of water was dotted with groups of islands vital to future plans, and included New Zealand, **New Caledonia**, **Samoa**, **Fiji**, **Tonga**, the Cook and **Society Islands**. Nimitz commanded all Allied forces, except the New Zealand land defences, in the Pacific Ocean areas, but Ghormley was appointed his subordinate commander in the South Pacific, with headquarters at **Auckland** in the early stages and later in **Noumea**, to which he transferred on 1 August 1942 and which became the principal **United States** base until the end of the campaign in the **Solomons**.

Both MacArthur and Nimitz were responsible to the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Washington. There was some conflict of opinion between Navy and Army before the commands were finally settled, after weeks of negotiation during which both **Australia** and New Zealand vigorously protested against being placed in separate areas, since they regarded both countries as a strategical whole.

New Zealand at this time was represented in both **Washington** and **London**. Nash departed from **Wellington** in January to become New Zealand Minister in **Washington**, where Brigadier A. B. Williams became New Zealand's representative on the British Joint Staff Mission. Brigadier R. S. Park was appointed in **London** as New Zealand's representative on the joint planning staff. In Washington the **Rt. Hon. R. G. Casey** was Australian minister, and lent his support when both New Zealand and **Australia** pressed hard for the establishment of a **Pacific War Council** in **Washington**, urging their desire in long and extremely

frank signals to Churchill. The rapidly changing war situation lent force to their argument, but **London** was at first hesitant to agree. A Far Eastern Council, on which Jordan represented New Zealand, had been established in **London** on 9 February, with a staff council in **Washington**, but New Zealand and **Australia**, supported by the Dutch Minister, maintained that the prosecution of the **Pacific** war would be more easily directed from **Washington** and that the **United States** was better situated to control it. They wished, also, for a unified command co-ordinating all land, sea, and air resources, realising that a multiplicity of commands would ultimately weaken and prolong the war effort. The **Pacific War Council** first suggested by New Zealand and **Australia** on 21 January 1942 was ultimately set up, though a Council still remained in **London** to advise on political matters.

Encouraged by their successes after the fall of **Singapore** and the Dutch East Indies, the Japanese prepared to continue their advance south, and planned an attack on **Port Moresby** from the sea and to establish bases in **New Caledonia**, **Fiji**, and **Samoa** from which to sever the American supply lines across the **Pacific** to New Zealand and **Australia**. **United States** naval forces, weakened at **Pearl Harbour**, were no match for the still undamaged Japanese Grand Fleet, but Nimitz made the best use of his **Task Force 3**, consisting of eight 8-inch cruisers, three aircraft carriers, and a destroyer screen. This, with the later formation of the Anzac Striking Force, which included **HMAS Australia**, **HMAS Perth**, **HMNZS Achilles** and **HMNZS Leander**, was almost the whole Allied naval strength in the **Pacific** during the critical months of early 1942.

Estimates of the strength of any further attacking Japanese forces varied widely. On 11 December 1941 information from **London** contained in a signal from the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, assumed that there would be 'no immediate large-scale threat to the territory of **Australia** and much less to New Zealand'. **Washington** advised on 8 January 1942 that an attack on **Fiji** could be expected at any time after 10 January, and that the probable scale would be one

division escorted by four aircraft carriers. In March, in view of the altered situation, the British Chiefs of Staff, who previously presumed that any attack on New Zealand would be at brigade strength, raised their figure to 'ten or eleven divisions, accompanied by very large naval forces, including five aircraft carriers', and added that the Japanese might employ one or two divisions for the initial purpose of seizing a base; but, despite this estimate, they did not suggest increasing the defence force of the Dominion, for which they considered seven brigade groups or formations were sufficient, supported by five air squadrons (only two of which were equipped with modern aircraft), augmented by four fighter squadrons, two general reconnaissance squadrons, two torpedo medium bomber squadrons, one bomber-reconnaissance or dive-bomber squadron, and four transport aircraft.

In the light of later knowledge from Japanese sources, the estimates of enemy strength were exaggerated; no attack on New Zealand was ever planned. Orders for a continuance of the attack south, issued on 12 May 1942 to the commander of the 17th Japanese Army, were delayed for two months after the Battle of the Coral Sea, when the force intended for **Port Moresby** was turned back, and were finally cancelled on 11 July after the disastrous defeat at the Battle of Midway.

MacArthur, from his headquarters in **Australia**, began planning for an offensive against the advancing Japanese early in May 1942, when he realised that the overwhelming enemy victories in the **Philippines**, **Burma**, and **Malaya** would release more forces to continue the move south. His presumption was correct, since orders to continue the advance south from the **Solomons** were issued by the Japanese High Command that same month. Airfields, which the Allies lacked, were being hastily constructed in the north of **Australia**, in the valleys inland from **Port Moresby** and at Milne Bay, **New Guinea**, but MacArthur wanted greatly increased numbers of aircraft carriers, aeroplanes, and ground troops before he could move. Nimitz was also contemplating an attack to destroy a seaplane base which the Japanese had constructed at **Tulagi**, the southern limit of their move in the **Solomons**, but the Marine raider

battalion he proposed to use was rightly considered too small for such a task. MacArthur's desire was for an early attack to dislodge the enemy from his newly won bases in both the **Solomons** and **New Britain** before they were consolidated, but as only three partly trained and equipped divisions were then available, and the objectives in the **New Britain- New Ireland** area were beyond the range of Allied fighter support from **Port Moresby** and the Australian mainland, close fighter air support would have had to come from aircraft carriers, none of which had been assigned to the South West Pacific area. British attacks against Timor or the Nicobar and **Andaman Islands** in the Bay of Bengal, which were on the outer rim of the Japanese penetration in that area, were planned to co-ordinate with the American attack, using units of the **British Eastern Fleet**, but they did not get beyond the stage of suggestion.

The mounting of a **Pacific** offensive entailed the appointment of an overall commander, and here negotiations were for a time halted. General Marshall favoured MacArthur, already the hero of the **Philippines** and a man of tried battle knowledge, and he believed that an attack could be mounted by July, using for the initial assault 1 US Marine Division, under Major-General A. A. Vandegrift, part of which was going to **Wellington**. Three Australian divisions were to take over after a bridgehead had been established. This force was to be assembled at **Brisbane**, the nearest available port to the battle area. Aircraft, many of them now pouring into **Australia** through **Fiji**, would be available for bombing, but fighter support would be required from aircraft carriers. The American War Department suggested a naval commander under MacArthur for the operation; the Navy Department, however, thought differently and suggested that Nimitz should command the offensive and that the attack towards the **New Guinea- New Britain** area should be pressed up through the Solomon Islands, the immediate objectives, using 1 Marine Division, two aircraft carriers with cruisers and destroyers, five Marine air squadrons and land-based aircraft from the South Pacific. Any captured islands were to be occupied under MacArthur with troops from **Australia**. The Navy planned to attack **Tulagi** first and, by progressive moves, ultimately to reach **Rabaul**, instead of attacking **Rabaul** directly

from **Australia**, which would require a strong naval task force, an army garrison, and additional land-based aircraft from **Australia** and **Port Moresby**. The Japanese were already established along the northern coast of **New Guinea** at lae and Salamaua. Nothing could be done before August because of the time required to assemble shipping and supplies.

The American operations division at first supported a direct thrust at **Rabaul**, which had been rapidly developed into the key Japanese base south of **Truk**, and recommended that the Navy provide 1 Marine Division and twelve transports, two carriers and supporting vessels, under MacArthur's command. While discussing the plans, no agreement could be reached between Army and Navy on a commander. Army insisted that as the attack would be in MacArthur's area he should command it, with a naval officer directing the tactical attacking force. Navy thought that MacArthur might expose their precious carriers by placing them in range of Japanese land-based aircraft in the **Solomons**, where several airfields had already been established on islands through the group, therefore it was essential first to reduce **Tulagi**. Command should therefore go to Ghormley, under Nimitz. When he was informed of Navy opposition, MacArthur insisted that his long-range plan had been misinterpreted, and that he had envisaged a final assault on **Rabaul** only after progressive moves up through the **Solomons**.

By 26 June no decision had been reached by Marshall and King, as King was still insisting on a naval commander and that MacArthur should take control at the conclusion of the amphibious stage. King also suggested that Navy begin immediate operations and directed Nimitz to go ahead with plans for an offensive in the **Solomons**. Nimitz and Ghormley immediately began their preparations. First Marine Division, part of which had landed at **Wellington** and was training along the coast from Pimmerton to Waikanae, was ordered to prepare for the attack, and Nimitz requested the Joint Chiefs of Staff to move eight army B. 17 and thirteen B. 26 aircraft from **Hawaii** to **New Caledonia** and the same number to **Fiji**, where the **Nandi** airfields could now accommodate them. He also asked for surface ships, submarines, and long-range aircraft from

the South West Pacific area to support Ghormley. Marshall was perturbed by King's implication that the Army might not co-operate fully, and decided to negotiate personally with him, which he did from 29 June to 2 July. Finally, a compromise was reached. Ghormley was to command the offensive until the **Tulagi** operation was completed, after which MacArthur was to take over and control the advance to **Rabaul**. An alteration was made in the boundaries of the operational areas to allow the island of **Guadalcanal** to come into Ghormley's command.

On 2 July King and Marshall signed a 'Joint Directive for offensive operations in the South West Pacific area agreed on by the US Joint Chiefs of Staff'. The operations were divided into three tasks:

- (1) The seizure and occupation of Santa Cruz Islands, **Tulagi**, and adjacent positions, for which MacArthur was to attach naval reinforcements and land-based aircraft and immobilise enemy and air activity west of the combat area.
- (2) Seizure and occupation of the remainder of the **Solomons**, Lae, Salamaua, and the north-east coast of **New Guinea**, which would come under MacArthur's command.
- (3) Seizure and occupation of **Rabaul** and adjacent positions, also under MacArthur's command.

The South West Pacific and South Pacific boundaries were moved so that **Tulagi**, **Guadalcanal**, Florida, the **Russell Islands**, **Malaita**, and **San Cristobal** came under Ghormley, leaving the rest of the **Solomons** to MacArthur. Curiously enough, **Guadalcanal** was not mentioned in the first task, but it was included when information reached the planners that the Japanese were constructing an airfield at Lunga Point. This had been revealed by reports from coastwatchers and by air reconnaissance.

Ghormley flew to **Australia** from **Auckland** on 7 July to confer with MacArthur and agree upon preliminary plans. They both were apprehensive because of the shortage of ships and aircraft and recommended a postponement until both the South and South West Pacific areas were strengthened, as all previous engagements with the enemy had demonstrated the value of air power in naval combat. This recommendation was rejected by the Joint Chiefs of Staff in

Washington, who controlled the broad strategic allocation, though the actual control of operations in the **Pacific** was retained by the **United States Chiefs of Staff**. Unity of direction stemmed from a **British- United States War Council**, formation of which was announced in **Washington** on 17 January 1942, but the **United States-British Combined Chiefs of Staff** organisation was not formed until 6 February 'to ensure complete co-ordination of the war effort.' **Australian, New Zealand, the Netherlands and United Kingdom** representatives on the **Far Eastern Council** acted in an advisory capacity in **London**, but as the war progressed almost the whole direction for the **Pacific** war came from **Washington**.

When **MacArthur and Ghormley's** request for postponement was rejected, plans went ahead. The first offensive of the war against **Japan** began when the Americans landed on **Guadalcanal** on 7 August, to begin the long, exhausting struggle for the **Solomons**. It did not end until the **New Zealanders and American forces** landed on the **Green Islands** on 15 February 1944.

New Zealand land and air forces were at first excluded from any **Pacific** command, but after lengthy negotiations with **London** and **Washington**, all except the land forces stationed in the Dominion, which remained under the **New Zealand Chiefs of Staff**, came under command of the **South Pacific** area. These included major units of the **Army and Air Force** located on **Pacific** islands beyond the Dominion's shores. Such naval units as were required were already under **American operational command**. This co-ordinated effort made for greater unity, though the approval of the **New Zealand Government** had first to be obtained before any of her services could be committed to action, and administrative command remained with the **New Zealand commanders** in the areas where the forces were stationed. This meant that **Ghormley**, and later **Vice- Admiral W. F. Halsey**, who succeeded him in the **South Pacific Command** in October 1942, could call on all **New Zealand units** in his area if he required them, but could commit them to action only through their own commanders.

II: New Zealand Emerges in the Pacific Plan

Urgent requests for men and equipment went from Wellington to the United States and the United Kingdom immediately following Japan's entry into the war. It seemed, at times, as though little heed was being taken of the requirements for other theatres where action was already in progress and decisions were vital, but New Zealand was deplorably short and unable to meet her own immediate defence needs, for little equipment had been imported into the Dominion in the years immediately preceding the outbreak of hostilities.

Both before and during negotiations for the mounting of an offensive in the Solomons, New Zealand was requesting help from London and Washington for the defence of her own shores and for Fiji. She persistently stressed the need for a full American division in Fiji and another for New Zealand and, because she considered Fiji her first line of defence, she wished to leave her own troops there when American troops ultimately reached the Crown Colony. Ghormley agreed to this proposal, but it was obvious from subsequent action that the American planners did not.

From the time of his arrival in Washington, Mr. Nash kept the New Zealand Government fully informed of all the Joint Chiefs of Staff proposals and planning, which included that, if Fiji and New Caledonia were lost, it would be essential to hold the North Island of New Zealand, particularly its northern regions. The apprehension felt at that time in New Zealand, and the Dominion's vulnerability should Japan press towards her shores, had been fully set out on 24 December 1941 in a cable message from Fraser to Churchill, who was then in Washington. (See Appendix II.) He said that the crippling of the United States Fleet at Pearl Harbour, the loss of the *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse* off Malaya, the violent and successful attacks by the enemy in Malaya, Hong Kong, the Philippines, Wake, and Guam had increased the probability of attack on Fiji and its importance in the scheme of Allied defence to a degree which could not be exaggerated. Extensions to the Nandi aerodrome,

which New Zealand was undertaking at the request of the **United States** Government, would become a liability if they were not adequately defended. New Zealand could supply an extra brigade for the western area of **Fiji**, but the Dominion could not equip these men. New Zealand had already denuded herself of arms to a degree which was causing the gravest concern. Fraser urged Churchill to impress on Roosevelt the importance of **Fiji** and the urgent need for equipment. On the following day the Prime Minister despatched a cable to the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs in **London** regretting that New Zealand was unable to send a force to **Malaya** to assist in the defence of the naval base of **Singapore**, which had been suggested during an inter-Allied conference there. In the same message he again set out the situation in **Fiji** and appealed for urgent assistance, particularly in armoured fighting vehicles and anti-tank equipment. (See **Appendix II**.) The Secretary of State replied that the Government of the **United Kingdom** concurred in the decision to reinforce **Fiji**, and that early provision would be made to send equipment. Because of commitments elsewhere—to the **Middle East** and **Russia** particularly—this could not be despatched immediately, and calls on the **United Kingdom** were beginning to embarrass her. This was revealed when Fraser received a cable from the Secretary of State on 4 February, eleven days before **Singapore** fell, indicating **Britain's** mounting difficulties, which informed him that ‘the task of allocation is one of some difficulty at the moment with a rapidly changing situation in several parts of the world. We are already heading dangerously near the point where the spreading of our resources must lead to a general weakness. There is a point beyond which we cannot interfere with the flow to the **Middle East**, whence so many army and air force units, with their equipment, have already been withdrawn for the **Pacific**’. His inference in part was to the withdrawal of Australian forces, ground and air, which began their return to the Commonwealth from the **Middle East** in early 1942, as soon as the Japanese threat to **Australia** seemed imminent. Despite the uneasy position in the **Mediterranean** theatre, however, the fighter aircraft sent to New Zealand in the early days of the war were deducted from Royal Air Force allocations originally intended for the **Middle East**.

New Zealand was beginning to feel the strain on her manpower by March 1942, by which time 61,368 men had gone overseas. The Army had absorbed 52,712, the remainder going to the Navy and the Air Force. Another 67,264 were in New Zealand camps, including 52,983 in the Army, and an additional 100,000 aged between sixteen and sixty were in the Home Guard. The New Zealand Chiefs of Staff, reviewing the situation in the Pacific early in April 1942, considered that six divisions were required for the defence of the Dominion itself, though only three were available. In submitting their appreciation to War Cabinet, they said that additional forces, as requested by Mead, were still required for Fiji—two brigade groups and one battalion for Viti Levu, one brigade group and one battalion for Vanua Levu (the second largest island of the group, which remained completely defenceless), and eight air squadrons. They pointed out that the airfields, still inadequately defended, were being enlarged and three others were to be constructed outside defended areas. Additional forces could come only from New Zealand or the United States, but the Americans, who were then considering sending a division and strong air forces to New Zealand, did not wish to divide their strength between New Zealand and Fiji. The United States Joint Working Committee, at the end of April 1942, thought that in asking for six divisions for the defence of New Zealand, the Dominion was not fully aware of American intentions in the South Pacific. They considered New Zealand would be reasonably secure with four divisions—two New Zealand and two American—and suggested that any remaining divisions be moved to Fiji. This committee also recommended at the same time that the following aircraft be provided for Fiji: 50 fighters, 26 medium bombers, 13 observation, and 12 navy type seaplanes.

The New Zealand Chiefs of Staff recommended placing the situation before Ghormley while he was still in the United States and, if land forces could not be obtained immediately for Fiji, then the risk of sending the New Zealand army reserve brigade group should be taken, as the situation was then sufficiently serious to warrant such urgent action. Cabinet approved the recommendation and Nash was asked to

put the situation to Ghormley. Nash replied on 29 April that the **United States** Chiefs of Staff refused to consider **Fiji** as a separate problem and insisted that in their **Pacific** plan it was only one of a series of mutually supporting islands, which it was. The security of the **Pacific** area and subsequent operations in it must be considered as whole. They proposed to have an air strength of 1000 personnel in **Fiji** before the end of 1942, and New Zealand was requested to supply 12,000 troops within that time.

Fraser replied that New Zealand was still of opinion that reinforcements for **Fiji** should come from the **United States**. 'We have despatched to **Fiji**,' he cabled, 'greater forces than we can reasonably be expected to spare, amounting to approximately a quarter of our effective strength at that time.' He added that to provide 12,000 men would cripple the defences of the Dominion. Besides, it would denude New Zealand of equipment. 'Even if we were to withdraw our Division from the **Middle East**, a lengthy period must elapse before its return would enable us to release additional men for **Fiji**.' He suggested either American or Canadian reinforcements.

The suggestion that New Zealand might withdraw her **2nd Division** from the **Middle East** to reinforce the **Pacific** had first been mentioned in a cable to Churchill in February, in which Fraser had hinted that there was some public feeling 'that the New Zealand Forces should be returned to the **Pacific** area to meet the danger nearer home'. During negotiations on **Pacific** manpower requirements, Churchill agreed that it would be preferable to send **United States** forces to New Zealand rather than withdraw **2 Division** from the **Middle East**, as it would conserve shipping and overcome the needless movement of troops, and shipping was an embarrassing problem in 1942.

While the interchange of opinion proceeded through March and April, **America** was speeding her first trained forces into the **Pacific** as she built up her series of mutually supporting bases, in fulfilment of the Chiefs of Staff planning. Many of the garrisons were already in position. The occupation of **New Caledonia** was announced on 25 April, and by the

end of that month the **United States** Joint Working Committee recommended that the following be completed by the end of December 1942:

Bora Bora, in the French Society Islands: 4000 men were in position
Samoa and Wallis: 23,000—13,000 mobile and ready for operation in any sphere

Tonga: 7000, including air forces

New Caledonia: 24,000 already in position

Efate, New Hebrides: 7000

Fiji: 1000, including air forces; New Zealand to provide another 12,000.

By May there were 81,000 American troops, including air personnel, in **Australia**, and the total American strength in the **Pacific** south of **Hawaii** had risen to between 130,000 and 150,000 officers and men of the three arms of the service.

The first intimation that the **United States** resolved to accept full responsibility for the defence of **Fiji** and **Tonga** came on 6 May (the day that Corregidor fell) in a cable from Nash, who had conferred with King. While the Coral Sea battle raged, messages passed between **Wellington** and **Washington** stating that New Zealand agreed to the American proposal but expressing surprise at the rapidity of such developments. The Governor of **Fiji** raised no objection, his only proviso being that two divisions were necessary to ensure the safety of the Colony and that, on political grounds, the identity of both Fijian and Tongan forces should be preserved within the framework of the American command.

Nash continued negotiations with King, who stated that both he and Nimitz considered the urgent strengthening of the islands would result if the **United States** took them over. Precipitate action had been taken, he said, because troops were already on their way. Nash continued to stress the necessity for at least six divisions in New Zealand, the number

recommended by the New Zealand Chiefs of Staff, but King, who still very wisely regarded the whole of **New Guinea**, **New Caledonia**, **Fiji**, and **Samoa** as vulnerable, explained that the number of American troops was limited and there were requests for them from many sources, particularly from **Australia** and Great Britain. Plans, outlined in **Washington** in January, were then in hand for the landing in North Africa later in the year.

Even after the arrival of American troops in **Fiji**, New Zealand still felt that her troops should remain there. It was still her first line of defence, but although Ghormley personally agreed to their retention, by 13 May King issued a joint Army-Navy Plan for the relief of the New Zealand forces and the assumption of **United States** responsibility for the defence of the Fijian Group. When a copy of the relief plan reached **Wellington** in June, Fraser cabled Nash to the effect that New Zealand was still in favour of leaving her troops to assist the Americans and that no conditions were attached to that offer. King's reply was that he and General Marshall had given further consideration to the New Zealand offer. 'After discussing the pros and cons,' he replied, 'we are of opinion that a greater service to our combined effort in the **Pacific** would be served by carrying out the present plan for their relief. The New Zealand troops thus relieved, we hope, can be made available for amphibious training with our 1 Marine Division in anticipation of joint offensive action to the north-west.' The signal also intimated that the **United States** would increase her ground and air force troops in **Fiji** to 23,000 by September 1942, but pending the arrival of reinforcements it might be desirable to supply some New Zealand troops to **Fiji**. Any decision on that point, however, could be made on the spot between Mead and Beightler. Finally, New Zealand accepted the American decision, but the Prime Minister's accepting cable said: 'We must emphasise our view that 23,000 troops are inadequate to defend the **Fiji** Islands. It was because of our apprehension ... that we made the offer to allow our troops to remain.' **America** was to have 14,529 men in **Fiji** with an additional 6583 by August.

From the time the first troops of the relieving force, the American **37 Division** from Ohio, reached the Colony to replace the New Zealand forces, **Fiji** fulfilled its destined role as a training ground for combat troops, a forward depot for supplies and reserves, and a staging centre for aircraft being ferried to the combat zones. The terms and conditions under which the **United States** forces occupied the group were, in so far as they were applicable, the same as those in operation for the leased bases set forth in the agreement for the use and operation of **United States** bases by Great Britain, signed in **London** on 27 March 1941. The Governor of **Fiji** remained the single authority responsible to the British Government, and he was also responsible for civilian rights and property. This similarly applied to **Tonga** and to all British territory in the **Pacific** zone where military security and defence were vested in the American forces. The system worked well and there was no friction on a high level. As the New Zealand forces remaining in **Fiji** and **Tonga** after the withdrawal of **3 Division** were equipped with British types of arms, the responsibility for their maintenance remained with New Zealand.

THE PACIFIC

I: AMERICA PLANS THE OFFENSIVE

I: America Plans the Offensive

AN unbroken series of retreats and territorial losses of the greatest strategical importance and significance followed the fall of **Singapore on 15 February 1942, as the Japanese thrust continued to the south and ultimately reached the **Solomons** in April. Although America was quick to act after the attack on **Pearl Harbour**, time and space dictated action and strategy in the **Pacific**—time to organise men, assemble materials, ships, aircraft, and naval support for a global war which meant fighting not only on two fronts but in several widely separated theatres; space because of the vast distances over which men and materials had to be carried before they were committed to action.**

Time and space were also influenced by command. Soon after **Japan's entry into the war a unified command was created in the South West Pacific under General Sir Archibald Wavell, who took over what was known as the ABDA area (American, British, Dutch, and Australian). His deputy commander was an American, and Admiral Thomas C. Hart, commanding the **United States Asiatic Fleet**, commanded all naval forces. Wavell's command included **Burma, Malaya, the Philippines, Netherlands East Indies, Dutch New Guinea** and, later, **Northern Australia**. Beyond this area, east of the **Philippines** and **Australia** and **New Zealand**, the defence of the **Pacific** became the responsibility of the **United States Navy**.**

In January 1942 the Anzac area was created. This was an addition to the Pacific Ocean area to include East **Australia, **New Zealand**, and part of **New Guinea**, and was still the responsibility of the **US Navy**, which assigned **Vice-Admiral H. F. Leary** to command the first Anzac naval force. When **Singapore** fell the ABDA command was dissolved, and a Dutch commander-in-chief took over for a brief period until the fall of **Java**.¹ Once more the**

¹ These commands existed for only brief periods and were created in an attempt to meet a situation which changed radically almost from day to day. But they were soon dissolved, for they were never satisfactory in meeting a grave situation which not only involved the use of all three services of the countries concerned in stemming the Japanese advance, but also had to satisfy the demands and wishes of Governments and the most senior officers.

strategic boundaries were shuffled, this time into two spheres of responsibility—the **Indian Ocean**, including **Burma**, became the British sphere, and the Pacific Ocean, including **Australia** and New Zealand, fell to the **United States**.

An attack could not be mounted quickly in the **Pacific**, however urgent the necessity to stem the seemingly overwhelming Japanese tide. The main Allied bases, in **Australia** and New Zealand, were at the end of a long ocean haul of more than 6000 miles from **United States** ports, and only a slightly shorter haul to **Fiji**, **New Caledonia**, and the **New Hebrides**, some of the more important subsidiary forward bases. After transshipment at those bases, there was another 1000- to 2000-mile haul to the immediate battle area through submarine-infested waters. And at that time, particularly, there were not enough ships, landing craft, aircraft, men or supplies to mount an attack in any great force. Even when it came, the required strength to mount an offensive was dribbled across the **Pacific** under navy protection for assembly and final preparation at hastily organised and constructed advanced bases. Moreover, almost the whole of the Allied strength at that time had been committed—either in preparation for a resumption of the attack in Egypt, where in June the British had been forced back beyond the Egyptian frontier, or in preparation in the **United Kingdom** for the landing on the **Normandy** coast. **Russia**, too, was causing some concern. She was being hard pressed by the German thrusts to **Stalingrad** and **Sevastopol**, and the Allies were therefore sending her all the assistance

they could afford in supplies and war materials. It was also the generally agreed Allied plan to defeat **Germany** first, because of the fear that she might first produce an atom bomb or develop other defensive weapons of equal destructive power, after which the full Allied strength could be turned against **Japan**.

Because of vital shortages, the first phase of the **Pacific** war was indecisive and unspectacular. From the attack on **Pearl Harbour** to the Battle of Midway was a defensive phase; it was followed by a holding phase and finally an offensive phase, which did not really begin until 1944, when the full force of armament and highly-trained fighting services had been assembled, and after lessons learned in early conflict had been absorbed by units not yet committed to battle. Nor was **Pacific** strategy fully developed until after the first foothold had been obtained in the **Solomons**. This evolved as a series of giant pincer movements to eliminate the bases of **Rabaul** and **Truk** in preparation for the thrust into the **Philippines**. As the **Pacific** offensive developed in 1943, three giant spearheads converged on the arsenals of **Japan's** inner defence line. MacArthur's force, which included Australians under General Sir Thomas Blamey and Americans under Lieutenant-General Walter Krueger, thrust through **New Guinea** and **New Britain** to **Rabaul**; and Americans, first under Ghormley and later under Halsey, and including New Zealanders under Major-General H. E. **Barrowclough**,¹ slowly fought through the **Solomons** to the same objective. Coming in on the right flank through the islands of the Gilbert and Marshall Groups, an amphibious American force struck at successive islands on the way to **Truk**, the key to the whole Japanese defence system and secured by a series of interlocking island bases. That was the early broad plan of the campaign.

Through all the phases of this campaign New Zealand played her part, which began before **Pearl Harbour** by garrisoning **Fiji** and other **Pacific** islands. Small though they were compared with **America's** vast resources in men and material, ground forces of 3 New Zealand Division, aircraft of the **Royal New Zealand Air Force**, and ships of the **Royal New Zealand Navy** lent their courage and strength to the long and arduous

battle. New Zealand also provided bases and training grounds and supplied fresh foods in such quantity that, according to General Marshall, 'In **Australia** and New Zealand American forces obtained almost all their food requirements locally'. New Zealand also despatched vast quantities of fresh foods to the forces in the **Pacific**.²

Through early 1942 a series of mutually supporting island bases was built up through the **Pacific**, extending from the **New Hebrides**, where a huge naval base capable of undertaking heavy repair work on damaged ships was established at Havannah Harbour on **Efate**, to **New Caledonia** (the largest military and supply base), **Fiji**, **Samoa**, and **Tonga**. These rear islands were not regarded as impregnable bases, but they were sufficiently strong if an attack developed to enable their garrisons to hold out until help arrived. On 2 July the **United States** Joint Chiefs of Staff ordered the Allied forces to mount a limited offensive with the men and ships then available, but before that could be done the vexed question of command had still to be settled.

By the end of March 1942 the division of the **Pacific** into two commands had been agreed—the South West Pacific area, which included the **Philippines**, the South **China** Sea, the **Netherlands East Indies** (except **Sumatra**), the Solomon Islands, and **Australia**

¹ **Maj-Gen H. E. Barrowclough**, CB, DSO and bar, MC, ED, m. i. d., MC (Gk), Legion of Merit (US), Croix de Guerre; **Auckland**; born **Masterton**, 23 Jun 1894; barrister and solicitor; NZ Rifle Bde 1915–19 (CO 4 Bn); commanded 7 NZ Inf Bde in **UK**, 1940; 6 Brigade, May 1940-Feb 1942; GOC **2 NZEF** in **Pacific** and GOC 3 NZ Div Aug 1942-Oct 1944.

² By 31 Dec 1943, under reciprocal lend-lease aid, New Zealand had supplied 113,886 tons of food, including butter, meat, vegetables, eggs and milk, valued at £11,190,000, to the American forces, as well as vast quantities of stores and war materials.

and waters to the south, under MacArthur, with headquarters in **Australia**, to which he had been ordered by his Government before **Singapore** fell; and the Pacific Ocean area under Admiral Chester Nimitz, Commander-in-Chief of the **United States Pacific Fleet**, with headquarters at **Pearl Harbour**.

Nimitz's area was again subdivided into three—the North, Central and South Pacific areas, which made the situation confusing to readers of the daily news. Most of the established Allied bases were in the South Pacific area, which lay south of the Equator and west of 110 degrees West, joining MacArthur's command off the east coast of **Australia**. This area of more than one million square miles of water was dotted with groups of islands vital to future plans, and included New Zealand, **New Caledonia**, **Samoa**, **Fiji**, **Tonga**, the Cook and **Society Islands**. Nimitz commanded all Allied forces, except the New Zealand land defences, in the Pacific Ocean areas, but Ghormley was appointed his subordinate commander in the South Pacific, with headquarters at **Auckland** in the early stages and later in **Noumea**, to which he transferred on 1 August 1942 and which became the principal **United States** base until the end of the campaign in the **Solomons**.

Both MacArthur and Nimitz were responsible to the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Washington. There was some conflict of opinion between Navy and Army before the commands were finally settled, after weeks of negotiation during which both **Australia** and New Zealand vigorously protested against being placed in separate areas, since they regarded both countries as a strategical whole.

New Zealand at this time was represented in both **Washington** and **London**. Nash departed from **Wellington** in January to become New Zealand Minister in **Washington**, where Brigadier A. B. Williams became New Zealand's representative on the British Joint Staff Mission. Brigadier R. S. Park was appointed in **London** as New Zealand's representative on the joint planning staff. In Washington the **Rt. Hon. R. G. Casey** was Australian minister, and lent his support when both New

Zealand and Australia pressed hard for the establishment of a **Pacific War Council** in **Washington**, urging their desire in long and extremely frank signals to Churchill. The rapidly changing war situation lent force to their argument, but **London** was at first hesitant to agree. A Far Eastern Council, on which Jordan represented New Zealand, had been established in **London** on 9 February, with a staff council in **Washington**, but New Zealand and **Australia**, supported by the Dutch Minister, maintained that the prosecution of the **Pacific** war would be more easily directed from **Washington** and that the **United States** was better situated to control it. They wished, also, for a unified command co-ordinating all land, sea, and air resources, realising that a multiplicity of commands would ultimately weaken and prolong the war effort. The **Pacific War Council** first suggested by New Zealand and **Australia** on 21 January 1942 was ultimately set up, though a Council still remained in **London** to advise on political matters.

Encouraged by their successes after the fall of **Singapore** and the Dutch East Indies, the Japanese prepared to continue their advance south, and planned an attack on **Port Moresby** from the sea and to establish bases in **New Caledonia**, **Fiji**, and **Samoa** from which to sever the American supply lines across the **Pacific** to New Zealand and **Australia**. **United States** naval forces, weakened at **Pearl Harbour**, were no match for the still undamaged Japanese Grand Fleet, but Nimitz made the best use of his **Task Force 3**, consisting of eight 8-inch cruisers, three aircraft carriers, and a destroyer screen. This, with the later formation of the Anzac Striking Force, which included **HMAS Australia**, **HMAS Perth**, **HMNZS Achilles** and **HMNZS Leander**, was almost the whole Allied naval strength in the **Pacific** during the critical months of early 1942.

Estimates of the strength of any further attacking Japanese forces varied widely. On 11 December 1941 information from **London** contained in a signal from the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, assumed that there would be 'no immediate large-scale threat to the territory of **Australia** and much less to New Zealand'. **Washington**

advised on 8 January 1942 that an attack on **Fiji** could be expected at any time after 10 January, and that the probable scale would be one division escorted by four aircraft carriers. In March, in view of the altered situation, the British Chiefs of Staff, who previously presumed that any attack on New Zealand would be at brigade strength, raised their figure to 'ten or eleven divisions, accompanied by very large naval forces, including five aircraft carriers', and added that the Japanese might employ one or two divisions for the initial purpose of seizing a base; but, despite this estimate, they did not suggest increasing the defence force of the Dominion, for which they considered seven brigade groups or formations were sufficient, supported by five air squadrons (only two of which were equipped with modern aircraft), augmented by four fighter squadrons, two general reconnaissance squadrons, two torpedo medium bomber squadrons, one bomber-reconnaissance or dive-bomber squadron, and four transport aircraft.

In the light of later knowledge from Japanese sources, the estimates of enemy strength were exaggerated; no attack on New Zealand was ever planned. Orders for a continuance of the attack south, issued on 12 May 1942 to the commander of the 17th Japanese Army, were delayed for two months after the Battle of the Coral Sea, when the force intended for **Port Moresby** was turned back, and were finally cancelled on 11 July after the disastrous defeat at the Battle of Midway.

MacArthur, from his headquarters in **Australia**, began planning for an offensive against the advancing Japanese early in May 1942, when he realised that the overwhelming enemy victories in the **Philippines**, **Burma**, and **Malaya** would release more forces to continue the move south. His presumption was correct, since orders to continue the advance south from the **Solomons** were issued by the Japanese High Command that same month. Airfields, which the Allies lacked, were being hastily constructed in the north of **Australia**, in the valleys inland from **Port Moresby** and at Milne Bay, **New Guinea**, but MacArthur wanted greatly increased numbers of aircraft carriers, aeroplanes, and ground troops before he could move. Nimitz was also contemplating an attack to

destroy a seaplane base which the Japanese had constructed at **Tulagi**, the southern limit of their move in the **Solomons**, but the Marine raider battalion he proposed to use was rightly considered too small for such a task. MacArthur's desire was for an early attack to dislodge the enemy from his newly won bases in both the **Solomons** and **New Britain** before they were consolidated, but as only three partly trained and equipped divisions were then available, and the objectives in the **New Britain- New Ireland** area were beyond the range of Allied fighter support from **Port Moresby** and the Australian mainland, close fighter air support would have had to come from aircraft carriers, none of which had been assigned to the South West Pacific area. British attacks against Timor or the Nicobar and **Andaman Islands** in the Bay of Bengal, which were on the outer rim of the Japanese penetration in that area, were planned to co-ordinate with the American attack, using units of the **British Eastern Fleet**, but they did not get beyond the stage of suggestion.

The mounting of a **Pacific** offensive entailed the appointment of an overall commander, and here negotiations were for a time halted. General Marshall favoured MacArthur, already the hero of the **Philippines** and a man of tried battle knowledge, and he believed that an attack could be mounted by July, using for the initial assault 1 US Marine Division, under Major-General A. A. Vandegrift, part of which was going to **Wellington**. Three Australian divisions were to take over after a bridgehead had been established. This force was to be assembled at **Brisbane**, the nearest available port to the battle area. Aircraft, many of them now pouring into **Australia** through **Fiji**, would be available for bombing, but fighter support would be required from aircraft carriers. The American War Department suggested a naval commander under MacArthur for the operation; the Navy Department, however, thought differently and suggested that Nimitz should command the offensive and that the attack towards the **New Guinea- New Britain** area should be pressed up through the Solomon Islands, the immediate objectives, using 1 Marine Division, two aircraft carriers with cruisers and destroyers, five Marine air squadrons and land-based aircraft from the South Pacific. Any captured islands were to be occupied under MacArthur with troops from

Australia. The Navy planned to attack **Tulagi** first and, by progressive moves, ultimately to reach **Rabaul**, instead of attacking **Rabaul** directly from **Australia**, which would require a strong naval task force, an army garrison, and additional land-based aircraft from **Australia** and **Port Moresby**. The Japanese were already established along the northern coast of **New Guinea** at lae and Salamaua. Nothing could be done before August because of the time required to assemble shipping and supplies.

The American operations division at first supported a direct thrust at **Rabaul**, which had been rapidly developed into the key Japanese base south of **Truk**, and recommended that the Navy provide 1 Marine Division and twelve transports, two carriers and supporting vessels, under MacArthur's command. While discussing the plans, no agreement could be reached between Army and Navy on a commander. Army insisted that as the attack would be in MacArthur's area he should command it, with a naval officer directing the tactical attacking force. Navy thought that MacArthur might expose their precious carriers by placing them in range of Japanese land-based aircraft in the **Solomons**, where several airfields had already been established on islands through the group, therefore it was essential first to reduce **Tulagi**. Command should therefore go to Ghormley, under Nimitz. When he was informed of Navy opposition, MacArthur insisted that his long-range plan had been misinterpreted, and that he had envisaged a final assault on **Rabaul** only after progressive moves up through the **Solomons**.

By 26 June no decision had been reached by Marshall and King, as King was still insisting on a naval commander and that MacArthur should take control at the conclusion of the amphibious stage. King also suggested that Navy begin immediate operations and directed Nimitz to go ahead with plans for an offensive in the **Solomons**. Nimitz and Ghormley immediately began their preparations. First Marine Division, part of which had landed at **Wellington** and was training along the coast from Plimmerton to Waikanae, was ordered to prepare for the attack, and Nimitz requested the Joint Chiefs of Staff to move eight army B. 17 and thirteen B. 26 aircraft from **Hawaii** to **New Caledonia** and the same

number to **Fiji**, where the **Nandi** airfields could now accommodate them. He also asked for surface ships, submarines, and long-range aircraft from the South West Pacific area to support Ghormley. Marshall was perturbed by King's implication that the Army might not co-operate fully, and decided to negotiate personally with him, which he did from 29 June to 2 July. Finally, a compromise was reached. Ghormley was to command the offensive until the **Tulagi** operation was completed, after which MacArthur was to take over and control the advance to **Rabaul**. An alteration was made in the boundaries of the operational areas to allow the island of **Guadalcanal** to come into Ghormley's command.

On 2 July King and Marshall signed a 'Joint Directive for offensive operations in the South West Pacific area agreed on by the US Joint Chiefs of Staff'. The operations were divided into three tasks:

- (1) The seizure and occupation of Santa Cruz Islands, **Tulagi**, and adjacent positions, for which MacArthur was to attach naval reinforcements and land-based aircraft and immobilise enemy and air activity west of the combat area.
- (2) Seizure and occupation of the remainder of the **Solomons**, Lae, Salamaua, and the north-east coast of **New Guinea**, which would come under MacArthur's command.
- (3) Seizure and occupation of **Rabaul** and adjacent positions, also under MacArthur's command.

The South West Pacific and South Pacific boundaries were moved so that **Tulagi**, **Guadalcanal**, Florida, the **Russell Islands**, **Malaita**, and **San Cristobal** came under Ghormley, leaving the rest of the **Solomons** to MacArthur. Curiously enough, **Guadalcanal** was not mentioned in the first task, but it was included when information reached the planners that the Japanese were constructing an airfield at Lunga Point. This had been revealed by reports from coastwatchers and by air reconnaissance.

Ghormley flew to **Australia** from **Auckland** on 7 July to confer with MacArthur and agree upon preliminary plans. They both were apprehensive because of the shortage of ships and aircraft and recommended a postponement until both the South and South West Pacific areas were strengthened, as all previous engagements with the

enemy had demonstrated the value of air power in naval combat. This recommendation was rejected by the Joint Chiefs of Staff in **Washington**, who controlled the broad strategic allocation, though the actual control of operations in the **Pacific** was retained by the **United States** Chiefs of Staff. Unity of direction stemmed from a **British- United States** War Council, formation of which was announced in **Washington** on 17 January 1942, but the **United States**-British Combined Chiefs of Staff organisation was not formed until 6 February 'to ensure complete co-ordination of the war effort.' Australian, New Zealand, the **Netherlands** and **United Kingdom** representatives on the Far Eastern Council acted in an advisory capacity in **London**, but as the war progressed almost the whole direction for the **Pacific** war came from **Washington**.

When MacArthur and Ghormley's request for postponement was rejected, plans went ahead. The first offensive of the war against **Japan** began when the Americans landed on **Guadalcanal** on 7 August, to begin the long, exhausting struggle for the **Solomons**. It did not end until the New Zealanders and American forces landed on the **Green Islands** on 15 February 1944.

New Zealand land and air forces were at first excluded from any **Pacific** command, but after lengthy negotiations with **London** and **Washington**, all except the land forces stationed in the Dominion, which remained under the New Zealand Chiefs of Staff, came under command of the South Pacific area. These included major units of the Army and Air Force located on **Pacific** islands beyond the Dominion's shores. Such naval units as were required were already under American operational command. This co-ordinated effort made for greater unity, though the approval of the New Zealand Government had first to be obtained before any of her services could be committed to action, and administrative command remained with the New Zealand commanders in the areas where the forces were stationed. This meant that Ghormley, and later Vice- **Admiral W. F. Halsey**, who succeeded him in the **South Pacific Command** in October 1942, could call on all New Zealand units in his

area if he required them, but could commit them to action only through their own commanders.

THE PACIFIC

II: NEW ZEALAND EMERGES IN THE PACIFIC PLAN

II: New Zealand Emerges in the Pacific Plan

Urgent requests for men and equipment went from **Wellington** to the **United States** and the **United Kingdom** immediately following **Japan's** entry into the war. It seemed, at times, as though little heed was being taken of the requirements for other theatres where action was already in progress and decisions were vital, but New Zealand was deplorably short and unable to meet her own immediate defence needs, for little equipment had been imported into the Dominion in the years immediately preceding the outbreak of hostilities.

Both before and during negotiations for the mounting of an offensive in the **Solomons**, New Zealand was requesting help from **London** and **Washington** for the defence of her own shores and for **Fiji**. She persistently stressed the need for a full American division in **Fiji** and another for New Zealand and, because she considered **Fiji** her first line of defence, she wished to leave her own troops there when American troops ultimately reached the Crown Colony. Ghormley agreed to this proposal, but it was obvious from subsequent action that the American planners did not.

From the time of his arrival in **Washington**, Mr. Nash kept the New Zealand Government fully informed of all the Joint Chiefs of Staff proposals and planning, which included that, if **Fiji** and **New Caledonia** were lost, it would be essential to hold the **North Island** of New Zealand, particularly its northern regions. The apprehension felt at that time in New Zealand, and the Dominion's vulnerability should **Japan** press towards her shores, had been fully set out on 24 December 1941 in a cable message from Fraser to Churchill, who was then in Washington. (See **Appendix II**.) He said that the crippling of the **United States Fleet** at **Pearl Harbour**, the loss of the *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse* off **Malaya**, the violent and successful attacks by the enemy in **Malaya**, **Hong Kong**,

the **Philippines**, Wake, and **Guam** had increased the probability of attack on **Fiji** and its importance in the scheme of Allied defence to a degree which could not be exaggerated. Extensions to the **Nandi** aerodrome, which New Zealand was undertaking at the request of the **United States** Government, would become a liability if they were not adequately defended. New Zealand could supply an extra brigade for the western area of **Fiji**, but the Dominion could not equip these men. New Zealand had already denuded herself of arms to a degree which was causing the gravest concern. Fraser urged Churchill to impress on Roosevelt the importance of **Fiji** and the urgent need for equipment. On the following day the Prime Minister despatched a cable to the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs in **London** regretting that New Zealand was unable to send a force to **Malaya** to assist in the defence of the naval base of **Singapore**, which had been suggested during an inter-Allied conference there. In the same message he again set out the situation in **Fiji** and appealed for urgent assistance, particularly in armoured fighting vehicles and anti-tank equipment. (See **Appendix II**.) The Secretary of State replied that the Government of the **United Kingdom** concurred in the decision to reinforce **Fiji**, and that early provision would be made to send equipment. Because of commitments elsewhere—to the **Middle East** and **Russia** particularly—this could not be despatched immediately, and calls on the **United Kingdom** were beginning to embarrass her. This was revealed when Fraser received a cable from the Secretary of State on 4 February, eleven days before **Singapore** fell, indicating **Britain's** mounting difficulties, which informed him that ‘the task of allocation is one of some difficulty at the moment with a rapidly changing situation in several parts of the world. We are already heading dangerously near the point where the spreading of our resources must lead to a general weakness. There is a point beyond which we cannot interfere with the flow to the **Middle East**, whence so many army and air force units, with their equipment, have already been withdrawn for the **Pacific**’. His inference in part was to the withdrawal of Australian forces, ground and air, which began their return to the Commonwealth from the **Middle East** in early 1942, as soon as the Japanese threat to **Australia** seemed

imminent. Despite the uneasy position in the **Mediterranean** theatre, however, the fighter aircraft sent to New Zealand in the early days of the war were deducted from Royal Air Force allocations originally intended for the **Middle East**.

New Zealand was beginning to feel the strain on her manpower by March 1942, by which time 61,368 men had gone overseas. The Army had absorbed 52,712, the remainder going to the Navy and the Air Force. Another 67,264 were in New Zealand camps, including 52,983 in the Army, and an additional 100,000 aged between sixteen and sixty were in the Home Guard. The New Zealand Chiefs of Staff, reviewing the situation in the **Pacific** early in April 1942, considered that six divisions were required for the defence of the Dominion itself, though only three were available. In submitting their appreciation to War Cabinet, they said that additional forces, as requested by Mead, were still required for **Fiji**—two brigade groups and one battalion for **Viti Levu**, one brigade group and one battalion for Vanua Levu (the second largest island of the group, which remained completely defenceless), and eight air squadrons. They pointed out that the airfields, still inadequately defended, were being enlarged and three others were to be constructed outside defended areas. Additional forces could come only from New Zealand or the **United States**, but the Americans, who were then considering sending a division and strong air forces to New Zealand, did not wish to divide their strength between New Zealand and **Fiji**. The **United States** Joint Working Committee, at the end of April 1942, thought that in asking for six divisions for the defence of New Zealand, the Dominion was not fully aware of American intentions in the South Pacific. They considered New Zealand would be reasonably secure with four divisions—two New Zealand and two American—and suggested that any remaining divisions be moved to **Fiji**. This committee also recommended at the same time that the following aircraft be provided for **Fiji**: 50 fighters, 26 medium bombers, 13 observation, and 12 navy type seaplanes.

The New Zealand Chiefs of Staff recommended placing the situation before Ghormley while he was still in the **United States** and, if land

forces could not be obtained immediately for **Fiji**, then the risk of sending the New Zealand army reserve brigade group should be taken, as the situation was then sufficiently serious to warrant such urgent action. Cabinet approved the recommendation and Nash was asked to put the situation to Ghormley. Nash replied on 29 April that the **United States** Chiefs of Staff refused to consider **Fiji** as a separate problem and insisted that in their **Pacific** plan it was only one of a series of mutually supporting islands, which it was. The security of the **Pacific** area and subsequent operations in it must be considered as whole. They proposed to have an air strength of 1000 personnel in **Fiji** before the end of 1942, and New Zealand was requested to supply 12,000 troops within that time.

Fraser replied that New Zealand was still of opinion that reinforcements for **Fiji** should come from the **United States**. 'We have despatched to **Fiji**,' he cabled, 'greater forces than we can reasonably be expected to spare, amounting to approximately a quarter of our effective strength at that time.' He added that to provide 12,000 men would cripple the defences of the Dominion. Besides, it would denude New Zealand of equipment. 'Even if we were to withdraw our Division from the **Middle East**, a lengthy period must elapse before its return would enable us to release additional men for **Fiji**.' He suggested either American or Canadian reinforcements.

The suggestion that New Zealand might withdraw her **2nd Division** from the **Middle East** to reinforce the **Pacific** had first been mentioned in a cable to Churchill in February, in which Fraser had hinted that there was some public feeling 'that the New Zealand Forces should be returned to the **Pacific** area to meet the danger nearer home'. During negotiations on **Pacific** manpower requirements, Churchill agreed that it would be preferable to send **United States** forces to New Zealand rather than withdraw **2 Division** from the **Middle East**, as it would conserve shipping and overcome the needless movement of troops, and shipping was an embarrassing problem in 1942.

While the interchange of opinion proceeded through March and

April, **America** was speeding her first trained forces into the **Pacific** as she built up her series of mutually supporting bases, in fulfilment of the Chiefs of Staff planning. Many of the garrisons were already in position. The occupation of **New Caledonia** was announced on 25 April, and by the end of that month the **United States** Joint Working Committee recommended that the following be completed by the end of December 1942:

Bora Bora, in the French **Society Islands**: 4000 men were in position
Samoa and **Wallis**: 23,000—13,000 mobile and ready for operation in any sphere

Tonga: 7000, including air forces

New Caledonia: 24,000 already in position

Efate, **New Hebrides**: 7000

Fiji: 1000, including air forces; **New Zealand** to provide another 12,000.

By May there were 81,000 American troops, including air personnel, in **Australia**, and the total American strength in the **Pacific** south of **Hawaii** had risen to between 130,000 and 150,000 officers and men of the three arms of the service.

The first intimation that the **United States** resolved to accept full responsibility for the defence of **Fiji** and **Tonga** came on 6 May (the day that Corregidor fell) in a cable from Nash, who had conferred with King. While the Coral Sea battle raged, messages passed between **Wellington** and **Washington** stating that **New Zealand** agreed to the American proposal but expressing surprise at the rapidity of such developments. The Governor of **Fiji** raised no objection, his only proviso being that two divisions were necessary to ensure the safety of the Colony and that, on political grounds, the identity of both **Fijian** and **Tongan** forces should be preserved within the framework of the American command.

Nash continued negotiations with King, who stated that both he and

Nimitz considered the urgent strengthening of the islands would result if the **United States** took them over. Precipitate action had been taken, he said, because troops were already on their way. Nash continued to stress the necessity for at least six divisions in New Zealand, the number recommended by the New Zealand Chiefs of Staff, but King, who still very wisely regarded the whole of **New Guinea, New Caledonia, Fiji,** and **Samoa** as vulnerable, explained that the number of American troops was limited and there were requests for them from many sources, particularly from **Australia** and Great Britain. Plans, outlined in **Washington** in January, were then in hand for the landing in North Africa later in the year.

Even after the arrival of American troops in **Fiji**, New Zealand still felt that her troops should remain there. It was still her first line of defence, but although Ghormley personally agreed to their retention, by 13 May King issued a joint Army-Navy Plan for the relief of the New Zealand forces and the assumption of **United States** responsibility for the defence of the Fijian Group. When a copy of the relief plan reached **Wellington** in June, Fraser cabled Nash to the effect that New Zealand was still in favour of leaving her troops to assist the Americans and that no conditions were attached to that offer. King's reply was that he and General Marshall had given further consideration to the New Zealand offer. 'After discussing the pros and cons,' he replied, 'we are of opinion that a greater service to our combined effort in the **Pacific** would be served by carrying out the present plan for their relief. The New Zealand troops thus relieved, we hope, can be made available for amphibious training with our 1 Marine Division in anticipation of joint offensive action to the north-west.' The signal also intimated that the **United States** would increase her ground and air force troops in **Fiji** to 23,000 by September 1942, but pending the arrival of reinforcements it might be desirable to supply some New Zealand troops to **Fiji**. Any decision on that point, however, could be made on the spot between Mead and Beightler. Finally, New Zealand accepted the American decision, but the Prime Minister's accepting cable said: 'We must emphasise our view that 23,000 troops are inadequate to defend the **Fiji** Islands. It was because of

our apprehension ... that we made the offer to allow our troops to remain.' **America** was to have 14,529 men in **Fiji** with an additional 6583 by August.

From the time the first troops of the relieving force, the American **37 Division** from Ohio, reached the Colony to replace the New Zealand forces, **Fiji** fulfilled its destined role as a training ground for combat troops, a forward depot for supplies and reserves, and a staging centre for aircraft being ferried to the combat zones. The terms and conditions under which the **United States** forces occupied the group were, in so far as they were applicable, the same as those in operation for the leased bases set forth in the agreement for the use and operation of **United States** bases by Great Britain, signed in **London** on 27 March 1941. The Governor of **Fiji** remained the single authority responsible to the British Government, and he was also responsible for civilian rights and property. This similarly applied to **Tonga** and to all British territory in the **Pacific** zone where military security and defence were vested in the American forces. The system worked well and there was no friction on a high level. As the New Zealand forces remaining in **Fiji** and **Tonga** after the withdrawal of **3 Division** were equipped with British types of arms, the responsibility for their maintenance remained with New Zealand.

THE PACIFIC

CHAPTER 4 – BACK TO THE PACIFIC

Contents

I: The Third Division Emerges p. 71

II: Move to New Caledonia p. 87

III: Life Among the Niaoulis p. 98

IV: Negotiations—Political and Service p. 103

V: Training for Combat p. 116

THE PACIFIC

I: THE THIRD DIVISION EMERGES

I: The Third Division Emerges

ON its return to New Zealand the **Fiji** force was given the mobile role of army reserve, ready to operate in any part of the Dominion as required by the tactical situation but with particular attention to the Bay of Plenty, **Auckland**, and **North Auckland** districts and their vulnerable beaches. Headquarters closed in **Fiji** on 8 August, and the temporary headquarters which had been established by Potter in Quay Street, **Auckland**, to tide over the transition period, moved to Orford's House, Manurewa, which had been vacated by an American command. The two brigade headquarters were established at **Papakura Camp**, the 8th afterwards moving to Opaheke, with their battalions and services scattered widely over the surrounding countryside. The 29th Battalion was at **Papakura**, moving later to Hunua Falls, the 30th went to Karaka North, the 34th to Hilldene (Manurewa), the 35th to Paerata, the 36th took over buildings on the Avondale Racecourse, and the 37th went to **Pukekohe**. Some of these camps, temporarily erected to house American units while they trained for the **Pacific** campaign, were as bleak as the weather and ill-equipped, but all ranks went on leave, most of them suffering from colds and influenza induced by the sudden change from tropical heat to bitter spring wind and rain, against which battle dress and heavy woollens by day and five blankets and a greatcoat at night gave inadequate protection.

Although units were much below strength, commanders committed to paper their tactical plans for immediate movement and action, but it was generally assumed that the force would be built up to a full-strength division for service in the **Pacific**, in accordance with conversations between Admiral King and Mr. Nash in **Washington** earlier in the year in which it was stated that New Zealand troops, relieved from **Fiji**, could be trained for amphibious operations with **United States** forces if the

essential equipment was provided. Such an assumption was also confirmation of General Puttick's conclusions, presented to the Minister of Defence on 3 August, that 'the best course to pursue in furthering the security of New Zealand is to participate to the fullest in offensive operations against the Japanese and at the same time leave nothing undone which may serve to strengthen the forces for home defence'; but reorganisation for any immediate action to implement this conclusion was slow and involved, and further provoked by indecision regarding the use of the force.

Major-General H. E. Barrowclough, DSO, MC, was appointed to command **3 Division** on 12 August and arrived that day to begin the exacting and prolonged task of reorganisation. He had commanded **6 Brigade** of **2 Division** from its formation in May 1940, and had taken it through the ill-fated campaign in **Greece** and later through bitter fighting at **Sidi Rezegh** in North Africa. When the Japanese drive in the **Pacific** threatened to reach striking distance of New Zealand, the need for war-experienced senior officers became urgent, and he was recalled on the assumption that he would take command of the forces then in **Fiji**. However, before he reached the Dominion, the **Pacific** situation had become critical and Mead had already been appointed. Barrowclough was therefore given command of **1 Division**, with headquarters at **Whangarei**, where he remained until he took over **3 Division**. His immediate task was beset by difficulties and recurring problems. The precise role of the division in the **Pacific** and its size were as ill-defined as its title, and its history, in the early months of reorganisation, was shrouded in ambiguity. The title '**3 Division**' had been in use since 14 May 1942 after the appearance of Mead's operational order No. 3 in **Fiji**, and that date, for record purposes and convenience, was taken as the day on which the force achieved the status of a division, but throughout the whole course of its existence the force was never officially gazetted '**3 Division**' but remained legally 'Pacific Section, **2 NZEF**', the designation it was given on 25 February 1942 when the original title '8 Brigade Group' was amended. The letters 'IP', indicating the theatre in which the division operated, were added on 10 November when Barrowclough's

appointment from 'Commander 3 NZ Division' was altered to 'General Officer Commanding 2 NZEF in Pacific'.

In making its decision to employ a division in the Pacific theatre, the New Zealand Government considered at the time that such a risk in sending men out of the country was justified. Great quantities of war materials, including tanks and aircraft, had reached the country; her home defences were therefore stronger and better equipped than ever before, and the situation beyond her shores was more secure because of the increased strength of the United States navy and island garrisons as far north as New Caledonia. Five days before Barrowclough's appointment, American forces landed on Guadalcanal, Tulagi and Gavutu, and although the Allied planners in London and Washington could not possibly be aware of the fact, Japanese orders for an attack on Fiji, New Caledonia, and Samoa had been cancelled in July, following the failure to capture Port Moresby and crushing losses of ships and aircraft in the Coral Sea and Midway naval battles. Political motives also contributed to the despatch of New Zealand forces to the Pacific theatre. The original intention of the American command in asking for a New Zealand force was to use it for the relief of 1 Marine Division engaged in the Southern Solomons, but as the struggle for Guadalcanal developed critically by continued Japanese attempts to break the Americans on the Matanikau River line, any relief by other than American forces was not welcomed until the island was permanently secured. This was one of several contributing factors affecting the prolonged reorganisation of the division.

Delays in reaching a decision regarding the size of the force and the role it was to play in the Pacific campaign apparently stemmed from confusion over the expressed views of King and Ghormley, and were aggravated by manpower problems which had then begun to affect the supply of Grade I men for the three services as well as men for production at home. Although King agreed in June that New Zealand forces should take part in amphibious operations when the time came for offensive action then being planned, Ghormley, who had moved his

headquarters from **Auckland** to **Noumea**, apparently had expressed other views. During discussions with Puttick at the end of July, he suggested that New Zealand might provide forces to follow up **United States** amphibious troops and hold captured areas, in order to release specially trained and equipped American forces for further operations, the size of the New Zealand force to depend on the scope and locality in which it would be engaged.

Four alternative forces were proposed by Ghormley to meet any emergency—Force A, built round one infantry brigade with attached anti-aircraft and coast defence artillery; Force B, the same with the addition of two heavy coast defence batteries; Force C, built round two infantry brigades; and Force D, increased to three infantry brigades, each with additional coast defence and anti-aircraft artillery. Any of these forces, the size of which was to be determined by the Government, was to be ready for embarkation at any time after 25 August, and the proposal was obviously based on the American belief that the battle for **Guadalcanal** would end sooner than it did, as all future negotiations hinged on its success.

Puttick communicated Ghormley's proposals to War Cabinet on 31 July and recommended the adoption of Force D as a target for reorganisation, using **3 Division** as a basis and adding the necessary units and services from existing New Zealand formations, the bulk of them to come from Army Reserve Brigade. At the same time he recommended the reduction of the age limit for service overseas from 21 to 20 years.

Although the original intention, as interpreted by Ghormley, seems to have been the employment of the division in a garrison role, other ideas were seemingly held by the planners in **Washington**, for on 8 July Commodore Parry, while undertaking a mission there on his return to England, had cabled the result of conversations he had with the Navy staff which indicated that, in addition to a request for garrison troops, **America** would also require others for amphibious operations. Approval of an offensive role was confirmed by War Cabinet's minute of 11 August

appointing Barrowclough 'to take charge of the division that is to be formed and trained for offensive operations', but this contained no formal decisions regarding the size of the force. The gravity of the situation in the **Solomons** at this time interrupted Fraser's mission to the **United States**, to which he had been invited by Roosevelt. His party included the Right Hon. J. G. Coates, Mr. Carl Berendsen and Mr. **A. D. McIntosh**, of the Prime Minister's Department, Mr. **B. C. Ashwin**, of the Treasury Department, Brigadier K. L. Stewart, Deputy Chief of the General Staff, and Mr. Patrick Hurley, **United States** Minister in New Zealand. They reached **Noumea** and conferred with Ghormley a few hours after he had been advised of the outcome of the first naval battle off **Guadalcanal** on 9 August and the crippling loss of four cruisers. Ghormley was extremely agitated by these losses, which so gravely reduced his limited strength in heavier ships. He was so apprehensive of the future in the **Pacific** that Fraser and his party temporarily delayed their journey to the **United States** and returned immediately to **Wellington**, where the Prime Minister called a secret session of Parliament.

On 10 August, the day before Barrowclough's appointment by Cabinet, Ghormley's headquarters had been informed that New Zealand was planning to provide a division of approximately 20,000 men, as requested, and that it would be available from 25 August, which would have been impossible as the last units of **3 Division** did not return from **Fiji** until 14 August and the force was not sufficiently trained for such immediate despatch. However, any urgent need for it was discouraged by the fluctuating battle situation on **Guadalcanal**. Meanwhile, Army Headquarters decided to proceed with the preparation of a force designated Kiwi A (a code name for the purposes of reorganisation), which was really Ghormley's Force A strengthened by artillery. It was to be built round units of 14 Brigade and to consist of:

Divisional headquarters on a reduced scale

One infantry brigade, with an anti-tank battery of 12 guns

One field regiment of sixteen 25-pounder guns

One heavy anti-aircraft regiment of sixteen 3.7-inch guns

One light anti-aircraft regiment of thirty-six 40-millimeter guns

One heavy battery of four 6-inch guns

Two companies of engineers

Signals, supply, and medical units and a small base organisation

This formation was given urgent priority, but the commander was also to proceed with the organisation of a force known as Kiwi C (based on Ghormley's Force C) consisting of 13,500 all ranks and made up of:

Divisional headquarters

Two infantry brigades, each with an anti-tank battery of twelve guns

One field regiment of twenty-four 25-pounder guns

One heavy anti-aircraft regiment of twenty-four 3.7-inch guns

One light anti-aircraft regiment of forty-eight 40-millimetre guns

One heavy regiment of four 6-inch or eight 155-millimetre guns

Three companies of engineers

Signals, supply, and medical units and a base organisation

Negotiations concerning the composition of these forces were in progress before Barrowclough's appointment and continued long afterwards. No New Zealand commander, faced with the responsibility of taking combat troops overseas, was ever so harassed by proposals, uncertainty, and indecision, all of which, despite his initiative and capacity for detailed planning, hindered him from reorganising his division and training to that desired state of efficiency required for an

unusual campaign such as island warfare in the tropics. No details of the precise character of the operations were available to him, which was no fault of the New Zealand Army authorities, for even by 7 September the South Pacific commander had not received permission from the Dominion to use the Division. This was revealed when a signal from New Zealand requesting a supply of anti-malarial drugs brought a reply from Ghormley that he had not yet obtained the permission of the New Zealand Government to use its troops, nor did he intend to use them in a forward area while the situation there remained critical. Later, however, South Pacific Headquarters did indicate that the New Zealand force would not be required to carry out opposed landings, but that its role most probably would be to garrison small islands and take part in land attacks on large islands or the mainland and that, in such operations, the possibility of heavy counter-attacks required full-scale supporting weapons and a high percentage of anti-aircraft and coast defence guns.

This question of artillery support was one of the most pressing problems which exercised the attention of the commander during the reorganisation period, and his views on its tactical significance were set out in a long letter to Army Headquarters. His idea of combat teams outlined in his letter was fully developed in training the division:

‘For a long time I have been teaching that success in modern war against a resolute and well-equipped enemy can be achieved only by a much closer co-ordination between infantry and artillery (and tanks if you can get them). I think, and I have long been teaching, that it is altogether wrong to consider the tactical handling of infantry as such in any unit larger than a platoon. I submit it is unsound to contemplate the employment of a company of infantry. One should command a mixed team of infantry, mortars, and guns. In battle a company command should never be a mere command of infantry. He should command a mixed team—a “combat team” as it is sometimes called... One of the mistakes of our British system is the tendency to over-centralise our artillery, tanks, and aircraft. Few battalion commanders and still fewer company commanders have any real idea of how to

command a mixed force.'

In the original reorganisation plan only one field regiment was contemplated, but at the same time an anti-aircraft brigade, as part of the division, was to be formed and trained. Barrowclough's comments during exchanges of correspondence concerning the formation of Force A—which he considered unbalanced because anti-aircraft and coast defence guns required adequate ground protection—and Force C brought about changes, though Army did not agree the Force A was unbalanced.

'From the outset', he wrote, 'even with Force C, I am limited to one field regiment of 25-pounder guns. The normal allocation of 25-pounders is on the scale of one field regiment to an infantry brigade, and I submit that until the precise task is known Force A should be mobilised and got ready in New Zealand with a full field regiment and Force C with two such regiments. Should the task, when it is known, call for less, field artillery guns can be left behind. The 25-pounde seems to be the one piece of equipment in which we outstandingly surpass our enemies, and I submit that neither Force A nor Force C can be considered adequately equipped if it has less than the usual scale of these guns.'

The commander also stressed the restricted mobility of such heavy pieces as 3.7-inch howitzers and 155-millimetre guns because, in possible engagements in areas removed from the site of static defence guns, they could not possibly take the place of 25-pounders, and they could be moved only with difficulty.

Because of the unusual composition of the force, the first of its kind New Zealand ever assembled, and its ultimate role, artillery remained a problem and eventually produced an organisation unique in the history of British arms. The division needed to be sufficiently strong to fight with or without the Americans (though it never did), and the necessity for static coast defence and anti-aircraft units, as well as support for infantry, required its artillery to be stronger and quite unlike the normal requirements of a divisional formation in the field. Two staffs were therefore evolved for its efficient operation—one for field and anti-tank

units and another for coast defence and anti-aircraft. Each had its brigade major, staff captain and liaison officers, sharing a common intelligence officer, and this system worked satisfactorily in **New Caledonia**, where a regiment of 6-inch guns assisted with the defence of **Noumea Harbour** and two anti-aircraft regiments defended several aerodromes. When the division moved north into the **Solomons** and the static units were disbanded and absorbed into other formations, the staff was proportionately reduced to the normal organisation.

The lengthy and complicated task of reorganisation no doubt provoked quite understandable impatience on the part of those most intimately concerned with it. Although in June orders had been issued that all available A grade men from ballots and garrison units were to be posted to divisions in order to have sufficient ready to meet the needs for overseas service, Army Headquarters, in calling for men for **3 Division**, did not wish to weaken unduly the home defences by drawing off too many key personnel until the situation in the **Solomons** removed any threat of attack. There were delays, also, in hearing appeals of men balloted for overseas service and in medical boardings, and there was the provocative question of leave, made worse when many of the men taking the leave due to them after service in **Fiji** displayed no great haste in returning to their units.

Leave in New Zealand, approved by Army Headquarters, was arranged on a basis of seven days for every two months of service, with one-way travelling time and a free rail warrant, which meant that men from the southern districts stationed in the **Auckland** area spent almost a fortnight away from their units. Bereavement and confinement leave were also allowed up to seven and fourteen days respectively. This embarrassed the transport services (at that time hampered by coal strikes) as much as any training programme and produced a routine order from the 14 Brigade Commander in which he said: 'Our primary duty is preparation for war and leave cannot be allowed to prevent the army from attaining a proper standard of training. Training is not only an individual concern; it necessitates the presence of whole units and

formations in the field together.' During his inspection of both brigades, Barrowclough also emphasised that the war would not be won by staying in New Zealand and that sooner or later someone had to go overseas. In an attempt to reconcile to the best possible extent the conflict between a desire for leave, the need for training, and the difficulties of transport. Army Headquarters called a conference of all divisional and district commanders and, although War Cabinet approved its recommendations for certain modifications, leave was still generously granted.

Concentration on defence works by all ranks in **Fiji** had left little time for advanced training, and most of the units were unfamiliar with battle exercises on a large scale or the latest developments in jungle tactics, these last evolved from information reaching the training manuals from those who had been in contact with the Japanese. This was revealed when Barrowclough reported that 'not one of the commanding officers was able to describe to me a single large-scale battalion exercise completely carried through'. For these reasons a six weeks' programme of concentrated training was devised and on 1 September the South Pacific command informed that the force could not be ready for overseas operations before the middle of October. As the men returned from leave and reinforcements arrived to build up old and new units, brigades embarked on tactical exercises and battalions on manœuvres, both by day and night, rain or shine.

All these were made as practical and interesting as possible and involved all branches of training so that, in the event of any sudden move, some reasonable state of preparedness would be attained. Engineers staged field days instructing the infantry in the art of bridging streams and in demolition; aircraft flew over the training areas trailing drogues as targets to accustom the men in anti-aircraft defence; lectures were given on malaria and other tropical diseases by former officials from the **Solomons**, and particular attention was paid to jungle warfare. Tactical exercises without troops concerned the senior officers, who were no longer required to find men daily for digging and wiring and excavating, as they had done in **Fiji**. A field regiment and anti-tank

batteries were reorganised from the existing units from **Fiji** and took part in combined attack and defence schemes, but elements of coast and anti-aircraft artillery formations, these last beginning at the recruit stage, were concentrated in camps at Judgeford and Pahautanui in the **Wellington** area under Colonel V. A. Young, RA, who was responsible for their organisation and training until they were ready to be absorbed into the division under the new CRA, Brigadier C. S. J. Duff, DSO. ¹ When these units finally emerged from the cocoon of reorganisation, they moved north via **Rotorua**, holding, calibration shoots on the way, and joined the division in the Waikato.

In order to avoid any confusion and unnecessary duplication in training, organisation and equipment, which arose because of the idea that attention could be given to Force C after Force A had left the country, Barrowclough on 1 September asked for a definite ruling from Army Headquarters, at the same time expressing the opinion that reorganisation would be effected more smoothly if the force was considered as a division less one brigade. Some idea of the difficulties being faced at this time, when no definite answer was possible, are indicated in a paragraph from Army's reply to the commander:

'I do not intend to bore you with the difficulties with which Army Headquarters and districts have to contend to produce personnel for your division, but I would ask you to accept them as very real.... Unfortunately a good deal of patience and restraint will require to be exercised by us all in many matters connected with this force.'

Carelessness by districts in selecting men for reinforcements for the division aggravated many of the delays in strengthening units, and a base reception depot established in **Papakura Camp** was hard pressed to cope with the constant stream of arrivals and departures. The figures for three months are eloquent evidence of the work required at this depot in detail and record:

	Sep/Oct	Nov
Marched in	1763	998
Marched out	880	346

Among those marched out were the medically unfit or lower than Grade I, men with more than three dependent children, incorrigibles, men over or under age, all half-caste or full-blood Maoris, and from quarter- to half-caste Maoris if they so desired. A high percentage of those marched out as unfit were men sent forward as reinforcements.

Manpower governed to a great extent the assembly and training of all units and affected the fortunes of the division during its whole existence. By the end of 1942 New Zealand was already feeling the strain of supporting two active service divisions and in maintaining her commitments to the Air Force and the Navy, as well as her home defences and garrisons in **Tonga, Fiji**, and

¹ **Brig C. S. J. Duff**, DSO m. i. d.; **Wellington**; born NZ 19 Nov 1898; Regular soldier; commanded 34 NZ A-Tk Bty, 1939–40; 7 A-Tk Regt, 1940–41; 4 **Fd Regt**, 1941–42; CRA 3 NZ Div, Aug 1942-Aug 1944; NZLO Melbourne, 1947-48.

numerous smaller islands, including scattered groups of coastwatchers. Production on the home front, so essential to the war effort principally in the supply of food, wool, coal, and munitions, was being maintained but showed little signs of increasing. (See Chapter 3, page 59.) Through all the complex detail of reorganisation, therefore, manpower loomed up like a restraining hand, but by the end of September formation was reasonably complete. One of Barrowclough's most immediate tasks on assuming command was the selection of commands and staff, which he did thoroughly by personally interviewing those who returned from **Fiji**. Many of the senior officers exceeded the age limit and several of the staff appointments were vacant or held only temporarily. Their places were taken by younger and more vigorous men, selected preferably from those with staff college training or others who had returned after service with **2 Division** in the **Middle East**. Though still far from complete in detail, by early October the framework of the division was as follows: ¹

Divisional Headquarters

GOC **Maj-Gen H. E. Barrowclough, DSO and bar, MC**
GSO 1 **Lt- Col J. I. Brooke**
GSO 2 **Maj S. S. H. Berkeley**
GSO 3 (Operations) **Capt R. F. Wakefield**
GSO 3 (Intelligence) **Capt J. Rutherford**
AA and QMG **Col W. Murphy, MC**
DAQMG **Maj P. L. Bennett, MC**
DAAG **Maj S. F. Marshall**
Chief Legal Officer **Maj D. A. Solomon**

Artillery

Commander Royal Artillery **Col C. S. J. Duff, DSO**
Brigade Major (field) **Maj N. W. M. Hawkins**
Staff Captain (field) **Capt O. J. Cooke**
Brigade Major (A/A and coast) **Maj C. D. B. Campling**
Staff Captain (A/A and coast) **Capt J. A. Crawley**

33 Heavy Coast Regiment:

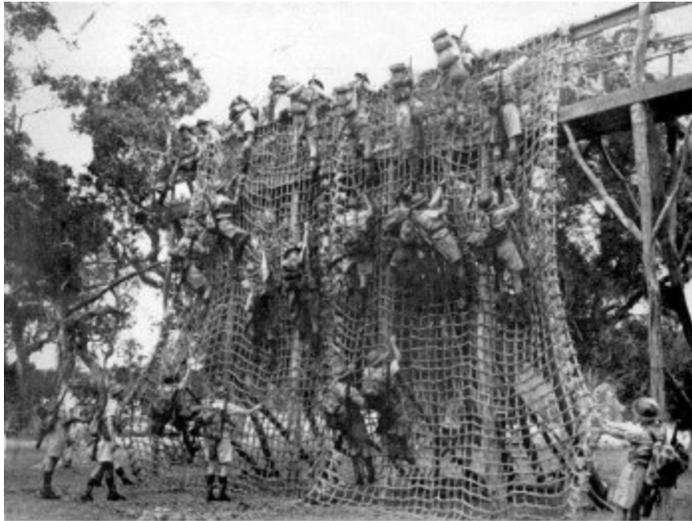
Commander **Lt-Col B. Wicksteed**
150 Battery **Maj H. C. F. Peterson**
151 Battery **Maj J. G. Warrington**
152 Battery **Maj G. L. Falck**

¹ No attempt has been made in this volume to give a complete and accurate record of changes of unit commanders. Because of sickness, age, and other factors there were frequent changes, particularly in the battalions. Commanders are named only at specified dates such as this, though a change of command may have followed shortly afterwards.



THE CLUB (erected by National Patriotic Fund Board) at Base Training Depot in Tene Valley, near Bourail, New Caledonia

The Club (Erected by National Patriotic Fund Board) at Base Training Depot in Tene Valley, near Bourail, New Caledonia



EMBARKATION PRACTICE ON HMS NIAOULI

EMBARKATION PRACTICE ON HMS NIAOULI



THE MOVE TO GUADALCANAL Equipment at the Nickel Docks,
Noumea area

The Move to Guadalcanal. Equipment at the Nickel Docks, Noumea Area.



BOARDING A LANDING CRAFT (Mechanised), Noumea

Boarding a Landing Craft (Mechanised), Noumea.



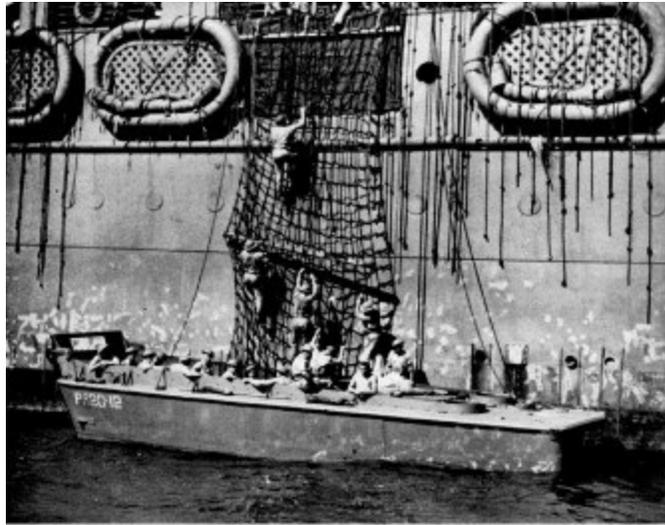
THIRD DIVISION TRAINING EXERCISES 36 Battalion at Mele Beach,
Efate, New Hebrides

3rd Division Training Exercises. 36 Battalion at Mele Beach, Efate, New Hebrides

GUNNERS PULLING A BOFORS GUN ASHORE at Mele Beach, Efate



Gunners pulling a Bofors gun ashore at Mele Beach, Efate



TROOPS BOARD THE USS TRANSPORT *PRESIDENT HAYES*, Noumea

Troops board the USS Transport President Hayes, Noumea



14 BRIGADE GROUP LANDING, Point Cruz, Guadalcanal

14 Brigade Group Landing, Point Cruz, Guadalcanal

17 Field Regiment:

Commander Lt-Col H. W. D. Blake

12 Battery Maj R. V. M. Wylde-Brown

35 Battery Maj A. G. Coulam

37 Battery Capt D. O. Watson

28 Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regiment:

Commander Lt-Col W. S. McKinnon

202 Battery Maj E. M. Luxford

203 Battery Maj H. G. St. V. Beechey

204 Battery Capt B. S. Cole

29 Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment:

Commander Lt-Col F. M. Yendell

207 Battery Capt H. L. G. Macindoe

208 Battery Capt B. L. Burns

209 Battery Capt G. H. Turner

214 Battery Capt G. F. T. Hall

144 Independent Battery:

Commander Maj L. J. Fahey

53 Anti-Tank Battery Capt L. D. Lovelock

54 Anti-Tank Battery Capt R. M. Foreman

Engineers

Commander Royal Engineers Lt-Col A. Murray

20 Field Company Maj W. G. McKay

23 Field Company Capt A. H. Johnston

37 Field Park Capt S. E. Anderson

Singals

Chief Signals Officer Lt-Col D. McN. Burns

Artillery Signals Capt G. W. Heatherwick

No. 1 Company Capt K. H. Wilson

Headquarters Company Capt R. M. South

J Section (8 Brigade) Lt G. M. Parkhouse

K Section (14 Brigade) Lt C. G. Murray

Army Service Corps

**Commander Lt-Col F. G. M. Jenkins,
DCM**

Senior Supply Officer Maj A. Craig

4 ASC Company Capt R. Gapes

16 ASC Company

Capt A. M. Lamont

**10 Reserve Mechanical Transport
Company**

Capt L. M. G. Grieves

Medical

ADMS Col J. M. Twigg, DSO

7 Field Ambulance Lt-Col S. Hunter

22 Field Ambulance Lt-Col W. F. Shirer

4 General Hospital Lt-Col A. A. Tennent

Dental

ADDS Lt-Col O. E. L. Rout

Base Dental Hospital Maj J. C. M. Simmers

10 Mobile Dental Section Maj A. I. McCowan

Ordnance

DADOS Maj M. S. Myers

Senior Mechanical Engineer (Armament) Maj J. W. Evers

Senior Mechanical Engineer (MT) Maj G. C. Simmiss

Infantry

8 Infantry Brigade:

Commander Brig R. A. Row

Brigade Major Maj J. M. Reidy

Staff Captain Capt I. H. MacArthur

29 Battalion Lt-Col A. J. Moore

34 Battalion Lt-Col R. J. Eyre

36 Battalion Lt-Col J. W. Barry

14 Infantry Brigade:

Commander Brig L. Potter

Brigade Major Maj C. W. H. Ronaldson

Staff Captain Capt A. E. Muir

30 Battallion Lt-Col S. A. McNamara, DCM

35 Battalion Lt-Col C. F. Seaward

37 Battalion Lt-Col A. H. L. Sugden

Base Units

**Officer in Charge of Administration and Base
Commandant**

**Col W. W. Dove,
MC**

DAG 2 Echelon

Capt G. W. Foote

Staff Captain

Lt H. N. Johnson

Base Reception Depot

Capt A. R. Stowell

Pay	Capt W. P. McGowan
Records	Lt E. R. Newman
Postal	2 Lt F. W. Purton

Many of the base units were not formed or were in process of formation and were completed only after long delay. Changes of appointment were frequent through the formative months, and many of the above appointments were altered by the end of the year.

Because of the unsuitability of some of the camps, and with a view to more comprehensive training and the use of troops for large-scale tactical exercises, a change of area was proposed, first to Warkworth, but finally to the Waikato. The division, however, seemed fated to periods of disintegration. New Zealand was asked to provide more garrisons for the **Pacific**, and this meant the withdrawal of units from **3 Division**. On 7 October **36 Battalion**, with supporting artillery—field, coast, and anti-aircraft—was detached for duty on pine-clad **Norfolk Island** to relieve Australian troops there, and later in the month the 34th was despatched to Queen Salote's island kingdom of **Tonga** to replace an American unit. Both battalions rejoined the division later in **New Caledonia**. They were replaced in **8 Brigade** by **1 Scottish Battalion**, commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel K. B. McKenzie-Muirson, MC,¹ and **1 Ruahine Battalion**, under Lieutenant-Colonel C. N. Devery, DCM,² from **4 Division**, though these two units did not join the division until it sailed for **New Caledonia**.

On 16 October, as the division was settling itself into the **Waikato** district, its role was to some extent clarified by a request from Ghormley's headquarters for a force equal to Force C to move to **New Caledonia** to replace American units committed to the battle, which was still undecided on **Guadalcanal**. The following day a cable despatched to Nash in **Washington** indicated its size: 'War Cabinet have agreed to Ghormley's request for a New Zealand force of approximately two brigades to proceed to **New Caledonia** as soon as transport can be arranged.' This was Force C of 13,500 all ranks, but a larger force, built

round Force D, of three brigades, with increased artillery and services, was still evidently contemplated for the **Pacific**, as the following sentence appeared in a message from Puttick to the commander of the South Pacific area on 13 October: 'Owing to manpower difficulties I cannot give estimated time when Kiwi D will be ready.' Approval for the remaining third brigade was given by War Cabinet on 28 November, but it was not to be formed until after the division was concentrated overseas. Inclusion of an armoured regiment of 60 tanks and 900 all ranks was also approved by Cabinet on 5 November, and preparations for its assembly from units of 2 Army Tank Battalion began at **Waiouru**, but the main body did not go north until the division was on **Guadalcanal** the following year.

Few men regretted leaving for the **Waikato** during the first two weeks in October. Strengthening sunshine and lengthening days did little to compensate for the discomfort of cold huddled and tented camps, through which the wind whistled miserably, so that the more articulate expressed in no uncertain terms their longing

¹ **Lt-Col K. B. McKenzie-Muirson**, Mc and bar, m. i. d.; **Wellington**; born **Australia**, 8 Dec 1894; inspector of factories; commanded 1 Scots Bn, Oct 1942-Jun 1943; 36 Bn, Jul-Dec 1943.

² **Lt-Col C. N. Devery**, DCM, ED; **Auckland**; born **Gisborne**, 10 Dec 1893; company manager; **Wellington Regt** 1914-19; commanded 1 Ruahine Bn, Oct 1942-Mar 1943; later Camp Commandant, **Linton**.

for the tropical heat they had cursed so volubly only a few weeks previously. Isolated in a **YMCA** camp at Hunua Falls, where exercises had been held in country which would have tried even the ingenuity of a goat, **29 Battalion** departed happily from an area inches deep in mud; for two months **35 Battalion** at Paerata had been attending its sick in a four-man hut but without such rudimentary equipment as a sink, light, or

running water, this last a growing problems in most of these temporary camps. The only compensating factor was their proximity to **Papakura**, **Pukekohe**, and **Auckland**, which gave ample opportunity for evening and weekend leave, and in granting this Barrowclough departed from the orthodox military practice and insisted that if a soldier returned to camp in time and in a fit state to perform his duties the following morning, there was no necessity to crime him for not returning at any specified time the previous evening.

Units marched in stages to their new areas, bivouacking by night as part of the training scheme. Morale was good, *esprit de corps* asserted itself, and few fell by the wayside; if they did they were soon revived by the hospitality which was showered upon them. Reconnaissance parties had previously allotted areas over a vast triangle enclosed by **Hamilton**, **Te Aroha** and **Tirau**, and including **Morrinsville**, **Cambridge**, and **Matamata**. On 6 October, when the move began, **Divisional Headquarters** was established in buildings of the Claudelands Racecourse; **8 Brigade** went to **Cambridge** and **14 Brigade** to **Te Aroha Showgrounds**, with their units distributed around them. **Artillery Headquarters**, its units not yet fully assembled, was established at **Tirau** with its regiments in **Okoroire** and **Matamata**; **Engineer units** were housed on the **Te Rapa Racecourse**, **ASC** at **Morrinsville**, and **Signals** at **Claudelands**. **Base units** were installed at **Rugby Park** in **Hamilton**, where new units were still being added to the order of battle.

The **Waikato**, in the full flood of spring, was lush, warm, and beautiful. In every town and village occupied by troops, residents responded so generously with entertainment, both private and public, that the period spent there remained as warmly in the memory as the thermal springs within easy reach of **Te Aroha**, **Okoroire**, and **Matamata**. As soon as the move was completed, preparations began for large-scale tactical manœuvres in the **Kaimai Ranges** which the commander had in mind when he selected the **Waikato** as a training area. These manœuvres, afterwards referred to facetiously as the 'Battle of the **Kaimais**', were the first in which the **Division** as a whole, or as whole as

it was ever to be, was engaged, and one of the most valuable because of the lessons learned and not readily forgotten.

In selecting this tract of wooded country Barrowclough had in mind the situation then existing in **New Guinea**, where the Japanese, after their reverse in the Coral Sea, were attempting to invade **Port Moresby** overland by crossing the Owen Stanley Ranges from Lae and Salamaua. The locality was ideal as a testing and training ground in jungle warfare for both men and equipment—only the heat and the mosquitoes were missing. Dense, untracked bush clothes hills rising to 2000 feet, through which a trail had been blazed as an axis of advance for the two opposing groups. For the purpose of the manœuvre, which lasted from 21 to 27 October, **Tauranga** became Buna and Matamata represented **Port Moresby**, with the high country dividing them as the Owen Stanley Ranges.

Row's **8 Brigade**, made up of **29 Battalion**, **23 Field Company Engineers**, **4 Composite Company ASC**, **7 Field Ambulance** and two home defence units, **1 Auckland** and a Home Guard battalion from the **Tauranga** area, represented a Japanese force advancing through **Tauranga**; Potter's **14 Brigade** consisting of **30**, **35**, and **37 Battalions**, **20 Field Company Engineers**, **16 Composite Company ASC**, and **22 Field Ambulance** moved into the ranges from Matamata to meet the enemy. Advanced Headquarters opened at Opal Springs, a bucolic spot near the foothills where trees enclosed a warm water pool, appointed umpires and watched results. The Japanese force was to advance through 'Buna', continue into the bush, construct a road and gain contact with the enemy; the defending force, after moving out of '**Port Moresby**' was to take up a position astride the line of advance (the 'Kokoda Trail') and maintain itself there for a week. This exercise was made as realistic as possible, its object being to practise the protection of supply convoys, the movement of infantry patrols through bush, communications, the organisation of medical services and other problems of administration. Air co-operation and air support played an important part. Hostile aircraft, dropping flour bombs, were represented by Hudson bombers

escorted by Kittyhawk fighters, with Hawker Hind reconnaissance planes playing for the defenders, all of them coming from aerodromes at **Tauranga** and **Whenuapai** during the hours of daylight to engage in mock dive-bombing raids and to reconnoitre the positions of the opposing forces. Propaganda leaflets dropped by the 'enemy' in the 14 Brigade area proved to be 'cheap immoral publications' in the estimation of the intelligence staff who examined them.

Heavy rain fell soon after the manoeuvres began and continued in torrents, adding considerably to the realism of jungle warfare but without its enervating heat. Conditions in the bush rapidly deteriorated and were such that patrols from the two forces which evaded each other were so exhausted they made no show of resistance when captured but simply asked for food. The 1st **Auckland** (T) Battalion, less arduously trained than **3 Division**, was withdrawn after the first day. No formed roads existed on either side in the immediate neighbourhood of engaged units, so that the task of creating them fell to the engineers, using bulldozers. When the weather halted all traffic except four-wheel-drive vehicles using chains, the roads were corduroyed for miles with trunks of tree ferns. Bren carriers and jeeps soon churned deep tracks through the emerald slopes leading up the bush line, when they replaced the ASC supply columns which were bogged down. In the bush itself, in the 14 Brigade area, a steep four-foot track was cut in steps up the hillside, and here, stripped to the waist and often knee-deep in mud, men of the ASC passed cases of supplies from hand to hand to ration the fatigued and sodden troops in the combat areas. The Kaimai adventure emphasised what was realised later, that much of the **Solomons** campaign was to be an engineer and supply problem. This test of organisation equally tried the physical efficiency of the individual and the reliability of unit equipment. Signals discovered that the existing wireless sets were useless in the rain-soaked bush, and relied on line communication; engineers, working from six o'clock in the morning until late into the night, soon realised that jungle warfare required a considerable increase in established equipment; the infantry, burdened with full pack and 24 hours rations, emphasised the necessity and value of slashers and

waterproof capes; the ASC, using jeeps to transport supplies over the boggy routes, finally resorted to the use of 1000 sandbags for the final individual carrying parties.

At the conclusion of the manoeuvre its shortcomings were ruthlessly exposed at a conference of commanders, during which Barrowclough commented that many of the troops, who were not fully aware of its purpose, seemed to think 'they were the Tararua Tramping Club making a road and packing in supplies'. Instead of improving occupied positions troops were too concerned with settling in and building shelters to turn the rain; making tracks took precedence over lanes of fire and fire plans; localities were revealed to aircraft by smoke from fires, and little attention had been paid to camouflage. Because of the dismal conditions, commanders were too concerned with the comfort of the men instead of with the 'enemy'. But the lessons learned were invaluable. Shortages were revealed, and the necessity shown for traffic control and anti-aircraft protection measures in rear areas, as well as an increase in unit equipment or its replacement by better quality articles. Two factors emerged triumphantly—the jeep as a means of transport under the most desperate conditions and the morale of the men, for sick parades had fallen far below normal during the exercise. Even the medical units found they could use jeeps for the transport of casualties when their ambulances were bogged down in the mud. Though the New Zealand soldier does not play at manoeuvres with any great degree of enthusiasm, requiring rather the presence of the enemy and the stimulus of actual fighting conditions, those troops taking part in the Kaimai exercise achieved a realism which drew praise from a party of American officers who visited the scene of operations and saw them at work.

The division's impending departure for **New Caledonia** was revealed at the conclusion of the Kaimai manoeuvres, after which leave was granted before the final packing and medical examinations began with their usual bustle. Meanwhile, information was reaching headquarters about the new territory. **Brooke**¹ flew to **Guadalcanal**, returning with

first-hand knowledge of conditions there during the height of the battle and some experience of the heavy bombardment of Henderson airfield by Japanese warships. **Dove**² and **Rutherford**³ brought back a sheaf of information about **New Caledonia**, to which they had flown on 18 October to select temporary headquarters and reconnoitre the proposed divisional areas. They were followed by an advanced party of 150 all ranks, under Major W. A. **Bryden**,⁴ which sailed in the *Crescent City* and reached **Noumea** on 2 November. Barrowclough and his principal staff officers arrived there by air five days later to await the assembly of the main body.

¹ **Col J. I. Brooke**, OBE, m. i. d., Legion of Merit (US); Waiouru Military Camp; born Dunedin, 20 Nov 1897; Regular soldier; BM 6 Inf Bde, 1940–41; GSO 1 3 NZ Div, 1942–44; Camp Commandant, **Waiouru**, 1951–.

² **Brig W. W. Dove**, CBE, MC, Legion of Merit (US); **Auckland**; born Rockhampton, Queensland, 6 Sep 1895; Regular soldier; NZ Rifle Bde 1916–19; Officer i/c Administration and Base Commandant, 2 NZEF IP, 1942–44.

³ **Capt J. Rutherford**; England; born Dunston-on-Tyne, 27 Jan 1906; university professor; GSO 3 (I) 3 NZ Div, 1942–43.

⁴ **Lt-Col W. A. Bryden**; **Wellington**; born Dunedin, 2 May 1910; accountant; commanded 37 and 38 Fd Regts in **Pacific**; 2 i/c 5 and 4 Fd Regts in **Italy**, 1945.

THE PACIFIC

II: MOVE TO NEW CALEDONIA

II: Move to New Caledonia

Through November, December, and January the division moved overseas, though not before its carefully planned departure schedules were upset by changes in shipping and escorts. The *Maui*, carrying 1960 all ranks, mostly artillery units urgently required by the American command, reached **Noumea** on Armistice Day, the commemoration ceremony for which was attended by representative New Zealanders. The *Brastigi*, with 917 men made up from Divisional Signals, **20 Field Company** Engineers and 16 ASC Company, disembarked at the small coastal port of Nepoui on 30 November, and was the first ship to use it; the *Weltevreden*, with 25, and the *President Monroe*, carrying 1796, mostly artillery, **30 Battalion** and Base units, reached **Noumea** together on 6 December; the *West Point*, taking the main body numbering 7158, reached **Noumea** on 31 December; the *Mormacport*, with 249 members of rear parties, berthed at Nepoui on 6 January, and the *Talamanca*, with 226 more rear details, reached **Noumea** on the 11th. By the end of February another 1052 details, including the usual collection of absentees without leave, had reached **New Caledonia**.

The movement of these 13,383 soldiers, together with a vast amount of stores and equipment, was made without mishap or excitement and was a lesson in American transport methods by which every available inch of space on large transport vessels was occupied. On large ships such as the *West Point* only two meals a day were served, which those returning from **Fiji** in the *President Coolidge* had already experienced and found the intervals between meals rather tiresome. Bunks, only two feet six inches apart, were in tiers four high in holds accommodating between 600 and 700 men. Meals and recreation periods on deck were taken in rotation, but the voyage was too short to be anything other than an interlude, pleasant or unpleasant according to individual

preference. The *President Monroe* provided an interesting comment on war for the historically minded. Named after the president whose dominant motive was the prevention of European interference in American affairs, the ship was now transporting New Zealand soldiers to a French possession to assist in a war against **Japan** which had its origin in the German invasion of **Poland**. Monroe's portrait still adorned the ship's lounge.

New Caledonia, where during nine months of garrison duty **3 Division** fitted itself for the **Solomons** campaign and established its base for those operations, lies 1000 miles north of New Zealand and 700 miles east of **Australia**, with its southern tip just over the Tropic of Capricorn. This French colonial possession, 248 miles long, never more than 31 miles wide, and shaped like a huge bread roll, is the world's richest island as a source of minerals. In 1938, with the exchange rate at 200 francs to the £, **New Caledonia** exported 19½ million francs worth of nickel, 21½ millions worth of chrome, and 12 millions worth of coffee, most of the minerals going to **Germany** and **Japan**, the only countries which wanted them. Until 1894 **France** made use of the island as a penal settlement, 40,000 prisoners passing through the convict barracks on Ile Nou, the largest island in **Noumea** Harbour, before such traffic ceased, after which various colonisation schemes were attempted with little success. Despite infrequent hurricanes, **New Caledonia** enjoys a magnificent climate for nine months of the year, half the annual 40 inches of rain falling in January, February, and March. Like most **Pacific** islands it has its wet and dry sides, but in both there is an abundance of freshwater streams, fed from a central chain of mountains.

Life moved indolently in picturesque **Noumea**, the principal town, port, and seat of Government, until war suddenly transformed it into the largest forward Allied base in the **Pacific**, where its magnificent land-locked harbour, the entrance to which is guarded by a coral reef and a lighthouse presented by Napoleon III, sheltered every type of warship and transport. As the division's convoys reached the harbour they found it

massed with ships, ranging from destroyers and landing craft to imposing aircraft carriers and battleships, several of them being repaired after disastrous engagements in and around **Guadalcanal**. Little space was available at the inadequate wharves, so that troops disembarked in the stream and were ferried ashore. Transports waited for weeks before they could berth and unload stores and heavy equipment.

Worse congestion was evident ashore, where headquarters of the **South Pacific Command** was established with all the subsidiary naval, military, and air headquarters and their staffs required for the conduct of an involved and widely dispersed campaign. Every vacant hillside and open space in and around the town was covered with hutted and tented camps. Vast dumps of war materials dotted the landscape for miles; aeroplanes linking **New Caledonia** with the battle zone and the network of **Pacific** bases extending to New Zealand, **Australia**, **Fiji** and beyond, were never absent from the sky, and ceaseless streams of motor traffic moved in dusty procession to and from the camps and aerodromes far in the country. Relations between the American command and French administration were strained, mostly because of the peremptory demands of war, but from the influx of thousands of servicemen flushed with money the local tradesmen and shopkeepers reaped their traditional wartime harvest.

But the men of the division saw relatively little of **Noumea**, except on brief visits. Temporary Base Headquarters was established in Rue d'Alma, in the middle of the town, with staging camps at Dumbea, some miles away, to which troops were moved in an antiquated train only slightly better than the Colonial Sugar Refining Company's modest system in **Fiji**, and at Nepoui Valley, 160 miles north and a few miles inland from the port of that name, where clouds of choking red dust coated the scrubby trees in the neighbourhood and departing aircraft on the nearby aerodrome were followed by mountainous dust-storms of their own making. Troops for Nepoui disembarked in **Noumea** Harbour and were staged up the coast in smaller craft to avoid the long haul by motor transport, which was never sufficient to meet the demand. These camps

served their purpose as the division moved in and assembled, after which a transit camp was established by Base in **Noumea** to handle all through traffic while the New Zealanders remained in **New Caledonia**.

Immediately on arrival the division occupied an area on the dry side of the island stretching for more than one hundred miles from Moindou, where its southern boundary joined 43 American Division's territory, to the far north and included the Plaine des Gaiacs aerodrome, other airfields in the north, and the port of Nepoui. It consisted of gently undulating country covered for the most part with niaouli trees and rank grasses, rolling down to the coast from the central mountain divide and watered by numerous streams and rivers, all of which were subject to swift flooding.

Only two main roads served the whole area. One, Route Colonial No. 1, coiled its way from north to south and was the main arterial route. Despite the lethargic efforts of a few workmen using barrows and shovels to fill in the holes with soil from nearby pits, this soon broke under a constant stream of cars, trucks, and jeeps, each leading its individual cloud of dust. Narrow bridges, none too secure, crossed the larger streams; concreted fords to prevent erosion served the smaller courses, and in the far north, at Tamala, all traffic crossed the river by ferry. The other road crossed the island from **Bourail** through the mountains to join an inferior route at Houailou serving the wet and more verdant east coast, where most of the rivers were crossed by old-fashioned ferries controlled by hand winches. All subsidiary roads were unmetalled and soon churned to mud after rain.

The whole of the public services and amenities of **New Caledonia** were little better than those existing in New Zealand in the pioneering days and were typical of a neglect born of isolation, but the dry rolling country was excellent for camp sites and manœuvres. There were few distractions. Villages were few and far between along the main roads and all of them rather blistered by time, with large cattle runs, bounded by rivers, coast and mountain, sub-dividing the rest of this sparsely populated country and supporting their independent and thrifty owners.

Mosquitoes, of the non-malarial variety, were a constant source of irritation, particularly in the marshy country near the coast and in river valleys, where they were unspeakably bad, but there were areas comparatively free from these pestilential insects. The only ports of any size and all the aerodromes were in the western side of **New Caledonia, and round them the principal defences were concentrated.**

On arrival Barrowclough's force became a component of First Island Command, under Lieutenant-General Rush B. Lincoln, and, as such, a part of Vice-Admiral Halsey's South Pacific forces. Barrowclough assumed command of the northern sector of the island on 17 December, with the tactical role of defending the aerodromes, radar stations along the coast, and the beaches, several of which were vulnerable and widely separated. From temporary headquarters established on 23 November at Nemeara, on the Houailou road, he moved to a site among the niaoulis on terraces between the Moindah River and the main road and opened permanent headquarters there on 12 December. It was 160 miles north of **Noumea and twelve miles from Poya, the nearest village, but the mosquitoes were few and space was unlimited.**

Mobility was the key to the division's role in **New Caledonia, where amphibious landings were possible almost anywhere along the coast, but the central mountain range could be crossed only by large formations, guns, and vehicles along the Houailou- **Bourail** road, so that the east coast required little attention. The southern route to **Noumea** was narrow and tortuous, allowing only one-way traffic where it ran through the hills from the division's southern boundary to **Bouloupari**. This problem could be solved by using Nepoui as a port and establishing dumps north of Moindou in the event of enemy action. Natives in the area round Hienghene, a village on the north-east coast, were suspected of Japanese sympathies, and unconfirmed reports of enemy submarines off reef passages there lent some support to this suspicion, but the majority of the natives were friendly and displayed the liveliest interest in the men of the Division.**

The northern sector was allotted to 14 Brigade, which established its headquarters on flat, tree-clumped country beside the Taom River near Ouaco, with 35 Battalion in the immediate vicinity and 30 Battalion some miles north at Koumac. Potter's group also included 35 Field Battery, 53 Anti-Tank Battery, 209 Light Anti-Aircraft Battery, 20 Field Company Engineers, 22 Field Ambulance with a field surgical unit and a 50-bed field hospital, 16 Composite Company ASC, 37 Light Aid Detachment, and one section of the Reserve Mechanical Transport Company. His task was the defence of two airfields at Koumac, radar stations at Pam and Gomen, at that time manned by American technicians, and the beaches. All French and native home defence forces, not of any great consequence, came under his command.

Eight Brigade, with headquarters in the wooded Nepoui Valley, consisted of 29 Battalion, 1 Ruahine Battalion, the remaining units of 17 Field Regiment, 214 Light Anti-Aircraft Battery, 54 Anti-Tank Battery, 37 Field Park, 7 Field Ambulance with a field surgical unit and a 50-bed hospital, 4 Composite Company ASC, 64 Light Aid Detachment, and the Divisional Mobile Workshops. Row's task was the defence of the Plaine des Gaiacs aerodrome and the port of Nepoui. The southern sector was occupied by the smaller 15 Brigade, with the task of defending the road through the mountains from Houailou. Headquarters was established at Nemeara, with 1 Scottish Battalion in the neighbouring valley and 37 Battalion on the eastern side of the mountains beside the picturesque Houailou River. Attached were 23 Field Company Engineers, 29 Composite Company ASC, one company of 7 Field Ambulance, and 144 Light (3.7-inch) Howitzer Battery.

Dove, who was both Base Commandant and Officer in Charge of Administration, established his headquarters and some smaller units in the town of Bourail, with his major concentration of Base units in Racecourse Camp, in Tene Valley, and Boguen Valley, some miles away. Sub-base remained at Noumea, 120 miles south over a dusty, pot-holed road. These dispositions were modified six weeks later when 8 Brigade moved south to Bouloupari to take over a sector vacated by 43 American

Division: 14 Brigade then extended its southern boundary to include **Nepoui** and the **Plaine des Gaiacs** aerodrome. Units remained in these sectors until the division moved from **New Caledonia**, holding three-quarters of the island. With the exception of those anti-aircraft batteries allotted to brigades, the heavy artillery was disposed in areas outside the divisional sector. The **33rd Heavy Regiment**, under American command, shared the task of defending **Noumea** Harbour with the **244 American Coast Artillery** and a French battery. Its head-quarters were on **Ile Nou**, with one battery at **Point Terre** and its workshops in **Vallee du Tir**. The **28th Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regiment** had its headquarters and one battery and workshops at **Oua Tom** aerodrome and one troop of **204 Battery** detached at **Ile Nou**; **29 Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment** was guarding the **Plaine des Gaiacs** aerodrome with the **208 Battery** detached to **28 Regiment** at **Oua Tom**.

In the mobile defence scheme brigades were given alternative roles for the mutual support of each other in the event of attack, and although more optimistic reports from the **Solomons** suggested that any danger to **New Caledonia** was becoming increasingly remote as the battle moved to **New Georgia**, alarm practices were regularly held on receipt of flash signals from **Noumea**. These tested the signals link throughout the whole island and kept the forces reasonably alert, for there was still the possibility of hit-and-run raids by Japanese submarines which waited along the sea lanes between the Allied Pacific bases.

From the time of arrival, tented camp sites were established and made comfortable by that fantastic attitude of the average New Zealander to make himself a home, providing he has a few boxes and nails with which to construct crazy but functional articles of furniture. Men lived in six-man Indian pattern tents, scattered irregularly among the trees and raised high off the ground by additional poles of the useful **niaouli** and bamboo to give plenty of head-room and air. The floors were sanded or metalled. Because of its usefulness the **niaouli** is worthy of mention. It covers vast areas of the dry side of **New Caledonia** and grows quickly. Its sparse, grey-green foliage resembles that of the Australian eucalypt,

to which it is related, and its trunk is covered with thick bark made up of many layers each as fine and soft as tissue paper. The slender trunks are much used by the natives for constructing their huts, and the bark, which is dexterously stripped off without killing the tree, is used for roofing. The timber endures for long periods in the ground.

Despite the eloquent minority who found nothing attractive in **New Caledonia** until they left it behind them, the camps, though isolated, were excellent. Most of them were sited within easy reach of freshwater streams or rivers, so that bathing and laundering presented only those difficulties which could be overcome by the exercise of common sense. As the months went by mess rooms, offices, store-houses, YMCAs, and recreation centres were built in the fashion of large native *bures* to provide additional and more comfortable accommodation. These *bures*, also used by the French farmers, are constructed by roofing a skeleton framework of niaouli trunks with bark and reeds, held in place with strands of fibre from the aloe plant, and covering the walls with sections of plaited coconut fronds. Native labourers, under engineer supervision, constructed the *bures*, and costs were met from unit funds. In each brigade area large recreational *bures* were erected and became the meeting place of all troops in the vicinity. Their most appreciative patrons were the transport drivers, who left the dusty roads for a few minutes to take a cup of tea during long journeys to and from the supply depots. By the time construction was finished some of the camps resembled native villages.

The rainy season brought problems such as the flooding of access roads, when they became bogs, and added to the worries of the engineers, who were so engulfed in maintenance work that units frequently went to their aid with their own transport. Rivers rose with astonishing rapidity, forcing the removal of some camps to higher ground and disrupting traffic on the main roads, but the mud soon gave way to dust as the year ebbed into the cooler season. Relations were never anything but cordial with the American forces, whose vocabulary, both official and unofficial, was adopted with limits. The French

administrative officials, farmers, and store-keepers welcomed the New Zealanders, to whom they became a race of *jolies garçons*, with an enthusiasm which soon overcame all language difficulties. To the Americans they were never anything but 'Kiwis', since that bird had become the division's distinguishing mark and every vehicle carried one.

From the time of arrival in **New Caledonia** the division, by arrangement between governments, was maintained from American sources, with the exception of certain specified New Zealand supplies such as canteen stores, clothing, tentage and ammunition, though later American tropical clothing was also adopted. The men were paid in dollars, £2 worth of which had been changed during the voyage, but they also used French currency for local purchases and were soon busily engaged in attempting to reconcile the New Zealand pound at 6s. 1d. to the dollar with francs at 43 to the dollar. Some of the American food was regarded with disfavour and the New Zealanders never became accustomed to spam, *chile con carne*, and others equally spiced, though they appreciated the fruits and juices and the liberal ration of turkey for such traditional festivals as Christmas Day and Thanksgiving Day. Quantities of fresh fruit, particularly oranges, and smaller amounts of fresh vegetables were purchased from French farmers to supplement and add variety to the daily tinned ration, but fresh butter and meat in reasonable supply did not become available until refrigeration storage space was increased in **Noumea**. Refrigerated vans relieved the storage difficulties among units.

The pot-holed roads and the long distances over which supplies were hauled daily played havoc with transport, and many of the ASC trucks, which averaged 2000 miles a month, were soon bumped into the repair depots. Barrowclough, against the opinion of the Quartermaster-General, Brigadier H. E. **Avery**,¹ requested full-scale transport of 3377 vehicles, which included 663 motor-cycles, 2016 cars, jeeps and trucks, and 507 tractors and carriers. By the end of June 2752 had been despatched from New Zealand. In an effort to make up the division's extensive deficiencies during its reorganisation, many of the trucks had been

supplied from districts and were ill-conditioned for the harsh service required of them in **New Caledonia**. Thereafter Army ordered that only new vehicles be sent forward, some being obtained direct from American sources on the island. Because of pillaging, one of the nastier features of wartime shipping, all tools were removed from vehicles before they were shipped from New Zealand. Ultimately all transport reached **New Caledonia**, where much of it remained when the division moved into the forward area. Only one third of the division's transport was taken to **Guadalcanal**, and still less beyond that.

Barrowclough was continually worried by the deterioration of stores and equipment, which were inadequately housed, and by increasing problems of maintenance, which included the erection of reasonably permanent buildings and the upkeep of roads, now far beyond the limited resources and equipment of the French public works organisation. Although the division was better equipped than it had ever been in its history, shortages could not be met from American sources, which were often hard-pressed through losses at sea to meet their own requirements.

Some indication of the major difficulties was revealed in a report by Major L. C. Hardie, of Fortifications and Works Branch, Army Headquarters, who spent from 21 March to 8 April thoroughly investigating the state of the division's services. 'At present everything is of the makeshift, inefficient, and temporary type', he noted in a long, detailed report, which included the state of the roads and camp sites. He observed that the provision of barges for use in unloading ships was largely the result of personal relationships and friendships existing between New Zealand and American officers, rather than any definite rights to use equipment as and when required. Although engineer supplies, under an original agreement, were the responsibility of the **South Pacific Command**, they were not available because the command itself was short. Hardie reported that the roads in **New Caledonia** were bad and road maintenance had broken down, building supplies were unobtainable locally, Base details camps were in great need of prefabricated buildings, and there was a distressing shortage of timber,

water, drain and culvert pipes, pumping plants, power generating plants, water heaters, chlorinating and filtering plants, general hardware and cement. If **New Caledonia** was to become a base, many buildings of a permanent type were required for storage. This report hastened supplies from New Zealand, particularly a quantity of prefabricated buildings for the housing of ordnance supplies.

Some of the General's administrative problems had been revealed in his letter to Army Headquarters, written on 2 February:

‘I have to decide what should be the size of my Base installations and what degree of permanence my building construction should take. This is naturally bound up with the possibilities of our returning here and the number of reinforcements which are likely to be retained at Base. At the present time these problems are almost overwhelming. We have large stocks of rations which are deteriorating through exposure to the weather. The same applies to ammunition, and in both cases our problem is accentuated by the fact that large supplies of ammunition and rations were landed here at a time when I had few troops to handle them. Even now my numerous commitments are leaving only the barest minimum of training opportunities and I am handicapped largely by shortage of engineer equipment. Some roadmaking equipment has just arrived, including some bulldozers, only one of which is a D4 tractor equipped with earth-moving plant. Another D4 tractor is without this plant, two D7 tractors have no roadmaking fittings, and my CRE advises me that even if the materials could be sent over the workshops could not fit suitable earth-moving appliances. These tractors are practically useless, and in order to keep open access to my brigades I have to employ large numbers of men roadmaking with nothing but picks and shovels.’

The delay in sending forward equipment for the division was partly caused by shortage of shipping, but this was aggravated by the method of storage in wharf sheds in New Zealand and by a system of loading which did not ensure that cargo was shipped in the order in which it was delivered. This prompted Dove, in a report on Base Headquarters

organisation, to suggest that in any similar future operations a special ship should be provided so that shipments could be made in the desired order in which they were required. Any demand for shipping was made to the American authorities, but some confusion seems to have existed between the authorities, both American and New Zealand. The **United States Navy**, which was advised of **3 Division's** requirements, had been shipping supplies only as space became available after its own requirements were satisfied. General Breene, of the **South Pacific Command**, considered that if he had been correctly informed of what had to be lifted both in reinforcements and supplies, he contemplated no difficulty, as he had other ships at his disposal which could be diverted. This ultimately solved the problem, though shipping space, during this period of the war, was always short in the **Pacific**, as elsewhere.

¹ **Brig H. E. Avery**, CMG, CBE, DSO, m.i.d., Legion of Merit (US); **Eastbourne**; born **Wellington**, 3 Oct 1885; company manager; NZASC 1914–19 (AA & QMG NZ Div); QMG NZ Military Forces, 1940–45; General Manager War Assets Realisation Board, 1945–48.

THE PACIFIC

III: LIFE AMONG THE NIAOULIS

III: Life Among the Niaoulis

Everyone trained in **New Caledonia**. There was no option, since it was an instruction that all ranks of every branch and headquarters, even the less conspicuous elements such as cooks and batment, must undergo a fitness campaign and march certain distances. In a review of the state of training at the end of January, Barrowclough issued an instruction which included that: 'It is essential that the whole division be trained in jungle warfare types of shooting. Artillery, signals, ASC, and ordnance must be trained with the rifle, Thompson sub-machine gun, and light machine gun to combat Japanese infiltration.' He also suggested to Army Headquarters that the supply of grenades, which were 'particularly suitable for jungle fighting because they did not locate the thrower' be increased to 200,000. No time was lost in beginning a schedule of training for which the country is so perfectly suited, despite the mosquitoes, and where the soft warm nights are not attended with discomfort when sleeping out, though reconnaissance parties which explored tracks through the mountains rarely moved without their mosquito nets. These insects were at their worst in **8 Brigade** areas in and around **Bouloupari**, where head-nets were often worn and office desks and signal equipments covered in an effort to overcome their agonising attentions.

Jungle training began on a platoon and company basis, using live ammunition, mortars and machine guns, over courses designed as a preliminary to manoeuvres on a larger scale employing battalions and finally brigades. Small parties made four- and six-day trips through the mountains and along the beaches, investigating the state of routes, their availability for movement, checking supplies of food and water, and testing the value of certain specified rations over stated periods. Inaccurate maps gave little indication of the actual state of the country,

but this only stimulated interest and encouraged initiative, for training in **New Caledonia** was never monotonous, despite its tests of stamina and endurance. As training progressed, every form of exercise was undertaken by battalions, from beach landings, using Higgins boats, to attacks on objectives over specially prepared tracts of country, using concealed targets and supporting arms. This went on for months, always with an eye to combat in the **Solomons**.

Some of the more spectacular exploits involved operations with American forces, such as an **8 Brigade** exercise in February using 29 and 1 Scottish Battalions, which co-operated with elements of 43 US Division and **United States** aircraft. Another **8 Brigade** exercise in April stressed communication problems in close country, the use of four-wheeled vehicles over tracks through the bush, and the reduction of the load carried by the individual soldier. Throughout May and June this brigade embarked on its most strenuous exercises, the first of which, from 4 to 7 May, took place over rugged bush and mountain country in the Ouenghi-Tontouta region with units divided into New Zealand and enemy forces. This was followed on 14 May by a still more exhausting exercise designed for the capture of a high hill feature, culminating in a five-day manoeuvre which involved carrying mortars and machine guns and other combat equipment up steep, bush-clad slopes and crossing rivers in assault boats and on floating rafts. Further exercises over long periods in June included attacks on La Foa and Moindou villages, for which sand models were used during discussions on problems and in lectures to the men to stimulate their interest, and for which they were invaluable. A recreational period at Thio, an attractive village on the east coast, was well earned by the whole brigade in the only respite it ever enjoyed from months of training.

In the dry, open country in the north, 14 Brigade had been equally busy, practising over an assault course, testing jungle rations during a beach landing on the Gomen Peninsula in April, and in defence and attack schemes which kept the units far from their camps. As a preliminary to the most thorough exercise undertaken by the brigade

and involving all arms of the service, **Divisional Headquarters** held a tactical exercise without troops for brigade commanders, followed by another for unit commanders. Then, for three days and nights, all units of the brigade were employed in a night river crossing, followed by an attack on the village of Pouembout. For this exercise the opposite bank of the Pouembout River was presumed to be in enemy hands, a bridgehead had to be established in darkness, and a force with anti-tank guns pushed over in readiness for the main attack next morning. Engineers used assault boats and box girder bridging to cross the river, the ambulance set up its hospital and treated several accidental injuries, signals tested the efficiency of communications, both line and radio, supporting artillery played its role, and the ASC fed and maintained the force. There were several visitors to witness this most realistic and exacting exercise, including two senior American generals, Harmon and Lincoln.

Fifteenth Brigade, while carrying out its various exercise, proved the value of its training during a three-day manoeuvre when not a man fell out. This brigade also tested the efficiency of various rations, and came to the conclusion that some of them would do little more than sustain men in action, leaving them no reserve for fighting. One of these was the American K ration, which was neatly enclosed in a cardboard package for easy carriage and contained $\frac{1}{4}$ lb. of cheese or meat in an airtight tin, eight small biscuits wrapped in cellophane, sixteen glucose tablets, three lumps of loaf sugar, powdered fruit juice for two drinks, one stick of chewing gum, and one carton of four cigarettes. Other similar rations contained soup cubes. These were all designed for use during assault landings, each man carrying three packages made up as three separate meals, and sufficient to last him for 24 hours. All of them were disliked after the novelty wore off, but they were efficient for their purpose.

Through May and June, also, the men were toughened by arduous marches, **8 Brigade** beginning with 14 miles a day, increasing to 18 and finally to 40 miles over the last two days. Units of 14 Brigade marched

20 miles a day for three days, culminating in an ambitious military display in which every unit played a part, and ending during the weekend with a church parade and ceremonial march past. Later in July, 8 Brigade held a ceremonial parade and review during the visit of the Minister of Defence, the **Hon. F. Jones, who inspected the men.**

Although taking part in the various brigade exercises, other arms of the service continued their individual training, in spite of the distracting calls on their time for routine duty. When anti-aircraft artillery units could not obtain the assistance of aircraft for trail shoots, they improvised by using kites or balloons towed by jeeps; engineers experimented in floating jeeps across rivers, using kapok assault floats or tarpaulins, and in building bridges at night, using materials cut from the nearby bush; signals had practice enough in their work, which called for the erection and maintenance of miles of line through the roughest country, and the servicing of a radio net which extended from **Noumea to Taom and a high-powered link sited at Base, which carried all traffic between the division and New Zealand.**

Unlike other divisions in the field, **3 Division, the only formation other than American then in the South Pacific, was without the usual Army Corps organisation on which it ordinarily would have called. This meant that Army Headquarters and the **South Pacific Command** to some extent took the place of the larger formation. Its training, also, was entirely different from that laid down in the manuals, in which emphasis is placed on traditional methods used in open country such as the European mainland or the African desert.**

New Zealanders of **3 Division, for the first time in history preparing for jungle and island warfare, were practically writing their own text books as their training progressed. All the months of works accomplished in **New Caledonia** were of immense value, and during that time the division experimented for future operations, adding to its ideas and equipment and discarding what was unnecessary. Long trousers and long-sleeved shirts were necessary because of mosquitoes; steel helmets were useless among trees and undergrowth because of the noise; gas**

respirators proved a hindrance in wooded country; canvas boots with barred rubber soles were superior to leather footwear in the jungle; some reduction in the amount of personal gear was essential. 'Streamlining in the jungle is not merely a desirable appearance but is a military necessity,' one unit reported. 'A water-bottle and haversack hung on the sides of each soldier may well represent so many coffin nails.' Tea proved to be the greatest stimulant for fatigued men and rice a popular food, though difficult to cook because water was often short. Troops soon tried of the American jungle rations, compact and efficient though they were.

Throughout the training period specially selected officers and men were despatched far and wide to gather the latest information on jungle fighting and amphibious warfare. Some went to amphibious training courses in the **United States**, returning rather too late to be of any assistance in the **Solomons**; others were sent to chemical warfare schools in **Australia**, Army School at **Trentham**, the AFV school of **Waiouru**, the tactical school at **Wanganui**, and staff college at **Palmerston North**.

Training culminated at the end of June with amphibious exercises using an American ship, the *John Penn*, off the beach of Ducos Peninsula in **Noumea** Harbour. Here a combat team of 1139 all ranks from 14 Brigade, made up of **37 Battalion** and a machine-gun platoon, **35 Field Battery**, **207 Light Anti-Aircraft Battery**, **20 Field Company**, **22 Field Ambulance** and 16 ASC Company, practised for some days all the complicated detail of embarkation drills, boat assignment tables, landing diagrams, beach organisation, loading and night landing, becoming so skilled in the routine that a landing craft could be filled in four minutes. Senior officers, both New Zealand and American, watched the operation, approving its speed and efficiency. So that other units might practise the essentials of embarkation and disembarkation, scaffolding was erected in some of the camps and here, on rope nets strung over the timber frames, men clambered up and down to familiarise themselves with the only method possible of going aboard or leaving a ship in

shallow and unfamiliar waters.

In a summary of the strategical situation which went to every man in the division, Barrowclough, who believed in keeping his troops 'in the picture', emphasised the close co-operation between the three fighting services, particularly as exemplified by the battle for Guadalcanal. 'We can see how dependent are the Navy, Army, and Air Force on one another,' he concluded. 'Only by the closest co-operation between all three services can island victories be won.... We shall be dependent on American sea and air forces, and we shall also rely a lot on the American divisions alongside us. With that great support we can go into action well trained and confident of victory.'

Recreation went hand in hand with training in New Caledonia and was almost as arduous. Apart from unit activities, which were given every encouragement, cricket, football, swimming, and athletics produced talent of high quality and a series of excellent contests, not the least of which was the Rugby final for the Barrowclough Cup presented to the captain of the triumphant 37 Battalion team, Private A. T. Long, by the General's wife, who flew from New Zealand for the occasion. The most spectacular recreational feature was the pride of 14 Brigade, units of which constructed a full-size racecourse at Taom where horses of doubtful pedigree, gathered from the surrounding countryside, competed at two meetings and attracted visitors from as far south as Noumea.

By the time 3 Division departed from New Caledonia it was as perfectly trained for jungle and island warfare as any force in the Pacific. Major-General C. D. Barrett, Commander of the First Marine Amphibious Corps, who was given the choice of 3 Division or any United States or Australian division for service in the Solomons, selected the New Zealanders, 'of whose qualities he had the highest opinion'.

THE PACIFIC

IV: NEGOTIATIONS—POLITICAL AND SERVICE

IV: Negotiations—Political and Service

From January 1943 to the following July, negotiations concerning the expansion of the division continued uncertainly as every means was explored in an effort to carry out the original proposal to put a three-brigade division in to the **Pacific**. There were also political motives behind the desire that New Zealand should be adequately represented in that sphere of operations. On several occasions tentative negotiations were opened for the return of **2 Division** from the **Middle East**, but each time the New Zealand Government, acting on the advice of the Allied leaders as to where that division could most usefully be employed, agreed to its retention in the **Mediterranean** theatre. Both Churchill and Roosevelt pressed for this and were supported by the New Zealand Chiefs of Staff. Any uneasiness on the part of the men in the **Middle East** that they should return were dispelled by **Freyberg's** assurance in March 1942 that the Dominion was adequately defended and that, by striking at the Germans in the **Middle East**, the New Zealanders were also indirectly striking at the Japanese as well. Moreover, he told his men, large quantities of armament had reached New Zealand from England and **America** and the American fleet had begun offensive operations in the **Pacific**.

On 19 November 1942, as **3 Division** was moving into **New Caledonia**, Fraser expressed the opinion to Churchill that 'Our own tried and well-trained troops [in the **Mediterranean** theatre] should be used for the defence of New Zealand in the **Pacific**', and in emphasising that New Zealand should play her part in the **Pacific** offensive 'to the fullest extent of our capacity' he did not mean that **2 Division** was to be returned and used only to defend the Dominion's shores. So that Nash could make this point perfectly clear to the Chiefs of Staff in **Washington**, he despatched a special message stating that if the division

were returned it would not be used exclusively for home defence. During Parliamentary discussions in December Fraser criticised the 'holding war' in the Pacific, which he said he had always opposed, though a holding period was necessary in order to build up American strength of arms and was in accordance with the over-all strategy that Germany should first be defeated before the full strength of the Allies was turned against Japan. 'Units of the New Zealand force have arrived in New Caledonia,' he said in December. 'It is only right that we should take part in the Pacific offensive which will keep the Japanese as far as possible from our shores.'

Although War Cabinet had approved the necessary increases for the division, Barrowclough still required a third infantry battalion for his 15 Brigade, as well as one field regiment of artillery, an ASC company, an engineer field company, an anti-tank battery, a light artillery regiment, less a battery already in New Caledonia, and the remaining units of 15 Brigade headquarters. Other units were required for the Base organisation. Puttick, in January, supported Barrowclough's request for these troops, most of which were being assembled in New Zealand, and commented on the urgent necessity for building up the division to full strength.

Early in February Major-General Peck, of Halsey's war plans staff, expressed concern at the strength of 3 Division and indicated that it would shortly be asked to undertake amphibious training, which 43 American Division had already started in readiness to move forward. Barrowclough was eager to get his remaining units to New Caledonia in order to acclimatise them. 'There is a vast difference between the men from Fiji and those gathered later from all parts of New Zealand,' he reported to Army Headquarters. Later in February Coates and Puttick visited New Caledonia and discussed with Halsey various problems concerning the division, including the relief by American units of the heavy coast and anti-aircraft artillery to enable them to return to it.

On 6 March War Cabinet reluctantly agreed to the expansion of the division to 17,637 all ranks, with a first reinforcement of 1263, a docks

operating unit of 90, and an engineer construction unit of 300, giving the force in **New Caledonia** a total strength of 19,290. One of the provisions was that 2211 coast and anti-aircraft personnel still in **Fiji** should join the division when they were relieved, as well as the battalions then in **Tonga** and Norfolk. But a third battalion still had to be found for 15 Brigade. The possibility of using a battalion of the Otago Regiment or a battalion of the Waikato Regiment had long been discarded, and when a suggestion to use 2 Maori Battalion, then in camp, was put forward Barrowclough replied that he welcomed the idea, but warned that some difficulty might arise through working Maori troops alongside American units which might subject them to some indignity.

Halsey and his staff, to whom the proposal was submitted, considered the inclusion of the Maoris would be both acceptable and desirable and discounted any suggestion of discrimination, but when the subject was referred to Colonel J. H. Nankivell, **United States Military Attache** in **Wellington**, he expressed the opinion that it would be unwise to send Maoris to serve alongside American formations. However, the **Maori War Effort Parliamentary Committee** gave no support to this suggestion; they desired to send their men to the **Middle East**, leaving no doubt of their intentions in a letter to the Prime Minister which concluded, 'The Maori people of New Zealand are averse to their boys being sent to any other theatre of war where they could not be directly supporting their kinsmen. This feeling is paramount in the minds of the men of the 2 Maori Battalion'. This view was not supported by the Chief of the General Staff, who expressed the opinion that 'every military and, as far as I can see, every economic consideration is in favour of the despatch of 2 Maori Battalion to **3 Division**'.

When the Deputy Chief of the General Staff, Stewart, toured **Pacific** formations the following month, he informed Barrowclough that 3 Maori Battalion, not yet formed, would be used to complete 15 Brigade. Although this was confirmed at a conference presided over by Coates and attended by the Maori members of Parliament and Army

representatives on 21 April, the furlough scheme for men of **2 Division**, which was influenced by strong public opinion, forced a drastic alteration of all previous decisions and required both 2 and 3 Maori Battalions to be diverted to support 1 Maori Battalion. It was obvious, also, that the Maoris did not wish their men to serve in the **Pacific**.

A suggestion to use the Fijians to complete **3 Division** also ended in stalemate. The offer came from Sir Philip Mitchell, Governor of **Fiji**, to use the **Fijian Brigade** with the division, this force to include the **Fijian Battalion** and the commando units, led by New Zealanders, then employed with American forces in the **Solomons**, where they had established their reputation as jungle fighters. Barrowclough suggested, and Puttick agreed, that one battalion of Fijians could be usefully employed with each New Zealand brigade, thus making full use of their special qualifications as jungle fighters, but he insisted that they must be in addition to, and not in substitution for, New Zealand units still required.

When the suggestion was referred to the **South Pacific Command** it was received coldly, as the removal of the brigade from **Fiji** required the use of American troops to replace them in garrisoning the island and would also deprive the American forces of the use of the scouts and raiders in the **Solomons** campaign. For this reason **South Pacific Command** could not agree to the request, and a communication from Halsey's headquarters on 18 June made this clear. 'In conference and correspondence concerning the reduction of home defences in New Zealand, it was our understanding that the 3rd Division would be brought up to full strength and that full strength would be such that the New Zealand division could be used interchangeably with American divisions in combat. Therefore, we prefer for the latter reason, and because of the reduction in strength of the **Fiji** garrison, that the expansion of New Zealand 3rd Division be not accomplished by the use of **Fijian troops**.'

Further negotiations, however, brought agreement to the employment of one battalion of Fijians with the division as scouts and

raiders, and its replacement by a Grade II New Zealand battalion from **Tonga**, but this Mitchell refused to accept, stating that his brigade could not be broken up. There were language and domestic difficulties to be considered, he pointed out, as well as public opinion in the Colony, and he suggested that the brigade might be used later as a whole formation when the tactical situation permitted it to be released. Army Headquarters thought it unwise to risk irritating Halsey with any further propositions and Barrowclough, though regretting the decision not to employ the Fijians, expressed surprise at Mitchell's objection to breaking up the brigade, since part of it was already detached and working in the **Solomons**. (See also **Appendix IV**.)

While these protracted negotiations were in progress, other factors had decided the fate of the division's strength, the most influential being the adoption of a furlough scheme for long-service men of **2 Division**. Both Major-General M. F. Harmon, commanding **United States Armed Forces in the South Pacific**, and Major-General R. G. Breene, commanding all Supply Services, had expressed concern over the slow movement of men and stores to **New Caledonia**, as the division, as it was then constituted, could not be used interchangeably with an American combat division of three brigades; but the manpower position in New Zealand again held up its restraining hand. Through April and May the whole position was thoroughly examined and discussed by Parliament. From those discussions stemmed a policy, approved by War Cabinet, that **2 Division** remain in the **Middle East** and furlough be granted to 6000 long-service men, and that the **Pacific** force be reorganised on a reduced scale. This meant that the 5600 men who were in camp awaiting transport to **New Caledonia** to build up **3 Division** were used to enable men of **2 Division** to take their leave. Artillery units relieved from **Fiji** were also diverted to **Middle East** reinforcements. The pressure of public opinion for the return of **2 Division** or that leave be granted to long-service men, no doubt influenced these decisions. During discussions at a secret session of Parliament before arriving at these decisions, Fraser emphasised the impossibility of providing, from existing sources of manpower, resources sufficient to meet furlough replacements for **2**

Division, the expansions required by the Air Force, which were particularly heavy, and the completion of **3 Division**. Both divisions, however, were to be maintained for as long as possible with smaller establishments until the position was again reviewed.

Apart from the vigorous requests from Churchill and Roosevelt to retain **2 Division** in the **Mediterranean** sphere, one of the overriding factors affecting its return was the employment of shipping necessary for the movement of troops when transport was critically short and urgently required in getting men and materials to the operational fronts. There was also the question of using trained armoured units which could not be employed in a close island campaign, and which would require to undergo months of preparatory training for jungle and island operations. In May 1943, Mr. Jones, Minister of Defence, also tested the reaction of the men during his visit to the **Middle East** forces and found that they had little or no desire to fight in the **Pacific** because of the prevalence of malaria.

In May, also, the political aspect of the **Pacific** war, to which the Government attached considerable importance, was made perfectly clear in Fraser's communication to **Freyberg** when his division was under discussion for return to the Dominion. 'You know, as I do, the very strong arguments in favour of the retention of the division in the European theatre,' he wrote. 'On the other hand, I believe it to be of the greatest political importance that, when the time comes to start offensive operations against **Japan**, the British elements in the **United Nations**' forces in the **Pacific** should be as strong as possible. It is not only a question of the immediate security of our own shores and our island territories; we must also take the long view and ensure that when the future of the **Pacific** is being considered after the war we, in common with other portions of the British Commonwealth concerned, are in the most favourable possible political. Another factor which we cannot ignore is the relationship of this country with **Australia**.'

Through all negotiations affecting the war effort, **Australia** had been

kept fully informed of New Zealand's actions and the Commonwealth had, on more than one occasion, expressed strong views on the use of forces in the **Pacific**. She had withdrawn most of her troops from the **Middle East** and thought that New Zealand should do the same, an attitude of which Churchill was fully aware. The Australian Prime Minister expressed the view that for every soldier kept out of the **Pacific**, either an American or an Australian had to take his place. In May 1943, when negotiations concerning manpower were under discussion, Curtin expressed himself rather violently to the New Zealand representative in **Canberra**, Mr. Berendsen, that in his opinion all New Zealand troops should be available for the **Pacific** theatre. When Curtin was informed that New Zealand had decided to leave her **2nd Division** in the **Middle East**, his reactions were 'very strong' and relations between the Commonwealth and the Dominion reached a stage of some delicacy, overcome finally by both parties tactfully refraining from any further reference to the subject.

There was still some confusion in the **South Pacific Command** as to when and where the division would be used. On 3 June Rear-Admiral T. S. Wilkinson met War Cabinet in **Wellington** and during the ensuing discussions was fully acquainted with the Dominion's growing manpower difficulties. He informed Cabinet that **3 Division** would not normally be required for active operations during 1943. However, on 11 June, Halsey raised with Barrowclough tentative plans to move the force into an operational theatre, and stated that the movement forward should be initiated by 15 August. Barrowclough then flew to New Zealand for further discussions with War Cabinet and produced a letter, dictated by Harmon, stating that the New Zealand division was required almost immediately for an active role and that delay in bringing it up to full strength would cause embarrassment, all of which conflicted with the two former views and suggested some lack of co-ordination in the American command. Barrowclough asked that his division, now well trained after six months in **New Caledonia**, should be employed for at least one campaign, extending over four or five months, otherwise morale would suffer, and he accepted without question the possibility

that it would be reduced later to reinforce **2 Division**, which was remaining in the **Mediterranean** theatre. Finally, on 27 June, War Cabinet approved the reduction of **3 Division** to two brigades and to its employment in a forward area, subject to the commander's report that the force was suitably equipped and trained for action, which it undoubtedly was. The total strength of the reorganised division was to be 17,831 all ranks, including 2000 reinforcements.

Halsey reluctantly accepted the decision to provide only a two-brigade division, and in a letter to Fraser added, 'I do feel that these two brigades should be maintained at full strength at all times,' and, in reference to reinforcements, 'I am counting on you to furnish such additional reinforcements as may be necessary to maintain these two brigades at full strength.' New Zealand's position and her policy regarding the division were made clear to Halsey in the Prime Minister's reply:

The decision to retain our battle-trained division in the **Mediterranean** theatre was made by Parliament on the advice of Mr. Churchill and Mr. Roosevelt, after we had pointed out to them and their military advisers that it was not possible, at this state of the war, with its other commitments, for New Zealand to continue to maintain two divisions overseas. Unless there is a change of policy which would cause Parliament to vary its decision, the division in the **Mediterranean** will, when the reinforcement pool has been exhausted, require to be maintained by drawing eventually upon New Zealand troops in the **Pacific**.

In so far as our **Pacific** commitments are concerned, we have continued to work on the lines laid down and accepted by Admiral Wilkinson and the War Cabinet in June last, namely that Air came first, Navy second, production third, and Army fourth. We are making every effort to fulfil those commitments and to increase to the maximum the production of foodstuffs for which there is a continually increasing demand from your forces. I must point out to you, however, that it is not possible for a small country like New Zealand, after four years of war, to

do more than we are doing, especially having regard to the fact that at the present time we have more than 68,000 overseas, that our casualties in dead, wounded, and missing have been extremely heavy, and that our reserves of grade A manpower are practically exhausted.

We have for some months been particularly concerned that there should be no collapse of our war effort in any of its several directions, and that is why I have taken steps to inform you that there must come a time when one particular activity or another must be tapered off.

It is and always has been our intention to maintain the two brigades of the 3rd Division as long as circumstances permit.

By June 1943 a survey of New Zealand's manpower resources had revealed the disturbing fact that by the end of the year the total available for overseas service would be only 3700. During that month the home forces were reorganised and reduced by 20,000 to a minimum consistent with national security, and the Territorial Force reverted to part-time training. The greatest call for men came from the Air Force, which was expanding to twenty operational squadrons in the Pacific at the request of the American command. To assist in meeting the demand, men of 3 Division were permitted to volunteer for this army of the service and, following the arrival of selection boards of the RNZAF in July, a number of those selected departed before the force moved out of New Caledonia. The Hon. W. Perry, who had become head of the Armed Forces and War Co-ordination Committee after the death of Coates, accompanied by Puttick, Shanahan, secretary of the Chiefs of Staff Committee, and Air Commodore R. B. Bannerman, ¹ Air Member for Personnel, visited New Caledonia to discuss manpower and other problems, including the release of men for the Air Force. During discussions with Halsey and Barrowclough, Perry intimated that there would be no extension of the reinforcements already approved for the division by War Cabinet, which had also decided that reinforcements would not be provided for either division during the remainder of 1943, but Barrowclough expressed the opinion that he would have sufficient to

maintain his force, with normal expenditure, until December. Provision had been made by War

¹ **Air Cdre R. B. Bannerman**, CBE, DFC and bar, ED; Gore; born **Invercargill**, 21 Sep 1890; barrister and solicitor; served in RFC in First World War; Air Member for Personnel, Nov 1942–Oct 1945.

Cabinet for men returning from the **Middle East** on furlough to be replaced until such time as these men rejoined their units, but the manpower situation was aggravated by the fact that of the 7000 men who did return to New Zealand under this scheme, only 1300 went back to **2 Division**.

The distribution of New Zealand's manpower in the three services during 1943, including women but excluding the Home Guard and small detached missions in various Allied theatres, is indicated in this survey:

Army

1943	Middle East and United Kingdom	Pacific, including New Caledonia, Fiji, and Tonga	In New Zealand excluding Home Guard
Jun	28,483	21,280	40,518
Sep	33,607	21,792	33,453
Dec	32,795	20,864	27,494

Navy

1943	In New Zealand	Pacific	With Royal Navy
Jun	5432		2796
Sep	6029		2617
Dec	5745		3752

Air Force

1943	Pacific	In New Zealand	Attached RAF	Canada , training
Jun	2847	28,495	4952	1506
Sep	3460	30,567	5061	1621
Dec	4536	29,569	5427	1503

Denied the larger formation for which he had planned so long, Barrowclough set about the reorganisation of his force with the strength

available to him and with the unhappy responsibility of disbanding several highly trained units. The 34th Battalion had returned from **Tonga**, via **Fiji**, on 13 March and **36 Battalion** from Norfolk on 7 April, both rejoining **8 Brigade** after being relieved by Grade II battalions from New Zealand. In the reshuffle **37 Battalion** returned to 14 Brigade and **1 Ruahine Battalion** to 15 Brigade. During the long period of negotiation and training, Barrowclough had accomplished some reorganisation with a view to increasing the striking efficiency of his brigades. In June brigade machine-gun companies were formed by absorbing platoons from each battalion, Major G. W. Logan taking **8 Brigade** company, and Captain S. R. Rice, succeeded shortly afterwards by Major L. A. S. Ross, that of 14 Brigade. Bren carrier platoons also came under brigade command to provide for their more flexible employment in island operations.

Additional engineers under Lieutenant-Colonel H. A. Jones, as CRE Works, consisting of a works construction company under Captain W. P. Boyd, and a wharf operating company under Captain E. Blacker, arrived in May and relieved the field engineers of maintenance work, with which they could not keep pace. A third composite company ASC, the 29th, commanded by Captain D. R. Hopkins, was formed in February from existing units and attached to 15 Brigade. Units still waiting in New Zealand to go forward were **38 Field Regiment**, commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel W. A. Bryden, **26 Field Company Engineers** under Major W. L. Mynott, **24 Field Ambulance** under Lieutenant-Colonel W. R. Fea, a convalescent depot commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel J. H. H. Wood, a tank squadron under Major R. J. Rutherford, and various base details. The proposed third field regiment, the 37th, was disbanded in New Zealand when the division's strength was reduced.

There was some delay in approving the extra units required, but by 17 July War Cabinet finally consented to Barrowclough's request. This gave him a two-brigade division with three engineer companies and a field park, three ASC companies, three field ambulances and additional signals, who were urgently required to maintain long lines of

communication not normally associated with a division, including the maintenance of an extended base organisation to ensure direct communication with New Zealand, and a forward station planned when the division reached **Guadalcanal** and moved into the combat zone. Harmon agreed that a force operating in territory such as the **Solomons** could not have too many engineers, as the American forces in action had confirmed, and he concurred that a third field ambulance was a wise arrangement. Barrowclough was still worried over his reinforcements because of a possible reduction in strength by malaria, and wrote to Army Headquarters pointing out that he could not 'face a situation where no reinforcements are behind me without running the risks of being unable to fulfil the role allotted to me'. However, these were assured when War Cabinet on 16 July reaffirmed its decisions made on 27 June regarding the revised strength of the division and its reinforcements.

On 1 July the Commander issued a special order of the day (see **Appendix V**) disbanding 15 Brigade, the two battalions of which were absorbed into existing units to make up deficiencies, the remainder going into a reinforcement pool at Base. A second special order disbanded 33 Heavy Coast Regiment and **28 Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regiment**, both of which were relieved by American formations. The 33rd ceased to exist on 26 July and was merged into a new Base unit, the Artillery Training Depot, and Wicksteed appointed commanding officer. Through succeeding weeks the heavy anti-aircraft units were also disbanded and concentrated either at the artillery depot or absorbed into the infantry and other arms. The 3.7-inch anti-aircraft guns were returned to New Zealand but, under reverse lend-lease, the **United States** forces took over the 6-inch and 155-millimetre guns, the total cost of which was £56,881 (NZ) and transferred them to the French military authorities, with whom the New Zealand Government had no reciprocal aid arrangement. ¹

There were many changes in staff and command during the division's sojourn in **New Caledonia** and following reorganisation before

the forward move. Base units were also built up to a total strength of 2580 and contained those components which were previously lacking. Twigg was promoted Brigadier and became Deputy Director of Medical Services, Colonel N. C. Speight replacing him as ADMS; Murphy became liaison officer at Army Headquarters, and Bennett was promoted Lieutenant-Colonel to take his place as AA and QMG, Major G. B. Gibbons replacing Bennett as deputy; Berkeley was promoted Lieutenant-Colonel and appointed Military Secretary, Major H. F. Allan replacing him as GSO 2; Lieutenant-Colonel C. A. Blazey arrived from New Zealand to relieve Jenkins as CRASC. Command of **36 Battalion** passed to McKenzie-Muirson when Barry returned to New Zealand, and Moore relinquished command of **29 Battalion** which passed briefly to Major I. H. MacArthur, Lieutenant-Colonel J. M. Reidy, and finally to Lieutenant-Colonel F. L. H. Davis when he arrived from New Zealand. McKinnon took over command of **29 Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment** from Yendell when artillery units were reorganised.

Personal contact with New Zealand had been maintained by visits from service and political chiefs. Mr. Coates paid two visits to the area. The Minister of Defence, Mr. Jones, visited several units when he passed through **New Caledonia** on his way to the **Middle East**, and Mr. Nash, New Zealand Minister in **Washington**, when on his way to **Wellington**. The Chief of the General Staff, Lieutenant-General Puttick, and his deputy, Brigadier Stewart, both

¹ This action was questioned by the New Zealand Treasury. The guns were issued on loan from the British Admiralty to the New Zealand Navy who lent them to the Army. When the Americans transferred them, Treasury noted, 'From experience it appears that the French Military authorities would be unable to pay for them in cash'. In reporting on the transaction, Dove emphasised that in any similar situation in future (when a New Zealand force was operating with other than a British formation) the creation of a special accounting unit should be carefully considered. This unit would be responsible for drawing all classes of supplies and for the complete bulk accounting of them to Army Headquarters for the purpose of accurately determining

New Zealand's liability for those stores. However, in the final adjustment of the **Pacific balance sheet with **France** in 1950, the cost of the guns, decided by mutual arrangement between Governments, contributed partly to the cost of quarters for the New Zealand Legation in **Paris**.**



ABOVE DECK Men of 36 NZ Battalion on USS *President Jackson*

Above Deck Men of 36 NZ Battalion on USS President Jackson

BELOW DECK ON THE WAY FROM NEW HEBRIDES TO
GUADALCANAL



Below Deck on the way from New Hebrides to Guadalcanal



MALARIA CONTROL UNIT spraying 37 NZ Field Park Company's camp, Guadalcanal

Malaria Control Unit spraying 37 NZ Field Park Company's Camp, Guadalcanal



HENDERSON FIELD, GUADALCANAL

Henderson Field, Guadalcanal



US MARINES FOLLOWING A TRAIL ON GUADALCANAL
Ridges covered with native grasses and valleys filled with jungle

US Marines following a trail on Guadalcanal

Ridges covered with Native Grasses and Valleys filled with Jungle



READY FOR EMBARKATION AT KUKUM BEACH, GUADALCANAL
before sailing for Vella Lavella. In the background is a Landing Ship (Tank)

Ready for Embarkation at Kukum Beach, Guadalcanal before sailing for Vella Lavella. In the background is a Landing Ship(Tank)

LOADING RATIONS AT GUADALCANAL FOR VELLA LAVELLA



Loading rations at Gudalcanal for Vella Lavella



14 BRIGADE UNITS LANDING AT VELLA LAVELLA from American barges manned by American crews

14 Brigade units landing at **Vella Lavella** from American barges manned by American Crews

visited the division, and **Lieutenant-General Freyberg**, on his way to New Zealand to discuss manpower and furlough problems, met personally many of his former officers. Colonel Henri Montchamp, Governor of **New Caledonia**, attended a ceremonial parade in **8 Brigade** area. Colonel C. W. **Salmon**,¹ the New Zealand Chiefs of Staff representative on the **South Pacific Command** headquarters in **Noumea**, and Lieutenant-Colonel W. **Bassett**,² New Zealand Liaison Officer in **Noumea**, were also regular visitors to the Division.

The division's base organisation and the headquarters of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force in the **Pacific** remained at **Bourail**, 102 miles north of **Noumea** and 50 miles south of the secondary port of **Nepoui**, and was housed in a former commercial building taken over after some argument from a French trading firm whose demands for an exorbitant rental were not approved. Like so many other small towns in **New Caledonia**, **Bourail** was not without a certain neglected charm, but its population had dwindled and evidence of its former industrial and commercial activities remained only in deserted buildings, factories, a large monastery, and a fortified gendarmerie dominating a hilltop which overlooked the town and wooded valleys it once protected.

Areas of overgrown countryside provided sites for that multiplicity of units and services which are a part of any base organisation in the field

and includes engineers, signals, pay and records, ordnance, medical and dental services, canteens, welfare, postal, base training depot, base reception depot, artillery training depot, movement control, field bakery and butchery, transport and supply services. There was also sufficient space to accommodate without congestion the stores which housed military supplies and equipment, most of them erected in **New Caledonia** either from prefabricated parts sent from New Zealand or built of native materials hewn from the forest. The various camps were spread among the niaouli trees of such localities as Le Clere's Farm, Nemeara, **Boguen**, the Racecourse, Tene Valley and the Kouri River valley, with other units and services occupying buildings in and around **Bourail** itself. No. 4 **General Hospital** was first established in the Bougen River Valley, eleven miles from **Bourail** in a mosquit ridden area, but later moved to Dumbea Valley, 15 miles from **Noumea**, where it was greatly enlarged and began operating towards the end of the division's active period in the **Solomons**.

¹ **Col C. W. Salmon**, DCM, m. i. d., Legion of Merit (US); **Wellington**; born **Blenheim**, 15 Apr 1892; company director; 1 **NZEF** 1914-19; NZ Chiefs of Staff representative at **South Pacific Command**.

² **Col W. Bassett**, Legion of Merit (US); Okato; born **Wanganui**, 18 Jul 1909; works clerk.

Dove carried out the dual functions of Officer in Charge of Administration (OICA) and Base Commandant and, as senior New Zealand officer, also maintained liaison with South Pacific Headquarters in **Noumea** and with the French civil administration. On arrival in **New Caledonia**, he opened temporary quarters in Rue d'Alma, **Noumea**, but moved to **Bourail** on 1 February 1943. His Deputy Adjutant-General, 2nd Echelon, was Major G. W. Foote who was appointed while the base organisation was forming at Hamilton. Changes of his senior staff included Major H. F. Allan, who moved to **Divisional Headquarters** in January 1943 and was succeeded by Major D. E. Trevarthen. Stowell,

promoted to the rank of Major, continued to command the Base Reception Depot. Because of distances from ports in New Caledonia, a sub-base remained in Noumea under Captain H. N. Johnson to handle troops and supplies passing through the ports and also the airfields some miles out at Tontouta and Oua Tom. This consisted of a transit camp, detachments of pay and records, movement control, field post office, and the base supply depot No. 1. When 4 General Hospital moved to Dumbea Valley at the end of 1943, further work fell to the sub-base in arranging transport to hospital of sick and wounded arriving by air from the Solomons.

Constant vigilance by the staff of the medical services was rewarded by complete freedom from any outbreak of disease which would have reduced the already limited manpower of 3 Division. A search of past records revealed that the usual collection of horrible diseases had been encountered in New Caledonian at some period or other of its history—leprosy, plague, typhoid fever and venereal disease—but almost without exception among the native tribes and peoples. Hookworm and dysentery were also known to exist there, and dengue fever, as in all other mosquito-infested islands where the inhabitants are continually bitten, was an annual visitation. But there was no malaria, since the island, like Fiji, lies outside the malarial zone, and septic sores, source of continual disability in Fiji, did not affect the men in the drier New Caledonian climate. Despite this excellent climate, however, stomach troubles, which the medical authorities class as entero-colitis and gastro-enteritis, were a worry during the acclimatisation period.

Despite the abundance of freshwater streams and rivers in New Caledonia, bacteriological examination of water taken from them disclosed, in almost every instance, some evidence of contamination. Strict measures were therefore imposed by the medical authorities for the purification of all drinking water from points established to serve unit areas. Men were also warned continually not to put their heads under water while they were bathing, either in the sea, because of minute particles of coral which caused an infection of the ear, or for the same

reason, in fresh water, because of the decayed vegetable matter found there. Under the supervision of **6 Field Hygiene Section** a constant war was waged against flies, and the standard of field sanitation kept to a high level.

Because units of the division were scattered over many hundreds of miles of badly-roaded country, field ambulances established dressing stations to serve their respective areas, and the main dressing station gave the fullest possible hospital treatment. Field ambulance reception hospitals did the work of a main hospital until **4 General Hospital** was opened in March 1943, but by special arrangement with the Assistant Director of Medical Services, serious cases from **3 Division** requiring urgent treatment were accepted by **109 American Station Hospital** which had been established off the main highway south of Moindah.

The base organisation was built up over a period of months and did not achieve its full strength of 2580 all ranks until a new war establishment was issued well into 1943. Its problems were accentuated by the nature of the **Pacific** campaign and the extremely long lines of communication, particularly after **3 Division** left **Guadalcanal** and scattered over the islands of the **Solomons**. The transport of stores and supplies from New Zealand to **New Caledonia** and their transhipment to the Field Maintenance Centre on **Guadalcanal** were all dictated by irregular shipping, which was never satisfactory. Commanding officers of units and services at Base were more fortunate when they wished to visit their representatives in the combat areas, since they were able to use the regular air services staging through the **New Hebrides**. Indeed, air travel was the recognised mode of transport over the waters of such an immense and scattered battlefield as the **Pacific**. Not the least of the base units was the welfare organisation, which has become such an inseparable part of the services in war and was more necessary in a region entirely without amenities of any kind. The most comprehensive of these, the **National Patriotic Fund Board**, controlled the clubs, recreation centres, sports materials, and the distribution of comforts, and avoided any waste ful duplication by incorporating the activities of

the **YMCA** and all religious organisations. Mr. Colin Cassells, senior **YMCA** secretary, with long service in the **Pacific**, undertook the direction of the **National Patriotic Fund Board** until the arrival of Major C. W. O. Brain in May 1943 to become the Board's Commissioner.

Early in the life of the organisation Barrowclough ordered the formation of a divisional welfare committee to assist with the equitable and efficient distribution of all comforts and recreational gear, after which there was no reason for criticism or complaint. It consisted of the Officer in Charge of Administration, the Deputy Director of Medical Services (Brigadier J. M. Twigg), the Senior Chaplain to the Forces (Lieutenant-Colonel K. Liggett), the YMCA Commissioner (Mr. **A. J. Heffernan**, who succeeded Cassells), the Assistant Director, **Army Education and Welfare Service** (Major A. H. Thom), and Brain.

One of the more important of the Board's achievements in **New Caledonia** was the construction and staffing of a chain of roadhouses and recreation centres, built *bure* fashion, to serve each concentration of troops, two of the largest being the Bourail Club, opened on 12 November 1943, and the **Kiwi Club** at Bourail Beach, which had residential accommodation for 120 guests. It was opened on 14 April 1944 and was the only organised rest centre for the NZEF IP. A detachment of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps under Junior Commander G. V. M. McClure, consisting of two officers and 76 other ranks, reached Base in 1943 for service with clubs, hospitals, convalescent depots, and recreation centres. Public Relations, another organisation now an essential part of the forces, was assembled at Base in April 1943. Its official photographers, official artist (Lieutenant A. B. Barns-Graham), war correspondent (Lieutenant D. W. Bain), archivist (Lieutenant R. I. M. Burnett), and a broadcasting unit spent most of their time in the forward area, under the direction of Major R. A. Young, who had his headquarters at Base. Base Headquarters operated in **Bourail** until 1 September 1944, after which a reduced headquarters moved to **Noumea**, working there until the last members sailed for New Zealand on 11 October.

THE PACIFIC

V: TRAINING FOR COMBAT

V: Training for Combat

Amphibious training for the whole division was completed on the island of **Efate** in the **New Hebrides**, to which it moved in three groups, each group spending five days at Vila before continuing the voyage to **Guadalcanal**. Almost before the green camouflage paint was dry on every article of equipment, convoys of vehicles moved south to **Noumea** through familiar clouds of choking dust. The little tented villages among the *niaoulis* disappeared almost overnight, leaving only the more substantial *bures* as memorials to occupation. Fourteenth Brigade sailed on 17 August in three ships, the *President Jackson*, *President Hayes*, and *President Adams*; **Divisional Headquarters** and troops followed on 24 August in the *Hunter Liggett* and *Fuller*; and **8 Brigade** on 4 September in the three *President* ships, which had disembarked 14 Brigade and returned. These transports were all employed in the original landing on **Guadalcanal**, during which the *Fuller* acted as guide ship for the whole convoy.

The three training groups were spaced so that one finished its exercises and departed before the next arrived. Transports were laboriously loaded from the beaches in **Noumea Harbour**, all equipment being ferried out to the waiting ships after being manhandled into barges. It was hot work but good practice for many such future operations. From the day of embarkation anti-malarial precautions became compulsory, and all the futile stories of the debilitating physical effect of atabrin tablets were soon dispelled. Those little yellow pellets were taken daily, except Sunday, and when troops went ashore they wore long trousers, with canvas anklets, and long-sleeved shirts, and spread repellent oil on exposed parts of the body.

Vila, though intensely humid, was ideal for amphibious exercises. Outside the land-locked harbour, Mele Beach, washed by long, lazy

rollers, curved in a golden arc of coral sand behind which a tangle of trees, vines, and bamboo thickets opened into coffee and cocoa plantations and the cultivated spaces which pass for farms in the tropics. There was little sign of war in the harbour, but at night the searchlights from Havannah Harbour, the immense naval base for servicing and repairing ships in the immediate forward area, spread their restless golden fingers across the indigo sky until dawn. As each convoy arrived, plans which were drawn up during the voyage were immediately put into operation. Every type of landing, made as realistic as possible by the use of aircraft and observers, was practised day and night, beginning with beach assaults, formation of defence perimeters ashore, night landings beginning soon after midnight from blacked-out ships, as well as ship and net drill and boat discipline. Torrential rain added to the realism as troops waited for dawn under rat-infested cocoa trees, sheltered with only a mosquito net. Full equipment was carried, in addition to jungle rations for the period ashore.

Brigades exercised in combat teams, as they were to operate later in action, taking even their field and anti-aircraft guns ashore in small barges and manhandling them into position over the sand. Because they were the pattern of many similar landings, these exercises were invaluable in planning movement from the restricted space of crowded transports to allotted areas ashore and are worthy of record. First the transport's landing craft, small flat-bottomed boats with broad collapsible bows, are lowered into the water, coming under landing nets down which the men scramble in fours as they come up from their quarters, unit by unit. As each craft fills with its complement of men and equipment, it moves away to join others circling in disorder to avoid loss by enemy bombing. Then, at a given signal, each wave of these assault craft speeds for the beach, judging its arrival so that a given number of them simultaneously reaches the sand in a well-spaced line. Bows drop and small bodies of troops dash for cover and prepare for action. Speed and uniformity are two essentials of a synchronised landing, which is so calculated that each wave of boats withdraws to make way for the next. The reverse action of these high-powered craft

enables them to retract easily from the beach. By the time the exercises were over, beach landings were as familiar as parade-ground drill.

Divisional Headquarters closed at Moindah on 15 August and opened the same day at **Guadalcanal**, where the area which was awaiting the division had been inspected some weeks previously by Barrowclough, Speight, Murphy, and McKay when they flew up from **New Caledonia**. Dove, promoted Brigadier, took over command of all New Zealand troops stationed in **New Caledonia**, which remained the division's base during its period in the **Solomons**. Over the long distances air travel became essential for the commander as he moved between components of his scattered force. He went by air to Vila to watch 14 Brigade at work, then on to **Guadalcanal**, returning by plane to be present when divisional troops and **8 Brigade** exercised. Only one convoy was attacked during the three-day voyage in stifling blacked-out transports to **Guadalcanal**. Two days out from Vila a Japanese submarine, afterwards sunk by escorting destroyers, fired three torpedoes, but they passed harmlessly through the convoy carrying divisional troops, missing the *Fuller* by 200 yards.

The division concentrated on **Guadalcanal** as the convoys arrived on schedule from the **New Hebrides**—14 Brigade on 27 August; **Divisional Headquarters** and troops on 3 September (the day on which the Allies landed in the south of **Italy**); **8 Brigade** on 14 September—and occupied areas vacated by American units extending 4000 yards on either side of the Matanikau River and inland to a depth of 5–6000 yards. Before the transports ceased to move, 500 yards from the shore in Sealark Channel, troops were ready to disembark over the side. Soon the beach between **Point Cruz** and the mouth of the river was a scene of strenuous activity as disorderly piles of equipment and stores grew higher with the arrival of succeeding waves of landing craft, and trucks, guns, and carriers lumbered ashore. Stripped to the waist and shining with sweat, chains of men handled crates and boxes without mechanical aid, even assisting trucks and guns when they stuck fast in the sand, in an atmosphere compared with which a New Zealand summer is almost chilly

By nightfall the most urgently required equipment was far from the beaches, and tents or shelters erected on the ridges to the rear where, when the sea breeze fell away with the setting sun, the stifling heat came down like an enveloping pall. Working at the rate of 119 tons an hour against a previous 104½ tons, 14 Brigade established a record in unloading a ship in the stream; not to be outdone, 8 Brigade went one better when it arrived and reduced the time still further, proving that *esprit de corps* could survive even the sweltering heat of Guadalcanal.¹ Such an expeditious turn-round of ships brought a letter of praise and congratulation from Harmon. 'This excellent effort augurs well for the success of future operations and reflects the high state of morale, discipline, and training attained by all ranks,' he wrote to Barrowclough after 14 Brigade's effort had been brought to his notice. Proof of ship discipline was contained in this farewell message from the commander of the transport *Fuller*: 'The ship wishes to thank all New Zealand troops for their unusual fine co-operation in keeping their parts of the ship in a constant state of cleanliness and order and for establishing a very high standard which will be hard for subsequent embarked units to maintain.'

Guadalcanal is one of the largest of the Solomon Islands which, before they became a battlefield, were the least known and least developed of any island group in the British Commonwealth. Land could be rented for threepence an acre for five years, but the prevalence of the malarial mosquito, an exhausting climate where sleep refreshes neither mind nor body, and the unfriendly attitude of the natives did little to encourage development, except the cultivation of coconut palms for the production of copra in plantations along the coastal areas. Rainfall averages 164 inches a year, with temperatures at sea level ranging without seasonal change from 86 degrees by day to 73 degrees by night. Dense forest clothes almost every island, even coral atolls, to the water's edge. Mendana,

¹ An artillery officer, in imitation of the travel agency brochures, produced a satirical description of the attractions of **Guadalcanal**, part of which read: 'Come to romancedrenched

Guadalcanal, you who wish to put the cares of civilisation behind you and seek (rapid) release from this world. Here no sound disturbs the serene stillness except the night-long yelps, squeals, squawks and groans of the happy denizens of the jungle. Come and bask on its sunlit sands, lulled by the soothing murmur of a golden nimbus of blood-sucking insects muscled like bull gorillas. Bathe in its ultramarine waters and sport with the festive sharks, long surfeited on the carcasses of defunct samurai. Or would you taste the night-life of this delectable spot. Then come with me to a native village for experiences vouchsafed only to those who get off the beaten track. Share with the simple savages their tasty jungle meal of spam and K rations.... And as you wend your way home through the A/A spangled night you can look forward to a long sleep undisturbed by anything more than a 250 lb. bomb. Yes, come to lovely **Guadalcanal**—and bring your strait-jacket with you, you dim-witted clod.'

a Spanish explorer, discovered the **Solomons** in 1568, but although exaggerated stories of their hidden wealth excited the adventurous, they were lost to the world for 200 years, until two French explorers, **Bougainville** and Jean François de Surville, passed through the group in 1768–69, but the mystery of the **Solomons** was not solved until Bruni d'Entrecasteaux, in 1792, recognised the islands from Mendana's records. French missionaries arrived in 1845, but their prompt despatch by aggressive natives only added to the grim reputation of the **Solomons**. White traders began limited activities in 1860, increasing when Great Britain took over the southern **Solomons** in 1893. **Germany** held the northern islands until 1900, when they were ceded to Great Britain in exchange for **Western Samoa**. Except for a change of attitude by the natives and the establishment of widely scattered Government, trading, and mission stations, and still fewer private plantation homes, civilisation had little effect on the **Solomons** until war's rampant violence brought it in the wake of such destruction and amenities as the islanders had never known. Soon thousands of men occupied the dim aisles of plantation and jungle which had previously known only the occasional presence of bare-footed natives.

When formations of **3 Division** moved into **Guadalcanal**, the Japanese had been pushed back to the **New Georgia** Group, 200 miles to the north, and the island had become an immense forward base to support the American forces in action—navy, army, and air. Beneath the shelter of coconut plantations, hospitals and camps and vast dumps of stores, petrol, vehicles, and ammunition were established for a distance of 40 miles along the northern coastal region facing **Florida Island**. This was the only occupied area and centred round Henderson Airfield, named in honour of an American airman Major Lofton Henderson, lost at Midway, and three others, Koli, Kukum, and Carney fields, created after the American occupation. Sloping up from the plantation and flat coastal belt, broad ridges of dead coral covered with coarse kunai grass extended some miles inland until they met dense, forest-clad mountains rising to 8000 feet, over which billowing rain clouds piled like ice-cream cones. Forest trees growing ridge-high gave this landscape a deceptive uniformity, but roads and trails, born of the tracks made during battle, led through it to camp sites. Here the division spread for some miles, dispersing its tents over the treeless ridges, scene of bitter fighting, and still bearing such evidence of the conflict that any doubtful ammunition and discarded equipment were avoided.

Below their vantage point spread the panorama of Savo and Florida Islands and the moving pageant of shipping in Sealark Channel and Lunga roadstead, where destroyers moved alertly beyond ships unloading men and stores, and flotillas of small craft hurried between ship and shore or departed in convoy to the north battle zone. Warships sheltered behind submarine nets in a naval base established in the bay round **Tulagi** and Gavutu, with the blue mass of Florida immediately behind them where the seaplane base at Halavo was sited. **Henderson Field** was restless and noisy with the ceaseless activity of aircraft, most of them going to or returning from missions to the north as they bombed Japanese installations and airfields on **Kolombangara**, **Bougainville**, the Shortlands, and islands round **New Georgia**, or watched for submarines in the immediate sea lanes. They were comforting proof of Allied air superiority. Dust from the streams of traffic on the two-way road linking

camps along the coast rose above the palms like gentle mist suspended in the heavy air. All along the curving beaches as far north as Cape Esperance, where men bathed in the sticky warm water, lay the relics of war—tanks and landing craft, disintegrating wrecks of ships and aircraft, backed by mutilated palms and trees, torn by shellfire, not yet healed despite the swift growth of tropical vegetation.

Guadalcanal was still within range of Japanese aircraft when the division arrived. They came from **Kahili**, Ballale, Buins and Rekata, usually on moonlight nights, dropping their bombs on dumps, shipping, and airfields. Sirens, linked with a net of radar stations, gave adequate warning, and lights flicked out leaving only vague shapes of tents and buildings on a landscape formerly peppered with the stars of candles and lamps. From foxholes laboriously gouged in the resisting coral, more as a protection against falling shrapnel than bombs, men watched the spectacle of weaving searchlights and bursting shells, and cheered on one notable occasion the valour of an American pilot who, disregarding his own anti-aircraft shells, sent down two Japanese planes in glowing spirals. The enemy occasionally sank transports and supply ships in the roadstead, eluding observation by following closely behind returning formations at dusk, and their haphazardly-strewn bombs sometimes found dumps among the palms which burned explosively for days, as one did soon after the arrival of the divisional convoy. But as pressure was maintained on the northern bases, enemy raids became fewer.

There can be no connected story of **3 Division's** activities in the **Solomons**. Not once did the brigades co-operate in joint action. Each was employed on an island far from the other and linked only by wireless, aircraft, and landing craft. Barrowclough commanded from the particular island on which he had established his headquarters, finally 500 miles north of **Guadalcanal** and 1500 miles from his base in **New Caledonia**. The transport of men, stores, and equipment over such long distances with only a minimum of means was one of the recurring problems of this island campaign.

By the time the division arrived to take part with American forces in

this campaign, which was designed to isolate and finally destroy Rabaul, the strategy of by-passing had been evolved. Briefly such strategy was to outflank enemy bases, forcing him to surrender or evacuate by cutting his supply lines and smashing his airfields and naval bases. In the Solomons this was achieved by capturing an island far ahead of an enemy stronghold and establishing there with the greatest possible speed airfields, naval bases, supply dumps, and radar stations to support the next move forward, most of these sites requiring the removal of virgin jungle. Such strategy requires the use of aircraft in strength to provide cover for landings, patrols and preparatory bombing; swift and powerful motor torpedo boats working at night to disrupt enemy barge traffic (hidden during the day) transporting men and supplies to his beleaguered garrisons; landing craft of all types to ferry men and materials to the beaches at the point of attack, and naval vessels to protect them during transit and as supporting artillery before landing. This meant the closest co-operation between all three services, planning in meticulous detail involved loading and landing timetables by Navy, Army, and Air Force representatives working as one committee. But most important of all was the saving in human life, by the avoidance of frontal beach attacks against strongly defended areas.

While waiting to move forward, units lost no time in becoming familiar with the jungle, in which they exercised for better efficiency when they were not engaged in moving heavy stores from the beaches, where parties from battalions laboured day and night as required. Because of stray marauding Japanese still hiding in the hinterland, beaches and ration dumps were patrolled from dusk to dawn, though indiscriminate shooting was discouraged. Guns of 29 Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment were linked in with the island defences and went into action soon after their arrival. Engineers, as they were to do for months afterwards, immediately began improving access roads, water points and wells, bridges and accommodation, as well as a programme which included bomb and ammunition disposal and the erection of semi-permanent buildings, all of which were necessary for units remaining on the island.

Timber was more readily available from a sawmill operated by the **Royal New Zealand Air Force**, happily sited close beside the main highway and a supply of giant trees. The daily dose of atebirin was increased to half a tablet, with a whole one on Sundays, the prescribed quantity for everyone in the **Solomons** zone. During this time, also, troops became more familiar with all types of landing craft they were to use later in operations—LSTs (landing ship, tanks), LCIs (landing craft, infantry), LCVPs (landing craft, vehicles and personnel), and APDs (army personnel, destroyers). With the exception of the APDs, which were obsolete destroyers reconditioned as troop transports, all these craft were designed with broad flat bottoms to ride up on the shelving sand or coral, men, guns, and vehicles going ashore over ramps which fell as the craft ran on the beaches or into shallow water. American naval ratings were in charge of them.

Some reorganisation of the division in readiness for action took place on **Guadalcanal**. On arriving there Barrowclough was confronted with a dilemma. His division was an isolated British formation in an American theatre of war which was primarily naval in operation. He was required immediately by Harmon to take over command on **Vella Lavella** Island and clear it of Japanese, and at a later date use another part of his division for operations in the Treasury Group. This meant that his small force was to be split into three widely separated groups, thus throwing an excessive burden on his staff and signals, though to some extent this had been anticipated by the retention of certain officers and other ranks when 15 Brigade was disbanded. Plans to meet both impending operations and the dispersal of the force began immediately after the opening of **Divisional Headquarters** on 4 September, at which the first important visitor was the **United States** Secretary of State for War, Mr. **R. P. Patterson**, who called the following day.

A Field Maintenance Centre, ¹ commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel C. E. **Lees**, ² ex **1 Ruahine Battalion**, was established and served as a halfway house between units in the forward zones and Base, now 1000 miles to the rear, with New Zealand another 1000 miles beyond that.

Immediate reinforcements and large quantities of equipment and supplies were held here until required, and all personnel going to or returning from the combat zone staged through **Guadalcanal**, either by sea or air. Important elements of FMC were a high-powered radio link operated by signals personnel under Lieutenant K. H. Barron, which maintained communication

¹ This was an *ad hoc*. organisation created specially to serve the requirements of the division while it was in the forward area. No war establishment was ever committed to paper in the accepted army sense. Barrowclough always referred to it as a 'Forward Maintenance Centre'.

² Lt-Col C. E. Lees, ED; **Auckland**, born **Christchurch**, 26 Jun 1898; barrister and solicitor; **1 NZEF** 1914–18; CO 1 Bn Ruahine Regt, Apr-Jul 1943; CO Field Maintenance Centre, **Guadalcanal**, Aug 1943–Jul 1944.

between Base and the forward headquarters, and an advanced ordnance depot under Captain H. N. McCarthy. Much of the equipment still required reached this depot on 26 September in the *James B. Francis*, which brought it direct from New Zealand. This included ammunition and 15,000 each of mosquito nets and gloves; 30,000 each of drill shirts and battle-dress trousers dyed green; ¹ 20,000 much-needed jungle knives; 15,000 dyed linen hats and the same number of pairs of jungle boots. Additional units came by the same ship, including **26 Field Company Engineers**, **24 Field Ambulance**, and the **Tank Squadron**, this last going into camp near Lunga Point to work out jungle tactics with **8 Brigade**. The 2nd Casualty Clearing Station, commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel S. L. Wilson, DSO, ² who had served with **2 Division**, was sited close beside the beach at **Point Cruz**, and remained there during the campaign.

Only a limited number of troops was taken forward to the island of **Vella Lavella** for the first operation, and when Advanced Divisional

Headquarters was opened there Murphy commanded a Rear Headquarters on **Guadalcanal**. This functioned until 13 December, after which command passed to FMC and he returned to New Zealand. The remaining divisional troops then came under command of Goss who, as senior officer, was responsible for the tactical employment of all New Zealand forces on the island. This organisation provided an efficient system of control and supply of all formations over such extended lines of communication.

¹ After arriving at **Guadalcanal**, Barrowclough on 9 Sep 1943 despatched a signal to Army Headquarters pointing out the inadequacy of arrangements New Zealand had made in supplying the division with jungle clothing. In June 1943 the Quartermaster-General accepted without question Barrowclough's request that 30,000 sets of jungle clothing should be delivered to the division in **New Caledonia** by 31 July. Supplies of camouflaged clothing for immediate use were obtained from American sources.

² **Lt-Col S. L. Wilson**, DSO; Dunedin; born **Dannevirke**, 17 Apr 1905; surgeon; surgeon 2 Gen Hosp, Mobile Surgical Unit, and 1 Mob CCS, Aug 1940-Mar 1943; CO 2 CCS (**Pacific**) Aug 1943-Jan 1944.

THE PACIFIC

CHAPTER 5 – THREE ISLAND ACTIONS

Contents

I: Vella Lavella p. 125

II: The Treasuries p. 142

III: The Waiting Period p. 159

IV: The Capture of Green Islands p. 168

THE PACIFIC

I: VELLA LAVELLA

I: Vella Lavella

IMPENDING operations were discussed by Barrowclough on 10 September with Rear-Admiral T. S. Wilkinson, commander of **Task Force 31**,¹ the naval organisation responsible for getting all units ashore in amphibious operations and their protection *en route*, and Major-General Barrett,² commander of the First **Marine Amphibious Corps**, at their headquarters on **Guadalcanal**, and at the same time tactfully ended their tendency to plan forward moves without consulting him about his own formations. The following day he flew to **Munda** to confer with Major-General O. W. Griswold, 14 US Corps Commander, whose troops, exhausted by three island operations, were to be relieved on **Vella Lavella**. Potter and Brooke accompanied him and continued the journey to Vella, remaining there until the force came forward. Meanwhile, valuable information was being gathered by a party from 14 Brigade consisting of Lieutenant D. G. Graham, Sergeants H. B. Brereton, L. V. Stenhouse and M. McRae,³ who had gone forward on 28 August with Major C. W. H. Tripp and Captain D. E. **Williams**,⁴ of the South Pacific Scouts (Fijian), to work with patrols in Japanese-held territory until the brigade took over from the Americans, after which the Fijian scouts were withdrawn and returned to **Guadalcanal**. Twenty-one officers representing all units of 14 Brigade, who moved north via **Munda** on 13 September as an advanced party to select bivouac areas, had their first practice in evasive tactics when their open craft was attacked by enemy dive-bombers off

¹ A task force was a combat organisation of naval craft and ground and air forces created for an attack on some particular objective. When that was achieved it was disbanded, but the same elements were employed again and again in the composition of other task forces, particularly in the **Solomons** where shortages were at times acute.

² Before the operations began Barrett was accidentally killed and Vandegrift returned to command the Marines.

³ Lt D. G. Graham; Auckland; born Gisborne, 3 Dec 1917; clerk. Sgt H. B. Brereton; Motueka; born Motueka, 8 Feb 1918; shepherd. Sgt L. V. Stenhouse; Timaru; born NZ 10 Jan 1920; storekeeper. Sgt M. McRae; Auckland; born NZ 16 Nov 1919; bookbinder.

⁴ Capt D. E. Williams, MC, Silver Star (US); Otane; born Otane, 6 May 1910; sheep-farm manager.

Maravari Beach two days later. Barrowclough went north on 17 September, travelling by air to Munda and completing the journey late that night by motor torpedo boat from Rendova, the operational base for those craft, which have a speed of 40 knots. Duff, the CRA, Burns of Signals, and Bennett, AA and QMG, accompanied him and all were on the beach the following morning to meet the landing craft.

As the division moved on to Guadalcanal in September, formations of Griswold's 14 Corps were driving the last of the Japanese from Arundel and Vaaga Islands and sites along the north coast of New Georgia, forcing them to retreat to Kolombangara, a few miles north. Munda airfield, finally secured after protracted and stubborn fighting two days less than a year after the landing on Guadalcanal, was in operation, though subject to nightly bombing raids. Plans to attack Kolombangara were discarded by the South Pacific Command on 12 July in favour of by-passing that island and landing on the more lightly held Vella Lavella, where suitable territory existed behind Barakoma Beach for the construction of an airfield to aid in the next thrust forward. This had been surveyed by a party of American specialists, who landed under cover of darkness and spent several days there before being taken off again. An American force 4600 strong, consisting of 35 Infantry Regiment, 4 Marine Defence Battalion, and one battalion of 145 Infantry Regiment (a later reinforcement) landed on Vella on 15 August

and drove the Japanese garrison into the north of the island, where they were holding out and awaiting relief along the coastal region between Paraso Bay and Mundi Mundi. An American engineer construction battalion, the 58th, known as CBs (units for which the New Zealanders developed profound admiration) immediately began clearing a swampy area of jungle for the airfield, and a naval base had been established at Biloa, on the southern tip of the island, where the only remaining evidence of a former mission station consisted of pieces of concrete foundations and a few flowering shrubs. A motor torpedo boat base was operating from an unsatisfactory site off Laipari Island, opposite Biloa. Night-raiding aircraft hindered the construction of the airfield, and attempted to destroy petrol dumps and the torpedo boats which were harrying Japanese barge traffic at night round [Kolombangara](#) and smaller islands. Sites at Kimbolia for a radar station and at Lambu Lambu for a more effective motor torpedo boat base were urgently required on the northern coast to assist in the next operations—the capture of the Treasury Group and a beach-head on [Bougainville](#)—and for this reason [Vella Lavella](#) was to be made secure.

The main Japanese force had been established in this region in defensive positions at Horoniu and Boko, but had been driven out by the Americans on 14 September. It consisted of remnants of several units, including 290 army and 100 navy personnel, who landed at Horoniu on the morning of 19 August after eluding an action in which their covering destroyers were attacked by an American naval force in Vella Gulf on the night of 17 August (two days after the American landing farther south) and approximately 190 army and 120 navy survivors from naval engagements on the night of 6–7 August, when three Japanese destroyers were sunk in almost as many minutes. These were joined by others from observation posts and staging barge bases on the island, and scattered survivors from barges sunk on 25 September, but there was no co-ordinated command as an officer detailed to take charge of the Japanese garrison never arrived. When the main position at Horoniu was overwhelmed they scattered to the north. Patrols of Fijian scouts, accompanied by 14 Brigade non-commissioned officers, had been

through the northern region observing the Japanese but with orders not to attack them. Estimates of enemy strength ranged from 500 to 700, established in small groups at **Timbala Bay**, their radio station and lookout post, Warambari Bay, Tambama and Varuasi, and armed with mortars, machine guns, rifles, and grenades. These patrols received valuable assistance and information from a coastwatcher, Lieutenant H. E. Josselyn, RANVR, who had been hidden on the island for several weeks.

Approximately 3700 troops of the division, principally 14 Brigade units and elements of headquarters, disembarked on the beaches soon after dawn on 18 September. After loading and practising disembarkation for two days at Kukum and Kokumbona beaches, they travelled north in a convoy of six APDs, six LSTs, and six LCIs, escorted by eleven destroyers. During the brief voyage troops voted in the New Zealand Parliamentary elections and watched from blacked-out ships the fiery spectacle of a Japanese air raid on **Munda**.

With only a limited time in which to clear the ships, disembarkation began with speed at **Barakoma**, Maravari, and Uzamba beaches as Japanese lookouts on **Kolombangara**, only thirteen miles across the water, could observe the landing. High overhead in the clear sunshine an umbrella of aircraft circled in anticipation of attack as men and ships went ashore to a disciplined schedule. As the ramps of the massive LSTs clattered down, trucks, bulldozers, and guns rolled out and bumped into the jungle and mud. Bulldozers tore down palms and trees, gathering them into their shining blades to form causeways to the ramps of the heavier craft which remained in water too deep for vehicles to negotiate. Waist deep in the water, men passed crated stores and equipment from ship to shore, stacking them out of sight among the trees. Petrol, oil, and ammunition also disappeared into the jungle, which grew almost to the water's edge. The APDs, lying in deeper water, were cleared in half an hour. By noon the Japanese air attack developed, but by that time the valuable landing craft, which were never over plentiful, lay far from the shore, herded together by the destroyers in readiness for the return

journey. Seven of the Japanese aircraft were brought down in a dogfight which ended as quickly as it began, but no damage was done to troops or equipment.

Divisional Headquarters was established in tents deep in the jungle behind Barakoma Beach, and over the primitive road which gave access to this gloomy site trucks pushed heavily laden jeeps out of the evil-smelling mud all day long. Fourteenth Brigade moved farther up the coast and opened its headquarters on high ground overlooking the deserted native village of **Joroveto** in the less enclosed spaces of Gill's Plantation, with the 35 and 37 Battalions and brigade units spaced on either side between the **Joroveto** and Mumia Rivers, and all concealed without difficulty from the air. The only access to the plantation area was a rough track, feet deep in mud, which skirted the coast among the trees, but by sundown most of the essential equipment had been transported over it. When night came down bivouacs had been erected, foxholes constructed or shelters made among the spreading roots of the trees, where the men lived on packeted C and K rations until routine was established. Air raids gave them little sleep that night, or for long afterwards.



The heavily wooded island of Vella Lavella, scene of 3 Division's first action in the Solomons. Flat-bottomed landing craft carried units of 14 Brigade from bay to bay round the coast

The heavily wooded island of **Vella Lavella**, scene of 3 division's first action in the **Solomons**. Flat-bottomed landing craft carried units of 14 Brigade from bay to bay round the coast.

Except for a few coconut plantations on the more level areas, **Vella**

Lavella is clothed with dense jungle from high-water mark to the crests of mountains in the interior. Visibility ends only a few yards away in a barrier made up of fleshy leaves, vines and creepers, shrubs and tree trunks, as this mass of vegetation fights upwards to the sun. Large trees, whose massive boles sprawl out like flying buttresses several feet above the ground, are matted together with vines and a variety of barbed climbing palm to form an impenetrable canopy overhead. The earth is never dry and never free from the heavy odour of decay. Mildew grows overnight on anything damp. Growth is so swift that a rain of leaves falls in a gentle whisper. By day the jungle is comparatively quiet, except for the chatter of parrots and parakeets and the harsh shrill of myriads of cicadas, which begin and end their crude orchestra as abruptly as though working to a signal. One moment the air is vibrating with the din of a sawmill; the next all is silent. Brilliant butterflies with inches of wingspread hover among the vegetation; grotesque spiders swing their huge webs among palms and trees, and lizards, large and small, rustle among the carpet of dead leaves.

When night falls, swiftly with the setting sun, the jungle comes to life and bedlam reigns until dawn. Millions of small frogs croak and whistle, night birds screech and chatter, and cicadas join sudden bursts of sound to this disturbing clamour. Fireflies flicker like showers of sparks in the velvet gloom, and in the phosphorescent light from the chips of one tree a newspaper may be read with ease. Among the dead and fallen leaves every creeping and crawling thing finds a home—ants by the million, millipedes, slugs, crabs and lizards, including the iguana. To this exotic land thunder-storms of great violence, coming almost daily, bring torrents of rain, adding to the discomfort and depression born of a sense of imprisonment in the perpetual half-light. The only open spaces were in the coconut plantations, though these had become dense thickets where fallen nuts had taken root and grown during the war years.

That was the setting for 14 Brigade's first action and, with few exceptions, a background for all action in the **Solomons**. The most

spectacular part of jungle fighting is the jungle itself and the beach landings. The more common conceptions of warfare, with bursting shells, tanks, guns, and men in violent action on a vast battlefield have no place here; nature dwarfs and conceals them all.

Barrowclough took over command of **Vella Lavella** and all American units on 18 September and became commanding general of these composite formations, New Zealand and American, grouped by **14 Corps** under the title of the **Northern Landing Force**. From that day all island administration—supplies, transport, signals, medical and engineering—passed to the corresponding branches of 3 Division Headquarters. Operational instructions to 14 Brigade to relieve American combat troops and clear the island of Japanese were issued the following day. Potter's plan for these operations, timed to begin on 21 September, entailed the use of two of his combat teams, built round Seaward's ¹ **35 Battalion** and Sugden's 37th. The 30th Battalion, command of which passed to Lieutenant-Colonel F. C. Cornwall, MC, ² when McNamara was evacuated sick, before leaving **Guadalcanal**, was held in reserve in the south of the island, where it arrived on 24 September as the other teams moved to their assembly points in the north.

The brigade commander planned a pincer movement employing Seaward's **35 Battalion** combat team on the left flank and Sugden's 37th team on the right, designed to drive the enemy garrison into a trap when the two battalions met in the extreme north of the island. His teams consisted of the following units:

35 Battalion:

12 Field Battery (Maj L. J. Fahey)

C Troop, 207 Light Anti-Aircraft Battery (Lt J. C. Hutchison)

C Troop, 53 Anti-Tank Battery (Lt D. Taylor)

Detachment of 20 Field Company Engineers (2 Lt A. R. I. Garry)

Detachment of 16 MT Company ASC (Capt T. P. Revell)

A Company, 22 Field Ambulance (Capt D. G. Simpson)

2 Platoon, 14 Brigade MMG Company (Lt R. B. Lockett)

K Section Signals (Lt E. G. Harris)

¹ **Lt-Col C. F. Seaward, DSO, MC; Auckland; born London, 16 Jul 1885; company manager; Auckland Regt 1914–19; CO 35 Bn, Mar 1942–Dec 1943.**

² **Lt-Col F. C. Cornwall, MC; m. i. d., Legion of Merit (US); Auckland; born Manchester, 1 Sep 1892; farmer; Wellington Regt 1914–19; CO 30 Bn, Sep 1943–Apr 1944.**

35 Battalion:

35 Field Battery (Maj A. G. Coulam)

A Troop, 207 Light Anti-Aircraft Battery (Lt O. W. MacDonald)

A Troop, 53 Anti-Tank Battery (Lt C. E. G. Kerr)

Detachment of 20 Field Company Engineers (Lt R. W. Syme)

Detachment of 16 MT Company ASC (Capt J. F. B. Wilson)

Headquarters Company, 22 Field Ambulance (Capt B. W. Clouston)

3 Platoon, 14 Brigade MMG Company (Lt K. A. Wills)

E Section Signals (Lt L. C. Stewart)

Potter planned to complete the task in fourteen days; but it took only ten. After establishing advanced bases, battalion commanders were instructed to move from bay to bay in bounds, first clearing selected areas by overland patrols before bringing their main forces forward by

small landing craft after beach-heads were secure. Eight such craft were allotted to each combat team, but breakdowns kept the 37th so short that at one stage it was reduced to two and borrowed replacements from the 35th pool. Supplies were maintained from Maravari, the main base, by a daily barge service to each team's headquarters as it moved forward. Dress for action was drill jungle suits with soft linen hats and waterproof capes or groundsheets, and individual equipment was made lighter by discarding steel helmets (except for anti-aircraft teams) and gas respirators. This was in accordance with Barrowclough's earlier instruction that assault troops were to go into action as lightly equipped as possible. The men carried their packaged jungle rations, atebirin tablets, mosquito repellent lotion, and water chlorinating tablets. In addition to full water bottles, a two-gallon tin of fresh water was carried for every five men.

Combat teams, which fought as self-contained units, began moving round the coast from Maravari Beach on 21 September and were established in forward areas four days later— **35 Battalion** at Matu Soroto because of the unsuitability of Mundi Mundi, and **37 Battalion** at Boro, on Dovel Cove, after picking up a stray prisoner at Paraso Bay, which was also abandoned as a forward operational base. Once established ashore patrols fanned out like the extended fingers of a hand through dense jungle and swampy mangrove and banyan thickets, searching every yard of ground to a depth of 2000 yards inland. Progress was slow, never more than a few hundred yards a day along the narrow coastal belt, which in places was only one hundred yards wide before it rose abruptly in heavily timbered mountain slopes. Rivers and streams impeded the patrols and their native guides, who moved along the narrow tracks in single file as they paved the way for the advance. Any use of tanks was out of the question. Field guns were dragged ashore by manpower under the most exhausting conditions. Beachheads were dictated by openings through the coral reef, some of them so shallow they prevented the passage of landing craft, and others non-existent on inaccurate maps. Conditions from the day active operations began on 25 September were harsh and difficult. Rain fell in torrents, soaking the

men, hampering movement, and turning the dank jungle into a bog. Despite correct information that the Japanese were poorly armed and led, their cunningly concealed machine-gun nests and pockets of resistance sited among sprawling roots and fallen logs were eradicated only with difficulty, as were snipers often hidden among the leafy branches overhead, for in the jungle the advantage is always with the defender. Hand grenades bounced off trunks and vines unless thrown with extreme care. At night patrols withdrew and formed perimeters, from which no man moved out of the cross-shaped foxholes, each containing four men, until dawn.

For the first few days action resolved itself into individual skirmishes, in which small resolute groups proved their ability to meet and defeat an equally resolute enemy camouflaged against a mottled wall of green and brown and occasional blobs of light. There was no definite lane of advance, as in open country. Patrols, thrown on their own initiative, fought individual actions among the enclosing growth, sometimes without seeing their adversaries. This was characteristic of the whole operation. By 27 September **35 Battalion** patrols, which encountered the enemy much sooner than the 37th, had advanced through Pakoi Bay and stubbornly fought their way overland to the heavily timbered country round **Timbala Bay**, beyond which the main Japanese garrison was concentrating as it fell back from both flanks.

On 26 September a strong patrol, consisting of 14 Platoon under Lieutenant J. S. **Albon**,¹ and the carrier platoon, working as infantry and led by Lieutenant J. W. **Beaumont**,² was despatched to block trails leading into Marquana Bay and the interior, with instructions to await the arrival of the main force, but both platoons were ambushed and lost to the battalion for six days. A, B, and C Companies were established at the head of Timbala on the morning of 27 September, in readiness for an attack the following morning when, after an artillery concentration, they moved forward slowly, C on the left with its left flank on the coast, B in the middle, and

¹ Lt J. S. Albon; Auckland; born Auckland, 8 Feb 1904; salesman.

² Lt J. W. Beaumont, m. i. d.; Greymouth; born Trentham, 14 May 1918; Regular soldier.

A on the right. Platoons led by Lieutenant R. Sinclair ¹ and Lieutenant W. J. McNeight ² took the brunt of the fighting.

Meanwhile, two platoons under Major K. Haslett ³ were sent forward to contact the force blocking the inland tracks, but when nearing Marquana Bay they ran against opposition, only 100 yards from where the force they were seeking had been ambushed, yet such was the density of the jungle they were unaware of it. Haslett returned after avoiding an ambush of his own force. Torrential rain fell all this time, disrupting communications. Wireless was useless under the tall trees and land lines broke continuously. Foxholes became beds of slime which the men shared each night with crabs and crawling insects.

By 29 September it was obvious that the battalion had come up against the main Japanese force contained in the narrow neck of land dividing Timbala Bay from Marquana Bay, and it was ordered not to make any large-scale attack but to await the arrival of 37 Battalion which, hindered by a shortage of landing craft, was covering longer distances along the deeply indented right flank. A Company was held up in Machine-gun Gully, the strongest point of resistance, and ordered to form a perimeter for the night with B and C Companies. That night, also, Private D. W. T. Evans ⁴ reached headquarters with information that the two platoons sent out on 26 September had been ambushed, but it was vague and useless. Private W. F. A. Bickley, ⁵ who had also escaped, was picked up the following day but he was equally vague. Next day Umomo Island, a wooded dot 40 yards off the northern end of Timbala Bay, was occupied by patrols and used as a site for enfilading enemy positions along the coast. B Company continued the move down the left flank of

Machine-gun Gully while A Company took the right, both calling for artillery support when their patrols were held up.

Throughout two dreary days patrols felt their way through the jungle, clearing the fully, and the two ambushed platoons rejoined the battalion. They had fought a gallant action and, as it so happened, contained a considerable enemy force deep in the jungle while the two battalions drove the Japanese in from the flanks. Not till they returned was their story known. Night fell before they reached their objective on 26 September, but they pressed on the next morning and were within reach of the main track when

¹ Maj R. Sinclair; Wellington; born NZ 22 Sep 1921; shepherd.

² Lt W. J. McNeight; Upper Hutt; born Westport, 13 Jun 1907; assistant civil engineer.

³ Maj K. Haslett; Whangarei; born Sussex, England, 27 Feb 1906; electrical contractor.

⁴ Pte D. W. T. Evans; Pukekohe; born Onehunga, 22 Sep 1919; fisherman.

⁵ Pte W. F. A. Bickley; Auckland; born Auckland, 10 Feb 1921; baker.

a native guide reported forty Japanese moving along it to the coast. Beaumont took two sections forward to reconnoitre the position and cover the track, which he crossed to give his machine guns a better site. This was completed by 11.30 a. m., after which small parties of Japanese were observed moving towards Marquana Bay, followed by 96 others, all well armed.

Because the parties were separated, Beaumont thought it unwise to

attack. Two hours later, when this enemy traffic ceased, Beaumont began to move back to the main party, but as he did so bursts of machine-gun fire shattered the silence. A few seconds later the main party under Albon, which was surprised while having a meal, rushed along the track and passed through Beaumont's men, under whose fire the Japanese melted into the jungle. Beaumont took command and formed a rough perimeter with his own platoon at one end and Albon's at the other. He instructed the men to hold fire until they saw a target. Scurrying from tree to tree the Japanese attacked, sometimes shouting in English as they hurled grenades. Again and again the New Zealanders held off the attackers until night fell, by which time three of the garrison had been killed and four wounded, including Signaller R. J. **Park**, ¹ when a burst of machine-gun fire wrecked the wireless set on which he was attempting to communicate with headquarters.

The little force was short of food, water, and equipment, most of which had been abandoned by Albon's party when the Japanese attacked them, and completely out of touch with the main force. What little food remained was rationed among the men; rain-water was trapped in capes and groundsheets. For three more days repeated Japanese attacks were held off with determination. Although morale was high, the men were growing weak for want of food. Albon spoke to Beaumont on 29 September of attempting to reach headquarters to bring help. He slipped a way the following morning, taking two men with him, but when he reached headquarters his information was too vague to be of use. That morning Corporal R. G. **Waldman**, ² with three men, attempted to reach the abandoned rations but was driven back into the perimeter.

On the fifth day under that dense jungle canopy, Beaumont decided to fight his way out to the beach. The wounded were suffering acutely from exposure and lack of attention. After burying the dead, he cut poles with which to make stretchers for the wounded, lashing them with vines and branches, but they were discarded as too unweildy. Beaumont's small force then set off

¹ **Pte R. J. Park**; born **Scotland**, 31 Jul 1918; farm labourer; wounded Sep 1943.

² **Cpl R. G. Waldman**; Eketahuna; born Pongaroa, 17 Apr 1920; farmhand.

at ten o'clock on the morning of 1 October. Private R. J. **Fitzgerald** ¹ led the wounded, himself one of them. Beaumont and six men covered the party as it crept through the jungle. Four and a half hours later they reached the beach, only 1000 yards away, but 49 men, including all the wounded, had been saved. A passing barge sighted Beaumont and his men inside their beach perimeter late that afternoon and advised headquarters, which immediately despatched a reconnaissance party in a landing craft with the object of making an overland advance to relieve them. When the craft moved in towards the shore Private R. **Davis** ² swam out to it, though fired on by machine guns from either flank of the perimeter. Private C. T. J. **Beckham** ³ crept through the undergrowth at dusk and destroyed one of them. That night, after immediate rescue was abandoned, the hungry garrison retrieved a bag of Japanese rations dropped by parachute, killing the enemy who were searching for it.

Next day, 2 October, two barge parties, the first under 2 Lieutenant C. D. Griffiths, ⁴ and another, which arrived later, under Lieutenant D. G. Graham, moved in as far as the coral growth would allow and men attempted to swim ashore with rations. Sharks were held off with tommy guns. Japanese snipers killed Lieutenant M. M. **Ormsby** ⁵ in the water and wounded an American sailor, **D. H. Stevens**. Sergeant W. Q. McGhie ⁶ reached the shore but lost food and medical supplies in the water. A second daylight attempt ended disastrously. Griffiths, **Warrant Officer R. A. Roche**, Private S. Hislop, Private W. M. Pratt, ⁷ and Graham spaced themselves in the water and attempted to get a line ashore to Beaumont. It caught in the jagged coral with maddening consistency, hindering the swimmers. All were killed except Graham. Fitzgerald, who had endured the agony of the perimeter, was killed on the barge and the rescue was

abandoned until nightfall. A party of strong swimmers, all volunteers, arrived from headquarters at Graham's request and, led by Corporal M. H. Cotterell,⁸ they swam ashore in the gathering dusk with a rubber boat and a native canoe. By eleven o'clock that night the last men

¹ **Pte R. J. Fitzgerald**; born Karangahake, 12 Sep 1909; barman; killed in action 2 Oct 1943.

² **Pte R. Davis**; Koputaroa, **Levin**; born NZ 11 Nov 1921; farmhand.

³ **Cpl C. T. J. Beckham**, m. i. d.; **Ruawai**; born Ngongotaha, 26 Feb 1920; farmhand.

⁴ 2 **Lt. C. D. Griffiths**; born **Timaru**, 16 Apr 1919; shop assistant; killed in action 2 Oct 1943.

⁵ **Lt M. M. Ormsby**; born NZ 24 Dec 1919; killed in action 2 Oct 1943.

⁶ **Sgt W. Q. McGhie**; Kihikihi; born Kihikihi, 28 Apr 1902; farmer.

⁷ **WO II R. A. Roche**; born **Gisborne**, 19 Sep 1910; killed in action 2 Oct 1943. **Pte S. Hislop**; born **Scotland**, 21 Dec 1907; company secretary; killed in action 2 Oct 1943. **Pte W. M. Pratt**; born **Christchurch**, 26 May 1910; killed in action 2 Oct 1943.

⁸ **Cpl M. H. Cotterell**; born **Kaitaia**, 4 Jan 1917; dairy factory assistant; killed in action 17 Feb 1944.

were transported to the waiting barges. Beaumont and his party had accounted for forty Japanese killed and an unknown number wounded. They themselves had lost six killed and eight wounded.

On the day of the rescue Major J. A. Burden, a Japanese interpreter from the American command, came forward with a proposal to distribute leaflets among the enemy informing them that they would be honourably treated if they surrendered, but nothing came of this. That day, also, 41 enemy planes attacked Matu Soroto but were driven off by Hutchison's guns, most of the bombs falling into the sea. By 3 October, after another artillery bombardment, A and B Companies finally cleared Machine-gun Gully, where most of the casualties occurred, and by nightfall were joined by C and D Companies. The battalion was then half way to Marquana Bay.

Meanwhile, away on the right flank, **37 Battalion** had advanced to Tambana Bay against light opposition. Here a patrol led by Captain R. T. J. **Adams**¹ captured a large Japanese barge which, well camouflaged with greenery, entered the lagoon and anchored off the beach among the mangroves. When the crew went ashore, one platoon boarded the barge and manned its several machine guns while, another, led by Lieutenant S. J. **Bartos**,² hid in the undergrowth. Fourteen of the Japanese crew were killed when they attempted to return to their boat. The shore party located the remainder in a tangle of mangrove and banyan roots and destroyed them. The battalion named the barge *Confident* and used it as a transport after the removal of a valuable collection of papers and equipment. Next day the battalion began its next leap some miles forward to Varuasi and then pushed on to Susu Bay, after which it was instructed to concentrate in Warambari Bay by the evening of 4 October.

With landing craft borrowed from **35 Battalion**'s pool and ferried round the coast, **37 Battalion** patrols landed on the south-west coast of Warambari Bay on the morning of 5 October against determined opposition. Lieutenant D. M. **Shirley**³ was pinned down between two machine-gun nests and snipers, but ultimately dealt with them. After a day of hard fighting, during which patrols killed twenty Japanese, the battalion established its beach-head and after an artillery bombardment next morning began another day of eradicating enemy posts. One patrol

led by Lieutenant D. J. Law⁴ accounted for the first machine-gun opposition. He and his men did not rejoin their unit until the following day. Two of many

¹ **Capt R. T. J. Adams**; Burhham; born NZ 27 Jul 1903; lorry driver.

² **Lt S. J. Bartos**, MC; **Christchurch**; born Waimate, 19 Jan 1915; civil servant.

³ **Lt D. M. Shirley**, m.i.d.; Dunedin; born Dunedin, 2 May 1920; clerk.

⁴ **Lt D. J. Law**; Kohuratahi, Taranaki; born **New Plymouth**, 8 Feb 1917; farmer.

acts of bravery were recorded during those two days before Warambari was secured—the first when Private A. **McCullough**,¹ although wounded in both hands and one leg, tossed one of their own grenades back among an enemy patrol before it exploded; the second when Corporal L. N. **Dunlea**² and Lance-Corporal J. W. **Barbour**³ retrieved the body of Lieutenant O. **Nicholls**⁴ after he had been killed.

By nightfall on 6 October both battalions were in range of each other, with the Japanese trapped in a neck of land dividing Warambari Bay from Marquana Bay, towards which 35 Battalion had inched forward at 300 to 600 yards a day, finally losing contact with the enemy on 5 October. A prisoner taken that day stated that about 500 well organised troops were trapped. They were short of food, evidence of which were the broken coconuts found in deserted bivouacs, and wished to surrender, but were prevented from doing so by their officers. Potter, who had conducted the operation from advanced headquarters at Matu Soroto, decided to close the gap. Both the covering batteries were tied in on a common grid and came under regimental control.

By four o'clock on the after noon of 6 October, **35 Battalion** reached the coast of Marquana Bay, finding many dead Japanese and much abandoned equipment in their former bivouac area. The **37 the Battalion** pushed through the jungle against opposition and by dusk and reached as far as Mende Point, narrowing the gap between the two combat teams. That night artillery and mortar concentrations were ordered over the are in which the Japanese were enclosed round Marziana Point, but because of low-flying aircraft they ceased early in the evening for fear of revealing their positions. This lack of aggression undoubtedly enabled the enemy to escape. The noise of barges scraping on the coral and the chatter of high-pitched voices could be heard by men lying in the sodden jungle, but the New Zealand guns and mortars remained silent. Next morning, after an artillery barrage, patrols from both battalions combed the are a without opposition. The only event of importance that day was the rescue of seven American airmen from a raft which floated into Tambama Bay after their machine had been shot down At. 10.33 a. m. patrols from A Company of **35 Battalion** joined **37 Battalion** patrols from B Company at the Kazo River, but further search of the are revealed

¹ **Pte A. McCullough; Oamaru; born Oamaru, 9 Oct 1900; painter.**

² **Cpl L. N. Dunlea, DCM; Rakaia; born Darfield, 17 Aug 1918; line erector, NZ Railways; wounded 6 Oct 1943.**

³ **L-Sgt J. W. Barbour, m.i.d.; Waimate; born Waimate, 10 May 1917; farm labourer.**

⁴ **Lt O. Nicholls; born Auckland, 2 May 1915; killed in action 6 Oct 1943.**

only abandoned equipment and some dead. At 10 a. m. on 9 October Potter declared the completion of the brigade's task.

Casualties were not heavy and, despite appalling conditions, the sickness rate was low. The brigade lost three officers and 28 other ranks killed; one officer died of wounds, and one officer and 31 other ranks were wounded. Uncertain estimates of enemy killed ranged from 200 to 300, but the Japanese always attempted to hide their losses by burying their dead and removing the wounded. Their naval records, examined in **Tokyo**, revealed that on the night of 6–7 October, when aircraft silenced the brigade's artillery, 589 military and naval personnel were taken off the island from Maraziana Point, while destroyers sent to cover the operation were engaged by an American naval force north of the island. This operation, planned by 17 Japanese Army, included a transport force of three destroyers and a pick-up unit of five submarine-chasers and three motor torpedo boats to screen the barges transferring men from shore to ship. Six destroyers to protect this force left **Rabaul** on 6 October and were observed by American reconnaissance aircraft north of Buka Passage, causing the commander to death two of his destroyers to join the three transport destroyer at a rendezvous in **Bougainville** Strait before proceeding to **Vella Lavella**. Late the same afternoon the pick-up craft departed from Buin, on **Bougainville**, skirting the Treasury Group to pick up the destroyer screen. As the Japanese force entered waters north of **Vella Lavella** it was engaged by three American destroyers—*Chevalier*, *Selfridge*, and *O'Bannon*— which triumphed in a sharp and bitter engagement but only after being severely mauled. *Selfridge* had her bow sheered off, *Chevalier* was torpedoed and sunk, and *O'Bannon* damaged herself in a collision with *Selfridge*. A Japanese destroyer *Yugomo* and several small craft were sunk, but under cover of this engagement the pick-up force moved into Maraziana Point, embarked the garrison between 11.10 p. m. and 1.5 a. m. and departed for Buin, where it arrived safely. Three other American destroyers bringing a convoy from **Guadalcanal** to **Vella Lavella** were ordered to the scene of the engagement but arrived too late to take part. Next day 78 naval ratings from the *Yugomo* were rescued by naval patrols.

Units emerged from their first action with high morale but a healthy respect for a tenacious adversary. Men in action had not tasted hot food

for almost a month, nor had a change of clothing been possible. Combat battalions lost one man killed for every man wounded, and all arms of the service, working as a team, overcame equipment problems, arduously tested by experience. There had been a tendency by commanders of combat teams to establish separate combat headquarters, in addition to battalion headquarters, instead of absorbing the extra attached units into their battalions. This was frowned on by Barrowclough and did not happen again during the remainder of the division's service in the **Solomons**.

Jungle conditions made immense demands on both artillery and signals. Guns were barged from bay to bay and hauled ashore by manpower over coral and tree-roots to their selected sites on beach or headland, on one occasion taking three days to do so. Working through the night, trees and undergrowth were cleared to give arcs of fire. Ammunition was manpowered from barge to gun site. Ranging on enemy targets with accuracy was impeded by the blanket of forest, and air observations was practically useless as the smoke from ranging shells never rose above the trees. Again and again the observation officers, Captain P. M. **Blundell**¹ and Captain R. E. **Williams**,² went forward with infantry patrols to report where the shells fell, laying 25 to 50 yards from the bursts. With his remarkable sense of locality Sergeant T. J. **Walsh**,³ of **35 Battalion**, also assisted by pin-pointing enemy machine-gun posts so that fire could be directed on them. This was the only answer to the use of artillery in the jungle.

Communication difficulties were not easily overcome. Seeping moisture, continual rain, and violent electrical storms played havoc with No. 11 and No. 12 wireless sets. Even the sets in use were not sufficiently strong to overcome the effect of the heavy mat of jungle overhead. Forward units were frequently out of touch with rear formations, particularly at night, when conditions, were at their worst. Field telephones were finally used in the forward areas and the more reliable runner when all else failed. During operations signals officers experimented with wireless aerials in trees and palms in an effort to

overcome problems in such thickly wooded country. Wire-lying parties, transporting their heavy and noisy equipment through territory not cleared of Japanese, were protected by armed guards. Such was the state of country that on one occasion nine miles of wire were required between two points only three miles apart. A moisture-proof New Zealand-made wireless set, known as the ZC1, some of which came forward during operations, proved to be most suitable for jungle warfare. Finally, after most exhaustive work, a telephone circuit using seventy miles of wire was laid round most of the island, linking units, radar stations, motor torpedo boat bases, airfield and anti-aircraft defences.

¹ **Capt P. M. Blundell**, M C; born **Wellington**, 10 May 1919; journalist; killed in action, **Italy**, 16 Apr 1945.

² **Maj R. E. Williams**; **Christchurch**; born **Christchurch**, 15 Sep 1917; clerk.

³ **Sgt T. J. Walsh**, DCM; Ngongotaha; born NZ 5 Apr 1914; chairman.

Supplies during the operational period were maintained by **10 Motor Transport Company** by breaking them down at Maravari and barging them round the coast to beach-heads, a journey of four to five hours, after which carrying parties took rations forward into the jungle. A field bakery detachment ¹ reached **Vella Lavella** on 9 October and, by the time the operations ended, fresh bread was delivered by landing craft to all units round the island every third day. Wounded and sick returned by the battalion supply barges to the field hospital established in Gill's Plantation, where any immediate surgical work was done by Major P. C. E. **Brunette**, ² **1 Field Surgical Unit**, after which the more serious cases were evacuated to **Guadalcanal** by air, the remainder travelling by boat.

While the combat teams cleared the jungle in the north, organisation and construction continued in the south. Barrowclough

moved his headquarters to a less restricted and more congenial site among the palms of Gill's Plantation on 2 October, some of the trucks and jeeps taking six hours to bump their way over seven miles of mud and coconut logs of the only possible track. Regular flights of landing craft arrived from **Guadalcanal**, bringing forward remaining units and rear parties and immense quantities of stores, ammunition, petrol, and oil for a garrison which, by 25 October, reached 17,000 New Zealanders and Americans, these last including three battalions and ancillary units of the First **Marine Amphibious Corps**, a battalion of the **United States Marine Corps**, and operational staffs for the airfield, naval base, and motor torpedo boat base.

Two of the flights were caught on the beach by Japanese aircraft—the first on 25 September when seventeen Americans were killed, and another on 1 October when low-flying bombers came out of the sun and caught two landing craft while they were unloading.

¹ The trials of the division's Field Bakery give a reasonable indication of what sometimes happened to small New Zealand units in the **Pacific**. When an American bakery was lost at sea on the way to the **New Hebrides**, **3 Division**'s bakery, at the request of the **South Pacific Command**, was despatched hurriedly from **Trentham** to work for the Americans until their own unit was replaced. They arrived at their destination on **Espiritu Santo** short of equipment, some of which was lost when the unit transhipped in haste in **Noumea** harbour, and little help was given by the American staff officers, who could never be pinned down to action. The unit ovens were built in a gully where they were partially destroyed every time rain fell, which was with exasperating regularity and in torrents, causing the coral foundations to disappear in each deluge. But these hardy bakers never failed to produce a regular supply of excellent bread, though temperatures varied from 81 degrees(F,) on the coolest nights to 98 degrees on the hottest days, when temperatures inside the bakehouse rose to 120 degrees. More than 600 gallons of water, tepid in that atmosphere, were used daily. Flies from a neighbouring refuse dump were more of a nuisance than the heat and the mosquitoes. Green firewood, the only kind available, almost broke the hearts of the men as they stoked their inferno

and increased their own discomfort. Sergeant-Majors McKay and Ware, two experienced bakers, made professionals of the inexperienced soldiers posted to the unit. They were happy to rejoin the division in **New Caledonia**. Detachments produced 10,000 pounds of block cake for Christmas, 1943.

² **Maj P. C. E. Brunette**, m.i.d., Legion of Merit (US); born NZ 2 Aug 1897; Medical Superintendent, Nelson Public Hospital.

Fifty-two men were killed and many wounded in this attack. The first bomb scored a direct hit on one of **209 Light Anti-Aircraft Battery's** guns, killing Sergeant M. J. **Healy**, ¹ of M Troop, and fifteen of his detachment, and destroying the LST by fire. Another bomb failed to explode, and a third grazed the rail to explode in the water.

Once more the engineers, with increased but still limited heavy equipment, set about the primary task of transforming a rough jungle track into a two-way all-weather road from **Biloa** to the motor torpedo boat base at **Lambu Lambu**, halfway up the island, and linking all units and service installations and depots along the coast. The 26th Field Company, which became a heavy equipment company, was brought forward from **Guadalcanal** and shared this project with McKay's **20 Field Company**. The road was finished in weeks, during which several substantial bridges were built using heavy timber from the neighbouring jungle and coconut logs for decking. Other roads were then constructed to water points and petrol dumps, known as 'tank fields'. Two months after the division was established on **Vella Lavella**, speed restrictions were imposed on the main highway, the surface of which survived even the torrential rain.

Soon after fighting ceased, reconnaissance patrols were despatched to neighbouring islands on which stray Japanese might still be in hiding. Gizo Island was searched on 10 October by two platoons from **30 Battalion** under Captain F. R. M **Watson**, ² and Ganongga Island on 19 October by a 4 Field Security patrol under Lieutenant D. **Lawford**, ³ whose men had worked with 14 Brigade during operations and later

assisted with the rescue of Beaumont's men from the beach. Both found evidence of former Japanese occupation, but the garrisons had been withdrawn on the night of 21 September. Natives reported that 67 dead Japanese had been washed ashore on Ganongga. A goodwill trip was also made to **Simbo Island** where, as on every island, the natives were given medical treatment by New Zealand medical officers.

A message from Griswold to Barrowclough at the conclusion of the **Vella Lavella** operations echoed in spirit others which came at the conclusion of each succeeding action from Halsey, Harmon, and senior American commanders in the **Pacific**. It ran:

Please convey to all elements of your excellent command my thanks and heartiest congratulations for the despatch with which enemy forces were driven from **Vella Lavella**. The prompt action of your division to make

¹ **Sgt M. J. Healy**; born NZ 27 Dec 1920; grocer's assistant; killed in action 1 Oct 1943.

² **Maj F. R. M. Watson**; Dunedin; born NZ 19 Nov 1910; traveller.

³ **Capt D. Lawford**; **Auckland**; born **Auckland**, 30 Mar 1905; company director.

secure the island's vital installations was accomplished with the smoothness and efficiency which mark a well-trained and determined organisation. Your own cordial co-operation and willingness to accommodate your requirements to limitations of transportation and other inconveniences which the situation required is fully appreciated. We have shown our readiness and ability to work together as Allies, and it is with the greatest confidence that I look forward to future operations with the Third New Zealand Division.

Although military operations were only of secondary importance, the conquest of **Vella Lavella** was a significant phase in the **Solomons** campaign. The island was secured at a cost of only 150 killed, New Zealanders and Americans, and the value of by-passing strategy conclusively proved. The airfield, construction of which began on 16 August, was in operation by 26 September and by 18 October in daily operational use by a squadron of Corsairs. A few days later sixty aircraft were using **Barakoma**. Moreover, 22 airmen had been saved either from the sea or by crash-landing on the partially constructed field. From the new motor torpedo boat base at Lambu Lambu powerful little craft emerged each night to hunt and disrupt enemy barge traffic round the Shortlands and **Choiseul**. Aircraft stationed at **Barakoma** joined those operating from **Munda** and **Guadalcanal** to pound enemy strongholds on and around **Bougainville** and **Rabaul**. Flights of 100 or more, droning north, became familiar sights. Thus the capture of **Vella Lavella** paved the way for the next thrust forward—the occupation of the Treasury Group, 73 miles away, and the landing on **Bougainville**.

THE PACIFIC

II: THE TREASURIES

II: The Treasuries

As 14 Brigade settled down to a period of routine duty after securing **Vella Lavella**, 8 Brigade embarked on the division's second task in the campaign—the capture of the **Treasury Islands**, a small group lying 300 miles north of **Guadalcanal** and only 18 miles from the **Shortland Islands**, where the Japanese were strongly entrenched round a series of airfields and naval bases covering their last defence system in the **Solomons**. The Treasury Group, consisting of Mono and Stirling Islands, with the deep, sheltered waters of **Blanche Harbour** dividing them, was urgently required to continue the by-passing strategy so successfully developed on **Vella Lavella** and to assist with a large-scale landing by Vandegrift's **United States Marine Corps** at **Empress Augusta Bay** on **Bougainville**, the next thrust in the enveloping movement designed to reduce **Rabaul** and isolate the remaining Japanese garrison, estimated at 24,000, holding **Bougainville** and neighbouring islands to the south.

A radar station was an imperative accessory to the **Bougainville** landing to give warning of approaching enemy air and surface craft, and a site for it was tentatively selected on the northern coast of **Mono Island**, a densely wooded cone seven miles by three, rising to a height of 1100 feet. **Blanche Harbour**, as beautiful as any in the **Solomons**, with tiny, palm-clad islands breaking its surface, fulfilled all requirements as a staging base for naval and barge traffic; and on flat, irregularly shaped **Stirling Island**, three and a half miles long by anything from 300 to 1500 yards wide, there was an excellent site for an airfield after the removal of its covering of dense forest.

Tactical and supply considerations and the adequacy of air support from existing airfields dictated the landings on both the **Treasury Islands** and **Empress Augusts Bay**, and then only after the alternatives of **Choiseul**, **Kahili**, and the **Shortland Islands** had been abandoned because

they were too strongly defended. An assault on those two objectives was also considered the best possible method of meeting the Joint Chiefs of Staff directives concerning the **Solomons** offensive and the subjection of **Rabaul**, but they were selected only after long discussions by the planning staffs of both MacArthur's and Halsey's headquarters. Most of the information which assisted the planners in arriving at their decision was obtained from reconnaissance parties, which went ashore at night from submarines and landing craft and spent days hiding in the jungle, interrogating natives and observing Japanese defences and movement of garrisons.

Barrowclough was informed of this task on 20 September, when he discussed with Wilkinson various phases of the campaign, following his arrival on **Guadalcanal**. He allotted it to **8 Brigade**, since 14 Brigade was already committed to **Vella Lavella**, to which it had departed three days after the arrival of **8 Brigade**. From the time of its arrival on **Guadalcanal**, **8 Brigade** lost no time in practising with fervour all phases of jungle warfare through the wooded gullies of the Matanikau River and over the grassy ridges radiating from the slopes of Mount Austen—country which had been most bitterly contested by the Japanese in the battle for **Guadalcanal**. Typical of this thorough training was the despatch of small groups to spend the night bivouacking in the jungle to make themselves familiar with the fantasy of noises and unusual conditions. Combined manoeuvres were also held with the **Tank Squadron**, then camped on the banks of the Lunga River. Tanks were allotted to battalions for field days—Troops one and four with **29 Battalion**, two and five with **34 Battalion**, and three with **36 Battalion**. Although they never worked in combat with **8 Brigade**, the exacting experience gained from these exercises was invaluable in the jungle on **Green Island**, where the tanks later worked with 14 Brigade.

There was one diversion from training which was typical of warfare in the **Solomons**, where small units frequently operated in Japanese-held territory to which they moved by submarine, motor torpedo boat or aircraft, and where they were secured against discovery by loyal and co-

operative natives. From 30 September until 12 October, a fighting patrol from **29 Battalion** under Surgeant G. G. **McLeod**¹ protected a group of four American technicians who were taking astronomical observations on the island of **Choiseul**, in order to correct irregularities on the existing maps of the **Solomons**. The patrol was flown from Halavo, an American seaplane base established on the coast of Florida, in a Catalina which also flew them back via **Rendova**, in the **New Georgia** Group, at the end of their mission. Friendly natives, to whom McLeod and his men carried gifts of tobacco, food, and clothing, guided the party as it carried out its mission, moving by canoe at night along the coast from village to village without interference. The only excitement during the execution of this valuable task was the failure of the seaplane to rendezvous at the appointed time, causing the party to spend an extra night on the island.

For the assault on the Treasury Group, **8 Brigade** came under command of the First **Marine Amphibious Corps**, command of which passed to Vandegrift on 15 September following the accidental death of Barrett. The whole operation was again under Wilkinson, of **Task Force 31**. Such naval planning, the work of a **United States** staff, had been improved after long and often bitter experience since the August landing. Row commanded all land forces, New Zealand and American. He held his first conference on 30 September, the day after receipt of the Corps Commander's letter of instruction, when he explained to his unit commanders the broad outline of the impending operation.

Planning this first opposed landing by New Zealand troops since **Gallipoli** required the most precise attention to detail so that troops, guns, ammunition, rations, petrol, oil, vehicles, and technical equipment could be disembarked from the proper landing craft in their appointed wave and time on the beach for which they were intended. Row's task was far from easy, as shortages of landing craft still hampered all amphibious operations. Only the barest minimum of such craft was available for this operation and losses seriously jeopardised any future operations. It was impossible, with the craft available, to take

more than a minimum number of the troops and supplies forward for the initial landing. Of his total

¹ **Sgt G. G. McLeod, m.i.d.; Balclutha; born Alexandra, 27 Aug 1916; school teacher.**



ON VELLA LAVELLA A signaller operating in an abandoned Japanese camp, Timbala Bay area

On Vella Lavella A signaller Operating in an abandoned Japanese Camp, Timbala Bay area

A PATROL FROM 35 NZ INFANTRY BATTALION
crossing a creek on logs at Pakoi Bay



A patrol from 35 NZ Infantry Batallion crossing a creek on logs at Pakoi Bay



INTERROGATION OF A JAPANESE PRISONER OF WAR, Gill's Plantation,
Vella Lavella

Interrogation of a Japanese Prisoner of War, Gill's Plantation, Vella La Vella



35 NZ ANTI-TANK BATTERY AT MARAVARI, Vella Lavella

35 NZ Anti-tank Battery at Maravari, Vella Lavella



UMOMO ISLAND SHELLED by 12 NZ Field Battery

Umomo Island shelled by 12 NZ Field Battery



THE CARRIER PLATOON OF 35 NZ BATTALION crosses Timbala Bay
in a native canoe

The carrier platoon of 35 NZ Battalion crosses [Timbala Bay](#) in a native Canoe



MUDDY CONDITIONS
TANGALAN PLANTA-
TION AREA, NISSAN
ISLAND

**Muddy Conditions
Tangalan plantation area, Nissan Island**



SOLID MAHOGANY
PLANKS COVER A
BRIDGE decked with
coconut logs over Joroveto
River, Vella Lavella. This
was the work of 20 Field
Company New Zealand
Engineers.

Solid Mahogany Planks cover a bridge decked with coconut logs over Joroveto River, [Vella Lavella](#). This was the work of 20 field Company New Zealand Engineers.

available force of 6574 all ranks (4608 New Zealanders and 1966 Americans), only 3795 could be accommodated for the assault, leaving the remainder to go forward in four successive flights, one every five days. Battalion strengths were reduced to 600 each and their transport to two 30-cwt. trucks and four jeeps. The assault force required to take with it 1785 tons of supplies and equipment, leaving several thousand tons to go forward with succeeding flights. In planning this action men, supplies, and equipment were distributed over thirty-one different landing craft of six different types, transported 300 miles north and, within a few hours, landed in successive waves against opposition on beaches familiar only from air photographs. Landing craft speeds ranged from six to 35 knots, and as much as three days elapsed between the despatch of the first and last convoys from [Guadalcanal](#). All craft of the first flight were tactically loaded, with men and supplies so distributed that if one boat was lost the whole operation would not be imperilled.

Brigade Headquarters was expanded to deal with the increased work such planning demanded, not only for the actual assault but for the loading and equipment tables of every landing craft of succeeding flights. Not a foot of space was wasted; the loading tables were meticulously detailed. Major J. G. S. Bracewell was brought up from Base in [New Caledonia](#) and appointed AA and QMG, Captain B. M. Silk was

attached as staff captain movements, and Captain R. S. Lawrence, of **36 Battalion**, as staff captain A to assist the normal staff of the brigade which, once ashore, would constitute an island command. Captain John Merrill, an interpreter of Japanese from **14 Corps Headquarters**, also joined the brigade to translate captured documents and interrogate prisoners of war. Lieutenant-Colonel J. **Brooke-White**¹ was appointed New Zealand liaison officer on Corps Headquarters during the planning period, which required the precise co-ordination of all navy, army, and air elements. He and others soon discovered that the service language of the two peoples differed greatly as, for example, when New Zealand 'unit equipment' became American 'impedimenta'.

Only one area in the Treasuries was suitable for a landing by heavy LSTs carrying earth-moving equipment, unit transport, guns and weighty stores—the sandy beaches of a small promontory at **Falamai**, on the coast of Mono, two miles from the western entrance to **Blanche Harbour**, and close beside the headquarters of the Japanese garrison. Row decided to make his principal assault there,

¹ **Col J. Brooke-White**, OBE; **Wellington**; born **Wellington**, 15 Jan 1909; Regular soldier; CRE 3 NZ Div, 1944; OC 28 Assault Sqn NZE (**Italy**) 1945; wounded, **Italy**, 30 Apr 1945.

using two battalions, the 29th on the right flank and the 36th on the left, at the same time moving **34 Battalion** on to **Stirling Island** to establish a perimeter wherein the artillery was to be sited along the inner shore in support of troops in action across the water on **Mono Island**. Guns, both field and anti-aircraft, were to be ferried across **Blanche Harbour** from the **Falamai** beach-head and emplaced with the utmost urgency.

While this main assault was in progress, a small separate force was to be landed at **Soanotalu**, a narrow bay on the north coast of Mono, to install a radar station which would look directly into **Empress Augusta Bay** on **Bougainville**. Topographical information concerning these

islands was reasonably good. It was assembled from most excellent air photographs taken, with great thoroughness, by American reconnaissance units and known as 'hasty terrain' maps; the personal observations of a naval and marine patrol which landed from a submarine and spent six days on **Mono Island** in August; and from talks with American airmen who had been rescued from the island after spending some time there when their machine was shot down. From all available sources the brigade intelligence section constructed a twelve feet square sand model for more complete comprehension of Row's plan of attack, which he set about completing with energy and perspicacity.

Twenty miles of primitive roads and a faulty telephone system separated Row from Corps and Task Force Headquarters, and delays in obtaining information and decisions frequently hampered planning, all of which was dictated by the amount of shipping available. The arrival at the last moment of some of the more hastily assembled American units, and the lack of knowledge of their particular tasks also delayed completion of final loading tables, as they were unable to furnish such vital information as the amount of shipping space required and the number of men they were taking forward in the first flight. As the tactical loading and equipment tables were completed ten days before departure, this often led to wasteful and hasty rearrangement.

Only meagre information was available concerning the strength of the enemy and his dispositions in the Treasury Group. In order to overcome this deficiency, Sergeant W. A. **Cowan**,¹ a member of the brigade intelligence section who really measured up to the requirements of that organisation, made two trips to the island before the landing took place. In company with Corporal J. Nash, an Australian coastwatcher, and two members of the British Solomon Islands Defence Force, Warrant Officer F. Wickham and Sergeant

¹ **Sgt W. A. Cowan**, DCM; **Lower Hutt**; born Tapanui, 29 Nov 1906; surveyor.

Ilala, Cowan spent twelve hours on **Mono Island**, landing there at midnight on 22 October by canoe from a motor torpedo boat. When he and his party returned the following night, they brought with them three American airmen whose machine had been shot down off the island, and six natives who were to act as guides on the day of the landing. Their return was another comment on this island warfare. After boarding the motor torpedo boat in the darkness off Mono, they sped to **Vella Lavella** where a waiting aircraft flew the party to **Guadalcanal**; the natives, emerging from the jungle for the first time in their lives, were pop-eyed with excitement as they marvelled at the wonders of travel war had brought to them. Cowan produced a valuable report, information from which was quickly disseminated to units ready to depart, though the slower-moving craft had already gone. The Japanese garrison, reinforced by 50 men a few days before his arrival on the island, was estimated at 225, with headquarters near the Saveke River, strongposts and the main garrison covering Falamai Beach, and observation posts at Laifa Point and other sites round the coast. Stirling. Island was free of Japanese. Cowan returned to Mono by motor torpedo boat on the night of 26 October, taking with him Corporal W. Gilfillan, Private C. Rusden, and Private J. Lempriere,¹ all of **29 Battalion**, to organise native patrols, known as 'blokes', and cut the Japanese telephone line between Laifa Point and headquarters on the morning of the landing.

The original plan for a simultaneous assault on the **Treasury Islands** and **Empress Augusta Bay** on 1 November was discarded by the **South Pacific Command** on 12 October in favour of sending Row's brigade into the Treasuries on 27 October, five days before the establishment of the **Bougainville** beach-head, in order to have a radar station in operation on Mono. On the night of 27 October, also, a realistic diversionary raid by 2 US Parachute Battalion under Lieutenant-Colonel V. H. Krulak was to be made on the island of **Choiseul**. Krulak was to be prepared to remain there for an indefinite period, which he did, remaining at Voza until the night of 3–4 November, and baffling the Japanese command by concealing the exact locality of the next Allied thrust.

Row issued his first administration order for the Treasury operation on 11 October and his first operational order on the 21st, by which time all details were completed by the planning committee. The administration order set out minutely the beach organisation, working parties for unloading, the pooling of transport to facilitate

¹ **Cpl W. M. Gilfillan**, m.i.d.; **Putaruru**; born **Fiji**, 18 Feb 1918; dairy farmer. **Pte C. M. Rusden**; **Te Awamutu**; born **Auckland**, 17 Jul 1912; hairdresser. **L-Cpl J. B. Lempriere**, m.i.d.; **National Park**; born **Wellington**, 4 Aug 1918; warehouseman.

unloading, and all details for succeeding flights. From 14 to 17 October the brigade rehearsed the landing on **Tumuligohm Beach**, on **Florida Island**, using four APDs and eight LCIs with which to practise embarkation and disembarkation, loading and unloading equipment, and the quartering of personnel. No detail was forgotten in making these practice landings as realistic as possible.

On 23, 24, and 25 October the slower craft were loaded and despatched from **Guadalcanal**, staging north via the **Russell Islands** and **Rendova**, their movements co-ordinated, under destroyer protection commanded by Rear-Admiral G. H. Fort, so that they would rendezvous off **Blanche Harbour** on the morning of 27 October. Finally, the faster APDs carrying the assault troops left **Guadalcanal** on 26 October, the Brigadier and his staff travelling in *USS Stringham*. The whole force bore a farewell message of the kind to which American commanders were addicted. It concluded: 'Shoot calmly, shoot fast, and shoot straight'. The men each carried two days' rations, and in their equipment was half a 'pup' tent, to be joined with another and set up as one in the bivouac area ashore. They wore steel helmets but carried soft jungle hats in their haversacks. Gas respirators were discarded. The assault troops wore camouflaged jungle uniforms of drill to make them less distinguishable in the jungle; some daubed their hands and faces with stain. The journey to the Treasuries was uneventful. Some men slept on deck in the hot night, for there was no moon.

The following units of the brigade made the landing on Treasury:

29 Battalion (Lt-Col F. L. H. Davis)

34 Battalion (Lt-Col R. J. Eyre)

36 Battalion (Lt-Col K. B. McKenzie-Muirson, MC)

38 Field Regiment (Lt-Col W. A. Bryden)—only one battery made the original landing.

29 Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment (Lt-Col W. S. McKinnon)—two batteries made the original landing.

54 Anti-Tank Battery (Maj R. M. Foreman)

8 Brigade MMG Company (Maj G. W. Logan)

23 Field Company Engineers (Maj A. H. Johnston)

4 Motor Transport Company ASC (Maj R. Gapes)

7 Field Ambulance (Lt-Col S. Hunter)

2 Field Surgical Unit (Maj G. E. Waterworth)

Malaria Control Section (2 Lt R. D. Dick)

J Section Signals (Capt G. M. Parkhouse)

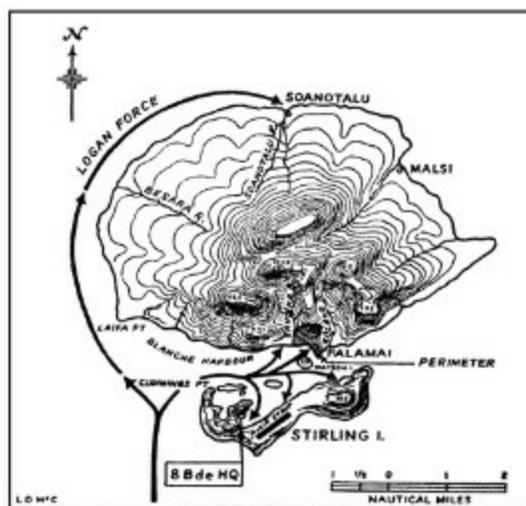
10 Mobile Dental Section (Capt J. H. Neville)

Brigade details.

American units included 198 Coast Artillery Anti-Aircraft Regiment (less one battalion) with sixteen 90-millimetre and thirty-two 37-millimetre guns and twenty searchlights; a company of 87 Naval Construction Battalion (the CBs), and technical personnel to operate air support, radar station, advanced naval base, a boat pool and a signals unit, totalling 1966 all ranks, 60 per cent of whom landed with the first

assault troops.

Zero hour for the landing was set for six minutes past six on the morning of 27 October, but because of the late arrival of the APDs it was delayed for twenty minutes and the radio silence broken by its dissemination to vessels of the convoy. In the grey light of breaking day, and wrapped in a drizzle of warm rain, the convoy lay off the western entrance to **Blanche Harbour**—eight APDs, eight LCIs, two LSTs and three LCTs, protected by a screen of six American destroyers. Overhead circled a fighter cover of 32 aircraft, including New Zealanders of Nos. 15 and 18 Squadrons, **RNZAF**, which patrolled from first light. Rain squalls came down as the assault troops descended the rope ladders into the landing craft, which rose and fell below them on the lazy swell, in readiness for the two miles dash up the harbour. Above them, out of the mist, rose the grey mushroom of Mono and, on the right, the dim shape of trees on Stirling. Moving sluggishly off the islands lay the large landing craft, waiting their turn to enter the harbour and beach after the way had been paved by the assault troops.



Arrows indicate the move of 8 Brigade units for the capture of the Treasury Group. The opposed landing was at Falamai, on Mono Island

Arrows indicate the move of 8 brigade units for the capture of the Treasury Group. The opposed landing was at **Falamai**, on **Mono Island**

Promptly at 5.45 a.m. the guns of two American destroyers, *Pringle* and *Philip*, cracked in the morning stillness as they bombarded **Falamai** and its environs, though many of the shells caught the crest of an

island in the harbour and failed to reach their objective. By six o'clock, as the light revealed the scene in detail, the first wave was on its way to the beaches in an atmosphere of noise, rain, and excitement. Because destroyers were unable to manoeuvre in the harbour, newly converted LCI gunboats, recently arrived from **Noumea** and used experimentally for the first time, moved on the left flank of the assaulting waves, pouring streams of tracer like coloured water from a hose into the undergrowth along the shore. They undoubtedly reduced the number of casualties, though by tarrying a little too long off **Falamai** they did hold up an assault battalion after it landed.

Two minutes after the naval bombardment ceased the first wave of assault troops leaped ashore at 6.26 a.m. from the landing craft, as though on a well-executed manoeuvre. As these craft emptied and withdrew, succeeding waves followed at thirty-minute intervals until the last and heavier craft arrived at 9.20 a.m. B and C Companies of **29 Battalion** moved quickly through the village of **Falamai**, with A Company coming in on their left flank to sweep across the whole battalion sector from Cutler's Creek, on the extreme left flank, to the Kolehe River on the extreme right. A and B Companies of **36 Battalion** disappeared into dense undergrowth between the Saveke River and Cutler's Creek, A Company under Captain K. E. **Louden**¹ being temporarily held up by the gunboat's stream of tracer, though it went in later to rout out Japanese headquarters 500 yards west of the Saveke River.

There was little opposition to the immediate landing and initial casualties were light. Unexpectedly, landing craft were fired on from Cumming's point on **Stirling Island**, though no enemy was ever found there. The Japanese garrison (their official time was always different) ceased communication with its headquarters in **Rabaul** with a message 'Enemy landing commenced at 0540 hours. We have engaged them.' before Loudens's men drove them up the hillside.

In the first rush from the beaches some enemy strongposts were overrun and the garrisons went to earth, emerging again to take the

landing troops from the rear. One of these posts was demolished

¹ **Capt K. E. Louden**, MC; **Eastbourne**; born **Auckland**, 23 Sep 1913; clerk.

by Private E. V. **Owen** ¹ (a man over forty with a son serving in the **RNZAF**) and Private E. C. **Banks**, ² using hand grenades. Then, as the large LSTs beached at half past seven, another enemy strongpost 20 yards from the shore came to life, pouring machine-gun fire into the craft as the ramp was lowered. It created considerable damage before it was silenced by a resourceful American, Carpenter's Mate 1st Class **Aurillo Tassone**, of the CBs, who, using a bulldozer as a tank and its shining blade as a shield, crushed the garrison and buried the 24 Japanese occupants in one operation. He was awarded the Silver Star. A party of anti-aircraft gunners, landing with the second wave, attempted to liquidate this strongpoint, and Gunner M. J. **Compton** ³ disposed of some of the occupants before the bulldozer arrived. Captain H. H. **Grey**, ⁴ also a gunner, collected a party and played an infantry role by seeking enemy strongposts.

Activity on the beaches was frequently more intense than in the jungle. Sapper J. K. **Duncan**, ⁵ of **23 Field Company**, never left his bulldozer, but kept tracks open from the landing craft to the dump areas, despite exploding mortar bombs.

By 7.35 a.m. the Japanese garrison had reorganised itself and laid down concentrated and accurate mortar and machine-gun fire on the beaches, where the LSTs were unloading heavy supplies, guns, and equipment. Direct hits set two of them on fire, but unloading parties quickly extinguished the outbreaks. Unit parties organising dumps of equipment on the beaches and sorting out gear as it came ashore were caught in the Japanese bombardment. One American 90-millimetre anti-aircraft gun and one New Zealand Bofors gun were destroyed; one 25-pounder gun of **38 Field Regiment** was badly damaged and large quantities of ammunition and medical stores were lost. An artillery jeep

and truck were both hit and much valuable equipment destroyed; another truck belonging to 4 Company ASC, loaded with ammunition, received a direct hit and blew up, pieces of the truck wrapping themselves round a palm trunk forty feet away. Just before midday a Japanese ammunition dump was hit and blew up, setting fire to the remaining huts of the village, where smoke and flames added to the unholy orchestra. Exploding ammunition caused LST 399 to retract from the beach and move farther along the shore.

Because of the difficult country—dense forest cut by deep water-courses—the site of the enemy guns was difficult to pinpoint. At

¹ Pte **E. V. Owen**, MM; born NZ 16 Feb 1903; farmer.

² Cpl **E. C. Banks**; Mount Maunganui; born **Rotorua**, 15 Dec 1907; farmer.

³ L-Bdr **M. J. Compton**, MM, m.i.d.; Wairoa; born Wairoa, 1 Apr 1919; carpenter.

⁴ Capt **H. H. Grey**; **Auckland**; born **Manchester**, 20 Mar 1911; journalist.

⁵ Spr **J. K. Duncan**, MM; **Auckland**; born NZ 15 Apr 1918; miner.

ten o'clock two platoons of **36 Battalion** were ordered to search the high country above the old Japanese headquarters. One of these, under Second-Lieutenant **L. T. G. Booth**,¹ quickly achieved its objective and stopped the beach bombardment. Scrambling up the hillside through the densest undergrowth, Booth and his men located and rushed the first enemy position and captured two 75-millimetre mountain guns, the barrels of which were still hot. Then, guided by the sound of a mortar in action, Booth led a section of his men 500 yards farther up the hill and

captured a 90-millimetre mortar. Ten members of the crew were killed; the remainder fled. All enemy resistance in the immediate vicinity of the landing was overcome soon after midday and battalions dug in along their perimeters from 400 to 600 yards in the jungle, which was much thicker than information had led them to believe.

The Stirling landing was unopposed and accomplished with ease; as troops cleared **Falamai, boats carrying **34 Battalion** swung right and went ashore. Two sections of 3-inch mortars were established on Watson Island to cover the perimeter on Mono. Brigade Headquarters, landing in the second wave, moved into a small bay on the inner shore of **Stirling** and was soon in wireless communication with units scattered over the two islands. During the day guns of **29 Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment** and **38 Field Regiment** were landed from LSTs at **Falamai** and ferried across **Blanche Harbour**. Late that afternoon they were dragged ashore over the coral and sited along the northern shore of **Stirling**, from which they covered the whole of **Mono Island** and both entrances to the harbour. One battery of anti-aircraft guns was temporarily sited on Watson Island. Incredible quantities of coconut palms and vegetation were felled that day to give the guns arcs of fire.**

Activity on the beach, though hindered temporarily by exploding ammunition, proceeded with only one hitch. Typical of the speed in unloading the earlier craft was the record of LCI 330, which discharged 299 men and 15 tons of cargo in 14 minutes. Only a few tons of cargo were returned to **Guadalcanal in one of the LSTs, because of some misunderstanding of the respective functions of the crew of the craft and the New Zealand unloading parties. After the trucks and jeeps on LST 399 were driven ashore, work on this craft almost ceased and the American commander reported that unloading became 'inexcusably slow'. The commander of the LST could not convince the troops that unloading was a troops responsibility, and there was some disorganisation of beach parties because of casualties. Otherwise all arrangements, despite the temporary hold-up because of exploding ammunition, went according**

¹ **Capt L. T. G. Booth, MC; Wellington; born Christchurch, 5 Aug 1912; clerk**

to Row's well-conceived plan, and by nightfall most of the landing craft were on their way back to **Guadalcanal**, there to load the second flight. ¹

When darkness came, bringing with it more torrential rain, the two battalion perimeters were established, the men sharing without complaint their dank cruciform foxholes with centipedes and other insects repulsive to a degree. During the day a few snipers were shot out of trees inside the perimeter, and under cover of darkness the Japanese attempted to reach their ration dump, which was outside the **36 Battalion** perimeter and could not be moved during the day. However, no determined attack developed. From the high country the Japanese dropped occasional mortar bombs into the beach area and swept it periodically with bursts of machinegun fire. A nervous reaction to the night noises and the events of the day caused some indiscriminate shooting, which revealed the position of the men and their posts, but there were actually fewer snipers than was indicated by the excitement they caused. On one occasion, to prove that a tree did not contain snipers, it was ordered to be felled, but nothing unusual spilled out of the branches.

Row had every reason to congratulate himself on his accurate and exhaustive planning. No call was necessary on his reserve— **30 Battalion**, waiting on **Vella Lavella**—though he employed the additional anti-aircraft units placed at his disposal by Barrowclough. Capture and consolidation of the Treasury Group on 27 October was accomplished with the loss of 30 killed (21 New Zealanders; 9 Americans) and 85 wounded (70 New Zealanders; 15 Americans), though Japanese aircraft came in after dark that night, spilling their bombs haphazardly over the **Falamai** and **Saveke** area, killing and wounding some men of **36 Battalion**. But there was no counter-attack from the **Shortland Islands**,

though Row was gravely concerned that such might develop. Had it done so ample warning would have been given by a squadron of motor torpedo boats which, under Lieutenant-Commander R. B. Kelly, **US Navy**, moved out of **Blanche Harbour** in the deepening dusk and maintained a constant night patrol of the waters between **Shortland Islands** and the **Treasuries**. Both entrances to the harbour were covered by detachments of guns of **54 Anti-Tank Battery**, and the guns of both **38 Field Regiment** and **29 Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment** were given secondary roles of firing on surface craft. The day following the landing, and for some days afterwards, patrols from 29 and 36 Battalions moved beyond their strengthened perimeters without meeting resistance, though they found traces of

¹ The report of CTF 31 stated: 'The New Zealanders were not easily convinced that unloading by hand was necessary.'

the enemy, who had picked up his dead and wounded and retired to the northern coast of **Mono Island**. Hit-and-run bomber raids were made over the **Falamai** area the first few nights only, after which they diminished.

Although the landing was observed by the Japanese, little action was taken because of pressure by Australian and American forces in **New Guinea**, where the battle at Lae, Salamaua, and Finschafen was adversely affecting them. A reconnaissance aircraft, known as a 'snooper', picked up the convoy at 4.20 a.m. as it approached Mono and signalled the information to **Rabaul**. The commander of the **South East Area Fleet** immediately ordered an air attack and directed submarine RO-105 to the Treasury Group to report on Allied activity. This craft was sighted from **Soanotalu** by members of **Loganforce** as it lay off the island. An air attack by 39 Zeros and 10 carrier bombers from the Shortlands did little damage until nightfall.

During the day enemy aircraft were held off by No. 15 Squadron RNZAF, under Squadron Leader M. J. **Herrick**,¹ and No. 18 Squadron

under Squadron Leader J. A. Oldfield,² which, with American aircraft working from Vella Lavella, maintained an effective cover only rarely broken by the enemy, four of whom were shot down. Although Japanese reports made extravagant claims of sinking two American transports and two cruisers, they did little damage, their only target being the US destroyer *Cony*, on which they dropped two bombs. A night raid on Mono, built round the light cruiser *Nagara* and ten destroyers then at Rabaul, was planned by the Japanese area commander but was cancelled the following day because of the rapidly deteriorating situation in New Guinea.

Meanwhile, as Falamai was cleared and consolidated, Loganforce, named after its commander, Major G. W. Logan,³ went about its appointed task on the other side of Mono, and wrote a gallant little page of history in doing so. Covered by the American destroyer *McKean*, Logan disembarked his small force of 200 all ranks at dawn on 27 October without opposition and established a perimeter round the tiny 40-yards-wide beach, overhung with trees, at the mouth of the Soanotalu River, above which rose forest-clad cliffs in a verdant semi-circle. This force consisted of D Company, 34 Battalion, under Captain Ian Graham;⁴ one section of the MMG

¹ Sqn Ldr M. J. Herrick, DFC and bar, Air Medal (US); born Hastings, 5 May 1921; RAF; killed on air operations, 16 Jun 1944.

² Wg Cdr J. A. Oldfield, DFC; Wellington; born Wellington, 10 May 1919; solicitor OC NZ Fighter Wing in Pacific, 1944.

³ Maj G. W. Logan, ED, m.i.d., Legion of Merit (US); Christchurch; born Blenheim 6 Feb 1900; cabinet marker.

⁴ Capt I. Graham; Ngongotaha; born Temuka, 14 Jan 1912; accountant.

Company under Sergeant T. J. Phipps; ¹ an artillery observer, Captain D. J. S. Millar, ² of 52 Battery; a field ambulance detachment under Captain C. C. Foote; ³ a detachment of the United States naval construction battalion under Lieutenant C. E. Turnbull, and a detachment of American radar technicians. By midday patrols reconnoitred the surrounding country without finding any trace of the enemy, the American technicians sought out and recommended sites for radar, and during the afternoon engineers began forming a road up the rising ground from the beach in readiness for the equipment, which was barged round from Falamai and arrived the following day. Late that afternoon natives arrived in the perimeter with Flight Sergeant George Luoni, ⁴ a New Zealand airman whose machine had been shot down off Mono a month previously. He had been hidden and protected by natives until he was discovered in a hut by members of Cowan's patrol, the night before the landing.

Each day patrols from Graham's company worked out to a depth of 1000 yards through the jungle and along the coast, and by 29 October ran against small parties of Japanese filtering through from Falamai. The first serious attempt was made to reach the beach late that afternoon, when a party of twenty Japanese attacked the perimeter but were driven back by No. 14 Platoon under Lieutenant R. M. Martin, ⁵ leaving five dead. That night guns of 38 Field Regiment emplaced along the harbour coast of Stirling Island, six miles away, registered outside the Loganforce perimeter, lobbing their shells over the crown of Mono. Clashes with the enemy halted neither the construction of the road nor the installation of the urgently required radar, the first of which was in operation two days after landing at Soanotalu. There was difficulty in restraining the enthusiasm of the American technicians, both radar and engineer, who frequently assisted the New Zealand patrols instead of concentrating on their construction work.

By 30 October, when it was obvious that the Japanese refugees were concentrating round Soanotalu, as Barrowclough had anticipated when he approved the original plans, Row despatched reinforcements from 34

Battalion, ⁶ consisting of C Company headquarters and one platoon and the carrier platoon (used as infantry)

¹ **Sgt T. J. Phipps; Westport; born Westport, 8 Mar 1914; printer.**

² **Capt D. J. S. Millar; Napier; born Knapdale, Gore, 4 Apr 1915; clerk.**

³ **Maj C. C. Foote; Westport; born Westport, 23 Oct 1915; medical practitioner.**

⁴ **W/O G. I. Luoni; Lower Hutt; born Dunedin, 23 Mar 1922; clerk; wounded 23 Sep 1943.**

⁵ **Maj R. M. Martin; Christchurch; born England, 28 Jul 1921; Regular soldier; wounded, Italy, 31 Dec 1944.**

⁶ **Barrowclough wished Loganforce to be increased to the strength of a battalion, but numbers were gravely reduced by a shortage of shipping at that time.**

under Major J. C. **Braithwaite**. ¹ These were disposed round the second radar site, equipment for which was dragged up the hillside from the beach and emplaced on higher ground the following day. It was operating on 31 October with the radius of 107 to 124 miles, and fulfilled its mission by being ready for the **Empress Augusta Bay** landing on 1 November.

Meanwhile, increasing patrol clashes indicated growing Japanese strength, though the enemy made no attempt to reach the radar and was unaware of its existence. A small patrol under Lieutenant J. A. H. **Dowell** ² encountered a strong enemy force 1500 yards beyond the perimeter on 1 November and withdrew after inflicting damage, as Dowell feared an ambush in such close country. With the arrival of

reinforcements Logan divided his force, using Braithwaite's group to guard the radar station high above the beach and the remainder to guard the original perimeter round headquarters and a second station. Closer to the beach, inside the perimeter in a strongpoint covering a barge drawn up on the sand, was a small force of nine men, six New Zealanders and the three American members of the barge crew, under Captain L. J. Kirk.³

Late on the night of 1 November, between sixty and ninety Japanese attacked the west perimeter, using grenades, mortars, and machine guns in an attempt to reach the landing barge. Before midnight the field telephones joining strongpoints with the commander had been put out of action by grenades, and the groups fought independently of each other. Japanese infiltrated through the perimeter and attempted to break Kirk's small garrison, which was armed with hand grenades, one tommy gun, and two machine guns taken off the barge. The first assault came at 1.30 a. m., killing Staff-Sergeant D. O. Hannafin⁴ and wounding Kirk, whose skull was creased with a bullet. He recovered and continued directing the defence. When the machine guns were hit and put out of action, Kirk and his men held off the Japanese with hand grenades. A suggestion to abandon the strongpost and withdraw to the main defence position was discarded in favour of holding out until day-light. Soon afterwards Kirk was again wounded, this time fatally, though he survived until next day. Command of the little garrison passed to Private C. H. Sherson⁵ and, when he was wounded as the Japanese pressed their attack, to the company cook, Private

¹ Maj J. C. Braithwaite, ED; Invercargill; born Port Chalmers, 31 Jan 1906; school teacher.

² Capt J. A. H. Dowell; Wellington; born NZ 3 Nov 1918; clerk.

³ Capt L. J. Kirk, m.i.d.; born 23 Jan 1911; schoolmaster; died of wounds 2 Nov 1943.

⁴ **S-Sgt D. O. Hannafin**; born **Port Chalmers**, 20 Dec 1905; farm manager; killed in action 2 Nov 1943.

⁵ **Pte C. H. Sherson**, m.i.d.; Te Kauwhata; born **Auckland**, 27 Nov 1917; farm contractor; wounded 2 Nov 1943.

J. E. Smith, ¹ who led the defenders until dawn, after which the Japanese melted away into the jungle. When daylight came a patrol was despatched from Logan's headquarters to investigate the state of the beach post, shooting a sniper on the way. Twenty-six Japanese dead lay round Kirk's strongpost. Some of them had reached the barge and were killed beside it. Most of Kirk's garrison were wounded, including one of the Americans and Smith himself who, in the midst of the grim scene, was busily preparing breakfast.

Platoons on the west perimeter fought off the attackers without loss. Fifty Japanese dead were counted that morning by patrols, but as on every other occasion, the wounded had been removed. Captured enemy equipment included five knee mortars, four light machine guns, several dozen rifles and one sword. During the day Logan reorganised his defences in readiness for attacks which came on the two following nights, though with decreasing violence, from desperate refugees who represented the last Japanese resistance on Mono. Patrols afterwards fanned out from the perimeter, picked up a few stragglers, and drove the remainder into hiding. D Company was relieved by A Company under Captain **A. G. Steele** ² on 5 November, but the **Loganforce** garrison was never again attacked.

Organised resistance in the Treasuries ceased on the night of 2–3 November, but groups of Japanese survivors secreted themselves in caves along the northern coast, where they built rafts in an effort to escape to the Shortlands. These survivors were eliminated only with difficulty by patrols. One such raft carrying an unknown number of Japanese was rammed and strafed by a motor torpedo boat four miles off

shore. After moving elements of **34 Battalion** to Malsi, which looked directly on to the Shortlands, Row ordered the whole island of Mono to be combed by fighting patrols. The hazards of these expeditions were increased by the density of the jungle and by broken watercourses which, radiating from the crown of the island, cut down to the coast in small rivers.

Several sharp engagements resulted before groups of refugees were exterminated. On 5 November a fighting patrol of D Company **36 Battalion**, under Major I. G. O'Neill, ³ which crossed the island from **Falamai**, was prompted to investigate a cave on the northern coast by the discovery of a recently constructed raft and paddles close beside it. In the two-hour engagement which followed, ten Japanese were killed and one taken prisoner.

¹ **Pte J. E. Smith**, MM; Moerewa, Bay of Islands; born Kawa Kawa, 11 Aug 1908 freezing works employee; wounded 2 Nov 1943.

² **Maj A. G. Steele**; Otahuhu; born **Pukekohe**, 15 Aug 1915; butcher.

³ **Maj I. G. O'Neill**; **Auckland**; born **Taihape**, 7 Jan 1906; schoolmaster.

Corporal F. A. Armstrong's ¹ initiative in following a wounded Japanese down a cliff-face and tossing grenades into a cave, after a sergeant had been killed by the enemy hiding there, saved the lives of several members of this patrol. The following day a patrol from Steele's company at **Soanotalu** routed twelve Japanese out of caves and killed them, losing one man killed and four wounded in doing so. The last of the refugees in any number were discovered hiding in caves west of **Soanotalu** on 8 November by a **29 Battalion** patrol, under Lieutenant E. C. **Chandler**, ² which destroyed twelve more. Other patrols laboriously searched the caves, water-course, and jungle, picking up a few

stragglers, but by 12 November the island was declared clear of the enemy. By that time eight prisoners had been taken and the destruction of 205 Japanese confirmed, the number rising to 223 by end of the month. Allied casualties were:

Killed: New Zealand 40, **United States** 12

Wounded: New Zealand 145, **United States** 29

Occasional Japanese were sighted in the jungle up to the end of December, and even in January, giving rise to fantastic stories, some of them true, of their attempts to obtain food from unit cookhouses and their escapes when pursued. One such story, a true one, concerned an American cook who disturbed a Japanese in his modest kitchen and knocked out the intruder with a Coleman lamp. This Japanese had been hiding close beside **34 Battalion's** open-air theatre. Such was one aspect of war in the the jungle. Civil administration was restored on 1 November by Major D. C. C. Trench, of the Government service, and the flag raised over the ruins of **Falamai**.

Although command of **8 Brigade** did not revert to the division until 16 November, Barrowclough and some of his senior officers visited the Treasuries on 2 November, travelling from **Vella Lavella** by motor torpedo boat and reaching **Blanche Harbour** by dawn. Moving from beach-head to beach-head by landing craft, the General visited as many units as possible in company with Row and arrived to find the **Soanotalu** action still in progress.

The Treasury operation was a revealing example of that team-work, not only among services but between New Zealand and American units and formations, which brought success to this island-hopping campaign and improved the planning for subsequent landings. A detachment of the US Naval Base landed with the first wave of New Zealand troops to mark beaches for craft arriving in succeeding flights. They then organised and controlled a small

¹ **Sgt F. A. Armstrong**, MM; **Napier**; born Seddon, 22 Mar

1914; storeman.

² Lt E. C. Chandler; Te Puke; born Birmingham, 24 Oct 1912; cheese-maker.

fleet of landing craft to ferry vehicles, stores, and guns to **Stirling Island**, and in a few days were running a regular ferry service round **Blanche Harbour** for passengers, rations, water, and other supplies. Among the New Zealanders the problems of the moment were overcome with speed and enterprise. All services were represented among the assaulting troops and worked with the infantry during the immediate beach fighting. An armourer of the Ordnance Corps, Sergeant W. J. **Pearson**, ¹ was one of the first casualties on the beach at **Falamai**, and two artillery observation officers of 49 Battery, Captain H. J. **Greig** ² and Captain F. J. **Mitchell**, ³ undertook infantry roles during the first day's fighting. On the day of the landing bulldozers of **23 Field Company** scooped roads and tracks from the beach to dumps and headquarters inside the perimeter, later extending them into the jungle and to nearby beaches. Communication problems resolved themselves more easily than during the operations on **Vella Lavella**. A forward signal centre established on **Mono Island** relayed information by wireless to headquarters on **Stirling**, the sets working well across water. Later, an underwater cable was laid from island to island, dried coconuts being used to float the line over sharp-cutting coral on the foreshore. Except for interruption by electrical storms, which were frequent and violent, the ZC1 and No. 48 radio sets worked well, and only rarely were commanders out of touch. The 7th Field Ambulance hospital, established in a cleared area under trees on **Stirling**, was relatively free from interference, but at a small dressing station in the forward area at **Falamai**, Captain D. **Rogers** ⁴ was forced to move to a stream, where the banks gave protection from flying metal, and he and his staff worked standing in the water, above which their patients were suspended on stretchers. The wounded were evacuated to **2 Casualty Clearing Station** on **Guadalcanal** by landing craft and sent on to **4 General Hospital** in

New Caledonia by air, where they arrived 48 hours later.

¹ Sgt W. J. Pearson, m.i.d.; born Auckland, 17 Aug 1919; letterpress machinist; killed in action 27 Oct 1943.

² Capt H. J. Greig; Kaikohe; born Auckland, 30 Sep 1914; panel beater.

³ Capt F. J. Mitchell; Christchurch; born Christchurch, 24 Oct 1905; Regular soldier.

⁴ Maj D. Rogers; Hamilton; born Hamilton, 30 Sep 1917; medical student.

THE PACIFIC

III: THE WAITING PERIOD

III: The Waiting Period

With the cessation of hostilities on both **Vella Lavella** and the **Treasuries**, problems of administration, particularly of maintenance and engineering, took precedence over operations. Units on each island were always maintained at combat strength by the absorption of reinforcements from **New Caledonia**, but the principal activities of each base centered round airfields and motor torpedo boat bases, since the striking force of those two arms of the service most effectively punished and weakened the enemy during the periods when further thrusts forward were being planned and organised. As the months went by, however, both islands were left far in the rear zone as the battle moved north. The plantations returned to their habitual peace, broken only by the chatter of birds by day and the noisy quarrelling of flying foxes by night. Before the New Zealanders left **Vella Lavella**, members of **17 Field Regiment**, **L Section Signals**, and **20 Light Aid Detachment** of the **Ordnance Corps** presented 1009 dollars to the **Methodist Foreign Mission** towards the cost of maintaining a ward for the treatment of native **Solomon Islanders** in a mission hospital. It was a tribute to the work of faithful native guides.

When command of **8 Brigade** reverted to the division on 16 November, **Barrowclough**, on an island midway through the **Solomons**, controlled a force the elements of which were scattered from the **Treasury Group** to **New Caledonia**, a distance of 1500 miles. Units of **14 Brigade** were disposed tactically at sites round the coast of **Vella Lavella**, from which they patrolled the intervening country and maintained their supply line with **Divisional Headquarters** by using landing barges round the coast. One such journey ended in disaster on 5 December when a captured Japanese barge, operated by the engineers, ran on a reef while transporting a padre and his party to **Tambama**. Three American aircraft

shot it up, killing Corporal J. J. **Tod**,¹ who died of wounds, and Sapper F. L. **Knipe**.² Exhaustive inquiries revealed that one of the pilots was afterwards killed in action and another wounded.

Units remained so dispersed until the year's end, when they were withdrawn and concentrated in the brigade area along the coast between Ruravai and Juno River, with **30 Battalion** scattered from Mumia to Supato and Malasova, from which companies departed periodically to undertake jungle and landing exercises on Baga Island. Eighth Brigade units remained similarly disposed, though not so widely scattered, on Mono and Stirling Islands, where they stayed until the division was withdrawn from the **Solomons**.

In the Treasuries all activity centred on **Stirling Island**, where an airfield was constructed with such urgency that machinery and equipment were flown from distant supply bases and dropped by parachute. Emergency landings were made there on 17 December, when the first machine overturned on the lumpy surface, but by the

¹ **Cpl J. J. Tod**; born NZ 3 Sep 1921; factory hand; died of wounds 5 Dec 1943.

² **Spr F. L. Knipe**; born **Christchurch**, 17 Apr 1921; driver; killed in action 5 Dec 1943.

end of the month it was a 7000 ft runway of blinding coral which, with revetments, repair shops put together like Meccano sets, supply and petrol dumps, occupied more than half the island. The airstrip ended with a drop over a 70 ft cliff. What few clumps of jungle remained after the airfield was completed concealed food and supply depots and the huts and tents of the island's busy inhabitants. **Japan's** final gesture of defiance in the Treasuries was made on the night of 12–13 January 1944, when the airfield and its environs on **Stirling** was heavily bombed, but without doing any great damage. At the western end of the island Brigade and Island Command headquarters were agreeably sheltered by a

few giant trees, all that remained of the thickets of jungle through which the staff had pushed and slashed their way to set up the tented offices of headquarters on the day of the landing.

This clearance of camp areas when hostilities ceased was one of the more urgent tasks as each island was secured, and also a revelation of the New Zealanders' passion for tidying up, even in the jungle. Trees and undergrowth, their overhead concealment no longer necessary, disappeared, and with them went the mud, most of the insects, and the gloom, followed by a gratifying uplift in morale. Associated with this clearance was the engineers' roading programme, always a most comprehensive one since it involved the removal of tracts of forest, the bridging of tidal streams and rivers, as well as the construction of wharves, all of which confirmed Barrowclough's wisdom in asking for three field companies for such a campaign. Such roading was also essential for the speedy distribution of supplies and the linking of defences and services.

As commanding general of the **Northern Landing Force**, Barrowclough not only commanded **3 Division** but was responsible for the administration and tactical disposition of all Allied forces in his area. On **Vella Lavella**, by 25 October, the total Allied strength numbered 17,000, fluctuating as American units of the **Marine Amphibious Corps** moved to and from the battlefield on **Bougainville** after the landing there. By 26 October aircraft stationed on **Barakoma**, from which air cover for the Treasury landing had operated, were using 27,000 gallons of petrol a day, rising to 30,000 gallons at the end of the month, all of it brought forward from **Guadalcanal** and other bases in landing craft in 53-gallon drums and manhandled ashore.

Motor torpedo boats, powerful craft which attained a speed of 40 knots, were at this time using 250 drums of petrol each night as they hunted the enemy along his supply lanes between the islands. The record consumption of petrol (or 'avgas' as the Americans called it) in one day, reached during the **Bougainville** landing operations, was 143,000 gallons. Food supplies to maintain these two island garrisons

(that on the Treasuries rose to 8000 with the arrival of construction battalions for the airfield) also arrived by landing craft until the Treasury Group was secured, after which cargo ships were permitted as far forward as **Vella Lavella**. The first of these, a refrigerated ship, arrived on 31 October with a cargo of fresh foods, including 22,035 lb. of beef, 1400 lb. of lamb, 9113 lb. of potatoes, 310 lb. of celery, 4100 lb. of apples and 2210 lb. of butter, which was speedily distributed to prevent deterioration in the heat. Five refrigerator units, with a storage space of 65,000 cubic feet, arrived in November and enabled fresh foods to held over long periods. Such was the organisation of supplies throughout the **Solomons** that for Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day sufficient turkeys arrived in supply ships, rather cynically termed the 'turkey express', to provide a most generous ration for all members of these island garrisons. Such fresh foods, however, were necessary for the maintenance of both health and moral in that debilitating climate.

New Zealand soldiers in the **Solomons** campaign established a record low sickness rate from malaria, though during the planning stage allowances were made for a high percentage of manpower wastage from it. During the operational period, of the 13,784 officers and men who went forward into the zone in which it was prevalent, only 3.19 per cent contracted malaria, many after they left the forward zone. Anti-malarial precautions, coupled with hygiene and sanitation, were one phase of tropical warfare in which vigilance was never relaxed. A ruthless insistence on obedience of orders concerning these precautions and a high sense of responsibility among individuals combined to keep down the sickness rate to a level previously thought impossible. The American forces in the early days of the campaign, particularly on **Guadalcanal**, suffered disastrously until a precautionary drill was established.

The division's No. 1 Malaria Control Unit, first commanded by Major N. H. North and later by Major D. McK. Jack, waged ceaseless battle against the mosquito and its breeding haunts. Round all camp sites and unit areas trained personnel carried out a strict routine programme. All damp undergrowth was removed, moist and swampy areas and other

breeding places were sprayed with oil—even the ruts of wheel tracks after rain. In the Treasury islands, particularly on **Stirling Island**, the removal of undergrowth also eliminated a minute insect, the bites of which produced a maddening itch and raised the sickness rate. In actual combat, when nets were inpracticable, the men rubbed exposed parts of the body with repellen oil and each man carried this own supply of atebtrin tablets. The division was also fortunate in having on its medical staff Colonel E. G. **Sayers**, ¹ a former medical missionary who had been stationed in the **Solomons**, who had been transferred from **2 NZEF** in the **Middle East** to be Consultant in Tropical Diseases. The 6th Field Hygiene Section, under Major R. M. **Irwin**, ² was equally vigilant in preventing disease and combating the spread of malaria and dengue fevers, skin disease, and dysentery. When possible, hygiene personnel were included in the first troops making a beach landing. Their primary duties were to establish emergency latrines and to arrange rubbish dumping areas. Sanitary policing of any newly occupied area or beach-head was most important, as gross fouling could occur in the first hour ashore. The disposal of garbage to prevent the carriage of disease by flies was usually accomplished by dumping it down chutes into the sea, which turned each disposal area into a haunt for fisherman in search of big game, or by burning. More unpleasant was the task of disposing of dead Japanese after an engagement. If this was not solved by the use of a bulldozer, the corpses were dumped into the sea from barges. After the action on **Nissan Island**, Irwin, a strong swimmer, disposed of seventy dead Japanese by towing them behind him with ropes, two at a time, into deep water when the barge stuck on the coral reef. These tasks, important to the conduct of an army, assumed greater importance in the **Solomons**, where tropical diseases were rife and hygiene control most essential to the healthy occupation of islands over a period of months or even years.

A considerable amount of experimental work was accomplished by services during the waiting periods, particularly by Signals, whose maintenance and installation work was especially arduous. Electrical storms played tricks with the radio network which linked up the islands,

and in the jungle itself moisture affected the efficiency of sets never designed for service in such damp, enclosed country. Many of the difficulties with field sets were overcome when Major P. Barcham, of the Signals Experimental Establishment of Army Headquarters, arrived on **Vella Lavella** and carried out technical experiments with **Burns**³ and his officers, from whom he collected information useful for the design of signals equipment in tropical territory.

The long intervals between actions, though ceaseless with administrative work for the staffs of headquarters, led to considerable

¹ **Col E. G. Sayers**, Legion of Merit (US); **Auckland**; born **Christchurch**, 10 Sep 1902; medical officer **2 NZEF**, 1940–42; Consultant Physician **2 NZEF** (IP), 1943–44; CO 4 Gen Hosp, Dec 1943—Aug 1944.

² **Maj R. M. Irwin**, m.i.d.; born **Christchurch**, 27 Oct 1914; medical practitioner.

³ **Lt-Col D. McN. Burns**, m.i.d., Legion of Merit (US); **Wellington**; born **Carterton**, 8 Oct 1910; telegraph engineer; OC 3 NZ Div Sigs, 1942–44; SSO Signals, Army HQ, 1944–45.

boredom among the men. Training and routine garrison duties could not compensate for their complete isolation in a climate which left them listless and restless. There was little to do during leisure hours except for those individuals with initiative and sufficient energy to drive themselves into activity of both mind and body. There were no towns to visit, no leave centres, not even a village and rarely a house. The only alternative to looking at a wall of verdant jungle, interesting enough until familiarity bred violent objection by all except ardent naturalists, was to turn about face and look at the sea, a more attractive prospect because the outlines of islands, far and near, gave it variety. During these periods and the **Army Education and Welfare Service** provided profitable employment for those who wished to study. From its base

headquarters in an ancient building in **New Caledonia**, a flow of material passed to the unit officers—Lieutenant H. C. Veitch, Divisional headquarters; Lieutenant J. L. H. Hewland, **8 Brigade**; Lieutenant A. A. Congalton, 14 Brigade; and Lieutenant N. H. Buchanan, Base—who put it to good use in both entertainment and instruction. This service, of which the first director was Major A. H. Thom, controlled and organised study courses, rehabilitation, discussion groups, unit libraries, cinemas, the concert party, and the force newspaper *Kiwi*, which was produced on a vintage plant in **Bourail** and flown to forward areas for distribution.

The construction of motion picture theatres was simplicity itself. Areas of coconut palm and jungle were felled by the engineers and tree trunks arranged in rows as seats, with the screen suspended between two remaining upright trees. Here the audience sat under the stars or in the rain, watching films which gave them relief from a monotonous daily round. Scattered units each had their own 16-millimetre projectors and were rarely without regular film entertainment. Hobbies were encouraged and quite a business developed by enterprising craftsmen, who fashioned bracelets and necklaces and other articles of chunky jewellery from sea shells and sold them to American troops at considerable profit.

Fourteenth Brigade set a precedent by organising an exhibition of handcrafts, later sending a remarkable collection of articles to New Zealand, where it was displayed publicly. There were 294 exhibits and 505 dollars in prize money. Metal and plastic glass from wrecked aeroplanes, shells, nuts, palm and jungle woods were all used with skill and imagination. Similar crafts were encouraged by **8 Brigade**, which also promoted yachting and boating on the calm waters of **Blanche Harbour**. The concert party, directed by Warrant Officer R. Sayers, toured from island to island for months at a time, playing to both New Zealand and American units on open-air stages and maintaining a standard of entertainment all the more remarkable because of its resourcefulness.

Unit padres and **YMCA** officials contributed to the well-being of the men, each according to his ability and personality. The amount of cheer

some of these men brewed with their tea could not be measured in gallons, particularly in action. Neither mud nor rain extinguished the primuses of Padres J. W. Parker and G. D. Falloon, who were only two of the division's team which included Padre K. Liggett, the first senior chaplain and an able musician, **Padre E. O. Sheild**, O. T. Baragwanath, and J. C. Pierce. ¹ The popularity as a social centre of **Padre G. R. Thompson's** tent under the palms at divisional Headquarters can be assessed by the 700 cups of tea provided daily for its callers. ² The former residence of Gill's plantation owner, the only European house remaining intact on **Vella Lavella**, was taken over and made into a rest house presided over by Mr. **S. R. Knapp** of the **YMCA**. Anyone passing along the main highway called there for tea and a glance at the newspapers, some of which had been flown from New Zealand a few days previously.

There was never any shortage of visitors to headquarters, all of them travelling by air in a service which ran with a regularity disturbed only by violent electrical storms. His Excellency the Governor-General, Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir Cyril Newall, arrived on 17 November and presented decorations won in action by members of 14 Brigade at a ceremony held in **Joroveto** village, long since deserted by the natives but now containing dumps for ASC supplies and engineer equipment. Lieutenant D. J. Law commanded a guard of honour of selected six-footers, six from each company of **37 Battalion**, in this first presentation of battle honours to members of the division. Accompanied by Barrowclough, who had flown to **Guadalcanal** to meet him, the Governor-General toured all units on **Vella Lavella**, moving round the coast in a landing barge, after which he went on a similar mission to **8 Brigade** in the

¹ Padre Falloon was awarded the Military Cross for his work in action on **Vella Lavella**; Padres Falloon, Baragwanath, and G. R. Thompson were mentioned in despatches.

² Thompson organised a popular recreation centre under the

palms of Gill's plantation and called it 'Te Kaianga o te Kiwi'. He and a band of volunteers cleared a site for two tents, once given by headquarters and the other obtained from a US salvage dump. Tea urns were made from shell cases and dippers from milk-powder tins. an empty petrol drum served as a furnace, with a ten-gallon dixie as a copper. Firing was collected from the jungle. Seats were made from logs and tables from packing cases. Thompson was assisted by Sergeant R. McNaught, as secretary, and a committee representing Divisional HQ, Signals, ASC, D and E Platoon, Field Security Section, Malaria Control Section, Engineers, and **22 Field Ambulance**. Tea, milk-powder, and biscuits were supplied by the National Patriotic fund Board. Games were provided, information boards displayed maps, news and intelligence items; 'quiz' seassions were arranged for Monday nights and concerts on Wednesdays. Volunteers also laid out a tenaquoit court and the place was made attractive with beds of tropical flowers bordered with sea shells.

Treasuries. On his way back to **Guadalcanal** he visited the **RNZAF** squadrons stationed at **Ondonga**, in the **New Georgia** Group. Major-General J. S. Lethbridge, head of a British mission seeking information on jungle warfare and equipment, called on Barrowclough and his staff officers for discussions on lessons learned in action. Halsey arrived on 11 November, the 25th anniversary of the 1914–18 Armistice, on one of his frequent visits to the forward zone to discuss with commanders future operations in the drive to **Rabaul**, round which the pincers were closing as the **Pacific** strategical pattern unfolded.

On 21 November, on the right flank of th vast **Pacific** theatre, American forces landed on **Tarawa** and Makin Islands, in the north of the Gilbert Group, thus beginning the thrust into the fortress islands of the Marshalls. Almost equally distant on the left flank, MacArthur's forces were pressing successfully along the northern coast of **New Guinea**, where Lae, Salamaua, and Finschafen had fallen, and preparations were advanced for the first move on to the island of **New Britain** on 26 December. Halsey, thrusting up through the **Solomons**, was then planning his next move to cut enemy traffic north of **Bougainville**, establish airfields to cover further advances forward, and

end the **Solomons** campaign.

Far-reaching changes followed Barrowclough's decision, taken on 28 November and executed in December, to retire all officers of more than 41 years of age unless their retention was justified by some special qualification. Many of the officers who returned to New Zealand had been with the force since **Fiji** days. Goss came up from **Guadalcanal** and succeeded Row as commander **8 Brigade**, which he took over on 4 December. Allan went to 36 battalion as second-in-command and was replaced as GSO 2 by MacArthur from **8 Brigade**. Major D. C. Williams was appointed DAAG in succession to Marshall; Reidy took over command of **34 Battalion** from Eyre, Major B. H. Pringle succeeded McKenzie-Muirson as commander **36 Battalion**, and Major J. F. Moffatt took over **35 Battalion** from Seaward, all three of them being promoted. Major H. A. Wernham, **34 Battalion**, succeeded Logan as commander of **8 Brigade** MMG Company. Major L. E. Pithie replaced Major G. W. Waddell as brigade major 14 Brigade, Bracewell taking over a similar appointment on **8 Brigade** staff. Tennent returned to New Zealand and was succeeded by Sayers at 4 New Zealand General Hospital in **New Caledonia**. Major F. G. Barrowclough was promoted and took command of **22 Field Ambulance** from Shirer. These changes and the promotions which followed them gave effect to the commander's desire to revitalise the force, before further action, with younger men, and to exchange officers from the Base Training Depot in **New Caledonia** with those who could be rested from the combat areas.

Changes also followed at the Field Maintenance Centre on **Guadalcanal** when **Rear Divisional Headquarters** ceased to function on 13 December. Elements of artillery, engineers, medical, and ASC passed to the respective heads of those services and all remaining troops came under command of FMC, now established in an area off Wright's Road. There sufficient buildings had been erected to house the increasing quantities of ordnance supplies and stores required in the forward zone and to accommodate troops going to and returning from the combat areas by surface craft and air.

As in all other areas occupied by units of the division, a roading programme by the engineers vastly improved it, particularly round the Casualty Clearing Station at **Point Cruz**, where tented wards had given way to more permanent wooden buildings, each one erected in ten days by members of 37 Field Park. The environs of this hospital, where flower gardens had been developed and young palms lined the paths and roadways, became the show place of **Guadalcanal**. An event of some importance, since they were the first women to reach the forward zone and had a considerable effect on morale, was the arrival of eight New Zealand nursing sisters from 4 New Zealand General Hospital in **New Caledonia** to join the staff—Charge Sisters Joyce Sexton and R. J. Ward, Sisters D. H. Hoyte, H. B. Foster, M. S. Farland, J. G. Galloway, A. M. McLachlan, and M. G. Gwilliam. Dental services attached to the station included No. 2 Maxillo-Facial Injury Section under Major S. N. Jolly.

Christmas came and with it a week of organised sport by all formations—swimming, wood-chopping (despite the climate), athletics, boating, mechanical horse-racing, and such other entertainment as could be improvised by ingeniously minded regimental committees. Natives on **Vella Lavella** recovered their magnificently decorated war canoes from hiding places in the jungle and rowed them with joyous vigour in a regatta. The concert party and the divisional band both contributed programmes regardless of the hour, and army cooks vied with each other in producing Christmas Day dinners, whipping up appetites with turkey and special foods which were a change from the dehydrated ingredients of the army ration. Halsey sent a Christmas message, generously worded in adjectives which a British commander would hesitate to use, which began, ‘To all hands of my South Pacific jungle-smashing, sea-sweeping, sky-blazing crew....’

The scene at Malsi, **Mono Island**, on Boxing Day 1943 was an interesting comment on the **Solomons** campaign, when long periods of consolidation and preparation were necessary while airfields and naval bases were constructed and the necessary craft made available for another long leap forward. There, on a beach of creamy coral sand,

hundreds of New Zealanders and Americans, restricted by the least possible amount of clothing, and brown as nuts, watched the events of an athletic carnival and sideshows rivalling those of an agricultural show at home, or invested their dollars on a busy totalisator between events. Not a gun or a weapon of war was in sight. High overhead squadrons of aircraft droned in the heavy air, going to and returning from their bombing missions. Fewer than twenty miles away across the water, columns of billowing smoke rose from Japanese airfields and installations on and around the **Shortland Islands**, indicating where the bombers had found their targets.

On 30 December Barrowclough, on receipt of a signal from Wilkinson, left by air for **Guadalcanal** to attend a conference on the division's next task, the capture and occupation of the **Green Islands Group**, only 117 miles from **Rabaul**, 280 miles north of **Vella Lavella**, and 530 miles from **Guadalcanal**.

THE PACIFIC

IV: THE CAPTURE OF GREEN ISLANDS

IV: The Capture of Green Islands

The **Green Islands Group**, a coral atoll lying midway between **Rabaul** and **Buka** and only four degrees south of the Equator, served as a staging depot for Japanese barge traffic operating between those two bases to maintain the enemy garrison contained on **Bougainville**. It consisted of **Nissan**, the largest island (and one by which the group is generally known) and two smaller ones, **Barahun** and **Sirot**, these three forming an oval of hard coral enclosing a deep, sheltered lagoon to which there are only two navigable entrances, both very narrow. **Hon**, a wooded dot of coral, sits in the middle of this lagoon, and lying north of the group is another atoll named **Pinipel**. Except for two coconut plantations, a deserted mission station and a few native clearings, the islands are clothed in dense forest. There are no streams and no supplies of fresh water, but heavy rain falls at some time almost every day. Along the outer coast of **Nissan Island**, inside the reef, boulder-strewn beaches rise to coral cliffs in places sixty feet high and often pitted with deep caves. Inside the lagoon, forest trees overhang much of the shelving coastline, which rarely rises to more than a few feet but provides only a few easily accessible beaches.

The Japanese command in **Rabaul**, **8 Area Army**, realised that the loss of the **Green Islands Group** would provide the Allies with an excellent site for an airfield from which to attack **Rabaul** and their other bases in **New Britain** and **New Ireland**, but beyond giving orders to a small garrison of twelve naval lookouts and an army unit of eighty all ranks to maintain a strict watch, the commander did nothing to fortify the group. Barges using it as a staging base sheltered in the lagoon by day, moving only by night on the journey between **Rabaul** and **Buka**.

Although another island base was required by the **South Pacific Command** to keep the attack rolling forward and contain **Rabaul**, the

decision to occupy the group was not reached without some difference of opinion. In March 1943 the Joint Chiefs of Staff had revised their orders of 2 July 1942 and directed that all operations against **Rabaul** by both the South and South West Pacific forces would be conducted under the supervision of MacArthur, whose directives were to be followed in all related tasks. From then on, therefore, Halsey had set about neutralising enemy airfields north and south of **Bougainville** as his forces thrust upward through the **Solomons**, until they were established on **Bougainville** itself.

During a conference at **Port Moresby** on 20 December 1943 with members of Halsey's staff, MacArthur, eager then to complete the encirclement of **Rabaul** and move on to the Admiralty Group, suggested the seizure of the **Green Islands** as a base on which airfields could be constructed. Wilkinson, mindful of the Joint Chiefs of Staff indication in their directive to neutralise **Kavieng**, on the northern tip of **New Ireland**, favoured Borpop, on the mainland of **New Ireland**, or Boang Island, 60 miles north-west of **Green Islands**, since they were both closer to the objective though more difficult to cover by land-based aircraft from established airfields. On the advice of Colonel W. E. Riley, his war plans officer, Halsey overruled Wilkinson's suggestion in favour of the occupation of **Green Islands**, because a landing there could be supported by aircraft operating from airfields inside the perimeter at **Empress Augusta Bay** and the **Stirling** field in the Treasuries. The group was also within easier reach of **Rabaul**, only 117 miles to the west. Halsey was also eager to establish motor torpedo boat bases to sever the Japanese supply lines to their remaining isolated garrisons in **Bougainville**, and the **Green Islands** appeared to offer the better facilities. He therefore directed Wilkinson to proceed with tentative plans for the seizure and occupation of the group and suggested that the New Zealand Division be used for the task.

Barrowclough, accompanied by Brooke and Bennett, attended a conference at Wilkinson's headquarters on **Guadalcanal** on 31 December, when the objectives of the operation were outlined, given the code name

of **SQUAREPEG**, and the date of the landing provisionally fixed for 25 January.

The task involved a difficult amphibious landing and, as soon as the group was occupied, the construction of two airfields, the establishment of a naval and motor torpedo boat base, and the installation of radar stations. Operational command was vested in Barrowclough who, after the landing was consolidated, would become island commander. He decided to employ 14 Brigade and strengthen his force by including **144 Independent Battery** and the **Tank Squadron**, neither of which had been employed in action since their arrival on **Guadalcanal** some months earlier. Information concerning the **Green Islands** Group, however, was too unreliable and insufficient on which to base a hazardous expedition. Most of it was taken from air photographs. Former residents were scattered, and no coastwatchers had been hidden on this isolated group. Nothing was known of the Japanese garrison, and a native population of 1500 was thought, quite wrongly as events proved, to favour the enemy. This vital lack of information was to be overcome by sending in a strong reconnaissance party at least ten days before the landing. Harmon, who was present at the initial conference, promised to intensify both air and naval cover over the group during the period between the reconnaissance and the invasion should the Japanese garrison, alarmed by Allied activity, call for reinforcements from **Rabaul**.

After issuing a warning order to Potter, Barrowclough returned to **Vella Lavella** by air on New Year's Day and that evening discussed the forthcoming operations at a conference with the brigade commander, the divisional staff, and heads of services. Potter assigned **30 Battalion** for the reconnaissance which, for security reasons, was described as a commando raid. The following day the divisional commander flew to the Treasuries, informed Goss that his brigade would be in reserve for the forthcoming operation, presented decorations won during the seizure of the Treasury Group, and returned to **Vella Lavella** that afternoon in readiness to move to **Guadalcanal** on 3 January. Only by the use of aircraft was Barrowclough able to cover such engagements throughout

his scattered command or periodically visit **New Caledonia**, as he did the following week to discuss hospital construction and problems of administration with Dove.

Although the **Green Islands** operation followed the pattern of the division's two former tasks, it was much larger in scope than either of them and required an immense amount of detailed planning, much of it based on incomplete knowledge of conditions likely to be encountered. In the early stages it was hampered by changes in the invasion date, which affected not only the army planners but also the naval and air force units with which the whole operation was so closely co-ordinated. On 4 January Barrowclough was informed that the operation had been postponed until 1 February, which meant a corresponding postponement of the raid, since only ten days were to elapse between the two events. The following day a further postponement put the operation back to 15 February. Even this was in doubt until Halsey issued an order on 24 January confirming both the date and the locality.

Divisional Headquarters on Vella Lavella closed on 5 January and moved back to **Guadalcanal** to be within easy working distance of Wilkinson's headquarters during the planning period, since constant consultation between the three services on final details was essential to success. Heads of services and skeleton staffs also moved back to **Guadalcanal** over a period of weeks as each came into the picture, command of Vella eventually passing to the Sixth (US) Island Command on 19 January. Meanwhile, working from air photographs, preliminary planning for both the raid and the landing were started by 14 Brigade, which remained at its old site in Gill's plantation. The first really accurate information which paved the way for the raid was obtained on the night of 10 January, when a special naval party in two American motor torpedo boats surveyed without detection the two lagoon entrances and found that the southern channel between **Barahun** and Nissan Islands was sixteen feet deep and forty to fifty feet wide. It would therefore take the larger landing craft, including heavy LSTs.

The Green Island landing, a model of accurate and detailed planning

by a divisional staff now experienced by former operations, avoided former faults and deficiencies. It was freely admitted that for once in military operations the A and Q department played a more important part than G, with whom there is inevitably a little professional rivalry. 'From conception to completion I consider that the **Green Island** project was a remarkably fine operation,' Halsey afterwards recorded in the report on the seizure of the group. Primarily the operation became a supply and engineering problem in distributing men, supplies, and great quantities of heavy machinery and equipment over a modest armada of landing craft, and so arranged that if one was destroyed its loss would not endanger or menace the success of the whole undertaking.

Conditions were exacting and complicated the planning, since units and their equipment had to be uplifted from islands hundreds of miles apart—American units from **Tulagi**, the Russells, and **Ondonga**, a base in the **New Georgia** Group; New Zealand units from **Guadalcanal**, **Vella Lavella**, and the Treasury Group. A total of 5806 officers and men (New Zealand 4242; **USA** 1564) and 4344 tons of supplies and equipment, including a special reserve of 2000 tons of fresh water in tins and five days' supply of food for 1500 natives, were distributed over eight APDs, thirteen LCIs, seven LSTs, and six LCTs. Numbers and quantities were worked out meticulously for each landing craft, some of which carried bulldozers for the construction of vehicular ramps to the shore should difficulties be encountered on the beaches. Others carried trestle bridges as a further precaution should deep water prevent the bulldozers from reaching land. Navy also provided a tug to pull landing craft off the coral banks should they block the channel, and two repair ships, one for motor torpedo boats and another for the landing craft, to moor in the lagoon and avoid returning any breakdowns to distant bases.

Navy planned the movement of groups of landing craft so that the faster APDs carrying the assault troops overtook and passed through the slower craft to arrive off the island at dawn, the second wave in the LCIs half an hour later, the third wave in LSTs an hour after the assault troops, and a fourth wave in LCTs early in the afternoon. This

arrangement of echelons enabled ships to disembark their complements with the greatest speed and depart from the area without confusion. All this separate movement was co-ordinated by the responsible **United States** navy and air representatives, since each element of the assaulting force required protection *en route*—seventeen destroyers for the landing craft and APDs, with a cruiser screen beyond, and air cover working in relays from **Munda**, **Stirling**, and **Empress Augusta Bay** as the convoys passed those island bases. Barrowclough and his senior staff officers maintained the closest liaison with their opposite numbers on the headquarters of **Task Force 31**, working to simplify on paper the mass of essential detail. The greatest amity existed between both commanders and staffs from the beginning to the end of the operation, despite problems which included the production of almost bi-lingual administrative orders containing such un-New Zealand paragraphs as those dealing with ‘pest control’ and ‘housekeeping’. Despite the use of the same language, the planners discovered that interpretation could be vastly different.

To cope with the increased volume of work a planning committee was established under Bennett, which consisted of his assistant, Gibbons, Williams (the DAAG), Captain H. M. Denton (staff captain, Q Branch), Silk—brought in from **8 Brigade** because of his familiarity with intricate loading tables—and Captain H. J. W. Hewin, with Warrant Officer M. H. Henderson as their chief clerk.

Until precise information became available three plans were devised, each of them sufficiently fluid to enable any two to be discarded in favour of one selected at the last moment. Under the direction of **Murray**,¹ the CRE, engineers of 37 Field Park, working from available data, constructed large-scale models² of the group, with toy landing craft placed in the lagoon landing beaches when they were finally selected. This was only one indication of the attention given to detail by planners of all branches. Indeed, these models were much praised by the American command, which afterwards developed the idea and used it for their subsequent operations. A sand-table model on a scale of 1:3000

inches was also produced by the intelligence staff of 14 Brigade Headquarters and used in explaining the operation to the men of the assaulting battalions. At the conclusion of practice manoeuvres on the beach at Ruravai, every man was as familiar with the territory and his own particular task as maps, models, photographs, and instruction could make him.

Nothing, however, could be finalised until the information obtained during the boldly executed raid by **30 Battalion**, decided for the night of 30–31 January, was collated and made known to the planners. **Cornwall** trained his men, 322 of them, on the Mumia and Juno River beaches, making them thoroughly conversant with their task of protecting groups of specialists and technicians—27 Americans and 11 New Zealanders—who were to report on the suitability of sites for airfields, landing beaches and approaches, naval and torpedo boat bases, and radar stations, as well as the rise and fall of the tides and the depth of the lagoon—all of which was to be gathered in the twenty-four hours allowed ashore. A member of the British Solomon Islands Administration, Lieutenant F. P. Archer, a former plantation owner from Buka Island who had avoided capture by hiding in the jungle until he was rescued by an American submarine, accompanied the raiders to interrogate the natives concerning the Japanese garrison and its activities. He spoke that curious language known as ‘pidgin’ and had been a visitor to the plantations of **Nissan Island** in pre-war days.

The raiding force, which consisted of A, C, and D Companies, one platoon of B Company, and attached sections of signals, mortars and intelligence, embarked in the APDs *Waters*, *Talbot*, and *Dickerson* on 29 January and practised a landing that night on Mumia Beach, after abandoning plans to land on the narrow,

¹ **Lt-Col A. Murray**, OBE; **Auckland**; born **Glasgow**, 16 Oct 1899; consulting civil engineer and surveyor.

² Scaled models for impending operations were extensively

used by **2 Division** in the **Middle East**, the first in November 1941 in preparation for the Libyan campaign. The first model to assist New Zealanders in battle was a large one prepared for the Battle of Messines in **France** in 1917.

jungle-enclosed Juno River beach because it could not be identified from the ships in the darkness.

Special precautions were taken to ensure direct communication with this expedition, moving far beyond the most northerly bridgehead in the **Solomons**, by the addition of a detachment from Divisional Signals under Second-Lieutenant R. H. C. Crawley. At first light on Sunday 30 January, the little convoy departed from **Vella Lavella**, moving via Gizo Strait and shepherded by four destroyers, one of which, USS *Fullham*, carried the Brigadier and his liaison officer, Captain D. M. Young. Two motor torpedo boats, for the protection of the landing craft in the lagoon, joined the convoy off **Empress Augusta Bay**, where the *Fullham* remained until the raid was over.

On the stroke of midnight the landing craft from the APDs passed through the entrance to the lagoon, shrouded in a night so dark it might have been prepared for such an undertaking. A rising sea had not hindered disembarkation in the open roadstead, but many of the men were sick. One of the motor torpedo boats led them in—twelve small landing craft in single file. With a sound like a deep sigh they slid up on the sandy beach of the Pokonian Plantation, a few hundred yards to the right inside the entrance to the lagoon, to await the dawn and form a defence perimeter inside which **Cornwall** established his headquarters. In thirty minutes everyone was ashore and digging foxholes as silently as the sound of vigorously employed shovels hissing through the sand would permit.

Before seven o'clock next morning the technicians and specialists left on their missions, each group protected by its armed screen. Major A. B. **Bullen**¹ commanded the party which crossed the lagoon to investigate airfield sites in the Tangalan Plantation, Lieutenant F. R.

Allen ² that which examined the Barahun Island beaches, and Captain F. R. M. Watson those who reported on the Pokonian area. Natives came forward with information for Archer that enemy strength was between fifty and sixty, but there was no opposition to the technical parties as they gathered and recorded their information in a silence broken only by the soft chugging of landing craft.

Meanwhile, Commander J. MacDonald Smith, USN, with three landing craft, sought suitable landing beaches for the LSTs and LCIs around the lagoon coast. Accompanying him were members

¹ **Maj A. B. Bullen**, DSO; **Auckland**; born Otahuhu, 25 Feb 1916; cashier; wounded, **Italy**, 30 Apr 1945.

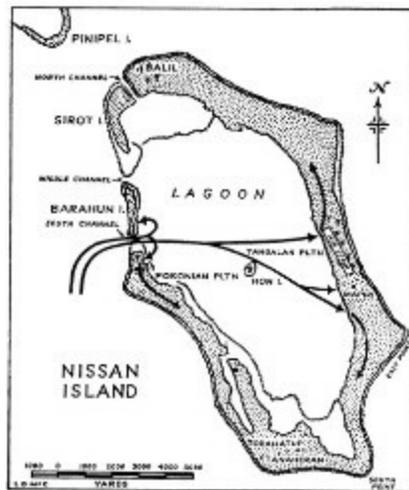
² **Lt F. R. Allen**; **Auckland**; born **Invercargill**, 9 Feb 1919; shop assistant; wounded, **Italy**, 17 Apr 1945.

of the battalion reconnaissance party, under Lieutenant P. O'Dowd, ¹ which went ashore at the deserted mission station at the south end of the lagoon, disturbed by nothing more than strange voices in the nearby jungle which they said came from natives. On the return journey to Pokonian soon after nine o'clock, Smith, searching the coastline through binoculars, picked up the outline of a camouflaged barge hidden under the overhanging branches and decided to investigate. As his landing craft touched the sand under the

¹ **Lt P. O'Dowd**; born NZ 11 Apr 1920; died of wounds 31 Jan 1944.

branches, close beside two barges, Japanese concealed and watching in the undergrowth only a few feet away poured machine-gun fire into it. In as many seconds 50 per cent of the occupants of the craft were either killed or wounded. Because of the absence of opposition, the customary vigilance had obviously been relaxed. Caught in overhanging branches,

the machine guns of the landing craft pointed skywards and were out of action for those few seconds which really mattered. The American coxswain and gunner were killed by the first bursts, as was another gunner who leaped forward to take the place of his dead companion. Three of the reconnaissance party were wounded, including O'Dowd, who died later in the day. Two native guides were also wounded but not seriously. One Japanese was shot out of a tree. Branches snapped off by bullets fell into the landing craft and fed the confusion. Private J. H. Jefferis,¹ a member of O'Dowd's party, courageously shot back into the wall of leaves with his rifle, a meritorious act which earned him the Military Medal. Under covering fire of the other two craft, which swung their machine guns into action as soon as they realised what had happened, Smith, although wounded, took the coxswain's place and retracted the boat from the beach after two agonising attempts had failed.



Nissan Island, largest of the Green Islands Group, was an oval of solid coral. Arrows indicate the movement of 14 Brigade battalions. Divisional Headquarters opened in Pokonian Plantation and then moved to the small bay above Torahatup.

Nissan Island, largest of the **Green Islands Group**, was an oval of solid coral. Arrows indicate the movement of 14 Brigade Battalions. **Divisional Headquarters** opened in Pokonian Plantation and then moved to the small bay above Torahatup

Later that afternoon, when all the reconnaissance parties returned to the perimeter, the area was strafed with mortars and a counter-attack planned, using a platoon from Bullen's company on each flank with Smith leading a frontal attack from landing craft. Although the men had been landed in the flank, the attack was frustrated by six Japanese

aircraft which strafed and bombed the landing craft just as Smith began to move in to land. Machine guns, one of them manned by Private W. T. A. Aylward,² drove off the attacking enemy planes. Reports obtained long afterwards disclosed that seventeen Japanese were killed by mortar fire during the strafing. Fearing that enemy aircraft might return and bomb the beach, Cornwall decided to withdraw his raiders and shelter the barges along the coast of Barahun Island until the midnight rendezvous with the APDs. Only one mishap marred the return journey. A 10-foot swell made the transfer from landing craft to APDs most difficult, taking hours to accomplish in the darkness, and an American officer was crushed between barge and ship as he embarked. By 4 p. m. the following day the raiding party returned to Vella Lavella, its mission successfully completed with the loss of four killed (one New Zealander, three Americans) and five wounded (two New Zealanders, three Americans).

¹ Pte J. H. Jefferis, MM; Waerenga; born Pukekohe, 25 Jun 1922; farmhand.

² Pte W. T. A. Aylward, MM; born NZ 17 Aug 1918; factory assistant; wounded, Italy, 11 Apr 1945.



LANDING CRAFT (INFANTRY) OF THE INVASION CONVOY AT
GUADALCANAL loading for the attack on Treasury Islands

Landing craft(Infantry) of the invasion convoy at Guadalcanal loading for the attack on Treasury Islands



LANDING CRAFT (TANK) BEACHED AT MONO ISLAND
Set on fire by a Japanese mortar, Falamai village and ammunition dumps
burn in the background

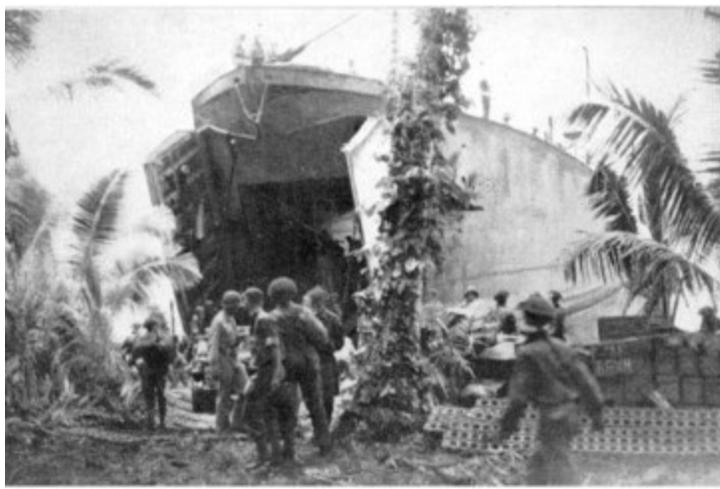
Landing craft(tank) beached at Mono Island

Set on fire by a Japanese mortar, Falamai village and ammunition dumps burn in the background



A 25-POUNDER DAMAGED BY ENEMY MORTAR FIRE, Falamai

A 25 pounder damaged by enemy mortar fire, Falamai



A LANDING SHIP (TANK) BEACHED AT MONO ISLAND
Marsden matting helps unloading operations

**A Landing ship(Tank) beached at Mono Island
Marsden matting helps unloading operations**



FOXHOLES IN A BIVOUAC AREA AT MALSI VILLAGE, Mono Island

Foxholes in a bivouac area at malsi village, Mono Island



Unloading operations at Falamai, Mono Island



EMBARKING ON A LANDING CRAFT (INFANTRY) AT JUNO
BEACH, VELLA LAVELLA, FOR NISSAN ISLAND

Embarking on a Landing Craft(Infantry) at Juno beach, Vella Lavella, for Nissan Island



LANDING CRAFT FILLED WITH ASSAULT TROOPS ENTERING THE LAGOON AT NISSAN ISLAND. Barrage balloons on heavy landing craft prevent attack by Japanese aircraft

Landing craft filled with assault troops entering the lagoon at Nissan Island. Barrage balloons on heavy landing craft prevent attack by Japanese aircraft

The raiders were not observed by the Japanese garrison until their landing craft began moving across the lagoon to Tangalan Plantation. **South East Area Headquarters in Rabaul** received the information at 9 a. m. on 31 January that Allied forces had landed on **Nissan**, and ordered an immediate attack by six bomber-equipped fighter aircraft and a counter-attack by an amphibious force transported in two submarines, but constant air raids on **Rabaul**, as promised by Harmon, made the preparation of these counter measures extremely difficult. The air attack, which was not pressed with any great determination, took place late in the afternoon, just as Smith was moving his landing craft into attack near the scene of the morning ambush. The Japanese claimed to have sunk 'one of six motor torpedo boats on the lagoon' and set two others on fire. However, no craft were lost by the raiders though several were badly shot up.

That evening, while **Cornwall's** men were sheltering off **Barahun**, the Japanese garrison despatched another message asking for reinforcements, stating that they were under attack and that their losses were heavy. They proposed to burn their code books that night. The following night the garrison fled north to the Feni Islands, using three landing barges which had been reported by a New Zealand reconnaissance aircraft flying over the island on the day of the raid.

Meanwhile two submarines, carrying 123 members of the Wada Company, left **Rabaul** at midday on 1 February and arrived off the north-east coast of **Nissan Island** at midnight, but the rising storm which hindered the embarkation of **Cornwall's** raiders made the task of disembarkation so difficult that only 77 members of the Wada Company reached the shore over the coral reef. The remainder returned to **Rabaul**. When some of the original garrison returned from the Feni Islands on 5 February, after concluding that the group had not been occupied, the two parties joined and made their headquarters in caves south of the Pokonian Plantation, later moving most of the garrison to the mission area. At that time the garrison numbered 102, but was increased by a small undetermined reinforcement from **Rabaul** before the actual seizure of the group.

Once possessed of accurate information gathered during the reconnaissance raid, which was quickly disseminated to all commanders, the final preparations were planned with confidence during the next fortnight. Engineers made the landing plan still more precise by attaching to their model of **Green Islands** small accurately numbered miniatures of the craft on each beach for which they were destined on D-day.

After his plans had been approved by Wilkinson's headquarters, Barrowclough issued his final operation order on 4 February. This was followed on 5 February by Wilkinson's operation order 2-44, an immense document defining the tasks and organisation of all navy, army and air units taking part, not only for the seizure of the group but for all subsequent echelons. In accordance with American procedure, the orders of subordinate commanders were incorporated in detail in those of the higher command, a system which hampers to some degree any last-minute changes dictated by tactical necessity. Then, on 7 February, Barrowclough flew to **Vella Lavella** for final discussions on Potter's operational plan for the assault. This involved landing three battalions of his brigade to occupy and consolidate the two plantation areas on **Nissan Island**, establish blocks each night from coast to coast, and

successively clear sectors each day until the whole island was free of the enemy. The 30th Battalion, already familiar with the locality, was assigned to the Pokonian Plantation and the southern tip of Barahun Island, thus securing the entrance to the lagoon; 35 and 37 Battalions were to cross the lagoon and land simultaneously in the Tangalan Plantation—the 35th on the right flank, the 37th on the left—and clear that area before the arrival of the LSTs carrying radar and earthmoving equipment.

Elaborate precautions were taken against counter-attack from **Rabaul** and provided for immediate naval and air support in any threatened zone. ¹ Beaches were again given their colour names and four ASC officers, Captains J. F. B. Wilson, G. N. Somerville, J. Sykes and D. R. Hopkins, appointed assistant beachmasters to control supplies and equipment as they were unloaded. Assault troops carried neither steel helmets nor gas respirators, and anti-tank rifles were discarded because they were difficult to handle in the dense jungle. The battalion combat team, which had tended to develop a multiplicity of commands during operations on **Vella Lavella**, was also dropped, but 35 and 37 Battalions were each allotted a troop of tanks. By 12 February the movement north began with the departure of the slower craft from their various island bases. The following day the LCIs and LSTs reached **Vella Lavella** to continue loading from the beaches where the men and material awaited them. That evening the landing craft lay off the island on a sea so calm that no line divided the reflected sunset glory from the heavens

¹ There were good reasons for the employment of so heavy a force in both the raid and this operation. The **Green Islands** lay some hundreds of miles beyond areas held by the Allies and were close to **Rabaul**; a large number of specialists, working alone in small separate groups, had to be protected; very little information was available about these islands, as no intelligence parties had been put ashore from submarines to make preliminary investigations; and a desire to avoid any unnecessary waste of life.

which produced it. The APDs followed on 14 February, embarked the assault battalions and practised a landing before they, too, steamed north to overtake the rest of the force.

Divisional Headquarters closed on **Guadalcanal** on 13 February when Barrowclough and his personal assistant, Lieutenant J. T. Collin, embarked in USS *Halford*, in which Wilkinson and his staff also travelled. They watched the rehearsal off the coast the following day before joining the last convoy. By this time, after a voyage devoid of incident, groups of slower craft had joined off the west coast of **Bougainville**, ready to make the rest of the journey together under cover of darkness and reach the rendezvous off the entrance to the **Green Islands** lagoon at dawn, synchronising their arrival with that of the slow APDs.

The following units landed on **Nissan Island** on 15 February:

Divisional Commander (**Maj-Gen H. E. Barrowclough**)

GSO 1 (**Col J. I. Brooke**)

AA & QMG (**Lt-Col P. L. Bennett, MC**)

3 Defence and Employment Platoon (**Capt W. G. Rutherford**)

4 Field Security Section (**Capt D. Lawford**)

Divisional Signals (**Lt-Col D. McN. Burns**)

Headquarters Company (**Maj G. W. Heatherwick**)

No. 1 Company (**Maj J. K. H. Clark**, who succeeded **Maj K. H. Wilson, MC**, in December)

No. 2 Company (**Capt T. C. Eady**)

No. 3 Company (**Capt G. M. Parkhouse**)

Divisional Artillery (**Brig C. S. J. Duff, DSO**)

17 Field Regiment (Lt-Col B. Wicksteed)

29 Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment, two batteries (Lt-Col W. S. McKinnon)

144 Independent Battery (Maj G. R. Powles)

53 Anti-Tank Battery, two troops (Maj L. J. Fahey)

4 Survey Troop (Capt N. R. Sanderson)

Tank Squadron (Maj R. J. Rutherford)

Divisional Engineers (Lt-Col A. Murray)

20 Field Company (Maj W. G. McKay)

26 Field Company (Maj W. L. Mynott)

Detachment 37 Field Park (Lt L. G. Taylor-Cannon)

Army Service Corps (Lt-Col C. A. Blazey)

16 MT Company (Maj C. McL. Brown)

Detachment 10 MT Company (Maj N. C. Moon)

Medical Services (Col N. C. Speight)

22 Field Ambulance (Lt-Col F. G. Barrowclough)

24 Field Ambulance (Lt-Col W. R. Fea)

No. 1 Field Surgical Unit (Maj P. C. E. Brunette)

Malaria Control Section (Maj R. G. S. Ferguson)

6 Field Hygiene Section (Maj R. M. Irwin)

10 Mobile Dental Section (Capt J. B. Muir)

14 Brigade Headquarters (Brig L. Potter)

Brigade Major (Maj L. E. Pithie)

Staff Captain (Capt G. C. C. Sandston)

Brigade Carrier Platoon (Capt J. F. B. Stronach)

Brigade Machine Gun Company (Maj L. A. S. Ross)

30 Battalion (Lt-Col F. C. Cornwall, MC)

35 Battalion (Lt-Col J. F. Moffatt)

37 Battalion (Lt-Col A. H. L. Sugden)

Under command were American services and units, the principal of which were a navy base and units commanded by Captain H. A. Rochester, USN; three naval construction battalions under Commander C. H. Whyte, USNR; an air centre and units commanded by Brigadier-General Field Harris; and 967 US Anti-Aircraft Battalion commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel J. E. Moore, afterwards made an Officer of the Order of the British Empire.

Dawn in the tropics is invariably a spectacle which fades as quickly as it flowers; 15 February was no exception. Piles of rosetinted clouds mounted in a jade sky, and along the horizon heavier cloud banks were slashed with shining gold. As the light strengthened, the ships of the force were revealed over the calm sea, spreading out for miles inside the circle of screening destroyers, with two task forces, one commanded by Rear-Admiral W. L. Ainsworth and the other by Rear-Admiral A. S. Merrill, still farther out. **Nissan Island** lay like a dark smudge on the water. Coming in at high speed, the APDs passed through the slower ships to rendezvous off the tip of **Barahun**. Behind them the great silver bellies of captive balloons, trailed by the LSTs as a protection against dive-bombers, glinted as they caught the first beams of the sun. High overhead an umbrella of aircraft from Vice-Admiral Aubrey Fitch's

command held off the Japanese attack, though a few machines did break through because of some confusion of the ships' radar screens.

Japanese headquarters in Rabaul were informed of the approach of the invasion force by a reconnaissance aircraft, which picked it up off the coast of Bougainville at dusk on the evening of 14 February, and reported that 'a large convoy of thirty transports and eighteen cruisers and destroyers' was heading north. Thirty-two Japanese aircraft were ordered to maintain an attack through the night, in relays, but the main attack did not develop until dawn, when LST 466 received slight damage from a bomb and the United States cruiser *St. Louis*, one of the screening cruisers, received a direct hit. These were the only two ship casualties, neither of them serious. As usual the Japanese claims were excessive—one transport sunk, two cruisers, one destroyer, and three transports damaged by near misses. The Japanese command recorded the loss of twelve of their aircraft, including the reconnaissance plane which shadowed the convoy through the night.

While the Japanese attempted to press their air attack on the widespread target of landing craft, the lagoon, so still that any movement shirred great stretches of rain-grey water, became the setting for activity it had never previously known. First to break the morning calm was a minesweeper at 6.10 a. m., after clearing the narrow entrance channel. At 6.41 a. m. the assault troops were down the nets of the APDs, and the first flight of thirty-two landing craft, led by a motor torpedo boat and an LCI gunboat, all in single file since they could move in no other formation, were on their way to the beaches. Circling above them was a special liaison aircraft, used for the first time that day, to acquaint the task force commander in *Halford* of the progress of the landing and, if necessary, direct gunfire against opposition. Not a shot was fired.

In two hours perimeters had been established with the perfection of a well-timed and executed manoeuvre. Potter and his staff went ashore in the second wave of assault troops and established advanced brigade headquarters in the Tangalan Plantation. As soon as the battalion

patrols established their block lines beyond the bridgeheads, the LCIs beached, then the LCTs and finally, in the afternoon, the LSTs. Men and materials poured ashore as each wave of craft was cleared and retracted from the beaches to make way for the next. Carrying parties, 100 from each battalion, removed materials as they came ashore to prevent congestion on the beaches. By half past ten that morning **Divisional Headquarters** was established in the Pokonian Plantation, a dank site under the palms, made worse when seeping tide water turned it into a bog. The whole landing had been completed without hindrance or confusion. It was disturbed by only one outbreak of firing when a too-imaginative officer, examining the lagoon coast from the deck of an LCI, picked up the two barges destroyed during the **30 Battalion** raid. All the armament from the LCI was turned on to them, to the bewilderment of **30 Battalion** patrols working their way slowly through the jungle nearby.

On that first day the landing craft disgorged 58 jeeps, 67 trucks of various kinds, 44 guns (both field and anti-aircraft), 7 tractors, 8 bulldozers, 2 compressors, 10 radar installations of various types, 12 water-distilling plants ready for operation, 10 trailers, 2 wireless vans, 8 Valentine tanks, 426 tons of petrol in drums, 2000 gallons of fresh water in tins, and 267 tons of rations, in addition to vast quantities of personal and unit equipment. So smooth was the programme that the last of the LSTs was on its way back to **Guadalcanal** by 5.30 that afternoon, though some of the LCIs had departed as early as 9.35 o'clock that morning. No raiding aircraft came to hinder this dawn to dusk activity.

Beginning at eight o'clock that morning New Zealand aircraft, as part of the South Pacific Air Command, assisted in maintaining a continuous cover over the island. No. 14 Squadron, **RNZAF**, commanded by Squadron Leader S. G. **Quill**,¹ and No. 18 Squadron, commanded by Squadron Leader J. A. Oldfield, between them kept eight aircraft continuously over the island until dusk, flying sorties from the airfields at **Empress Augusta Bay**.

The intense activity on the beaches was reflected elsewhere as patrols pushed through the jungle, and by nightfall more than the original programme had been accomplished. Artillery regiments went to their allotted sites, in many instances along swathes cut through the undergrowth by bulldozers, and guns, both field and anti-aircraft, were ready for action by eleven o'clock in the morning. The only action, however, fell to **144 Independent Battery**, which shot up some Japanese barges on the shore of Sirot Island. Immediately on landing Signals established a report centre in Tangalan area, linking by wireless the station at **Divisional Headquarters** on the opposite side of the lagoon. By two o'clock that afternoon Captain K. H. **Barron**² had established wireless communication with **Guadalcanal**, the Treasuries, and **Vella Lavella** and, through that network, to New Zealand. Before nightfall all unit headquarters on the island were linked up and six miles of underwater cable had been laid across the lagoon. Engineers, both New Zealand and American, drove their earth-moving equipment straight off the landing craft to their appointed tasks, improving the landing beaches, gun and radar sites. When night came seven miles of road had been formed—rough but capable of taking trucks and jeeps. Jungle and palms toppled as the shining blades exposed reeking earth to the burning sun. When a few Japanese aircraft raided the island from **Rabaul** that night, they were picked up by radar installed only a few hours previously. The only casualties from this haphazard bombing were natives in a village near Tangalan Plantation. A briefer raid attempted the following night was driven off by anti-aircraft fire. Among the ground troops there was some indiscriminate shooting during the first few nights, provoked in the darkness by herds of marauding pigs, but there was no sign of the Japanese garrison.

Battalion patrols continued their advance early in the morning of 16 February, their progress in the Tangalan area made easier by the tanks, which moved with the speed of the men. Their presence

¹ **Wg Cdr S. G. Quill**, DFC; RNZAF Station, **Whenuapai**; born **Porirua**, 12 Oct 1919.

² **Capt K. H. Barron; Auckland; born NZ 28 Aug 1916; radio officer.**

stimulated morale, and the tracks they crushed permitted the unimpeded progress of carrying parties with rations and water—and an occasional enterprising jeep carrying equipment. Engineer detachments under command laid booby traps along the block-lines each night, lifting them before the advance began the following morning.

Late on the afternoon of the second day, natives reported that an unspecified number of Japanese had taken refuge on the densely wooded island of Sirot, and the task of clearing the island was assigned to B Company, **30 Battalion**, commanded by Captain D. Dalton. ¹ Since such skirmishes could never be taken lightly in the jungle, his unit was strengthened by the addition of No. 1 Platoon of the **Machine Gun Company** under Lieutenant E. H. Ryan, ² 14 Brigade Defence and Employment Platoon under Lieutenant E. G. Taylor, ³ and **4 Field Security Section** under Captain D. Lawford.

This small expedition landed on the island the following morning after a seven-minute barrage by **144 Independent Battery**, and patrols moved into the jungle on a front of 100 yards from a native village, intending to sweep the whole area. Taylor's platoon, on the left flank, soon made contact with the Japanese and took the brunt of the fighting in a sharp engagement fought out among the trees, vines, and undergrowth so thick that it was impossible to pinpoint the enemy or even estimate his strength. Corporal P. A. Davidson ⁴ (his second name was Anzac), leader of Taylor's No. 1 section, first engaged the Japanese among the undergrowth and shot two of them, though not before his Bren gunner, Lance-Corporal C. Reid, ⁵ had been killed as he dashed forward the better to site his gun. Both groups went to earth, firing only when, from behind the protection of tree trunks, movement among leaves and branches revealed their positions to each other. For the next two hours Taylor's men pressed slowly round the Japanese, who had

secured themselves to resist such an attack. Taylor himself, while engaged in a brief duel, was shot in the boot, but killed the Japanese who had shot Private I. N. **Tolich**.⁶ When a Bren gun jammed, the leader of the enemy detachment leaned from behind a tree, shot the gunner, and hurled a grenade which wounded two of Taylor's men. Davidson, who had moved forward to rising ground, acted swiftly, killed the Japanese, destroyed the machine gun with a grenade, and then accounted for another of his opponents. His Distinguished Conduct Medal was well merited. Taylor

¹ **Capt D. Dalton; Napier; born Napier, 18 Jan 1913; plastering contractor.**

² **Lt E. H. Ryan; born NZ 1 Apr 1916; clerk; wounded 20 Feb 1944.**

³ **Maj E. G. Taylor, m.i.d.; Trentham Military Camp; born Christchurch, 27 Jan 1917; Regular soldier.**

⁴ **Cpl P. A. Davidson, DCM; Waitoa; born NZ 30 May 1916; sheepfarmer.**

⁵ **L-Cpl C. Reid; born NZ 30 Sep 1918; killed in action 17 Feb 1944.**

⁶ **Pte I. N. Tolich; born NZ 3 Sep 1919; clerk; killed in action 17 Feb 1944.**

lost five men killed and three wounded, but his platoon had accounted for fifteen Japanese.

Later that afternoon No. 8 Platoon, under Sergeant N. **Goodall**,¹ replaced Taylor's badly shaken men, and the whole area was searched. They found six more dead Japanese. During the action some

consternation was caused by a wounded and dazed member of Taylor's platoon who had wandered away from the fight, happily in the right direction, telling the passing barge which picked him up on the beach that there were 150 Japanese on Sirot. Fortunately, by the time this information reached headquarters the engagement was over.

On 18 February **37 Battalion** patrols reached the northern tip of **Nissan Island** and reported it clear. On the same day **35 Battalion** had cleared south to the outskirts of the mission area, where only a narrow, unsearched tract of jungle separated them from **30 Battalion** patrols moving from Pokonian. Except for single individuals and small groups, there was no sign of the enemy garrison. Before the mission area was searched on 19 February it was shelled by **17 Field Regiment**, but the only evidence of occupation was a hastily vacated bivouac area and some equipment, including six 20-millimetre guns, two mortars (one of them a new type), six machine guns, 150 rifles, two radio sets, and 150,000 rounds of ammunition—sufficient armament to have damaged the single line of landing craft entering the lagoon on the morning of the 15th. Considerable quantities of rice, used later to supplement the ration for the natives, and cases of dried fish, two supply items dumped in any Japanese-held area, were also found.

Although natives still reported the presence of seventy Japanese in and around the gardens of Torahatup, they eluded the patrols by hiding in cliff cave used by the natives as burial places. Working near the unit boundaries, patrols from both 30 and 35 Battalions picked them off in twos and threes but were unable to assess the numbers of those who escaped. Late on the afternoon of 19 February, a patrol from **30 Battalion** under Lieutenant G. H. **Primrose**² searched the cliffs and killed four Japanese, and from midday jeeps bumped through the locality over a rough track, formerly serving the island as a Government road, in readiness for the move of **Divisional Headquarters** from Pokonian Plantation to the mission area. Pinched into this area by continuous patrolling and desperate for food, the remaining Japanese evidently decided to attack any

¹ **Sgt N. S. Goodall; Oamaru; born Oamaru, 2 Nov 1919; shop assistant.**

² **Lt G. H. Primrose; born Scotland, 11 Oct 1920; van driver; wounded, Italy, 4 Apr 1945.**

of the New Zealanders they could find, and on the morning of 19 February despatched their final message to **Rabaul**: 'We are charging the enemy and beginning radio silence'. Active patrolling, however, prevented this, though one Japanese did tumble into a **30 Battalion** foxhole that night and was disposed of over the nearby cliff.

The locality in which the remaining garrison was finally unearthed on 20 February, quite accidentally since it had been declared clear by patrols, was along the coast near a few deserted native huts passing as the village of **Tanaheran** on the map. **Stronach**, ¹ with 27 men of his carrier platoon, arrived there at 11 a.m. during a reconnaissance for a new site for 14 Brigade Headquarters, and halted for lunch in drowsy heat disturbed only by the chatter of parakeets and crackling cicadas. Patrols working farther south drove the Japanese towards him, though he was unaware of it at the time. Earlier that morning a small **35 Battalion** patrol under Sergeant H. L. **Nelson**, ² working to the south, returned to Brigade Headquarters after killing a Japanese. Lieutenant R. P. Clouston's ³ platoon, despatched to the same locality in the afternoon for a more intensive search, withdrew when it came within reach of the flying metal from an action already in progress, but remained in the area and prevented the Japanese from escaping south again, since the enemy was now confined by Stronach's men along the cliff among thickets of pandanus roots, vines and trees, and broken coral rock.

Action began with an unexpected rifle shot from one of these thickets. When Sergeant A. T. **Bartlett** ⁴ took his section to investigate, a fusilade of bullets from the undergrowth greeted them and two men were wounded. Stronach immediately formed a cordon round the area

with the men available, these including Ryan's machine-gun section which was fortunately in the vicinity. The section took the right flank of the perimeter. There was nothing except noise to indicate the strength of the enemy, the first estimate of which was five or six, but after two unsuccessful attempts to rescue one of his wounded men, Stronach realised he was opposed by considerable numbers and sent a message to **30 Battalion** headquarters for assistance. Because of broken signal lines this did not reach **Cornwall** until after two o'clock in the afternoon, via Driver C. F. Broomhall, of the ASC, and the battalion adjutant, Captain G. H. Biss.

¹ **Capt J. F. B. Stronach**; born NZ 19 Sep 1907; stock clerk.

² **Sgt H. L. Nelson**, m.i.d.; born NZ 20 Sep 1920; farmhand.

³ **Lt R. P. Clouston**; Ward; born **Blenheim**, 8 Sep 1917; farmer.

⁴ **Sgt A. T. Bartlett; Nelson**; born **Invercargill**, 6 Feb 1920; motor worker.

Cornwall immediately ordered D Company, under Bullen, and the mortar platoon, under Lieutenant G. R. **Hamilton**, ¹ to the scene of action, with instructions to Bullen to relieve Stronach. Meanwhile two tanks, one commanded by Lieutenant T. K. **Evans** ² and the other by Sergeant R. H. H. **Beetham**, ³ were despatched to the scene on receipt of a message from Captain L. F. **Brooker**, ⁴ the liaison officer who accompanied Stronach on his reconnaissance. They had been ferried across the lagoon the previous day to reconnoitre the mission site, which they had been unable to reach overland because of crevices in the coral. Soon after two o'clock Stronach put them in on his left flank. Their first task was the rescue of Private R. **Stannard**, ⁵ who had been lying under a coverlet of leaves and branches, lopped off by bullets, since 11.15 o'clock in the morning. He was able to clamber onto the rear of Beetham's tank and lie there while it backed him to safety. Both tanks

then sprayed the trees with canister and machine-gun fire, aiming only at movement among leaves and branches. Not one Japanese had been seen.

Bullen and his company reached the scene of action at 3.45 p.m. and relieved Stronach's platoon, which had been holding the enemy for more than four hours but had been unable to make much progress. Although the Japanese were only fifteen to twenty yards away behind that frustrating barrier of leaves, trunks and vines, it was still impossible to estimate their strength. The men continued to fire without a target, aiming only at space and sound when the enemy returned their fire. Private P. **Priest**⁶ brought one Japanese down from a tree with a lucky burst from his Bren gun. Morale was high as Bullen inched his men forward, using trees as cover. Even when a bullet snipped off one of Private R. T. Richard's⁷ thumbs he continued to throw grenades. Daylight was fading, quickly as it does in the tropics, under a canopy of jungle growth. Bullen realised that a final assault must be made before nightfall, otherwise the Japanese would scatter. At a quarter past five he asked **Rutherford**⁸ to withdraw his tanks so that he could reorganise his men under a mortar barrage. The machine-gunners, now equipped as infantrymen, were still on the right. Bullen's No. 15 Platoon,

¹ **Lt G. R. Hamilton; Rotorua; born Australia 21 Apr 1914; grocer.**

² **Lt T. K. Evans; Marton; born NZ 14 Aug 1914; law clerk.**

³ **Sgt R. H. H. Beetham; Masterton; born Masterton, 22 Nov 1919; farm manager.**

⁴ **Maj L. F. Brooker; Wellington; born Rotorua, 18 Oct 1919; Regular soldier.**

⁵ **Pte R. C. Stannard; Waerenga; born NZ 30 Sep 1916;**

farmer; wounded 22 Feb 1944.

⁶ **Pte P. M. Priest**; Pahiatua; born Pahiatua, 27 Jan 1903; sheepfarmer.

⁷ **Pte R. T. Richard**; Christchurch; born NZ 8 Dec 1918; tanneries' employee; wounded 20 Feb 1944.

⁸ **Maj R. J. Rutherford**, ED, m.i.d.; New Plymouth; born Wanganui, 1 Mar 1905; electric-crane driver.

under Captain P. R. W. **Adams**, ¹ took the left flank and No. 14 Platoon, under sergeant G. H. **Reesby**, ² was between them and the machine-gunners. After slowly moving forward for about 50 yards, Bullen decided on his final assault. Only half an hour of daylight remained. He yelled his orders from behind a tree, which diverted enemy fire. Under cover of a barrage created as each man threw a grenade, the attackers made their final dash, firing as they stumbled over splaying roots and lumps of coral.

Fifty-one dead Japanese were counted among the trees along the edge of the cliff. Eight others were picked off by a patrol from No. 16 Platoon under Corporal L. G. **Ratcliffe**, ³ as they tried to escape to the caves in which they had been hiding. Rather than be taken prisoner, the only survivor among the tree roots killed himself with a grenade. Of those who escaped during the action, all were accounted for next day. Two were killed in caves, and three were intercepted on a raft off the south of the island on receipt of information from an air patrol. Despite their hopeless plight, those trying to escape by sea refused to surrender but opened fire on a motor torpedo boat which was sent to pick them up. Two were killed; the other, a husky fellow who had fallen over the cliff during the fighting, was taken prisoner. The total New Zealand casualties during the action at **Tanaheran** were three killed, including Adams who fell in the final assault, two died of wounds, and seven wounded. Up to that time **30 Battalion**, in its various skirmishes, had

accounted for 102 Japanese.

Three days later a small force from **37 Battalion** consisting of B Company, under Captain G. F. R. **Keith**,⁴ and C Company, under Major R. **Catley**,⁵ supported by a section of mortars under Lieutenant J. C. **Forward**,⁶ and a machine-gun section, cleared the tiny island of Sau, in the **Pinipel** lagoon, to which fourteen survivors had fled in canoes. They were short of food, indifferently armed, and had used their clothing as binding material for the raft on which they had hoped to escape, but they refused to surrender though an interpreter assured them they would be well and humanely treated. Patrols from Keith's company destroyed them at the cost of four wounded by grenade splinters. Except for an occasional refugee found hiding in the jungle (one was found three months later),

¹ **Capt P. R. W. Adams**; born **Blenheim**, 2 Sep 1920; farmer; killed in action 20 Feb 1944.

² **Sgt G. H. Reesby**, DCM; **Winchmore**; born NZ 24 Jul 1906; shepherd; wounded 20 Feb 1944.

³ **Cpl L. G. Ratcliffe**; **Kerepehi**; born NZ 8 Feb 1908; sharemilker.

⁴ **Maj G. F. R. Keith**; **Auckland**; born **Wellington**, 9 Jun 1912; solicitor; wounded 5 Oct 1943.

⁵ **Maj R. Catley**; **Waipukurau**; born **Nelson** 24 Nov 1909; fitter and turner.

⁶ **Lt J. C. Forward**; **Palmerston North**; born **New Plymouth**, 6 Oct 1920; printer.

that was the last of the garrison in the **Green Islands**, which had

been secured at the cost of the following casualties:

Killed: New Zealand 10, **United States** 3

Wounded: New Zealand 21, **United States** 3

By the end of February 120 Japanese had been killed, each one checked since that was the only accepted official recording of enemy dead during the **Pacific** campaign. A final note to the Japanese operational record of their **Solomons** campaign stated that conditions on **Green Islands** were unknown after receipt of the radio message on 19 February. It ended naively, 'The fact that the aerial interception battle over **Rabaul** kept us so busy that we could not deal a smashing blow to the enemy landing forces on **Green Islands**, only a short distance away, was a source of great chagrin.' But Rabaul was almost immobilised by this time. Two days after the landing, motor torpedo boats from a base quickly established in the inner shore of Barahun Island, hunted the sea lanes as far a field as **Rabaul** and **Buka** and the coast of **New Ireland**.

Five days after the landing, Halsey, accompanied by Vice-Admiral A. W. Fitch and Rear-Admiral Robert Carney, his chief of staff, arrived by flying boat for a conference with Barrowclough. Their visit coincided with the action at **Tanaheran** and the arrival of the second echelon of 21 ships under Rear-Admiral G. H. Fort, who had taken **8 Brigade** to the Treasury operation. Because of food shortages and congestion on the island, 1147 natives from **Nissan** were returned to **Guadalcanal** on landing craft of the second echelon, the voyage being enlivened by the birth of a native child on the way. Every fifth day after the seizure of the group an escorted echelon arrived from **Guadalcanal** pouring the necessary men and materials ashore to build up the force to full strength and ensure adequate reserves. By 17 March seven such echelons had arrived, bringing a total of 16,448 all ranks, both New Zealand and American, and 43,088 tons of food, petrol, supplies, and equipment. More than three million dollars worth of mechanical equipment went forward in the first two echelons, most of it for airfield construction work. ¹

¹ The force was built up between 15 Feb. the day of the landing, and 17 Mar in echelons as under:

Echelon	Landing Craft	Personnel	Supplies and Equipment
First	8 APDs, 13 LCIs, 7 LSTs, 6 LCTs	5,806	4,344 tons
Second	8 APDs, 2 LCIs. 11 LSTs	4,715	6,315 tons
Third	10 LSTs, 3 LCIs	2,577	6,668 tons
Fourth	10 LSTs, 1 LCI	1,048	5,477 tons
Fifth	10 LSTs, 1 Cargo	1,127	9,147 tons
Sixth	5 LSTs, 3 Cargo	1,175	11,137 tons
Seventh			

These echelons brought sufficient supplies to maintain the force over a stated period, after which they came forward as requested but not at regular intervals.

This extract from Barrowclough's report to the New Zealand Government on the seizure of the **Green Islands** Group is a fair indication of the conditions under which the men worked unloading supplies:

New Zealanders and Americans toiled through the steaming days and stifling nights unloading and transporting thousands of tons of supplies of every description. It is impossible to overestimate the magnitude of the work involved in unloading this cargo. Some of it came in LSTs which could enter the lagoon and drop their ramps on the ramps on the various beaches. No sooner had the huge bow doors opened than men swarmed into the cavernous holds and in sweating teams dragged out vehicles and loose cargo through oceans of mud to the dumps ashore. Most of the cargo, however, arrived in larger ships which could not enter the lagoon. These had to be unloaded into smaller landing craft, which pitched and tossed alongside the larger ships in the heavy ocean swell that was usually running. The agility and skill of the soldiers in performing this dangerous task would have done credit to experienced sailors. All services of both nations worked with most commendable zeal.

This subsection of natural obstacles was one of the features of the **Green Islands** operation. To overcome the lack of fresh drinking water, which was acute during the first two days but happily relieved by the proximity of untold quantities of green coconuts, sixteen massive condensers, each ready for immediate operation, went forward and were speedily installed. Each plant condensed 4000 gallons of sea-water a day, holding it in 1200-gallon canvas 'S' tanks, which were afterwards replaced by large wooden tanks, each with a capacity of 5000 gallons. Water from these condensers was used exclusively for drinking and cooking. Bathing presented no difficulty, as all camps were sited on either the lagoon or ocean beaches, and rain-water was trapped in drums from tents, using lengths of bamboo for guttering. Because of the danger of poisoning from coral or a particular kind of fish, men bathed in parties of never fewer than three and were ordered to wear canvas shoes while in the water.

By the time **Divisional Headquarters** moved to its new site in the former mission station at the south of the lagoon on 23 February, the construction programme was well advanced. Nothing hindered the work of consolidation, which went ahead through March and April until **Nissan Island** became another highly organised base in the **Pacific** and a port of call for distinguished visitors who arrived and departed like migratory birds and were facetiously referred to as 'visiting firemen'. Permanent camp sites were established as dictated by tactical necessity and joined by a main highway, which the engineers constructed through the jungle over practically the whole island. Signals used 70 miles of underwater cable linking up the island's communications. Timber for camp and airfield buildings came from a sawmill established in the jungle north of Tangalan Plantation, labour being shared by New Zealand engineers of 37 Field Park sawmill platoon and American engineers. A fleet of 26 small landing craft provided a taxi service from beach to beach on the lagoon, running to a strict timetable and using, with a few heavier craft to carry supplies, an average of 2300 gallons of petrol a day. Outdoor cinemas were constructed under the trees; a rest camp was established on the southern coast by B Company, **22 Field**

Ambulance, and the **AEWS** went into action. Every effort was made to provide as much diversion as possible. Two members of the **Tank Squadron**, seeking unauthorised adventure beyond the limited resources of a now peaceful island, accompanied an American bombing expedition to an island group north-west of Trunk and had to be brought back from **Emirau** when the damaged **Liberator** crash-landed there. They willingly paid their fines.

But the health of the troops was excellent. A furry caterpillar, dropping from the trees, caused a maddening skin irritation which cleared up when the insects disappeared. An outbreak of hookworm among members of **30 Battalion** was a temporary worry, removed by the drastic treatment of the suspected sufferers. There were no epidemics of any kind, and the mosquito nuisance was lessened by the removal of large areas of trees and undergrowth.

As on every other island occupied by the division, the natives were given medical attention, which they sorely needed. When most of them were evacuated to **Guadalcanal**, a few hundred ablebodied men and boys were retained as a labour corps under Archer. Two hundred other natives on **Pinipel**, their tropical diseases aggravated by years of neglect, received regular treatment from Major **W. W. Hallwright**,¹ Deputy Assistant Director of Medical Services, and officers of the field ambulances. A diet of army rations, including some of the more despised dehydrated items, soon restored the gloss to their ebony skins.

The construction of the airfields was the crowning achievement of the **Green Islands** operation and proof of the vital role of engineering in the **Pacific** war. Barrowclough's instructions were to have a fighter strip 3250 feet by 100 feet ready for operation by 20 March and a bomber strip soon afterwards, but fourteen days before that target date aircraft were using a much more extensive strip than the one requested. By 6 March the strip was 5000 feet long by 150 feet wide, running on an angle from ocean to lagoon coast, with 17 revetments completed, as well as many of the control and accommodation buildings. A damaged American aircraft,

¹ **Maj W. W. Hallwright**; born Wairoa, 3 Jan 1918; medical practitioner.

struggling home to **Bougainville** after taking part in a raid on **Rabaul**, made an emergency landing on 5 March, and the following day 36 aircraft landed there, including a detachment of **RNZAF** machines from **Bougainville**. When the Japanese made their final attempt to break the American perimeter at **Empress Augusta Bay** on **Bougainville**, and shelled the **Piva** and **Torokina** strips, all machines were flown to **Nissan** and parked there for safety. Sufficient aviation petrol and bombs had reached the **Green Islands** by 6 March that all aircraft were able to refuel and bomb up on the **Nissan** strip before continuing the missions of destruction to **Rabaul** and other enemy bases in **New Britain**. That day 20 New Zealand aircraft under Wing Commander C. W. K. Nicholls, DSO, ¹ refuelled on the **Nissan** strip before going on to attack **Rabaul**.

All this had been achieved by the utmost harmony and the closest co-operation between all services of both the New Zealand and American forces. Barrowclough made available to Whyte the assistance and equipment of the New Zealand engineers to enable the project to be completed on time; he also relieved the American construction battalions of such tasks as unloading landing craft, roadmaking and maintenance, which would have hindered their concentration on the airfields programme. On the day of the landing, technicians went direct from their boats to the area selected by map and reconnaissance in the Tangalan Plantation; two days later their surveys were complete. They found a rock-like coral foundation with a reasonably level surface and no swamps. Coconut palms growing 27 feet apart, ranged in height from 15 to 60 feet over the whole area, according to the date of planting, but during the years of neglect secondary growth, vines, and young palms from the fallen nuts had filled the avenues between the trunks with a tight weave of vegetation. Nothing, however, could withstand the powerful blades of the bulldozers. On the third day they went into

action, shearing off the palms and topsoil with incredible ease and revealing the gleaming cream coral. After then came the full battery of carefully organised mechanism—scoops, graders, rollers, spreaders. From pits established along the lagoon coast, where continuous blasting resembled distant thunder, came 100,000 loads of coral carried by tip-trucks, which changed drivers every eight hours. As they dumped their loads on the runway, eight-and ten-ton rollers followed them, and then the spreaders and levellers and other massive pieces of machinery which, only a few days before, had issued from the landing craft. Men worked in shifts

¹ **Gp Capt C. W. K. Nicholls, DSO, OBE; born Palmerston North, 7 Oct 1913; RAF; commanded NZ Fighter Wing in Pacific, 1944; SASO Northern Group, 1944.**

round the clock, but the mechanism went on, stopping only when it required repairing.

By 3 March a mile-long lane of coral gleamed between the remaining avenues of palms, and in areas close beside them machine and repair shops, pilot and staff quarters, control tower underground fighter-control station, and a tank farm capable of holding 350,000 gallons of petrol were in various stages of construction. Blackout restrictions were no longer necessary. **Rabaul** had been thrashed into such impotence that no raiding aircraft came after the first two nights. When darkness fell rows of huge electric arc lights, fitted to the highest palms on either side of the strip and visible for miles, lit up the fantastic scene of men clad only in boots, hat and shorts, directing and controlling the procession of machinery.

Rain, which fell almost daily at some hour and often all day, scarcely hindered the work of construction. At night in the artificial light the huge palm fronds, quivering under the deluge of water, resembled nothing so much as green ostrich plumes. There was some anxiety on the night of 5 March when a soft patch refused to firm up,

but a broiling sun the following day and additional loads of coral made it sufficiently dry to take the incoming aircraft. By 7 March that strip had become the terminal for a regular air service linking every island airfield south to **Guadalcanal**, and another base to cover further forward operations. A bomber strip running parallel with it was started on 6 March and completed 25 days later, working with the same urgency. From it Liberators bombed **Truk** and other Japanese arsenals in the Carolines. Expressed in terms of petrol alone, March was a busy month on **Nissan Island**. When it ended, army and construction vehicles were using 8000 gallons a day, aircraft 20,000 gallons, and the motor torpedo boats 15,000, all of it brought forward from rear bases in drums and put ashore by manpower. By the middle of April, however, the **Nissan** airfields had served their purpose as the campaign moved over the Equator and reverted to secondary importance as a base for purely local operations. Its fulfilment coincided with the withdrawal of **3 Division** from the **Pacific**, the orders or first news for which were announced on 7 April. Men were on the way home before April ended.

The seizure of the **Green Islands** Group was virtually the end of the **Solomons** campaign. Concurrently with this landing American forces struck at other Japanese strongholds, first reducing many of them with raiding surface craft. On 17 February an American task force under **Vice-Admiral R. A. Spruance** practically destroyed **Truk**, the Japanese arsenal in the Caroline Islands, which was one

of the pivots on which swung their **Pacific** defence. During a two-day attack from sea and air the Japanese lost 325 aircraft, ten naval vessels, 28 merchant ships (about 191,000 tons) and 700 men, which the **United States** command regarded as partial repayment of the debt incurred at **Pearl Harbour** more than two years earlier. Before the smoke and echo of this blow had subsided, **United States** forces seized the Eniwetok Atoll on 19 February, and the control of the Marshall Islands and a whole series of strongholds passed out of Japanese hands for the first time since 1917. By 20 February the Japanese High Command reported that not one single moveable aeroplane remained to them in the South East

Pacific area. MacArthur's forces, pressing north from **New Britain** and the northern coast of **New Guinea**, landed in the Admiralty Group on 29 February, followed by another landing by Wilkinson's task force on **Emirau** on 20 March. The great arsenal of **Rabaul**, which had been pounded for months with increasing violence as each move brought it within easier range of aircraft, was now encircled and impotent. Any remaining Japanese forces scattered through the jungles of the **Solomons** and **New Guinea** were completely isolated and left to 'wither on the vine', as the Americans invariably described their fate. Plans to seize **Kavieng**, another stronghold on the northern tip of **New Ireland**, for which Barrowclough had been warned to hold his division in readiness on 6 March, the day on which the **Nissan** airstrip was ready for operation, were abandoned. A final observation to the Japanese naval record of their South East Pacific area operations is surely one of the most revealing indications of mounting Allied might at that time: 'It was difficult to learn the actual course of developments due to the fact that there were no survivors.' With the completion of this phase of the war, command of the South Pacific theatre passed to **Vice-Admiral J. H. Newton**. Halsey, ¹ who visited **Nissan** on 25 May to say goodbye to

¹ His farewell message to all forces in the **South Pacific Command** was typical of his adjectival enthusiasm:

With the announcement of the virtual completion of the South Pacific campaign, except for mopping up and starving out operations, I can tell you and tell the world that no greater fighting team has ever been put together. From the desperate days of **Guadalcanal** to the smooth steam-rolling of **Bougainville** and the easy seizure of Green and **Emirau**, all **United States**-Allied services put aside every consideration but the one goal of wiping out Japs. As you progressed your techniques and team work improved until, at the last, ground, amphibious, sea and air forces were working as one beautiful piece of precision machinery that crushed and baffled our hated enemy in every encounter. Your resourcefulness, tireless ingenuity, co-operation and indomitable fighting spirit form a battle pattern that will everywhere be an inspiration, and a great measure of credit for the sky-blazing, sea-sweeping, jungle-

smashing of the combat forces goes to the construction gangs and service organisations that bull-dozed bases out of the jungle and brought up beans and bullets and supplies. You never stopped moving forward and the Jap never could get set to launch a sustained counter-attack. You beat them wherever you found them and you never stopped looking for them and tearing into them. Well done. HALSEY

Barrowclough and other commanders, took over command of 3 US Fleet and carried on into the [Philippines](#).

The official dates of the division's three actions were declared to be:

[Vella Lavella](#): 21 September to 9 October 1943

Treasury Group: 25 October to 26 November 1943

[Green Islands](#): 15 February to 27 February 1944

THE PACIFIC

CHAPTER 6 – THE END OF A DIVISION

CHAPTER 6

The End of a Division

SHORTAGE of manpower finally sealed the fate of **3 Division**, but the protracted negotiations preceding its disbanding indicated a reluctance to reach any decision at home without first obtaining the guidance and advice of the Allied war leaders. In January 1944, while Barrowclough was planning the seizure of the **Green Islands** Group, the New Zealand Government, long disturbed by her decreasing industrial manpower, decided to reduce the country's overseas commitments by recalling one of its divisions and employing the men thus released to build up the civilian labour pool in order to maintain the production of essential foodstuffs for both the **United Kingdom** and the American forces fighting in the **Pacific**. Before deciding which division to bring home, Fraser sought the views of the Allied leaders. On 12 January he requested Nash in **Washington** to obtain Roosevelt's opinion. After a fruitless interview, in which Roosevelt hinted that New Zealand should be represented at the fall of **Tokyo** rather than at the fall of **Berlin**, Nash discussed the problem with Halsey, repeating what had already been agreed before the division left **New Caledonia** in 1943, that New Zealand could no longer supply reinforcements to the **Pacific** division. He then saw General Sir John Dill, British representative on the Combined Chiefs of Staff in **Washington**, whose expressed personal opinion was that New Zealand should notify both Churchill and Roosevelt that she desired to withdraw **2 Division** from **Europe** by August 1944. This suggestion, however, was disregarded. On 24 January Nash set out in detail in a long letter to Roosevelt all commitments of New Zealand's manpower, the result of which was a suggestion from the American leader to refer to Churchill for a decision. When Nash saw him in **London** on 9 February, Churchill expressed a wish that **2 Division**, then preparing for the **Cassino** offensive, should be represented at the fall of Rome, but he did not commit himself until Nash saw him again a week later, when he said he desired at least a brigade group, with **Freyberg** in command, to be retained in **Europe** until the end of hostilities. Puttick, one of the

advocates in the earlier years of the war of meeting the Japanese as far from New Zealand's shores as possible, recommended the withdrawal of **3 Division** (see **Appendix VIII**) and condemned Churchill's suggestion as 'distasteful' and 'dangerous'. **Freyberg** was equally downright in condemning it, and in a long signal to Fraser pointed out the dangers of leaving a small detached group in an active theatre where it might possibly be employed to its grievous disadvantage. Finally, after a secret session of Parliament, which had been adjourned a week earlier, the opinion of the British Chiefs of Staff reached New Zealand in a cable message from Nash and was made known to the members of the House. This recommended that the Navy and Air Force, both of which were in a more favoured position than the Army, ¹ should remain undisturbed, and that New Zealand's manpower requirements for the production of meat and dairy produce could be met by the temporary withdrawal of **3 Division** from the **Pacific**, with the reasonable hope that **2 Division** could be withdrawn later from the European theatre in time to constitute a full New Zealand division for further operations in the **Pacific** in 1945. In their conclusions the British Chiefs of Staff were 'averse to the complete withdrawal of the New Zealand division from **Europe**', and intimated their preference that 'it should be allowed to fall in strength to one brigade'. They considered operations in the **Solomons** theatre of secondary importance to those in **Italy** and that the withdrawal of **3 Division** would not create the shipping problem such as would be involved in withdrawing the division from **Europe**.

While advice was being sought from Allied leaders on which division could be withdrawn with the least disruption to the war effort, Jordan advised the Government that the food position in the **United Kingdom**, so closely linked with production in New Zealand, had become serious. The British Ministry of Food, with extreme reluctance, suggested that as essential supplies had dropped to a critically low level, the possibility of withdrawing the New Zealand forces from the field should be faced, for if production fell away in New Zealand, as it showed signs of doing, the ration of butter and cheese and, to a lesser degree, meat would be seriously affected in the **United Kingdom**. The choice in New Zealand,

therefore, reduced itself to the maintenance of two forces in widely separated theatres of war or the production of food for the people in areas just as widely separated.

Barrowclough's first intimation that his division was being withdrawn reached him in a confidential cable message from the Prime

¹ The approximate strengths of the three services and the theatres in which they were serving as at 31 December 1943 were as follows:

Navy: 5000 New Zealand and **Pacific** theatres; 3500 other theatres.

Army: 30,500 **Mediterranean** theatre; 19,600 South Pacific theatre.

Air: 30,000 New Zealand and **Pacific**; 4000 European theatre; 4000 **Canada** and **India**.

Minister on 7 March. Three days later Halsey was informed. Barrowclough, in acknowledging the message, expressed his disappointment that a division so well trained and familiar with amphibious operations that it could pack its thousands of tons of equipment and supplies and move at short notice from island to island was to be made inactive. The only ray of encouragement, for the earlier intention was to retain the force on a reduced basis in **New Caledonia**, lay in the suggestion that a division would probably be assembled to continue the attack on **Japan** at some unspecified date. However, no further active role was possible after receipt of the message. When the Government was informed that Barrowclough had been warned to hold his division in readiness for use in a proposed amphibious attack on **Kavieng**, using **8 Brigade** as part of the assaulting force, he was immediately instructed that any such operations were not to interfere with the release of soldiers to industry, but any embarrassment of the commanding officer as a result of this instruction was avoided when Halsey cancelled the operation on 13 March.

After discussing the relief of his division with Harmon, who visited him at his headquarters on **Nissan** on 17 March, Barrowclough returned to New Zealand for more precise instructions, travelling by air via **Guadalcanal**, the **New Hebrides**, and **New Caledonia**. He reached **Wellington** on 24 March, attended a meeting of War Cabinet on the 25th and a meeting of the full Cabinet the following day, discussing with Ministers all details and categories of the men to be withdrawn. The scheme provided for the return to New Zealand by October 1944 of 11,000 men from the **Pacific** force, 7000 of them to be in the country by 1 July, the remainder to be absorbed into industry at the rate of 2000 a month. These men were required for employment in farming, and in dairy factories and freezing works. Another 4900 were also required for essential industries such as housing, railways, coal-mining, sawmilling, and hydroelectrical development. Men were allowed to volunteer for return, at the same time stipulating the branch of industry in which they desired employment. The remainder of the division was to be returned to **New Caledonia** after being relieved by American forces of the **Pacific** command. These figures and conditions were also supplied to the American Chiefs of Staff who, in agreeing with their opposite numbers in the **United Kingdom** to the withdrawal of the division, asked New Zealand to set out in detail her full manpower requirements.

Although the Government resolved early in 1944 to reduce the division and withdraw it from active operations, a decision to disband it was not made until nine months later. Barrowclough, when informed of the demands on his force, saw no difficulty in providing the men required by the Government, but he suggested that instead of retaining a brigade group, the original idea, he would prefer to retain all units on a reducing scale to enable the division, or *a division*, to be more speedily built up later, if and when it was required. This suggestion was accepted. Barrowclough returned to his headquarters in the **Green Islands** on 1 April after discussions in **New Caledonia** with heads of services—his own and the Pacific Command—on the impending moves. The Americans were reluctant to lose the division, which was now as experienced as any combat unit in the **Pacific**. Harmon, particularly, did not wish to lose

the New Zealanders off the order of battle, because of their familiarity with jungle and amphibious warfare. The American command also considered that the complete withdrawal of **3 Division** would mean the loss of New Zealand-American co-operation and method which, with the seizure of **Green Islands**, revealed that such involved operations could be executed with complete understanding devoid of all friction among either services or individuals. Salmon, writing from **Noumea**, advised caution in making a decision. He stressed the necessity of maintaining goodwill with the American forces and hinted at the danger of future accusations of leaving the Americans 'to do our fighting'. However, the necessity for maintaining the country's food commitments to the **United Kingdom**, where preparations were well advanced for the landing in **Normandy**, and also to the **Pacific** forces, undoubtedly overruled these considerations.

On 7 April Barrowclough released the news of withdrawal and the conditions governing the return to New Zealand of men for essential industries. In this special message to the force, he indicated the reasons for the manpower demands on the division:

No modern war can be won by the fighting services alone. The production of warlike equipment and stores and primary products (including food) is as essential to the war effort as is the work of the soldier in the front line. By virtue of her geographical position on Allied lines of communication and because of her natural resources, New Zealand has been requested by the highest Allied authorities and as part of the general war strategy, to undertake a greatly increased programme for the supply of food and other primary products. This she cannot do without some reduction in the numbers of her armed forces. It has been agreed that she ought to recall from active service certain categories of men whose work in primary and essential industries at home is likely to be of greater assistance to the war effort than is their continued service with the colours.

Barrowclough had been given no policy directive regarding the future of his force, with the result that his position during succeeding months

was an unhappy one, governed by almost the same degree of uncertainty which marked the building up of the force two years earlier. What was vaguely described as an interim policy provided for a skeleton force to remain in **New Caledonia**, on the assumption that it would be the basis for a reconstructed division. There was a general understanding, without recorded report, that nothing definite would be decided about **2 Division** until after the fall of Rome, when it would be withdrawn from the line for rest and reorganisation. Throughout the negotiations concerning **3 Division's** withdrawal, Barrowclough criticised the continued indecision of the United Kingdom Chiefs of Staff in not assigning a definite role to **2 Division** when its task in the battle of Rome was ended, which he considered was the appropriate time to decide its future. Some of his difficulties at this time are suggested by an extract from his letter written to Army Headquarters: 'Unless some clear indication is given shortly it will not be possible for us to deal with our situation here in an intelligent and economical manner. It is unfair to us to base everything on the certainty of the fall of Rome.'

Men for return to New Zealand were selected with commendable speed and all details of the withdrawal plan completed by the division's staff in a week. When Mr. **H. L. Bockett**, the Director of National Service, reached Barrowclough's headquarters, he was a little embarrassed to find that the first 7000 men had already been selected and were ready for departure. To deal with any possible recurrence or outbreak of malaria when the men discontinued taking atebirin tablets, the withdrawal scheme provided for a medical observation period of four to five weeks in **New Caledonia** before going on to New Zealand. This period also enabled medical examinations and preliminary details of discharge to be completed.

The slow and melancholy process of the division's disintegration began on 24 April when the first releases, numbering 1850, left the **Green Islands** in USS *Wharton*. On Anzac Day 1944, **8 Brigade** was reduced when another 1700 departed from the Treasuries in USS *President Monroe*. Two more ships left **Nissan** on 27 April. By 15 May

the last troops had left the Treasuries in USS *Tryon*, and two days later command passed from Goss to 198 US Coast Artillery Group, an element of 93 US Division, then on **Bougainville**, which became responsible for the two island commands of the division. In addition to an exchange of farewell ceremonies, one of Barrowclough's last acts before he handed over command of the **Green Islands** Group on the night of 29–30 May was the presentation of a distinguished American honour to Whyte, the 'CB' commander, for his work with the airfield construction programme. A fitting gesture to mark the end of **3 Division's** tour of duty in the **Solomons** was the capture of one last Japanese in the jungle on **Nissan** on 30 May. When command passed to the Americans there were between 1400 and 1500 New Zealand troops left on **Nissan**, a small rear party in the Treasury Group, and 600, principally from Ordnance, on **Guadalcanal**. By 12 July these were all back in **New Caledonia**.

Barrowclough left **Nissan** on 5 June and reopened his headquarters at the old site among the niaoulis at Moindah, with the two brigades and most of the remaining units of the division congregated in camps in Tene Valley, where their accommodation and reception had been prepared by Dove and his staff. In addition to the returning drafts for industry, considerable numbers also went on leave to New Zealand. Those who remained in and around **Bourail** found themselves entertained as they had never been entertained before by concert parties, lecturers, and educational diversions sent from New Zealand at the General's request to relieve the inevitable period of boredom following the transition from an active to a passive role.

But no sooner was the division congregated in **New Caledonia** than repeated requests arrived from Army Headquarters to supply officers and men for 12th Reinforcements for **2 Division**, and engineers for service with South East Asia Command in **India** and **Burma**. Because of the absence of any defined policy regarding the future of the division, this made the work of administration extremely difficult and discouraging, as withdrawals over and above manpower demands tended to diminish the force too drastically. By July some of the units were no larger than

football teams, but they still retained all their stores and equipment for which they were responsible. Barrowclough wrote to Army Headquarters suggesting that all withdrawals from his dwindling force, with the exception of those returning to specified industries, should be held up until the return of the Prime Minister from **London**, where he had gone in May to attend the Premiers' Conference and where the fate of **2 Division** was to be discussed and its future decided. The commander anticipated that after Fraser's return a definite policy statement would be issued. At that time he was even unaware whether his skeleton force would remain in **New Caledonia** or return to New Zealand, but a decision was forced on this point when Admiral Newton asked that the force be returned to the Dominion as he required the vacated areas for the accommodation of expected American troops. As so often happened these troops never arrived.

‘I cannot over-emphasise the difficulties we are meeting in the absence of any fixed policy direction’, Barrowclough wrote again before flying to New Zealand on 20 July for nine days, during which he endeavoured to obtain a Cabinet decision on the future employment of the force. Beyond deciding to withdraw it to New Zealand, as Newton wished, the New Zealand Government made no decision, as they were still waiting for some indication from the United Kingdom Chiefs of Staff on the future employment of **2 Division**. In asking that some public announcement be made about **3 Division**'s future, Barrowclough stressed the necessity of retaining the interest of his remaining officers and men while holding them together through the period of indecision and inactivity. While in New Zealand he also discussed the situation with Puttick, who favoured leaving **2 Division** in **Europe** until the end of hostilities. He returned to **New Caledonia** on 29 July, disappointed with the results of his visit and discussions. Beginning immediately after the General's return, drafts of men were shipped back to New Zealand, moving temporarily into **Papakura Camp**, where the brigades opened their headquarters. **Divisional Headquarters** opened in Civic Chambers, **Auckland**, on 18 August with Barrowclough's return, later moving out to Orford's House at Manurewa. A rear party of 1000 all ranks under **Davis**,

¹ of **29 Battalion**, remained in **New Caledonia** to check and supervise the return to New Zealand of a vast quantity of the division's equipment, including 2805 vehicles, guns and trailers, and 10,000 tons of ammunition and stores, the last members of the party returning on 11 October when their task was completed.

By the end of August the strength of **3 Division** had fallen to 6000 officers and men whose services, until some indication from the United Kingdom Chiefs of Staff on the future employment of a Commonwealth force to continue the war against **Japan** moved the Government to a decision, were lost to both Army and industry. This point was stressed by the Director of National Service in his warning of any possible public criticism of wasted manpower, which would have been quite justified. He suggested also that in any replacement scheme of the long-service men from **2 Division**, those returning from the **Mediterranean** theatre could be directed into industry to permit the release of fit men held there on appeal. Army, until this time silent on a subject bound up with political

¹ **Lt-Col F. L. H. Davis**, m.i.d.; **Wellington**; born Feilding, 23 Jan 1909; Regular soldier; served **2 NZEF**, Egypt, 1940–41, 1945; CO 29 Bn, 1943–44; commanded 3 Div rear party; wounded, **Italy**, 15 Apr 1945.

implications, took a hand in September when a report to the Minister of Defence signed by Barrowclough, Conway, and Bockett recommended that **2 Division** remain in **Europe** until the end of the war in that theatre, after which New Zealand should maintain one division to continue the conflict with **Japan**. This recommendation, combined with the indecision of the British Chiefs of Staff in issuing a policy statement, finally decided the Government's action. 'As we are still awaiting some indication from the United Kingdom Chiefs of Staff regarding our future military role in the **Pacific**, we are still unable to make a final decision as to the future of the two divisions', Fraser cabled **Freyberg** as late as 25 August.

Finally the fate of the division was declared on 21 September when Fraser announced in Parliament that it would be disbanded. Negotiations, however, had been in progress for some time before that. Although nothing was made public, Fraser cabled confidentially to Churchill on 9 September indicating that the Government proposed to disband the division and maintain the strength of **2 Division** with men from the **Pacific** force. War Cabinet met on 11 September, two days after Churchill had been advised, and approved the policy of disbanding **3 Division**, leaving **2 Division** in **Europe** until the end of hostilities and using the remaining men from the **Pacific** force, then in various camps in New Zealand, to build up the division in **Italy**. Involved with this policy and to some extent bearing on the fate of the **Pacific** force, was a scheme to replace long-service men from **2 Division**. After the unhappy experience with an earlier furlough scheme, when many men refused point-blank to return to **2 Division** and others were graded down medically and released from service obligations, the Government realised that such schemes were impossible of fulfilment and that any men brought back to New Zealand would have to be replaced permanently. **Freyberg**, who was fully acquainted with all negotiations concerning **3 Division**, had reported to the Prime Minister in June that 'the keen fighting edge of the force was blunted', and that unless a quick victory in **Europe** was assured, and this he considered possible, he was inclined to advise the withdrawal of his division. He wished, however, to have officers and men up to the 4th Reinforcements replaced. This involved 3200 men of the division, and it was this replacement scheme to which the Government agreed, filling the majority of the gaps with men from the **Pacific**.

A total of 17,134 all ranks returned from the **Pacific**, and by the beginning of September were scattered far and wide. Of these, industry absorbed 12,069; another 3229 had embarked to join **2 Division**; 38 were on their way to the **United Kingdom**; 830 were in camp with 16th Reinforcements, and 968 were held on home service. ¹ A skeleton base headquarters established at Mangere Crossing Camp, where the division's stores and equipment were assembled, completed the tedious work of

finally checking them before return to Ordnance. When Barrowclough issued his final order on 19 October disbanding the division 'as from 1700 hours on 20 October', there were only a few Headquarters and Base staff to read it.

One of the problems arising out of the policy of sending **3 Division** men to build up **2 Division** was the status of officers, warrant officers, and non-commissioned officers when they reached the **Mediterranean** theatre. Barrowclough, in discussing their future prospects with War Cabinet, urged that no officer should be asked to take lower rank or resign his commission merely because he belonged to **3 Division**, even if there was a surplus of rank. However, any decision attended future discussions with **Freyberg**, to whose headquarters Barrowclough departed immediately his force was disbanded. Most of the problems solved themselves. There was no surplus of officers, as anticipated. Some of the senior officers automatically reduced one grade; all were absorbed and acquitted themselves with credit. Several who had survived the jungle actions were killed; others won honours during the final stages of the advance in **Italy**.

¹ The response by the farming community was the most disappointing. By 10 May only about 1000 men of an estimated 7000 had been asked for by the farmers, whose allotment from the labour pool was later reduced.

THE PACIFIC

CHAPTER 7 – THE BATTLE FOR THE SOLOMONS

Contents

I: Japanese Plans Defeated p. 204

II: The Turning Point p. 211

III: Crucial Action p. 216

IV: The Japanese Move Back p. 221

THE PACIFIC

I: JAPANESE PLANS DEFEATED

I: Japanese Plans Defeated

MOBILISATION orders to General Juichi Terauchi's South Army, elements of which ultimately reached the **Solomons**, were issued by Japanese Imperial General Headquarters in **Tokyo** on 6 November 1941, a month before the attack on **Pearl Harbour**, and the areas to be seized were decided on 20 November while British and American diplomats were negotiating in an attempt to avoid a conflict with **Japan**. Operations were to begin simultaneously with those of the Combined Japanese Fleet, and the areas to be seized were clearly defined in the following order:

1. The seizure of **Malaya**, British Borneo, the **Philippines**, and North Sumatra.
2. The seizure of **Java**.
3. Cleaning up **Burma**.

Two paragraphs disposed of the objective:

- (The objective of this operation is to destroy and seize enemy
 - a) strongholds of **Britain**, the **United States**, and the **Netherlands**;
 - b) The sectors to be seized by the South Army are the **Philippines**, British Malaya, **Java**, **Sumatra**, **Borneo** and Timor, &c. ('etcetera' presumably meaning all the intervening island groups).

This operation was the fulfilment of secret plans contained in an 'Outline of Japanese Foreign Policy', dated 28 September 1940, and issued by the Japanese Foreign Office, in which the establishment of the **Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere** was definitely defined:

In the regions including French Indo- **China**, the Dutch East Indies, Straits Settlements, British Malaya, **Thailand**, the Philippine Islands, British Borneo and **Burma**, with **Japan**, Manchukuo and **China** as the centre, we should construct a sphere in which the politics, economy, and culture of those countries and regions are combined.

- (**French Indo- China and the Dutch East Indies:** We must, in the first
- a) place, endeavour to conclude a comprehensive economic agreement (including the distribution of resources, trade adjustment in and out of the Co-prosperity Sphere, currency and exchange agreements, &c.), while planning such political coalitions as the recognition of independence, the conclusion of mutual assistance pacts, &c.
 - b) **Thailand:** We should strive to strengthen mutual assistance and coalition in political, economic, and military affairs.

On 4 October 1940 a tentative plan for policy towards the southern regions was secretly drawn up, the first paragraph of which gives the clue to **Japan's** aggressive attack: 'Although the objective of **Japan's** penetration into the southern regions covers, in its first stage, the whole area to the west of **Hawaii** (excluding for the time being the **Philippines** and **Guam**), **French Indo-China**, the **Dutch East Indies**, **British Burma** and the **Straits Settlements** are the areas which we should first control. Then we should gradually advance into the other areas. However, depending on the attitude of the **United States** Government, the **Philippines** and **Guam** will be included.'

In detailing this plan an independence movement, which would cause **France** to renounce her sovereign right, was to be manoeuvred in **French Indo-China**, every attempt was to be made to reach an understanding with **Chiang Kai-shek** in **China**, and the army of **Thailand** left to control Cambodia. These actions were to be governed by **Japan's** liaison with **Germany** (with whom she had complete diplomatic understanding), and the success of the German military operations to land in **Britain**.

By the first week in May 1942 elements of Terauchi's army had reached as far south as **Tulagi** and **Guadalcanal** in the **Solomons**, and east to **Tarawa** in the Northern Gilbert Group. Only one corner of **New Guinea** of all the island territory north, north-east, and north-west of **Australia** remained to the Allies and there, in valleys behind **Port Moresby**, Australian forces were concentrated and airfields established as quickly as the machinery could make them available for use by aircraft, most of which were coming from **America**. Only the Owen Stanley

Ranges separated them from the Japanese forces which were established along the northern coast at Lae and Salamaua. **Burma, Malaya, the Nicobar and Andaman Islands in the Indian Ocean, Java, Sumatra, Timor, the Philippines, Borneo, New Britain and New Ireland, and most of New Guinea** itself were held by the Japanese, according to the plans drawn up in **Tokyo** in 1940.

This swift and unexpected success in overrunning Allied territory, which contributed to her ultimate undoing, encouraged the Japanese High Command to attack the Dutch East Indies sooner than the provisions of the original plan intended, and then to push farther south beyond the **Solomons**. In March Terauchi was instructed to complete mopping-up in the captured areas as quickly as possible and to secure a strong defence which would withstand a long period of resistance. Two months later tentative plans were issued for an attack on **Port Moresby, Fiji, New Caledonia and Samoa**, the occupation of which, in the light of previous successes, was to 'accelerate the termination of the war'. Those three island groups, and the Northern Gilberts, were to constitute the outer rim of the Japanese defence line in the **Pacific**. Established in them, and holding **Port Moresby** to cover the **Rabaul** arsenal and control the Coral Sea, she aimed to sever all sea routes between **America and Australia** and New Zealand, thus preventing the concentration in those two countries of forces sufficiently strong for a decisive counter-attack. From aerodromes and naval bases in **New Guinea, New Caledonia, Fiji and Samoa**, ports and bases in the north of New Zealand and on the mainland of **Australia** were to be bombed into impotence and **Japan's** inner fortress line, swinging on **Rabaul, Truk** and Palau, was to have been made impregnable, while behind it she built up her **Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere**. Before this rosy plan could be accomplished, however, the situation was changed, and units were quickly withdrawn from **Java** and the **Philippines** and despatched to bolster elements of 17 Japanese Army attempting to retake and hold the **Solomons** after the American landing there on 7 August.

Japan's advance south had been as swift as it was previously thought

impossible before the fall of **Singapore**. By 3 May a seaplane base had been established at **Tulagi**, former headquarters of the British administration in the **Solomons**, and by early August an aerodrome on Lunga Point, **Guadalcanal**, had been completed. These were in readiness for the contemplated attack on **Port Moresby** to ensure security on the Japanese left flank. When the first attack on **Port Moresby** was turned back by the Coral Sea battle, fought out on waters between the **Solomons** and the Louisiade Archipelago between 6 and 8 May, orders were issued to the **17 Army** Commander, Lieutenant-General Harukichi Hyakutake, on 18 May to attack **New Caledonia**, **Fiji** and **Samoa**, and to continue the attack on **Port Moresby** overland. The main body of his army, which was created from elements of the South Army after it had completed its original mission, was drawn from 5, 18, and 56 Divisions, the principal units of which were concentrated at Davao, in the Southern Philippines, with others in **Java** and **Rabaul**. Hyakutake moved his headquarters and the main force to **Truk** and elements to **Rabaul** and Palau from the end of June to the beginning of July, when the attack on the island groups was to be developed.

The **Fiji** defences, with which 3 New Zealand Division was so long and arduously concerned, were never tested, though the island itself was vital to the ultimate success of the **Pacific** war. If the Japanese attack had come in early July as originally planned, it is doubtful whether they would have held for any length of time against the weight of the naval and air support under which the Japanese proposed to put their land forces ashore. At that time the anti-aircraft defences of **Fiji** had been strengthened by the arrival of American units, as plans were in preparation for the relief of **3 Division**. Considerable American strength was also being built up in **New Caledonia** and **Samoa**.

The attacking force under Hyakutake which was designed for the conquest of the three island groups was a strong one, with overwhelming naval support from the Second Fleet under Vice-Admiral Nobutake Kondo, consisting of 13 heavy cruisers, two light cruisers, and 24 destroyers, and the First Air Fleet under Vice-Admiral Chuichi Nagumo,

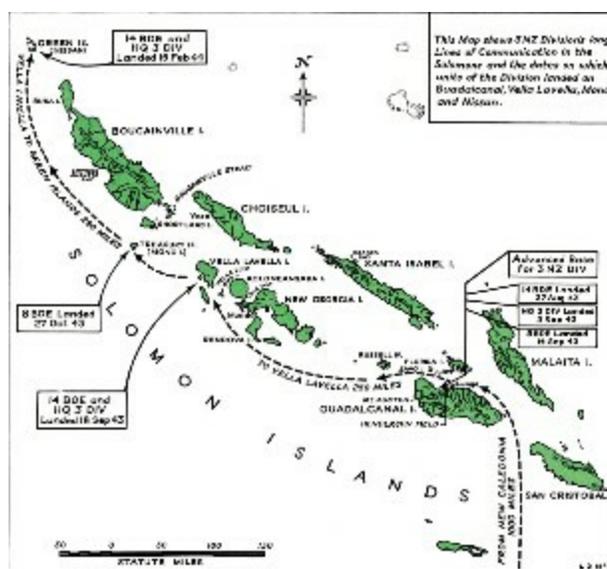
with seven aircraft carriers and eleven destroyers as well as auxiliary supply ships. This whole invasion force was to be protected by Vice-Admiral Gunichi Mikawa's fleet, which included the four battleships *Hiyei*, *Kirishima*, *Kongo*, and *Haruna*. Although the three island invasion forces never got beyond the planning stage, many of the units taking part had been moved to **Rabaul** from **Davao** and **Java**. Major-General Kiyotake Kawaguchi commanded a force of 9126 all ranks assigned to attack **Fiji**. This consisted of 35 Infantry Brigade (from 35 Japanese Army in the **Philippines**) with the following units attached: two battalions of 41 Infantry Regiment; 45 Field Anti-Aircraft Battalion and two independent anti-tank companies; 20 Independent Mountain Artillery Battalion; 15 Independent Engineer Regiment, with an engineer company attached for heavy bridging; a motor transport company; a hospital; strong signals units equipped with field wireless; and a water supply unit. The **South Seas Detachment** of 5549 all ranks, under Major-General Tomitara Horii, was assigned for the invasion of **New Caledonia** and was built round 55 Infantry Brigade Group, 144 Infantry Regiment, and 47 Field Anti-Aircraft Battalion and ancilliary units from 55 Brigade. A force of 1215 all ranks, commanded by Colonel Kiyomi Yazawa and built round a battalion of 41 Infantry Regiment, with a land combat battalion and supporting units from 14 and 17 Armies, was assigned to take **Samoa**.

Each of these three landing forces contained elements of **17 Army** and was particularly strong in communications units—all eight radio platoons and an independent company being equipped with motorised vehicles. These three expeditions, timed to begin simultaneous attacks in order to divert and cause the dispersal of any relief forces, were disastrously affected by the Battle of the Coral Sea, which halted their preparations, and then by the Battle of Midway, which forced their cancellation, as many of the naval and air units destined for them were destroyed or damaged.

The first tests of American aggression, which ultimately led to these two sea battles, developed from audacious raids on Japanese targets in

the Caroline and Marshall Islands on 31 January 1942, and on Wake Island on 24 February, by naval units commanded by Halsey, who later succeeded Ghormley as commander of the South Pacific area and whose pugnacious character was reflected in his directives and strategy for the **Solomons** campaign. These tests demonstrated that air power and air superiority were necessary in all naval engagements. This had been a potent factor in all early Japanese successes, and was proved again and again when the **Pacific** campaign began and Allied air power gradually reduced the Japanese and finally drove them from the skies.

The battles of the Coral Sea and Midway preceded the landings at **Tulagi** and on **Guadalcanal** and turned the tide in the **Pacific**. They decisively halted the Japanese drive south and restored the balance of sea power until it swung in favour of the Allies. The first, the battle of the Coral Sea, from 6 to 8 May 1942, turned back the Japanese Fourth Fleet, commanded by **Vice-Admiral Inouye**, which was protecting a large convoy carrying a force commanded by Lieutenant-General Momotake intended for the assault on **Port Moresby** from the sea, and caused postponement of the projected attack on **New Caledonia, Fiji** and **Samoa**. Not a single shot was exchanged between the surface ships of the opposing forces and, for the first time in history, a decisive naval battle was fought exclusively between carrier-borne and land-based aircraft. The Allied naval force, commanded by Rear-Admiral Frank J. Fletcher, included the Australian cruisers **Australia** and **Hobart** and the American carriers **Lexington** and **Yorktown**, with six heavy and light cruisers, **Minneapolis, New Orleans, Astoria, Chester, Portland** and **Chicago**, with their protective destroyer screens. They caught the Japanese force before it turned north in the Coral Sea and joined battle on 7 May. The Japanese aircraft carrier **Ryukaku** was sunk by aircraft from the **Lexington** and **Yorktown** with the loss of only one American dive-bomber, and the **Shokaku** was put out of action the following day and withdrawn. Both the American



This Map shows 3 NZ Division's long lines of communication in the Solomons and the dates on which units of the Division landed on Guadalcanal, Vella Lavella, Mono and Nissan.

carriers were damaged, the *Lexington* so severely that she was abandoned and sunk by her own people. The United States destroyer *Sims* and a tanker and 66 aircraft were also lost during the battle, but the Japanese force was so severely mauled that it turned back to Rabaul with the invasion force. On 4 May, before this action began, the *Yorktown's* aircraft inflicted severe and unexpected damage on 19 Japanese Seaplane Tender Division which had occupied Tulagi and Gavutu, off Florida Island, to protect the flank and assist with the assault on Port Moresby. ¹

A lull followed the Coral Sea battle, and American carriers and supporting craft were recalled from the South Pacific in readiness for another move. Naval patrols were established to the west of Midway Island, which lies north-west of the Hawaii Group, as American intelligence, obtained from such a reliable source as decoded Japanese naval signals, estimated that an attack was imminent against that island outpost. The total United States forces available in the Central Pacific were three aircraft carriers, the *Enterprise*, *Hornet* (which was returning from a raid on Tokyo on 18 April), and *Yorktown* (which had been patched up after the Coral Sea battle), seven heavy cruisers, one light cruiser, 14 destroyers and 20 submarines, divided into two task forces under Fletcher and Rear-Admiral R. A. Spruance. The Japanese

Combined Fleet, under Admiral Yamamoto, was sighted on the morning of 3 June, some hundreds of miles south-west of Midway, moving east. Its arrival within reach of Midway was co-ordinated with a Japanese move into the Aleutians, where enemy forces landed on Kiska and Attu that same day. In the afternoon of 3 June Yamamoto's fleet was attacked by heavy bombers from **Hawaii** which inflicted the initial damage. The following morning two enemy carriers and the main force were picked up and attacked by aircraft from the Midway garrison. The **United States** fleet's carriers then entered the battle with conspicuous success but great loss. A torpedo squadron from the *Hornet*, without protection, attacked the four Japanese carriers. Every aircraft was shot down and only one American pilot survived. Torpedo squadrons from the *Enterprise* and the *Yorktown* then attacked, losing heavily but registering hits on the Japanese carriers. By the end of the day two Japanese carriers were on fire and out of action, a third damaged and later sunk by submarine, and a Japanese battleship and cruiser badly damaged. A furious air battle continued throughout 5 June, during which American aviators maintained their initiative, but poor visibility prevented conclusive action. On 6 June aircraft from the *Hornet* sought out units of the dispersing Japanese fleet, scoring hits on cruisers and destroyers. The remainder, denuded of their air support, scattered and fled.

The Japanese had suffered their first decisive naval defeat since 1592, when a Korean admiral routed a Japanese fleet under Hideyoshi. At Midway they lost four aircraft carriers—the *Akagi*, *Hiryu*, *Kaga* and *Soryu*; the heavy cruiser *Mikuma* and two battleships, four cruisers, and three destroyers were damaged. The American forces also lost heavily in men and aircraft. The *Yorktown* was hit by two torpedoes on 5 June and sank the following day, and the destroyer *Hammann*, which had gone alongside to assist the aircraft carrier, was also torpedoed and sunk. Other vessels were damaged.

The Battle of Midway was one of the decisive battles in the **Pacific** war and one of the great naval battles of history. It removed the threat

to **Hawaii** and confined future naval operations to the South Pacific; it caused the cancellation of the Japanese move to secure island bases in **New Caledonia**, **Fiji**, and **Samoa**, and it forced the Japanese to waste their strength on two land battles—an attempt to take **Port Moresby** by crossing the Owen Stanley Ranges and the reckless and disastrous attempt to reinforce and hold **Guadalcanal**. The Japanese never regained the initiative after the Battle of Midway, and their superiority in the air began to wane from that time. But it was the loss of naval craft, aircraft, and men in the futile attempt to drive the Americans from **Guadalcanal** which lost them the **Solomons** and finally, with their equally wasteful battle to hold **New Guinea**, **Rabaul**. Despite the fanatical bravery of her fighting men, the Japanese High Command was outmanœuvred by superior strategy, aided by those twin scourges, malaria and dysentery. **Guadalcanal** is a horrible example of the wanton disregard of the Japanese for human life, and adherence to an ideal, based on Emperor worship, of implicit obedience to authority in the face of overwhelming adversity.

There is no evidence to prove that **Japan** ever intended to invade either New Zealand or the mainland of **Australia**, though her plans did include an enforced acceptance of her predominant direction and role in all **Pacific** affairs. Before General Tojo went to his death on 23 December 1948 at the conclusion of the International War Trials in **Tokyo**, quite happily and in the belief that he would be the future hero of **Japan**, he gave a final interview at Sugamo prison, where he was confined during the trials. Typed copies of this interview were afterwards submitted to Tojo and his solicitor, Mr. George Blewett, an American who had defended him, and approved by them both. In answer to specific questions regarding Japanese policy and any contemplated invasion of New Zealand and **Australia**, Tojo replied: 'We never had enough troops to do so. We had already far out-stretched our lines of communication. We did not have the armed strength or the supply facilities to mount such a terrific extension of our already over-strained and too thinly spread forces. We expected to occupy all **New Guinea**, to maintain **Rabaul** as a holding base, and to raid Northern **Australia** by air. But actual physical

invasion—no, at no time.’ Tojo also expressed the opinion that politically **Japan** lost the war on **Guadalcanal**, but that he had his first doubts about its outcome after the Battle of Midway. This is supported by extracts from a report in September 1943 by Imperial General Headquarters on the progress of the war after the failure of Japanese arms to retake **Guadalcanal**:

The fighting power of our naval and air forces had been whittled away in successive operations, particularly at Midway, and recovery was painfully slow. Enemy submarines were a menace to our sea lanes; our shipping losses mounted so that new construction could not match losses. We found it increasingly difficult to provide our vast operational areas with the desired quantities of supplies. Like it or not, our forces, their initiative lost, were now forced into a defensive position. We maintained a longer fighting front than our national resources could justify.

¹ Most of the damage to Japanese surface craft was done beyond the waters of the Coral Sea. On 4 May two destroyers, three transports, four gunboats, one light cruiser, and various small craft like launches were sunk at **Tulagi**, and one destroyer and one heavy cruiser damaged there. Near Misima, an island of the Louisiade Archipelago, the carrier *Ryukaku* and one light cruiser were sunk on 7 May. On 8 May, in the Coral Sea, the carrier *Shokaku* was severely damaged, the carrier *Zuikaku* lightly damaged, and 87 aircraft destroyed.

THE PACIFIC

II: THE TURNING POINT

II: The Turning Point

All Japanese naval, military, and economic opinion agreed that **Guadalcanal** was the turning point in the **Pacific** war, but the island was held and finally won for the Allies only at great cost, particularly of American naval forces and aircraft. Her navy suffered unmercifully in a series of surface engagements, though never once did the Japanese High Command realise how grievously American strength had been wounded. Although losses on land were less severe, the American Marines who bore the brunt of the early fighting were tested for the first time against a cunning enemy who was as aggressive as the conditions. Handicapped by lack of previous battle experience and by territory which was even more terrifying than his foes, the American soldier gained his bitter experience from hour to hour and day to day. Not a single complete or accurate map existed of **Guadalcanal** or the other islands, and the outdated hydrographic charts were little better. Invaluable information was obtained from coastwatchers who, organised by the Australian naval authorities, had secreted themselves and their wireless sets in the jungle when the Japanese arrived. A little more was added by observation from the air, but only by personal observation after landing was any really reliable and accurate detail possible. The invasion force worked from hastily prepared mosaics photographed from the air and assembled with speed.

This is not the place for a detailed account of the land, sea, and air battles which enabled the American command to hold, overwhelm, and finally force the Japanese to give up the struggle for **Guadalcanal**, and afterwards to continue driving them from island to island until the **Solomons** were retaken, but these are of such importance to the outcome of the campaign that no account of New Zealand's part in them would be complete without some broad reference to the more crucial

engagements. More particularly does this apply to the New Zealand naval and air force units which, because their numbers were more limited than those of the army, operated for the most part as components of larger American formations, whereas army units undertook separate missions, all of which are detailed elsewhere.

On 7 August elements of 1 American Marine Division, under Major-General A. A. Vandegrift, went ashore unopposed on **Guadalcanal**, but other units under Brigadier-General W. H. Rupertus lost heavily in capturing the islands of **Tulagi**, Gavutu, and Tanambogo, where the Japanese had strongly entrenched themselves to protect the seaplane base they had established in sheltered waters among these islands off the coast of Florida, opposite the northern coast of **Guadalcanal**. The first echelon of these Marines reached **Wellington** on 4 June 1942 and the second on 11 July. Working day and night in atrocious weather, ships, not loaded for a combat operation, were reloaded with such haste that the convoy of twelve transports and cargo ships was able to depart on 22 July for **Fiji** to meet the remainder of the invasion force coming down from **Hawaii**.¹ There, in less tempestuous conditions, an armada of 80 ships held a rehearsal of the landing on the beaches of Koro Island between 28 and 31 July. Nothing went right, but no further practices were possible because of the time limit. Under cover of bomber aircraft from three carriers, *Wasp*, *Saratoga* and *Enterprise*, the American invasion force approached round the north point of the island, taking the Japanese garrison in such surprise that those on **Guadalcanal** fled to the hills, and 11,000 Marines,

¹ A report by **Marine Corps** units involved stated: 'Labour for stevedoring more than 36,000 long tons of materials involved was, because of local civilian labour difficulties, entirely composed of Marines, working day and night, three shifts round the clock.'

with so much equipment that the beaches became congested beyond measure, went ashore the first day.

On Tulagi and the neighbouring small islands, however, resistance was determined and the invaders lost heavily, particularly in the honey-combed hillocks of Gavutu and Tanambogo, which were not subdued for three days. Once established on **Guadalcanal**, the American forces discovered a useful collection of machinery and equipment on and around the newly constructed airfield opposite Lunga Point, and immediately put it all into operation. ¹

Because Imperial Japanese Headquarters believed that the result of the battle for the **Solomons** would decide the fate of the Greater Far East Asia war, orders were issued on 13 August that **Guadalcanal** must be retaken. Units were haphazardly assembled from the Kwantung Army, the **China Expeditionary Force**, **38 Division** in **Sumatra**, **2 Division** in **Java** and units from the home front in **Japan** itself, and thrown into the battle, and the commander of **17 Army**, Hyakutake, given the task of driving the American forces from the island. All units of **17 Army** already in **New Guinea** were also withdrawn and despatched to **Guadalcanal**, and a new command, Eighth Area Army, under Lieutenant-General Imamura, was created with headquarters at **Rabaul**. This new command incorporated **17 Army** and **18 Army**, which was commanded by Lieutenant-General Futogo Adachi.

Although ground action on **Guadalcanal** was fierce and prolonged, the decisive battles were fought between naval units, for the whole of the battle for the **Solomons** was predominantly naval, with strong support from the air forces. For the first six months after 7 August, these battles were almost continuous on land, sea, and air. Beginning two days after the American landing, a series of violent naval actions was fought at night, usually in rain storms, with star shells and searchlights illuminating scenes made most dramatic and spectacular by burning ships and drifting smoke. Those who witnessed the first of these actions from the high country behind the **Guadalcanal** beaches speak of them as fantastic theatrical displays on the grandest scale. The first of these sea battles was fought on the night of 8–9 August, on a triangle of water bounded by the north coast of **Guadalcanal** and the islands of Savo

and Florida. Several other naval battles of greater and lesser intensity were fought out in this same region until the battle for **Guadalcanal** was ended. As soon as the American landing on 7 August was

¹ The Americans admitted that the Japanese had done a remarkable piece of work in developing the airfield at Lunga Point. In five weeks they had constructed large, semi-permanent camps, wharves, bridges, machine shops, two large radio stations, ice-making plants, two large permanent electric power plants, and an almost completed aerodrome with hangars, blast pens, and a 3600-foot runway.

reported, Mikawa, commander of the Eighth Fleet, decided to attack with every ship at his disposal, and the Seventh Cruiser Division and three destroyer divisions were recalled from duty in the **Indian Ocean** to join and strengthen him. The American naval force protecting the disembarking combat units and their transports was taken by surprise through not being fully prepared, and suffered disastrously. Between the hour of a quarter to two and a quarter past on the morning of 9 August, with smoke and burning ships obscuring visibility made worse by storms of rain, they lost four cruisers—HMAS *Canberra*, which sank the following day, and the American cruisers *Astoria*, *Vincennes*, and *Quincy*. Another, the *Chicago*, was so badly damaged as to be useless in action. American ships almost collided during the action and the *Chicago*'s star shells failed to function. Although the Americans lost heavily, they saved their aircraft carriers which were ordered to leave the area. Fortunately an eight-inch shell destroyed the operations room on Mikawa's flagship, the *Chokai*, which was partly responsible for a rapid withdrawal from the area without fully appreciating the damage which had been done.

Again and again, following their first attempt to land on the night of 23–24 August, the Japanese tried to reinforce and strengthen the garrison in accordance with instructions received from Imperial General Headquarters that all key positions in the **Solomons** must be recaptured.

Men and supplies, under cover of strong naval protection, were despatched in destroyers to **Guadalcanal** from concentrations in the **Shortland Islands** and at **Rabaul**, their departure so timed to stage in daylight down 'the Slot', a name given by the Americans to the waters between the islands of **Choiseul**, Santa Isabel, and the **New Georgia Group**, disembark under cover of darkness on the **Guadalcanal** beaches between **Point Cruz** and Cape Esperance, and retire by daylight. These nightly operations became known as the running of the 'Tokyo Express', which the American command was unable to disrupt until Japanese naval strength had been reduced by several battles of great violence. By October 20,000 Japanese had been landed, including **2 Division**, a regiment of **38 Division**, and strong artillery and engineer units. American strength had been increased to 23,000 but malaria, because of the lack of precautions so successfully instituted later, was already taking toll of the Marines, 1960 of whom were in hospital.

Because American naval strength had been so grievously reduced in the first clash on the night of 8–9 August, Japanese naval vessels approached **Guadalcanal** during hours of darkness and bombarded **Henderson Field** and American service installations with impunity, creating great loss. Ships and aircraft were also required to protect the vital sea lanes between **Guadalcanal** and the **New Hebrides** and **New Caledonia** and, in lesser degree, to New Zealand and **Fiji**. Actions almost daily whittled down the husbanded strength of the American commands, and by 15 September only one aircraft carrier, the *Hornet*, remained undamaged in the whole of the South Pacific. The other three had been put out of action in various engagements—the *Saratoga*, though she was able to reach **Tonga** after being torpedoed, the *Enterprise*, which eventually reached **Pearl Harbour** for repairs, and the *Wasp*, which had cost 21 million dollars, and was sunk while escorting supply ships to **Guadalcanal** on 15 September. Earlier in the war she had ferried aircraft reinforcements to **Malta**. The valuable battleship *North Carolina* was also out of action.

In the battle of the Eastern Solomons, fought out on 23–24 August

to the east of **Malaita** and Florida between carrier-based aircraft without surface craft firing a shot, the Japanese losses included the carrier *Ryujo* sunk and another one damaged by Vice-Admiral F. J. Fletcher's force, but the enemy succeeded in landing about 1500 men a few days later on the **Guadalcanal** beaches. Meanwhile, air and coastwatching intelligence reported a concentration of shipping at **Rabaul**, evidence that another large-scale landing was imminent. This was planned for the night of 11 October, and from it developed the Battle of Cape Esperance in which American forces under Rear-Admiral Norman Scott defeated a strong enemy force designed to cover a troop landing. Two Japanese destroyers were sunk and the Japanese commander, Rear-Admiral Goto, was killed when his flagship, the *Aoba*, was damaged. Two more destroyers were sunk the following day while trying to rescue men from the water. A Japanese naval report of this battle recorded that 'the enemy used radar which enabled them to fire effectively from the first round without the use of searchlights. The future looked bleak for our surface forces, whose forte was night warfare.'

Two nights later, under cover of darkness and rain storms, the Japanese attempted to put **Henderson Field** out of operation. From close inshore two battleships, the *Haruna* and the *Kongo*, poured 918 rounds of armour-piercing and high explosive shells in and around the field while aircraft overhead dropped guiding flares. The following morning, 15 October, only one American bomber and ten fighter aircraft were fit to take the air, and then only after sufficient drums of petrol had been collected from the nearby jungle into which they had been tossed by the bombardment. Only 400 drums could be found. Meanwhile five Japanese transports, protected by eleven warships, could be seen discharging men and materials at Tassafaronga, ten miles away, and although valiant efforts were made to bomb the ships later in the day, after further supplies of both machines and petrol had been flown in from the **New Hebrides**, the Japanese succeeded in landing between 3000 and 4000 troops.

This was a critical period for the American command, both on land

and sea, for their ground forces were not sufficiently strong to attack on land and naval strength was reduced to one aircraft carrier, one battleship, and a bare complement of destroyers and cruisers. Repairs to the *Enterprise* were rushed at **Pearl Harbour** and she was ready for action again by 16 October. Halsey took over command of the South Pacific two days later, at the time when the Japanese were preparing a combined attack on both land and sea. Fortunately this miscarried. The Japanese ground forces attacked along the Matanikau River, where a critical battle raged for some days and culminated in an assault which broke the American line on the night of 23–24 October. It was restored by counter-attack on the 27th and never again broken.

The two opposing fleets joined action on 26 October, 350 miles north-east of **Guadalcanal** in the Battle of Santa Cruz, in which a Japanese force under Vice-Admiral Nagumo, who had led the attack on **Pearl Harbour**, met an American task force under Vice-Admiral Thomas Kinkaid, in the carrier *Enterprise*, who had under command another group commanded by Rear-Admiral G. D. Murray and built round the carrier *Hornet*. Superior strength lay with the Japanese, whose combined forces included four aircraft carriers, three of which were seriously damaged, four heavy cruisers, four battleships, nine light cruisers and 28 destroyers, operating in three groups, and covering troop and supply transports intended for **Guadalcanal**.

Although the Japanese did not lose a ship, they withdrew when their carriers were put out of action with the loss of 100 aircraft. The Americans lost their carrier *Hornet*, sunk after great damage by enemy suicide pilots who crashed their machines into her stack, and the *Enterprise* was again damaged. During the progress of the battle, which lasted through to 27 October, fourteen enemy submarines patrolled the sea routes between the Santa Cruz, **New Hebrides**, and the **Fiji** Groups, hoping to destroy reinforcements of both men and ships.

THE PACIFIC

III: CRUCIAL ACTION

III: Crucial Action

Although it left the Americans with only one damaged aircraft carrier in the South Pacific, the Battle of Santa Cruz, which the Japanese always insisted in calling 'Santa Claus', definitely affected future operations in the **Solomons**, for the enemy losses undoubtedly weakened them for the most crucial of all naval battles, the Battle of **Guadalcanal**, which developed from their last major attempt to reinforce and hold the island. It raged from 11 to 15 November, and on it hung the fate of the **Solomons** campaign. Had the American navy been defeated **Guadalcanal** would have been lost, thus altering the whole course of the **Pacific** war and jeopardising the Allied position in the South Pacific, perhaps for years. Rear-Admiral R. K. Turner reported after the battle on the night of 12–13 November, 'This desperately fought action ... has few parallels in naval history.... Had this battle not been fought and won, our hold on **Guadalcanal** would have been gravely endangered.'

While daily air reconnaissance reported the concentration of Japanese naval and transport craft in **Rabaul** and the anchorages of Southern **Bougainville** (where more than sixty transport and cargo ships of a vast fleet were assembled), American troops on **Guadalcanal**, supported by bombardment from surface craft, pressed the enemy back beyond the Matanikau River and off the high features they held inland; but Vandegrift, although strengthened by the arrival of artillery units during the first week of November, urgently required still more men to replace units exhausted by excessive heat and antagonistic country. The decision to send 3 New Zealand Division to **New Caledonia** to relieve the American Division provided the men required for **Guadalcanal**. While Halsey was planning to send in these troops, as well as extra supplies, Hyakutake, the Japanese commander, was similarly planning the

landing of his **38 Division** under strong naval protection, using troop transports instead of the usual destroyers of the Tokyo Express, the schedule of which had been disrupted by 24 **United States** submarines patrolling along the route. Hyakutake also planned to bombard **Henderson Field** into impotence so that his disembarkation could proceed without air interference. Halsey's total naval force was still outnumbered by the Japanese, but his air strength was greater. The American command made the first move.

A force commanded by Rear-Admiral Turner, charged by Halsey with the dual task of getting men and supplies ashore and protecting **Guadalcanal** from expected Japanese attacks, was divided into three groups, one of which he commanded personally. Rear-Admiral Scott and Rear-Admiral Daniel J. Callaghan commanded the other two. A force at **Noumea** under Kinkaid, and built round the carrier *Enterprise* and two battleships, was to support Turner. Scott's group of three transports, one cruiser, and four destroyers reached **Guadalcanal** and began unloading men and supplies on 11 November under cover of Callaghan's five cruisers and ten destroyers. Raiding Japanese aircraft interrupted the operations, but they were continued next day when Turner's own group of transports arrived from **Noumea** with the American Division. Again the Japanese attacked, but 30 of the 31 attacking aircraft were shot down, though not before the cruiser *San Francisco* was damaged seriously. These were only the preliminaries of the battle, but they enabled the Americans to get 6000 men ashore and valuable heavy supplies and munitions before the transport and cargo ships retired.

The battle increased in violence in the early hours of the morning of 13 November, when the main forces met as the Japanese battle-ships *Hiyei* and *Kirishima* moved inshore to try to bombard **Henderson Field**. This developed into one of the most furious of all naval engagements of the war, fought out on waters enclosed by **Guadalcanal**, Savo and Florida Islands, scene of the first naval encounters in the **Solomons** and surely one of the greatest of all naval graveyards.¹ The battle began soon after midnight, when Callaghan's weaker force of 6-inch and 8-inch cruisers

joined with Japanese battleships mounting 14-inch guns. In the intense darkness the ships almost collided before a shot was fired, and in the confusion both American and Japanese ships fired on each other. Twelve of the thirteen American ships were either sunk or damaged in the first fifteen minutes, but the American ships concentrated on the *Hiyei*, which they hit 85 times. She was scuttled next day. Admirals Callaghan and Scott were both killed during the action, but the lighter American ships saved **Henderson Field**—and the **Solomons**.

The Japanese withdrew at three o'clock in the morning without firing on the airfield they hoped to destroy. The fact that they carried high explosive shells for the airfield instead of armour-piercing shells probably saved the situation for the Americans. But this battle was not yet ended.

Despite the fact that **Henderson Field** was still operating and its strength increased by aeroplanes flown in from the carrier *Enterprise*, which Kinkaid had brought forward with the battleships *Washington* and *South Dakota*, the Japanese still attempted to bring in their transports with men and supplies. These had been sheltering off **New Georgia**, protected by twelve destroyers, awaiting news of the battle. There were eleven of them carrying 10,000 men of **38 Division**, a naval force of between 1000 and 3000, and 10,000 tons of supplies. They were picked up by aircraft 150 miles north of **Guadalcanal** when they began moving south in the early morning. All that day and until night came down aircraft from **Henderson Field** bombed up, attacked the transports, and flew back for more bombs to maintain a relentless attack. Aircraft were refuelled by hand and ground crews serviced the planes by rolling bombs across the muddy runways.

By nightfall the invasion fleet had been cut to pieces. Seven of the Japanese transports had been sunk, including the *Canberra Maru* and the *Brisbane Maru*. Under cover of darkness that night, however, the four remaining ships continued to the **Guadalcanal** beaches. Meanwhile Halsey had detached the battleships *South Dakota* and *Washington*, and four destroyers from Kinkaid's force, and sent them into the battle

under Rear-Admiral Willis A. Lee. Sixteen minutes after midnight, on the morning of 15 November, they joined battle with the Japanese battleship *Kirishima*, which had returned to the area with cruisers and destroyers to cover the landing of the four remaining transports. An hour later one of the few engagements between battleships in the war ended in favour of the American navy. The heavily damaged *Kirishima* was scuttled by her crew.

When morning broke clear the four remaining Japanese transports were beached near Tassafaronga Point and were destroyed by aircraft and field artillery. Japanese and American reports estimated that only about 4000 troops reached the shore; 3000 were drowned but some thousands were rescued from the water by Japanese destroyers. Only five tons of supplies reached the shore. In the four-day battle the Japanese lost two battleships, one heavy cruiser, and three destroyers sunk, as well as their eleven transports; two heavy cruisers, one light cruiser, and six destroyers had been damaged. American losses were serious—one light cruiser, two light anti-aircraft cruisers, and seven destroyers sunk, and one battleship, two heavy cruisers, and four destroyers damaged, but the American forces on **Guadalcanal** were never again seriously threatened, and relief troops and supplies were afterwards landed without danger or loss. By the end of November Vandegrift's ground forces numbered 39,416 all ranks.

In one last major action on the night of 30 November, off Tassafaronga, when the Japanese tried to run in six transports under destroyer protection, an American force commanded by Rear-Admiral C. H. Wright suffered grievous loss. Limited visibility was made worse by a completely overcast sky, but in the first phase of the engagement, which began about an hour before midnight, Wright's force had all the advantage, sinking four of the Japanese ships and damaging others. In the second phase the remaining enemy ships launched a devastating torpedo attack before they turned and fled, and in 21 minutes sank the heavy cruiser *Northampton* and seriously damaged three others—the *Minneapolis*, *Pensacola*, and *New Orleans*—fortunately without

realising the great damage they had done.

Minor clashes occurred almost daily between these major engagements, and at times the South Pacific naval forces were reduced to the narrowest margin of safety. At one time in November, Halsey had only four undamaged cargo ships at his disposal to maintain supplies to the battlefield. The situation in **New Caledonia** was also worrying. Men and supplies poured into that vast base in such quantity that congestion became a problem in itself. At the end of November and in early December, as **3 Division** moved in to replace the American Division, there were 91 ships carrying 180,000 tons of cargo waiting to be unloaded in **Noumea Harbour**.

Nevertheless, the forces on **Guadalcanal** were built up, and the Marines who had endured the initial fighting were relieved and sent to New Zealand and **Australia** to recuperate. On 9 December Major-General Alexander M. Patch took over command from Vandegrift, and soon afterwards all American infantry units were welded into **14 Corps**, with which New Zealand ground forces were associated during the **Solomons** campaign. By that time there were between 40,000 and 45,000 men on the island, and Patch set about planning his offensive to drive the Japanese from such dominating hill features as Mount Austen, the 'Gallop Horse', and Gifu strongpoint. The campaign went slowly, due in many instances to the mistaken belief, current during the whole campaign among New Zealanders as well as Americans, that all Japanese snipers fired from treetops, which they did only rarely.

While major clashes at sea held off a Japanese invasion in any strength, small numbers of men and limited quantities of supplies were wastefully put ashore from submarines at night in what the Japanese called 'rat' landings. The garrison in the jungle, reduced by malaria and dysentery, was desperately short of food, but even so resisted stubbornly as the Americans drove them along the coast in an effort to surround them. (See **Appendix XII**.)

In a miserably conceived plan to get supplies ashore, the Japanese

cased their food, ammunition, and materials in drums, lashed them together in rafts and threw them overboard, trusting to the tides to carry them to the beaches, but most of these either stuck to rocks or reefs or were shot up by air and surface craft. By 25 December 1942, of the 6000 Japanese combat troops on **Guadalcanal**, only 2500 were available as fighting troops, and 30 per cent of those who were capable of walking were employed transporting rations, but the Americans were never certain of enemy dispositions and consequently hesitated in forcing a battle which would have gone in their favour. A report on the campaign by the 17 Japanese Army commander stated that many of the garrison were mentally unfit and that medical treatment was well nigh impossible. By December front-line troops were reduced to an average of .5 'go' of food a day—one 'go' being equal to .318 of a pint. Some of the soldiers had no food for a week and were reduced to eating grass, coconuts, and ferns.

¹ Some of the more important naval units lying on the seabed of this triangle are:

America: Four heavy cruisers— *Northampton*, *Astoria*, *Quincy*, *Vincennes*.

Two anti-aircraft cruisers— *Atlanta*, *Juneau*.

Ten destroyers— *Jarvis*, *Barton*, *Cushing*, *Laffey*, *Monsson*, *Preston*, *De Haven*, *Benham*, *Walke*, *Duncan*.

Australia: One cruiser— *Canberra*.

New Zealand: One corvette— *Moa*.

Japan: Two battleships— *Hiyei*, *Kirishima*.

Two heavy cruisers— *Kurutaka*, *Kinugasa*.

Eight destroyers— *Yudachi*, *Takanami*, *Natsugomo*, *Makigumo*, *Kitusuki*, *Ayanami*, *Fubaki*, *Akatsuki*;

as well as an unspecified number of cargo and transport vessels, including four beached at Tassafaronga, and

numbers of torpedo boats, landing craft, and aircraft.

The **United States forces also lost a number of motor torpedo boats, landing craft, and several cargo boats in this area.**

THE PACIFIC

IV: THE JAPANESE MOVE BACK

IV: The Japanese Move Back

The growing strength of American naval, ground, and air forces and the withering losses of the campaign, ultimately forced the Japanese High Command to order the evacuation of the island and establish a line which included **New Georgia**, **Kolombangara**, **Vella Lavella** and intervening islands, with **Munda** as a central pivot. Imperial General Headquarters made the decision on 31 December and issued orders for the evacuation on 4 January 1943 to Hyakutake, who remained on **Guadalcanal** until early February. Destroyers were employed for the evacuation, with 80 large barges, 100 small barges, and 300 collapsible boats to uplift men and materials from the shore. The first units of **38 Division** left the island on the night of 1 February from beaches round **Cape Esperance**—site of the Japanese base, 25 miles along the coast from **Henderson Field**; the evacuation was completed by 8 February, by which time 12,000 army and about 1000 naval personnel were moved to concentration areas in Southern **Bougainville** and the **Shortland Islands**. According to Japanese records, 3500 of these went into hospital suffering from beri-beri, dysentery, and malaria; 600 of them died.

American intelligence failed to appreciate the Japanese evacuation which, because of the concentration of shipping in anchorages to the north, was mistaken for another attempt to land reinforcements on a large scale. A report made on 17 April 1943 by the American Commander-in-Chief of the Pacific Fleet confessed that 'Not until after all (Japanese) organised forces had been evacuated on 8 February did we realise the purpose of their air and naval dispositions; otherwise, with the strong forces available to us ashore on **Guadalcanal** and our powerful fleet in the South Pacific, we might have converted the withdrawal into a disastrous rout'. The cautiousness of commanding officers in action for the first time may have been partly responsible for a certain lack of

aggressiveness among the men fighting the jungle as well as the Japanese.

Guadalcanal cost the Japanese at least 24,000 officers and men killed in action and lost in sunken ships. Figures gathered from both American and Japanese sources, which are as accurate as any figures of this campaign can be, since most of the enemy records were either lost or destroyed, state that between 36,000 and 37,000 Japanese fought on **Guadalcanal** between August and the end of December 1942; 14,800 were killed or missing and 9000 died of disease. Of these, 4346 were drowned at sea; 1000 were taken prisoner. Only 2516 of 7648 officers and men from **38 Division** who landed on the island returned to bivouac areas in the **Shortland Islands**. Six hundred aircraft and their pilots were also lost in attempting to hold the island.

The Japanese at first did not appreciate the necessity for a series of intermediate air bases through the **Solomons**, beginning them hastily only when losses on the 600-mile journey between **Rabaul** and **Guadalcanal** weakened their air power. Weather conditions changed so swiftly during this flight that operations were hampered and required drastic changes from the original plans. A seaplane base was therefore established at Rekata, on Santa Isabel; an airfield at Buin, in Southern **Bougainville**, was ready by 7 October; **Munda**, in **New Georgia**, by the end of December; and Vila, on **Kolombangara**, also in December. By that time, of course, the fate of **Guadalcanal** was sealed. Ten destroyers used in running the Tokyo Express were sunk and 19 damaged. By comparison American army losses in manpower were light—1752 killed and missing out of a total of 6111 casualties. Navy losses were much more severe. Throughout the whole campaign the Japanese made excessive claims of sinking and damaging American naval craft and of destroying aircraft.

Following the retreat from **Guadalcanal** to the Central Solomons line, 17 Japanese Army was given the task of defending **Bougainville** in support of a new line swinging on **Munda**, where, in February, Rear-Admiral Ota established his headquarters and took command of 5500

navy and army personnel. Ota, who was commander of **8 Fleet Special Unit**, was made responsible for all Central Solomons operations, but he had great difficulty in controlling navy and army units, since Army refused to send in any more men. Differences of opinion between army and navy commanders after the withdrawal to **New Georgia** weakened the Japanese defence plans, and the continual cancellation and reissue of orders by **8 Area Army**, which was formed at **Rabaul** to direct the whole of the **Solomons** and **New Guinea** campaigns, produced confusion which destroyed any unity of command.

In March, also, Japanese morale suffered a blow by the loss of Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, Commander-in-Chief of their **Combined Fleet**, who was the dominating mind in Japanese naval strategy and originator of the attack on **Pearl Harbour**. On 18 March he left **Rabaul** by special aircraft, accompanied by his chief of staff and several senior staff officers and escorted by nine fighters. While on their way to Buin, in the south of **Bougainville**, where Yamamoto was to inspect both army and navy units and inspire them to further effort, the flight was intercepted by American fighters and the two planes carrying the Commander-in-Chief and his senior staff officers were shot down. Yamamoto was killed when his machine crashed into the jungle; the other machine fell into the sea, injuring all the occupants. Vice-Admiral Kondo took over command of the **Combined Fleet** until the arrival of Admiral Mineichi Koga, commander of the **China Fleet**. Through the following months Ota's garrison was increased until, by the end of June, there were 10,500 men in the **New Georgia** and **Kolombangara** areas deployed to protect airfields and fleet anchorages, and another 3400 round Rekata seaplane base on Santa Isabel. Early that month he was relieved by Rear-Admiral Noboru Sasaki, whose instructions were to unify and command naval and army forces in all land operations.

Meanwhile American strength was increasing in readiness for an advance into the **New Georgia** area, with **Munda** as the next objective. Throughout June, action on sea and in the air paved the way for the landing at **Rendova** on 30 June. On that and the following day 125

Japanese aircraft were shot down, heartening proof of Allied air superiority. Although the Japanese put up a stout resistance and prolonged the battle for **New Georgia** for six weeks against **14 Corps**, which was forced to commit its three divisions, the commander of the garrison reported 'we were overwhelmed by the enemy's material and military strength'. By this time the Americans had reduced disembarkation to a speed which baffled the Japanese, and from then on until the end of the campaign the Japanese were outmanœuvred. 'Our losses in men and planes were beyond our estimation', the **Southern Army** commander, Terauchi, reported to **Tokyo** in June.

The Japanese were never able to anticipate the next Allied thrust in the **Solomons**. After the fall of **Guadalcanal**, they did not expect the attack to continue to the next objective for at least a year. Although land action in the jungle was slow and laborious, the pressure of naval action at sea was maintained without ceasing. Through the months of preparation by the land forces, strong naval units bombarded at night the **Munda** and Vila airfields and Japanese installations throughout the area, and shot up barge traffic known to be running between the islands.

The Japanese lost as heavily in attempting to hold and reinforce their garrisons in the **New Georgia** Group as they did in finally evacuating troops from islands to which they had been driven as Griswold's corps closed round **Munda**, which fell on 5 August. Fighting, however, continued for another fortnight on adjoining islands of the group. Small groups of reinforcements had reached **New Georgia** in barges, torpedo boats, and submarine chasers, running in under cover of darkness, and when **Munda** fell efforts were made to strengthen **Kolombangara** so that any remaining island garrisons could be maintained from that base.

The final attempt to reinforce **Kolombangara** on the night of 6–7 August, anniversary of the opening battle for **Guadalcanal**, ended in complete disaster. Units of 6 and 38 Divisions were despatched from Southern **Bougainville** under the protection of four destroyers. As they passed into Vella Gulf they were intercepted and taken completely by

surprise by an American task force, commanded by Commander Frederick Moosbrugger, which had been ordered to sweep the gulf to disrupt such traffic. In a few minutes three of the enemy destroyers were sunk and the fourth heavily damaged. Most of the reinforcements were drowned—820 army and 700 navy personnel; 190 army and 120 navy survivors reached the shores of **Vella Lavella** on rafts or by swimming and joined the garrison which had been sent there previously to organise staging bases and lookouts.

That same night Admiral Sasaki, the **Munda** commander, moved his headquarters back to Vanga Island, and the following night to **Kolombangara**. On 14 August he was instructed to withdraw all the **Munda** garrison, and the following day American forces landed on **Vella Lavella**. This was the beginning of the by-passing strategy which was continued during the remainder of the **Solomons** campaign. Remnants of the Japanese forces from **New Georgia** had concentrated on **Arundel** and Gizo Islands by 16 August, but as Griswold's forces closed round them they moved piecemeal to **Kolombangara** by barge, the last units leaving Gizo on the night of 21 September, the day on which 14 Brigade of 3 New Zealand Division began operations to clear **Vella Lavella** of the enemy.

The loss of **Munda** and **Vella Lavella** seriously menaced the Japanese forces on **Kolombangara**, who were now outflanked, with all their supply routes severed, and Sasaki was instructed to continue his withdrawal to **Bougainville**, moving via staging bases on **Choiseul**. On the night of 28–29 September, while 3 New Zealand Division units were forcing the **Vella Lavella** garrison into the north of the island, 2115 Japanese sick and wounded were uplifted from **Kolombangara** in three destroyers and taken direct to **Rabaul**. Small parties continued the evacuation, making their escape at night in barges and torpedo boats, and on the nights of 1–2–3 October the last of the garrison departed—5400 moving in 136 barges and other small craft and 4000 in six destroyers. Twenty-nine barges and torpedo boats were destroyed by American destroyers and motor torpedo boats, but the Japanese records, from which the above figures

were taken, state that 12,435 all ranks from **Kolombangara** and **Choiseul** reached **Buin** and **Erventa** in **Bougainville**. On the night of 6–7 October the last of the **Vella Lavella** garrison was uplifted under cover of a naval engagement, which is recorded here merely to emphasise the Japanese propensity for making excessive claims of damage. During this action, fought in the midnight hours north of **Vella Lavella** in violent rain storms, they claimed to have sunk two American cruisers and three destroyers, whereas only three American destroyers opposed them. (See

Chapter 5.)

The loss of **New Georgia** and **Vella Lavella** created further strife among Navy and Army leaders concerning future defence strategy and caused the Japanese High Command to modify their Z plan, which was conceived by Yamamoto, and withdraw their vital defence line to the Kurile-Mariana-Caroline Groups. This Z plan originally established an unyielding line for the defence of the Japanese mainland running from the Aleutians through Wake Island, the Marshalls, the Gilberts, Nauru and Ocean Islands, and the Northern Solomons to the Bismarck Group, with the **Combined Fleet** retained as a mobile reserve to attack any invading force at any place in or on that line. Further modifications became necessary as this line was broken by successive actions through 1943 and 1944. After the fall of **Vella Lavella** the Japanese were given no respite. As soon as an airfield was ready at **Barakoma**, a further thrust was made into the Treasury Group by units of **3 Division** supported by American formations. This and a diversionary raid on **Choiseul** paved the way for a large-scale landing at **Empress Augusta Bay** on **Bougainville** on 1 November 1943.

Unable to anticipate the next Allied thrust, the Japanese concentrated their main force in areas in Southern **Bougainville**, with **17 Army** Headquarters established near Buin, but despite their numerical strength, in the descriptive language of the soldier, they were never able 'to take a trick' during the remainder of the campaign. Ground strength numbered 15,000 troops, mostly from **6 Division**, and there were also 6800 base personnel who were employed for the defence of loading installations and the two airfields outside Buin, where Mikawa, commander of 8 Japanese Fleet, also had his headquarters. The airfield on Ballale Island, in Shortland Bay, was also defended by naval units. About 5000 men of 4 **South Sea Garrison Unit** and a formidable force of coastal and anti-aircraft artillery units were deployed on Shortland Island, only about eighteen miles across the water from **Mono Island**, where **8 Brigade** of 3 New Zealand Division was securely established. There were between 2000 and 3000 troops and naval lookouts in the

Gazelle area and another 4000 to 6000 army and 200 navy personnel stationed in the Kieta area, midway along the north-east coast of **Bougainville**. All these were by-passed when Griswold's **14 Corps** landed at **Empress Augusta Bay** on 1 November, against little opposition but in territory which almost bogged down the landing forces.

Later, in March, when the Japanese moved a strong force through the mountains and launched a determined attack on the perimeter, they were driven off with severe loss. With the occupation of the **Green Islands Group** by 3 New Zealand Division in February 1944, enemy forces on **Bougainville** were completely isolated, so that they were forced to maintain themselves by growing their own food or by using native foods. Rice cultivated in large areas was one of the objectives of Allied aircraft operating from the **Empress Augusta Bay** airfields and they sought daily to destroy it with oil spray and incendiary bombs. The capture of **Green Islands** on 15 February and of **Emirau Island** on 20 March 1944 ended the **Solomons** campaign. New Zealand ground forces were then withdrawn from the forward areas, but air force units remained under American and later Australian command until the surrender of **Japan** on 15 August 1945.

This translated extract from an **8 Area Army** order, issued to the commander of **17 Army** at the time 3 New Zealand Division occupied **Green Islands**, is a typical example of the fanaticism which prompted Japanese resistance, though it was not frequently exercised:

If supply should be stopped and there is no alternative but to starve, the troops will charge into the enemy before they are entirely exhausted and, obtaining food from the enemy sources, they will continue fighting up to the very last.

Five days after **3 Division** landed on **Green Islands**, **8 Area Army** reported that not one single moveable aeroplane remained to the Japanese command in the South Pacific area; 70 per cent of the remaining ground forces were living in unhealthy conditions in caves to which they were driven by the fury and accuracy of Allied bombing, and

8 Fleet had lost all its ships except a few landing barges. Japanese records compiled by former service staff officers from information available to them and from their own personal documents, gave the following losses of **8 Area Army**:

From December 1942 to July 1944: killed in action and died of injuries, 52,684, including 12,679 drowned in sunken ships; died of sickness, 8216; seriously injured, 43,234. At the time of the surrender deaths in action were estimated at 55,379 and deaths from sickness 15,936.

From October 1943 few medical supplies reached elements of the army stationed beyond **Rabaul, and when the war ended 17.3 per cent of the total strength was ill, 11.5 per cent of them suffering from malaria.**

THE PACIFIC

CHAPTER 8 – THE COASTWATCHERS

CHAPTER 8

The Coastwatchers

FROM 1941 until the cessation of hostilities, New Zealand coastwatchers maintained a lonely vigil on islands scattered over sixteen million square miles of the Pacific Ocean, engaged in the most monotonous and unspectacular of all war service. Those stationed on islands of the Gilbert Group, the northernmost of which were closest to the enemy-held Marshall Islands, were the only ones to fall to the Japanese, some to be brutally killed, others to spend the rest of their war years as prisoners in Japan.

One of the obvious dangers in the Pacific was the possibility of German surface raiding craft sheltering in anchorages of such uninhabited groups as the Auckland and Campbell Islands and in the Kermadecs, from which they could endanger vital shipping along the sea lanes. Stations established on those distant islands served a twofold purpose—as watchers for enemy shipping and as meteorological stations. Without them periodical inspection would have been necessary by either surface craft or aircraft to remove any doubts of enemy occupation.

One of the first coastwatching stations in the Pacific was established by Mr. Nelson Dyett on Pitcairn Island on 20 December 1939 and served as a link in the Pacific communication system, although he was a civilian operating his own equipment. He was afterwards attested as a New Zealand serviceman. When the volume of shipping increased with the outbreak of war with Japan, the United States Navy requested a station on Pitcairn in order to pass signals to ships at sea affecting their safety and routing. Four operators and a landing party sailed from Auckland on 15 December 1943 in an American merchant ship, the *J. Sterling Morton*, which remained off Pitcairn for ten days while materials were off-loaded into small boats and hauled up cliffs. This station was operated until October 1945, after which it passed to the Western Pacific High Commission.

Immediately following the outbreak of hostilities in Europe, a coastwatching system was organised throughout the Fijian and Tongan Groups, using natives to man scattered stations linked to the civilian communications by any means available, since radio sets were in short supply. Messages from these distant stations to the available telephone or radio-telephone terminals were by boat, horse, runner, and in some instances by smoke signal. This system was under the jurisdiction of the civilian administration. When the first New Zealand force reached Fiji in 1940, the coastwatching system, already established there and in Tonga, came under the operational direction of Cunningham's headquarters, though it was still nominally controlled by the civil administration. This service was an integral part of the plans of the New Zealand Chiefs of Staff for the defence of Fiji and Tonga, and was linked broadly with that of the Australian Naval Board whose theatre of operations extended from New Britain through the Solomons to the New Hebrides, a line along which air reconnaissance was maintained by flying boats from Port Moresby in the early months of the war. The whole system, however, lacked co-ordination and there was a good deal of overlapping. Early in 1941 the New Zealand Naval Board initiated an extended service over the whole of the South Pacific to include the Crown Colony of Fiji, the territories of the Western Pacific High Commission, the Kingdom of Tonga, and the dependencies of New Zealand. Some co-ordination was instituted in 1941 when a senior naval officer, Lieutenant-Commander P. Dearden, was appointed to Suva, and Mr. L. H. Steel, of the New Zealand Post and Telegraph Department, was sent there by agreement with the Governor of Fiji as Controller of Pacific Communications, with direct control over the powerful Suva Aeradio Station and executive powers in an emergency. His appointment brought about a desirable co-ordination in an indifferent system which, until then, was at the mercy of eight different authorities. ¹

Although the coastwatching service was primarily the responsibility of the Navy Department, the majority of those engaged actively in it were drawn from the Army and the Post and Telegraph Department, which supplied the necessary qualified radio operators. New Zealand

maintained three small vessels of approximately 100 tons each, the *Ranui*, *New Golden Hind*, and *Tagua*, for the carriage of supplies and reliefs to several of the more distant stations. These craft were operated by the Public Works Department at a cost of £30,000 a year. The **Fiji** Government used the 700-ton *Viti*, her only naval vessel, and a small trading schooner, the *Degei*, for

¹ The eight organisations which were concerned with coastwatching in the **Pacific** and which were co-ordinated by Steel for their more efficient operation were: The **Fiji** Government, the **Western Pacific High Commission**, the Military Administration Headquarters in **Fiji**, the Tongan Government, the New Zealand Naval Board, Amalgamated Wireless (**Fiji**), the **Fiji** Post and Telegraph Department, and the **Fiji** Harbour Board. An organisation known as **Fiji** Aeradio later came into operation, and became the centre for all combined services communications as well as for all coastwatching stations.

surface contact with stations established throughout the Gilbert and Ellice Groups. Calls were made on New Zealand for station equipment. Six teleradio sets and eleven telescopes were sent to **Tonga** in January 1941 and an effort was made to obtain an increased supply for **Fiji**, but all such equipment was deplorably short in the first years of the war.

Coastwatching stations were established in the **Auckland** and Campbell Islands in March 1941 and were combined with a scientific expedition collecting data on radio short-wave reception. For the rest of that year and through 1942 similar stations, manned by radio operators who, in many instances, were accompanied by soldier companions, were established from the north of the Gilbert Group to the far south of New Zealand, until the Navy Office in **Wellington** became the centre of an immense network radiating north, south, and east across the **Pacific**. This system provided for a series of sub-stations in each island group on which parent stations maintained a constant watch. These parent stations acted as clearing houses for the sub-stations and passed on to **Wellington** any vital information which came to them. **Suva**, the largest

and most important centre in the South Pacific, was the receiving station for a network which had as parent stations: Ocean Island, Beru, which watched ten sub-stations in the Gilbert Group; **Funafuti**, seven stations in the **Ellice Group**; Canton Island, four stations in the Phoenix Group; **Fanning Island**, three stations in the Line Group; **Apia**, five stations in the Samoan Group; **Rarotonga**, eleven stations in the Cook Group; Nukualofa, six stations in the Tongan Group; as well as all stations throughout the **Fiji Group** itself. **Wellington** was the parent station for posts in the Kermadec and **Chatham Islands**, and **Awarua** (Southland) for the **Auckland** and Campbell Islands. The sub-stations worked on a common crystal-controlled frequency on which the parent stations maintained a constant watch.

Because of their proximity to the Marshall Islands, about which the British and American Chiefs of Staff vainly endeavoured to obtain information before and after the outbreak of war, the decision was made in 1941, and the responsibility passed to New Zealand, to establish seventeen coastwatching stations throughout the Gilbert and Ellice Groups, a series of atolls clothed in coconut palms and pandanus extending north of **Fiji** for more than 600 miles and adjoining the Japanese-held Marshalls. One qualified radio operator was supplied from New Zealand for each post, and two soldier companions were to accompany fourteen of them.

Cunningham received his instructions in April from Army Headquarters, and twenty-two soldiers were obtained from the Reserve Battalion (later the 34th). They were all volunteers, selected for their initiative and self-reliance and preferably from those accustomed to an outdoor life. Two of them were to accompany the radio operators on eleven of the islands, as the remaining three operators were destined for islands on which there were either missionaries or European officials, as at **Tarawa**, headquarters of the British administration in the Gilbert Group. This proposal to send soldier companions with the operators was regarded with disfavour by the High Commissioner for the Western Pacific, Sir Harry Luke, and also the resident commissioner of the group,

who urged that as the soldiers would not be engaged on any specific duty, their presence would inevitably lead to unfortunate complications with the natives. New Zealand, however, did not agree, on the grounds that most of the operators were very young men, most of them in their early twenties, and that their companions were men of maturer years, selected for their special qualities. The soldiers were also more skilled in the observation of naval, military, and air installations.

Because of isolation and the possibility of losing surface contact with headquarters in **Fiji**, each group took with it sufficient food, equipment, and medical supplies to last for at least nine months—all obtained from 8 Brigade Group and prepared for despatch under the supervision of Captain R. C. **Aley**,¹ the brigade supply officer, and his staff. Because of the number of small groups, ranging from three to one, into which the soldiers and operators were divided, this required an immense amount of detailed planning and packing. Moreover climate, distribution, and the necessity to go ashore in small boats or canoes required all supplies to be hermetically sealed in tins and then encased in strong timber. These supplies included a number of items not usually associated with a military expedition and such essentials as twine, scythes and sharpening stones, saws, axes, butter muslin, hammers, mosquito netting, fishing lines and hooks, clocks, chisels, lamps and globes, petrol, small cooking stoves, as well as food apportioned on a generous army ration scale, with extras for the natives, and medical stores for the treatment of minor ailments, particularly skin infections. Extra clothing was also generously supplied. **Aley** overcame many difficulties and supplied every commodity except tinned butter, which arrived too late from New Zealand to be included.

¹ **Maj R. C. Aley**, ED; **Auckland**; born **Auckland**, 4 Feb 1909; civil servant.

The operators and soldiers left **Suva** on 19 July in HMFS *Viti*, the principal employment of which was to transport the Governor round the

island territories which came under his jurisdiction as High Commissioner for the Western Pacific. The men were accompanied by Sergeant M. M. N. **Corner**,¹ who returned to **Fiji** after supervising the disembarkation of each island group with their supplies, a manoeuvre often attended with some difficulty because of the coral reefs. At **Nurakita** small boats were unable to beach and the station was not established until the following October, but all others were installed and in touch with **Suva** by the end of July and the beginning of August.

These coastwatchers went unarmed to their isolated tasks, as it was assumed that such small groups would only imperil their own safety by resisting capture in the event of enemy attack. The wireless operators went as civilians, though their assignment in reporting the activities of enemy surface craft and aircraft was essentially military. When Japan entered the war the soldier coastwatchers throughout the Gilbert and Ellice Groups requested a supply of rifles and ammunition, but these were not issued until May 1942, when a further supply of eight months' rations was distributed to stations in the Ellice Island and to those not yet overrun throughout the southern Gilberts. A month previously Army decided that, as a state of war existed with **Japan** and as small parties from seaplanes might land at isolated islands, the coastwatchers might reasonably deal with them. Each man was therefore issued with a rifle and 200 rounds of ammunition. By that time, however, stations in the northern Gilberts had been overrun by the Japanese and all soldiers and wireless operators associated with them either killed or taken prisoner. After the death of the operators it was also decided to attest as soldiers all men engaged on such work in the **Pacific** and give them retrospective rank, even to those who had been killed. This was done in December 1942 and created some involved administrative problems since dead men are unable to sign the necessary attestation papers. However, the required regulations were promulgated entitling dependants to pension rights and other privileges of men of the services. Although the operators were given military rank, they still retained their civilian rates of pay.

These men, who were the eyes and ears of New Zealand's outposts in the **Pacific**, endured their loneliness and privation with fortitude. When any of them became too ill to doctor themselves, they radioed their symptoms to **Suva**, where the medical officers

¹ **Lt-Col M. M. N. Corner**, MC; **Auckland**; born NZ 28 Jul 1908; bank clerk; CO 1 Bn, **Fiji** Infantry Regt, Feb-Oct 1945; wounded, **Bougainville**, 20 Dec 1943.

of Cunningham's headquarters diagnosed their complaints and despatched, also by radio, details of treatment required. As soon as Japanese aircraft and naval units moved into the northern Gilberts, after the war began in December, the watchers from those stations reported accurately all details of any value until they were taken prisoner. The Japanese established themselves in the **Gilbert Islands** in two periods—the first immediately following the attack on **Pearl Harbour**, when they took and fortified only the northernmost islands, and the second the following September.

On 10 December, two days after war was declared, two brothers, Privates J. M. Menzies and Michael Menzies, and the operator, Corporal J. M. Jones, reported the presence of 23 Japanese naval craft of various sizes in the lagoon of Butaritari, on which they were stationed. The following day they were taken by the Japanese and, with Private Basil Were, Private L. E. H. Muller, and the operator, Corporal M. P. McQuinn, from Little Makin, and another operator, Corporal S. R. Wallace, from Abaiang, who was collected on 23 December, they were assembled at Butaritari with Mr. G. Williams, an administration official. Here the men were all closely questioned about the defences of **Fiji**, with particular attention to the aerodromes. Although they revealed nothing to the Japanese, by giving vague and non-committal answers, they were not ill-treated and spent Christmas Day on the jetty there. Williams enlivened the occasion by producing two bottles of wine which he had packed with the kit he was permitted to take with him. All these men were shipped to **Japan** soon afterwards and, except for the discomfort of close

confinement, they had no cause for complaint. When a Japanese guard stole some of their biscuits he was punished by his own people. This party, the first New Zealanders to fall to the Japanese in the **Pacific**, arrived at Yokohama on 8 January 1942 and remained in captivity for three years and nine months, most of which were spent in the prison camp at **Zentsuji**, on the island of Shikoku.

Although the remainder of the men on the Gilbert Island stations realised their companions had been either captured or killed, they refused to leave their posts, despite the offer of relief. In February 1942 the first lot of stores was despatched to them from **Fiji** on the *Degei* which, because of enemy air activity, was permitted only as far north as Nonouti, after which supplies for the men on islands nearer the Japanese were transported by launch and canoe, moving by night and sheltering in the lagoons by day. On his return the master of the *Degei* reported that the morale of the men was still high.

From the time of the first Japanese reconnaissance of **Tarawa** in December, Mr. **R. G. Morgan**, an administrative official, had smashed the main transmitter of the radio station there and taken refuge in the jungle. With the assistance of loyal natives, he gathered invaluable information of enemy air and naval activity which he transmitted to **Suva** on the small set he had taken with him. Morgan was not captured until the Japanese began their move farther south in September, when they gathered up the coastwatchers and operators in the remainder of the **Gilbert Islands**.

When the Japanese came there was no panic among those men. Until they were apprehended they continued to send their vital messages, calmly and without haste, to the **Suva** station. Each message was the end of a chapter as each island station closed down, and the listeners so far away in **Fiji** realised that the enemy was so many miles nearer. Ocean Island, which is part of the Gilbert Group for administration, though far distant from the main chain of islands, went off the air on 26 August. The New Zealand operator, Sergeant R. Third

(who later died in captivity), was attested into the NZEF at the same time as the other operators. After bombing and strafing several of the stations, the Japanese sent in their surface craft with landing parties. Maiana sent its last message on 25 September: 'Japanese coming; regards to all', then silence, as the two soldiers and the operator concealed themselves in the jungle, only to be captured later. The Nonouti watchers were taken on 26 September. The same day three warships visited Beru, where the two operators, Lieutenant A. L. Taylor and Corporal T. C. Murray, sent their final message: 'Three enemy warships. Good luck', before destroying their equipment and fleeing into the jungle, hoping to escape later by canoe or launch. Because of Japanese threats of revenge on the natives these two men gave themselves up on 3 October, to suffer further pain of ill-treatment from their captors. Kuria went dead on 28 September with a message: 'Two warships visiting us now', and also reporting that the watchers on Abemama had been captured earlier in the month, after hiding from the Japanese for a week. This information had been obtained for them by Ben Randolph, a loyal native of Kuria, who had paddled 26 miles to Abemama and back in a canoe with information of the enemy visit. On the island of Tamama the operator was actually sending a message as the Japanese walked into the station; he ignored them and continued to despatch the message until he was struck violently on the head. These seventeen soldiers and operators were all taken to **Tarawa**. There, together with several European inhabitants of the island, they were treated with callous indifference. After being tied to coconut palms with telephone wire for three days while awaiting examination by their captors, they were confined in a hospital building in the enclosure reserved for native lunatics. Finally, they were made to work on the wharf at Betio.

The fate of these men was unknown until the islands were recaptured at great cost by an American landing force on 20 November 1943. Then it was learned that when an American machine from an aircraft carrier bombed **Tarawa** on 15 October 1942, the New Zealanders and five European civilians were killed and their bodies thrown into a

pit. Not all the details, however, were revealed until a court of enquiry was instituted on 16 October 1944, and evidence collected from the available witnesses. All of them confirmed evidence of the brutal execution of the New Zealand soldiers and operators. Tiriata, clerk and interpreter for the administration, told how he accompanied the Japanese from island to island collecting the coastwatchers, none of whom forcibly resisted capture. He told how the three men from Nonouti were taken on 1 October and beaten by their Japanese guards and how, when the men were finally assembled, they were tied to palms outside the Japanese commander's office. The New Zealanders bore their suffering with dignity and fortitude. One of them, Private W. A. R. Parker, knocked down a Japanese soldier who jostled him. Another, when asked by the Japanese guard if he wanted his hands united a little because they were swollen, replied 'No. You tied them tight, you can leave it as it is.' Another witness, Frank Highland, said the prisoners were united when they were given food and rice in a tin. He found the bodies in a pit, headless and partly burned, several days after they had been killed. A **Tarawa native, Mikaere, witnessed the execution of three Europeans and then fainted. One of these Europeans had escaped from the asylum enclosure when the American aircraft came over the island, but he had been recaptured. When Mikaere recovered consciousness he saw the Japanese carrying the bodies to two pits.**

There is no explanation of the treatment of the two groups of captured coastwatchers and operators. Those taken in December were humanely treated, whereas those captured later were most cruelly used before they were killed, possibly in retaliation for bombing by American aircraft and the futile attempt at escape by a civilian member of the party when an American aeroplane flew over the island later in the day. Apparently the fact that civilians and soldiers were employed side by side was of no significance to the Japanese, nor is there any evidence that it influenced their behaviour, since the first-captured operators were accorded the same treatment as the soldiers, even in prison camps in **Japan. The desire to preserve civilian rates of pay for operators on a service mission seems to have been the motive for a policy which would**

have justified the Japanese in shooting them out of hand as *francs tireurs*.

All those killed were later mentioned in despatches—Privates R. A. Ellis, R. I. Hitchon, D. H. Howe, R. Jones, C. A. Kilpin, R. M. McKenzie, J. H. Nichol, C. J. Owen, W. A. R. Parker and L. B. Speedy; and the operators, all of whom were given post-humous military rank—Lieutenant A. L. Taylor, Corporals H. R. C. Hearn, A. C. Heenan, J. J. McCarthy, A. E. McKenna, T. C. Murray and C. A. Pearsall. Sergeant Third, from Ocean Island, and Corporal P. B. Thorburn, his assistant, whose illness caused his removal from the island before the Japanese arrived, were also given military rank. A memorial erected on the island of **Tarawa** bears the following inscription: 'In memory of 22 British subjects murdered by the Japanese at Betio on the 15th October 1942. Standing unarmed to their posts they matched brutality with gallantry and met death with fortitude.' A tribute to their courage and devotion to duty was paid by the Prime Minister when he made public the circumstances of their death.

The treatment of prisoners of war by the Japanese varied according to the outlook of the officer commanding the particular camp in which they were held, and often also reflected the outlook of the individual. Private Were and the Menzies brothers, who spent three years and nine months as prisoners, most of the time at **Zentsuji**, stated that they were treated with consideration on the voyage to **Japan**, but as the daily ration of food was reduced in the prison camps, conditions became correspondingly worse. Were, who wrote a record of his years as a prisoner of war, stated that treatment was fair at **Zentsuji**. He was then sent to **Tanagawa**, where conditions degenerated because of the extreme shortage of food. He was afterwards moved to **Tokyo**, where conditions ranged from 'fair to pretty bloody'. When the Japanese surrendered he was in a prison camp at **Kobe**. With others he took food from warehouses on the wharves, for which the Japanese requested signatures. These men still retained sufficient sense of humour to sign as Tom Mix, Churchill, Stalin, Roosevelt, and MacArthur. The Menzies brothers stated that

conditions were reasonable for the first year at **Zentsuji** but became worse as the war progressed. Warrant Officer I. D. Newlands, a New Zealand pilot who operated a Hurricane from the British carrier *Indomitable* and was captured in **Java**, was ill-treated and thrashed until an English-speaking colonel took over the camp on the island of Hokkaido, in the north of **Japan**. After that the beatings ceased, food was increased until the prisoners had more than they could eat, and they were permitted to hold concerts. Warrant Officer R. C. Warren, of the **RNZAF**, whose aircraft crashed on York Island on 21 June 1945, was shockingly treated. Although suffering from a broken leg, he was given no medical treatment and was kept in a small dark cave at **Rabaul**. These are only limited examples of the treatment of prisoners.

Islands of the Gilbert Group were the extreme limit of the Japanese thrust south, though they bombed **Funafuti**, the parent station for the Ellice Islands, where the principal operator, Lieutenant D. L. Vaughan, extended his station to an outside bomb shelter from which he transmitted messages during raids. One soldier coastwatcher from the **Ellice Group** was relieved in February 1943, but the remainder stayed on, one until 1946. Five of the original operators were relieved in April 1943, when the mission steamer *John Williams* was used for their transport. For the most part the conduct of the coastwatchers was exemplary, despite their years of isolation. When a representative of the **Western Pacific High Commission** visited the **Ellice Group** in November 1943, he reported that some of the men had been there too long and their mental attitude bore evidence of their lack of association with their fellow-men. One or two of them caused friction and embarrassed the economic structure by inciting the natives to demand rates of pay equal to those of New Zealanders. On two islands watchers had contracted liaisons with native women, and on one island the soldiers had quarrelled. All this was merely the fruit of endless monotonous days of idleness and isolation. Food was poor and mail came only when the relief arrived, which, at best, was once a year.

Although the coastwatching service through the **Solomons** was

organised by the Australian Naval Board, several New Zealanders were engaged there both before and after the Allied thrust when the islands were recaptured. Many of the administrative officials and planters joined this service. The value of their work was acknowledged by Halsey, who said that information obtained from these coastwatchers secreted in the jungle and aided by loyal natives was of immense value in assisting the **United States** forces to hold **Guadalcanal**. Again and again, from their dismal hideouts, these watchers gave American headquarters warning of the approach of both air and naval attacking forces. Major D. G. Kennedy, a New Zealander in the Colonial Service who was district officer on the island of Santa Isabel, was awarded the DSO for his work. After losing his launch by betrayal, he made his way by native canoe to **Segi**, in the south of the **New Georgia** Group, where he organised a coastwatching service throughout the neighbouring islands. He was also responsible for the rescue of 22 American airmen and the capture of 20 Japanese. Kennedy, from his station in the jungle, organised the natives for this work, paying them a bag of rice and a case of tinned meat for every airman brought to him. They were then collected from the jungle refuge by flying boat, even after the Japanese had established posts in the area. Kennedy and his loyal natives killed 54 Japanese by ambushing small parties of them. When the American forces began their attack on the **New Georgia** Group to capture the **Munda** airfield, reconnaissance of Japanese positions was made easier by Kennedy's native scouts.

The Rev. A. W. E. Silvester, a New Zealand missionary on the island of **Vella Lavella**, remained in hiding when the Japanese came and later joined the coastwatching service in the jungle, working with Lieutenant H. E. Josselyn, a district officer from the Solomon Islands Administration. These two men also rescued American airmen who had been shot down in combat, hiding and feeding them until they were taken off by surface craft. In June 1943, when the USS *Helena* was sunk after an engagement in the Vella Gulf, Silvester helped the coastwatchers to succour 160 survivors who reached the shore and were hidden for a week until they were taken off by a **United States** destroyer.

A New Zealand naval rating, **Telegraphist G. Carpenter**, joined a coastwatching post on **Rendova Island**, in the **New Georgia Group**, before the American landing there. When this post was attacked by Japanese **Carpenter**, before he escaped, succeeded in destroying the teleradio set before it was captured. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal for his work there. **Telegraphist T. Withers**, of the Royal New Zealand Naval Volunteer Reserve, accompanied the American Marines who landed at **Empress Augusta Bay** on 1 November 1943 and remained with them for some months.

Coastwatching stations established to the south of New Zealand in the **Auckland** and Campbell Islands remained there for five years. The first party sailed from **Wellington** in the *Tagua* on 5 March 1941, taking three years' supply of food and portable prefabricated huts because of the sub-arctic weather conditions. The manning of these stations was the responsibility of the Aerodrome Services Branch of the Public Works Department. There were three shore stations, one at Port Ross, another at Carnley Harbour, both in the Auckland Islands, and a third at Perseverance Harbour in the Campbells. The motor vessel *Ranui* remained at an anchorage in Waterfall Inlet, in the Aucklands, to act as a link between the stations, each of which was manned by four men during the first year but later increased to five. Geologists, surveyors, and naturalists accompanied each relief, and certain scientific data was also collected. These coastwatching stations were of scientific value and their daily weather reports were invaluable. That on the Campbell Islands was retained as a permanent part of the New Zealand meteorological service at the end of war.

The first arrivals confirmed the visit of a German ship, the *Erlangen*, which sailed from Dunedin on 26 August 1939, ostensibly for **Australia** but which went instead to South America, calling at the Auckland Islands to collect rata wood to supplement her coal supplies.

Apart from the heat in the north, the cold in the south, and the isolation of both, some of the **Pacific** coastwatchers suffered from the

violence of tropical storms. Those on Suvarov Island, in the Southern Cook Group, endured a grim experience when a hurricane struck the island on 16 February 1942. There was no high ground on which to take refuge, since the island is only 14 feet above high-water level. The two soldiers and one operator climbed to safety in a tree, clinging there until the raging wind subsided and enduring the deluge of a tidal wave which swept over the island. Some natives were washed into the lagoon by this wave, but fortunately another one washed them back again. When the hurricane subsided the operator pieced together a transmitter from salvaged equipment and sent out a call for help, but a relief ship did not arrive from **Rarotonga** until 16 July, bringing with it much-needed food as well as six tons of earth and some plants with which to rehabilitate this coral island. Later a strong wooden shelter tower, twenty feet high, was erected on Suvarov for the protection of the coastwatchers.

Throughout 1944 most of the coastwatching stations were closed down as the **Pacific** war was pressed closer to the Japanese mainland. Some of them, however, remained as meteorological stations, their value as such having been established during the war years. In May 1944 stations in the Phoenix Group closed down; on 15 June orders were issued to close those in the Tokelau Group; the **Chatham Islands** stations ceased on 18 July, **Fiji** and **Tonga** on 25 July, and the Cook Island stations on 26 July. Two stations remained in the **Fiji** Group for the meteorological service—Wailangilala and Cape Washington, and also Suvarov and Nassau in the Cook Group. Nassau was closed in August 1945 after the island had been purchased by the New Zealand Government for £2000.

THE PACIFIC

CHAPTER 9 – NAVY AND AIR FORCE

Contents

I: The Navy in the Solomons p. 240

II: The Air Force Story p. 245

THE PACIFIC

I: THE NAVY IN THE SOLOMONS

I: The Navy in the Solomons

IN addition to convoy duty in the **Pacific**, which was undertaken by ships of the Royal New Zealand Naval Squadron from the outbreak of hostilities, two New Zealand cruisers were damaged in action while fighting under American command in the battle for the **Solomons**. Corvettes of the squadrons also took part and lent valuable assistance, particularly during the struggle for **Guadalcanal**, where they were engaged on submarine patrol work.

Following one of several bombardments of the **Munda airfield**, in **New Georgia**, by surface craft, HMNZS **Achilles**, commanded by Captain C. A. L. Mansergh, DSC, RN, ¹ was damaged and forced to retire from service with Halsey's naval forces. On the night of 4–5 January 1943, a task force of four cruisers and three destroyers commanded by Rear-Admiral Mahlon S. Tisdale, in the cruiser **Honolulu**, patrolled off **Guadalcanal** while another task force bombarded **Munda** in the first co-ordinated night action of surface craft, aircraft, and submarines. Next morning, as both forces joined and steamed off Cape Hunter, **Guadalcanal**, they were surprised by four Japanese Aichi dive-bombers which came from the direction of **Henderson Field** and were mistaken for friendly aircraft. ² The enemy planes dived on the line of cruisers before

¹ Rear-Admiral C. A. L. Mansergh, CB, DSC, m.i.d., US Silver Star; born England, 7 Oct 1898; served First World War, 1914–18 (DSC); captain HMNZS **Achilles**, 1942–43; HMNZS **Leander**, Feb–Oct 1943; promoted Rear-Admiral, 1948.

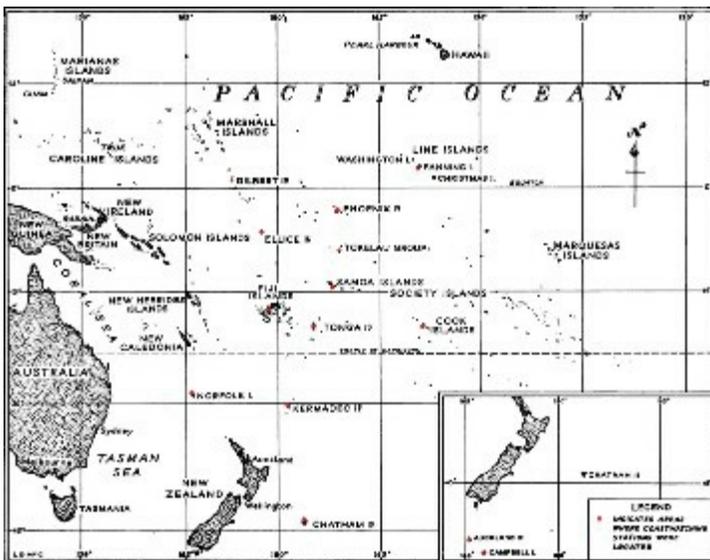
² *Bombardments of Munda and Vila-Stanmore*, combat narrative by Office of Naval Intelligence, **US Navy** (p. 13) and Admiralty battle summary No. 21, *Naval Operations in the Campaign for Guadalcanal* (p. 75).

Captain Mansergh's report on the engagement, dated 17 Jan 1943, reads in part:

'The armament was manned by the AA Defence Watch, the highest degree of anti-aircraft readiness short of action stations, namely, all 4-inch guns and control manned, seven Oerlikons manned, "B" and "X" turrets skeleton-manned for barrage fire and all lookouts posted.

'At 0925 a formation of four American Grumman fighters was sighted at about 12,000 feet immediately above the ship. These aircraft were positively and correctly identified as American machines. Two minutes later a further group of four aircraft were sighted spiralling down through the clouds at an angle of sight of about 40 degrees ahead of the ship and the aircraft alarm was sounded.

'The aircraft followed one another in quick succession, the first three attacking *Honolulu* without success and the fourth attacking *Achilles*. The ship was swinging slightly to starboard when a bomb hit the top of "X" turret, piercing the roof and exploding on top of the right gun....'



the Allied ships began firing, and a bomb from the third Japanese plane scored a direct hit on the roof of No. 3 gun turret of *Achilles*. It penetrated the one-inch steel plates and exploded on the cradle of the right gun, wrecking the gun house and killing six of the crew. Seven others were wounded. The right side of the turret was blown into the sea. The force of the explosion split the roof, one half of which was thrown

on to the quarter deck; the other half turned upside down in the air and came down again on the turret. Fires were quickly extinguished. An American naval report recorded that *Achilles*, hero of the Battle of the River Plate, 'took the damage in her stride and never lost position. Her A/A fire continued throughout the brief engagement.'

A few months later, during the progress of the battle for **Munda airfield**, strong naval forces periodically swept the waters of Kula Gulf, between **New Georgia** Island and **Kolombangara**, for the dual purpose of bombarding Japanese installations and concentrations ashore and holding off determined attempts to reinforce garrisons established near Rice Anchorage and at Bairoko Harbour and Enogai Inlet. By this time the line of the Tokyo Express had been reduced in length but it was still running under cover of darkness. These expeditions to contain enemy activity developed a further series of naval engagements, in one of which, the Battle of **Kolombangara**, HMNZS *Leander* was gravely damaged. She was commanded by Mansergh and for some months had been on convoy duty to **Fiji**, the **New Hebrides**, and **Guadalcanal**. On 11 July the *Leander* joined Rear-Admiral W. L. Ainsworth's task force to replace the cruiser *Helena*, which had been torpedoed in the Battle of Kula Gulf a week previously after surviving twelve major naval engagements in the **Solomons**. That night Ainsworth's force protected a convoy landing munitions and supplies for units fighting in the jungle, and after returning to **Tulagi** to replenish fuel and munitions was again ordered north to disrupt any enemy forces bringing reinforcements to **New Georgia**. Ainsworth moved out of **Tulagi** on the evening of 12 July, and on the journey north hugged the coast of Santa Isabel because of bright moonlight. Because the *Leander's* radar was inferior to that of the American cruisers, she was placed between Ainsworth's flagship, the *Honolulu*, and the *St. Louis*. Soon after one o'clock on the morning of 13 July, a Japanese force led by the light cruiser *Jintsu* was encountered off **Kolombangara**, and about twenty minutes after the action began the *Leander* was struck by a torpedo, after firing four herself, just as she was straightening up after completing a turn. Defects in the TBS system caused the *Leander* and several of the **United States**

destroyers to miss an executive signal, and the situation was further complicated by dense smoke from flashless powder.

The *Leander* came round promptly after seeing the movement of the flagship through a rent in the smoke clouds, but there was considerable bunching at the turn and drastic avoiding action had to be taken to prevent collisions as the cruisers and destroyers came into line again. The *Leander* was hit by a torpedo while executing this movement. The explosion tore a hole in her port side and flooded No. 1 boiler room; No. 2 boiler room had to be abandoned; the ship's electrical installations failed and five fuel tanks were wrecked. Seven men were killed. One gun crew and the upper deck fire party, numbering 21 all ranks, were swept overboard and the ship travelled some distance before this was noticed. Fifteen men were injured but the ship's crew, many of them in action for the first time, behaved like veterans throughout the engagement and afterwards. Two American destroyers, the *Radford* and the *Jenkins*, were detached by Ainsworth to escort the *Leander* 200 miles back to **Tulagi**, where she remained for a week before returning to **Auckland**. The American force lost heavily in this action, which continued after the *Leander* was struck. Both cruisers, *Honolulu* and *St. Louis*, were damaged by enemy torpedoes, the destroyer *Gwin* was lost, and two other destroyers damaged in a collision. The *Jintsu* was sunk.

New Zealand's little ships, the 600-ton corvettes, added a well-documented page to the country's naval tradition while they worked as part of the American naval command. Six of them spent lengthy periods in the forward zone and were actively engaged round **Guadalcanal**, working from a base at **Tulagi** before and after the Japanese evacuation, and afterwards as far north as **Green Islands**, moving forward as naval bases were established on recaptured islands. Except for periods of refit in New Zealand, these corvettes remained in the **Solomons** until the end of the campaign. They constituted the **25 Minesweeping Flotilla, South Pacific Command**—HMNZS *Moa*, commanded by Lieutenant-Commander P. Phipps, RNZNVR; HMNZS *Kiwi*, commanded by Lieutenant-Commander G. Bridson, RNZNVR; HMNZS *Tui*, commanded by

Lieutenant-Commander J. G. Hilliard, RNZNVR; HMNZS *Matai*, commanded by Commander A. D. Holden, RNZNR, senior officer of the flotilla; HMNZS *Gale*, commanded by Lieutenant-Commander C. MacLeod, RNZNR; and HMNZS *Breeze*, commanded by Lieutenant-Commander A. O. Horler, RNZNR. These last two were small coastal ships taken over by the Government early in the war. Holden was relieved by Phipps on 21 August 1944, and in December of that year HMNZS *Arabis* arrived in the **Solomons** to relieve *Matai*, and he transferred to her. From June 1945 until the end of the war two months later HMNZS *Arbutus*, commanded by Lieutenant N. D. Blair, RNZNVR, served with the **British Pacific Fleet** as an escort and radio and radar servicing vessel with the fleet train.

The corvettes' first 'kill' was one of **Japan's** submarine fleet operating with land forces at the time the evacuation of **Guadalcanal** began, the I-1, of 1970 tons. She was destroyed in a combined action by *Kiwi* and *Moa* on the night of 29 January 1943. In heavy rain squalls which limited visibility, they were on patrol off the northern tip of **Guadalcanal** opposite Kamimbo Bay when the *Kiwi's* Asdic officer, Sub-Lieutenant D. H. **Graham**,¹ reported a contact 3000 yards away, the maximum range. It was then five minutes past nine. Further contacts confirmed the presence of the enemy submarine, and the *Kiwi* went into the attack, dropping six depth charges as she closed the distance between them, until the submarine could be seen outlined in the phosphorescence which is such a feature of tropical waters at night. A second release of depth charges forced the submarine to surface about 2000 yards away, and the *Kiwi*, being the nearer vessel, raced towards her with machine and 20-millimetre guns blazing and her searchlight, operated by Leading Signaller Howard **Buchanan**,² playing on the enemy vessel. The *Moa* supported her sister ship, firing star shells to illuminate the murky tropic night. Both corvettes were outclassed by the submarine's heavier armament which by now had come into action. The *Kiwi* decided to ram her from about 150 yards. She struck the submarine on the port side to the rear of the conning tower, but was unable to cut through the ship's heavy plating. The *Kiwi's* guns put the submarine's

5.5-inch gun out of action, but her machine and six-pounder guns were still operating. Although he was mortally wounded and died later in the night, Buchanan continued to operate the *Kiwi's* searchlight, holding the enemy ship in its beam. **Bridson**³ decided to ram again, but as the submarine had begun to move towards the shore the two ships met at a glancing angle. Bridson quickly manoeuvred and rammed a third time, this time with success, for the *Kiwi* slid up on the submarine's deck, spilling the Japanese crew into the water. As she retracted from this dangerous position, oil spouted from the submarine's tanks.

¹ **Lt D. H. Graham**, m.i.d.; born Feilding, 25 Jun 1919; law student.

² **Ldg Sigmn C. H. Buchanan**, m.i.d., US Navy Cross; born **Port Chalmers**, 7 Apr 1920 factory employee; died of wounds, **Tulagi**, 31 Jan 1943.

³ **Cdr G. Bridson**, DSO, DSC, VRD, US Navy Cross; **Auckland**; born **Wellington**, 2 Dec 1909; commercial traveller; served in *HMS Walnut* (RN) and *HMNZS Kiwi*; Naval Officer-in-Charge, **Lyttelton**.

The *Kiwi's* guns, which had been in action almost continuously for an hour, were now too hot to continue the fight. The *Moa* took over and scored more hits on the submarine, which struck a reef and sank before she could reach the shore. The Hon. Walter Nash later took I-1's flag back to New Zealand.

The *Moa* remained on patrol for the remainder of that night, and then, in company with the *Tui*, fought an engagement the following night off Cape Esperance, from which the Japanese had begun evacuating their troops. The two corvettes engaged four Japanese landing barges and sank two of them. Cordite on the *Moa* caught fire when she was struck by an enemy shell, but the flames were extinguished before any great damage was done.

As soon as the Japanese evacuation of **Guadalcanal** was confirmed, preparations were made by **14 Corps** headquarters to move into the **Russell Islands**, a group farther north and most suitable for navy and air staging bases. To the *Moa* fell the task of carrying the first reconnaissance party there, and on the night of 17 February selected officers of 43 US Division and others from Navy and Marine units moved from **Guadalcanal** to Renard Sound, in the south of the group, where they were put ashore in darkness, only to be told by the natives that the Japanese had gone.

The *Moa* was lost at **Tulagi** two months later during one of the last concentrated Japanese air attacks on shipping lying in the channel between Florida and **Guadalcanal** and in Tulagi Harbour. Thirty-three of 117 enemy aircraft were shot down on 7 April 1943, but not before they had wrecked the New Zealand corvette, sunk an American destroyer and an LST, and damaged three cargo vessels. One 500-pound bomb struck the *Moa* near the bridge, passed through Phipps's cabin, and exploded below. Five ratings were killed, seven seriously injured, and Phipps ¹ and seven other ratings injured.

The following August the corvette *Tui* was primarily responsible for the destruction of Japanese submarine I-17, a craft of 2563 tons, which had shelled the Californian coast in February 1942. Early on the afternoon of 19 August the *Tui* left **Noumea, New Caledonia**, to escort two American supply ships to **Espiritu Santo**. Sixty miles south-east of **Noumea**, her Asdic operator recorded a contact and she made three runs over the area, dropping depth charges before proceeding on her way, but without confirming the presence of the enemy. Later that afternoon aircraft on patrol over the approaches to **Noumea** Harbour asked the *Tui* to

¹ Cdr P. Phipps; **Wellington**; born Whitby, England, 7 Jun 1909; bank officer; served in HMS *Bay* (RN) and HMNZS *Scarba*, *Moa*, *Matai* and *Arabis*; wounded, **Tulagi**, 7 Apr 1943.

investigate smoke on the horizon, and at 7.15 o'clock that evening she sighted the conning tower of the submarine which had been forced to the surface by the depth charges. The corvette opened fire at extreme range as the submarine tried to escape in the evening light, but she was ultimately sunk by aircraft. Six survivors of a crew of 97 were rescued by the *Tui*. I-17, which had spent from April to June in waters round **Fiji**, **Tonga** and **Samoa**, carried one reconnaissance aircraft and had a cruising range of 14,000 miles.

Until the **Solomons** campaign ended, New Zealand corvettes undertook tours of duty at anchorages of the various islands where ground forces were operating. When elements of **3 Division** occupied the Treasury Group, they did patrol duty in **Blanche Harbour** and again at **Green Islands**, protecting the cargo ships which lay off the entrance to the lagoon. When the American forces landed in **Empress Augusta Bay** to establish a perimeter, the *Breeze* on the night of 1–2 November laid mines off Cape Moltke to protect surface craft unloading in the bay off **Torokina**.

‘The alert and courageous actions of the crews of these gallant little ships merits the highest praise’, Halsey observed in a report on their activities.

THE PACIFIC

II: THE AIR FORCE STORY

II: The Air Force Story

New Zealand's air strength in the **Pacific** grew from a small force despatched to **Fiji** in November 1940 under Squadron Leader D. W. Baird, which ultimately became known as No. **4 Bomber Squadron**, and at the outbreak of war with **Japan** consisted of four outmoded de Havilland machines and six Vincents. Two aircraft of an army co-operation squadron were also stationed in **Fiji**. On 8 December 1941 this small unit was reinforced by six Vincents sent from New Zealand. From the time the **United States** assumed responsibility for the defence of the South Pacific area in 1942, New Zealand air units stationed there came under operational command of the Americans.

In planning air support and preliminary cover for the landing on **Guadalcanal**, Rear-Admiral John S. McCain, commander of air forces, **South Pacific Command**, requested the New Zealand Government to send six Vincent aircraft from the **Fiji** command to **New Caledonia** to assist with anti-submarine patrols over the sea approaches to the **Solomons**. Squadron Leader G. N. Roberts, who succeeded Baird, was then commanding New Zealand air force units in **Fiji**, where he had remained under American command after the return of **3 Division** in 1942. New Zealand, however, considered that Hudsons would be more suitable for patrol work. Two were flown from **Fiji** in July and the remainder from Nos. 1 and 2 Squadrons in New Zealand. From these aircraft grew No. **9 Bomber Squadron**, commanded by Squadron Leader D. E. **Grigg**,¹ which began operations from the Plaine des Gaiacs airfield, a dreary, dusty site on the west coast of **New Caledonia** near the primitive port of Nepoui. Dawn and dusk patrols to a distance of 400 miles began on 21 July 1942 and were continued until March 1943, under miserable and exasperating conditions. The squadron, ill equipped for both climate and maintenance, from the beginning of its tour of duty depended on

American sources for medical services, signals, transport, rations, fuel and oil. No mosquito nets had been supplied with the unit's equipment, and the airmen suffered unmercifully from the clouds of mosquitoes which infest that corner of **New Caledonia**. Even when some prefabricated huts arrived later from New Zealand, they were unsuitable for the conditions. Time and infinite patience solved most problems as the unit became self-supporting.

While the squadron maintained its routine and often monotonous flights for eight months, **No. 3 Bomber Squadron**, under Wing Commander **G. H. Fisher**,² moved from New Zealand to the island of **Espiritu Santo**, in the north of the **New Hebrides**, on 14 and 15 October, when the battle for **Guadalcanal** was reaching its climax. This move was the result of representations made by the Chief of the Air Staff (Air Vice-Marshal **R. V. Goddard**)³ while in **Washington**, for an operational role for the **Royal New Zealand Air Force in the Pacific**, and the answer to a request from the American Command for a second bomber squadron to relieve **No. 9**, so that it could move forward to the combat zone. Almost immediately, however, a change of plan by the Air Command requested **No. 3 Squadron's** services at **Vila**, on the island of **Efate**, and then at **Espiritu Santo**. The full resources of American construction might and industry had been turned on to this island, more commonly known as **Santo**, and airfields had been carved out of jungle and hill to make it both a reserve area and operational base and ultimately one of the great forward naval and air bases of the **Pacific**. Aircraft and crews of **No. 3 Squadron** staged to **Espiritu Santo** through **Norfolk Island** and **New Caledonia** from **Whenuapai**, and began operations from **Pallikulo** airfield on 16

¹ **Wg Cdr D. E. Grigg**, MBE, m.i.d.; **Akaroa**; born **Ashburton**, 22 Jan 1903; farmer.

² **Wg Cdr G. H. Fisher**, m.i.d., Air Medal (US); **Auckland**; born **Auckland**, 7 Feb 1910; salesman; **SASO No. 1 (Islands) Group**, **Espiritu Santo**, 1943; Northern Group, **Auckland**, 1944.

³ Air Mshl Sir Victor Goddard, KCB, CBE, DSM (US); born Harrow, England, 6 Feb 1897; **RAF**; served in Royal Navy and RNAS in First World War; Chief of Air Staff, **RNZAF**, and Commander NZ Air Forces, South Pacific, 1941–43; Air Officer i/c Administration, SEAC, 1943–46.

October, patrolling the sea lanes for enemy submarines. Lack of liaison in the early planning for this hasty move prevented any preliminary survey of the area to be occupied, and on arrival tents were pitched wherever space could be found for them among the trees and undergrowth. **Espiritu Santo** is one of the wettest, hottest, and most mosquito-ridden islands of the group, and conditions for the squadron were most unhappy until more permanent quarters were constructed. Late in November, however, the first units of this squadron moved forward to **Guadalcanal** and joined American units operating in congested conditions from **Henderson Field**. On 23 November, at a most critical time in the campaign, the New Zealand Hudsons undertook long-distance patrols for which they were more suited than the torpedo- and dive-bombers the Americans had been using. Flying Officer G. E. **Gudsell**¹ was the first member of the unit to meet the enemy. He was on patrol over **Vella Lavella** when three enemy aircraft guarding a convoy attacked him. A few days later Gudsell fought off three Japanese machines in a seventeen-minute engagement and proved the superiority of his Hudson in air combat. Sergeant I. M. **Page**² bombed a submarine while on patrol to the west of **New Georgia** on 2 December.

By 6 December the whole squadron, command of which passed later to Squadron Leader J. J. **Busch**,³ was concentrated on **Guadalcanal** as part of the American **Task Force 63**, leaving a rear echelon on Santo to provide replacements and servicing. Until 14 December, when a change of routine was made, individuals of the squadron flew four, five, and six patrols a day over the Japanese-held islands of **New Georgia**, Santa Isabel, **Choiseul**, and **Vella Lavella**, as far north as **Bougainville** and intervening waters, but this was reorganised into regular two morning and four afternoon searches. In addition to seeking for enemy surface

craft, submarines, convoys, and troop concentrations, most valuable information in a daily assessment of the enemy's strength, patrolling aircraft reported on the weather in a climate where conditions changed swiftly and drastically hampered surface and air operations. The New Zealand patrols frequently reported on the activities of the Tokyo Express as it moved in daylight down 'the Slot', prior information which enabled operational command on **Guadalcanal** to be prepared for the enemy's approach

¹ **Sqn Ldr G. E. Gudsell**, Air Medal (US); RNZAF Station, **Wigram**; born **Ashburton**, 15 Jun 1918; school teacher.

² **Fg Off I. M. Page**, DFM; **Opunake**; born **Christchurch**, 26 Feb 1913; assistant electrical engineer.

³ **Gp Capt J. J. Busch**, OBE; **Lower Hutt**; born **Amberley**, 12 Aug 1905; airways pilot; SASO No. 1 (**Islands**) **Group**, **Guadalcanal**; SASO NZ Air Task Force.

either by sea or air. One of the first attacks on the newly discovered **Munda airfield** in **New Georgia**, which was cunningly constructed underneath the heads of palms, supported on wires, was made by a Hudson on the morning of 9 December, and from that day the field was regularly attacked from the air and from the sea. Hudsons of No. 3 Squadron assisted with air cover for the task force which bombarded the airfield on the night of 4–5 January 1943, when the **Achilles** was put out of action. It was a pilot of No. 3 Squadron who reported the last run of the Tokyo Express to **Guadalcanal** on 7 February, while he was on patrol near **Vella Lavella**. Through rents in rain squalls he observed 19 Japanese destroyers moving south at high speed near **Ganongga Island**, and reported their presence and direction to headquarters on **Guadalcanal**. Interception failed to prevent them from uplifting the Japanese garrison from the beaches of **Cape Esperance** that night.

New Zealand air strength on **Guadalcanal** was increased in April

when No. **15 Fighter Squadron** arrived from **Tonga**, where it had been stationed for three and a half months, staging through **Espiritu Santo** to be equipped with more modern Kittyhawks (P40Ks). The new arrivals were soon in action. On 6 May Squadron Leader M. J. Herrick, the commander, and Flight Lieutenant S. R. **Duncan**¹ shot down a Japanese float-plane north of **Guadalcanal**. Two days later Herrick led eight New Zealand fighters in a combined attack, with American bombers, on three Japanese destroyers which had been damaged by magnetic mines in **Blackett Strait**, between **Kolombangara** and **New Georgia**. Two destroyers, the *Oyashio* and the *Kagero*, were strafed by the New Zealanders and sunk by the bombers; the third destroyer, *Kuroshiro*, was sunk by mines.

The New Zealand airmen made reconnaissance flights in all weathers, and weather in the **Solomons**, which may change from a cloudless sky to violent electrical storms in a remarkably short time, can be as dangerous as any enemy. In March 249 bomber-reconnaissance flights were recorded by the New Zealanders and 197 searches and other missions in April. Submarines or suspected submarines were not often sighted, although targets were more plentiful during the first two weeks of April. Flight Sergeant C. S. **Marceau**² reported one such successful mission on 3 April when, under cover of a rain squall, he dropped three bombs on a target off **Vella Lavella**.

¹ **Sqn Ldr S. R. Duncan**, m.i.d., Air Medal (US); **Nelson**; born **Nelson**, 19 Apr 1912; brewer; Operations officer No. 1 (**Islands Group**).

² **Flt Lt C. S. Marceau**, DFC; born **Opotiki**, 15 Jun 1916; storeman.

By the time Halsey was ready to strike for the **Munda airfield** and force the Japanese out of **New Georgia**, he was still far from strong enough for the enormous task demanded of his available air strength. He had at his disposal 290 fighters, 170 dive- and torpedo-bombers, 35

medium bombers, 72 heavy bombers, 18 flying boats, and 42 other types of aircraft. With these he carried out reconnaissance missions over the whole of the **Solomons** as far north as **Buka** and **New Ireland**, supported land forces in action in the jungle, fought off enemy air attacks on shipping and his own bases, neutralised enemy shipping and destroyed as much of it as he could. Because of the shortage of aircraft, all units worked at high pressure in heat and humidity which soon drained the strength and affected the nerves of the aircrews. Servicing units worked round the clock to keep the aircraft available for combat.

Throughout the months of 1943 the Japanese attempted with their dwindling air strength to hinder concentration of Allied air and naval forces on **Guadalcanal**. On 7 June between 40 and 50 enemy fighters were broken up before they had time to attack new airfields established on the **Russell Islands**, into which the Americans had moved after the Japanese retreat from **Guadalcanal**. These were then the most advanced airfields in the **Solomons** and were hurriedly constructed to assist in the **New Georgia** operation. Twelve machines of No. 15 Squadron took part and shot down four Japanese, two of the squadron's planes crash-landing in the Russells. Another determined attempt followed on 12 June, when 25 Japanese aircraft were shot down. Eight aircraft of No. 14 Squadron, commanded by Squadron Leader S. G. Quill, were in the process of relieving No. 15 when the attack came. They joined in, shot down six Japanese aircraft, and lost one of their own. One of the most determined raids on airfields and shipping came on 16 June, when more than 100 Japanese bombers and fighters were driven off with great loss. Coastwatchers reported the flights moving south and Allied aircraft were prepared for them when they reached within striking distance. Pilots of No. 14 Squadron dived into a formation of 33 Japanese aircraft, four New Zealand pilots accounting for five Japanese. Seventy-seven enemy machines were claimed as destroyed by Allied planes in that attack and eleven more were brought down by anti-aircraft fire. The Allies lost six fighters, one cargo ship, and one LST.

During the battle for **Munda** air formations from **Guadalcanal** and

the new fields on the Russells protected convoys, covered landings, and neutralised Japanese airfields as far north as Vila, Ballale, and **Kahili**. By this time the air superiority of the Allies was acknowledged. Construction work had forged ahead during April and May, and by June four fields were operating on **Guadalcanal**, with two subsidiary strips in the **Russell Islands**. When the American units landed at **Rendova**, in the initial thrust into the **New Georgia** Group, No. 14 Squadron aircraft provided air cover, working for the operation from the **Russell Islands**, where refuelling and rearming were maddeningly slow from the still inadequately organised fields, and food supplies were neither sufficient nor palatable. But the pilots never relaxed their efforts, despite the debilitating heat and the seas of mud which busy feet and vehicles enlarged each day round the airstrips and installations. July 1943 was a month of intense air activity as the Americans maintained the superiority they had at last achieved and intended to retain. The month opened successfully on the 1st when Flight Lieutenant E. H. **Brown**¹ led a flight of eight New Zealand aircraft and combined with Americans in holding off an attack by 22 Japanese machines on the **Rendova** beach-head, where the Americans went ashore, shooting down seven enemy planes. Brown baled out of his damaged machine on the way back to base and spent four and a half hours in the water before he was rescued. Two days later, while again on patrol over **Rendova** beach-head, eight more machines of No. 14 Squadron were surprised by forty of the enemy, who swept on them out of a cloud. Quill, who was wounded, and Sergeant R. C. **Nairn**,² each accounted for a Japanese machine. Flying Officer G. B. **Fisken**³ claimed three. During the month, in addition to arduous patrols, No. 14 Squadron pilots escorted flights of American bombers during attacks on enemy ships and air and naval bases as far north as the **Shortland Islands** and **Bougainville**.

Halsey's air strength was sufficient by the middle of July 1943 to justify increased strikes against enemy bases, and on 17 July No. 14 Squadron combined with the Americans in the largest air operation undertaken up to that time in the **Solomons**. A concentration of 71 dive- and torpedo-bombers and seven heavy bombers, escorted by 114 fighters,

sought out enemy shipping at **Kahili**, sank and damaged seven ships and dispersed others. The following day a similar mission, in which New Zealand fighter pilots were employed in close escort for the American bombers, attacked enemy shipping in the **Shortland Islands** and the south of **Bougainville** anchorages.

¹ **Flt Lt E. H. Brown**, DFC; Mount Maunganui; born **Dannevirke**, 1 Feb 1913; commercial pilot.

² **Flt Lt R. C. Nairn**, DFM; RNZAF Station, **Wigram**; born **Ireland**, 15 Nov 1922; farmhand.

³ **Fg Off G. B. Fisken**, DFC; **Masterton**; born **Gisborne**, 17 Feb 1918; shepherd.

Because of the prevailing conditions in the **Solomons**, New Zealand fighter squadrons were relieved after a six weeks' tour of duty in the forward area. Squadrons usually spent six weeks in **Espiritu Santo** before they were sent forward. From the combat zone they returned to New Zealand for rest and reorganisation. No. 14 Squadron, ¹ which had accounted for 22 Japanese aircraft, was relieved by No. 16, commanded by Squadron Leader **J. S. Nelson**, ² on 25 July and moved back to base at **Espiritu Santo**, remaining there until relieved by No. 17 Squadron under Squadron Leader **P. G. H. Newton**, ³ after which No. 14 moved back to New Zealand. The periodical rotation of active squadrons made for greater efficiency and reduced sickness. No. 16 Squadron remained on **Guadalcanal** for two months, undertaking much of the same kind of work as No. 14 had done and earning similar praise from American commands and from the crews of the bombers they protected. Encounters with enemy aircraft, however, were becoming less frequent as pressure on the ground was maintained and captured islands were consolidated, but the New Zealanders continued to provide cover for American bombing missions and themselves searched out and destroyed Japanese shipping, particularly barge traffic round the islands. On 25

August Flight Lieutenant R. L. **Spurdle**⁴ and Flight Sergeant N. A. **Pirie**⁵ set fire to some Japanese barges on the coast of **Choiseul**, then shot up three more boats used by the Japanese in evacuating their scattered forces from the **New Georgia** Group. Flight Lieutenant J. R. **Day**⁶ led a flight which set fire to two vessels off Ganongga Island, just south of **Vella Lavella**, the following day. While returning to their base after covering an American bombing mission on 3 September, two of the squadron's pilots, Flight Lieutenant M. T. **Vanderpump**⁷ and Flight Sergeant J. E. **Miller**,⁸ fell back to protect a damaged American bomber which was being attacked by eight enemy Zeros. They drove off the Japanese and escorted the damaged bomber to a safe landing. Both pilots were awarded immediate American

¹ No. 14 Squadron at this time went to Santo instead of returning direct to New Zealand.

² **Sqn Ldr J. S. Nelson**, m.i.d.; **Wellington**; born NZ 28 Jun 1912; metal merchant.

³ **Wg Cdr P. G. H. Newton**, DFC, m.i.d.; **Christchurch**; born **Christchurch**, 29 Sep 1917; engineering draughtsman; Director of Operations, Air Department, Aug 1945-Jan 1946.

⁴ **Wg Cdr R. L. Spurdle**, DFC and bar; born NZ 3 Mar 1918; commanded No. 80 Sqn, 1944–45.

⁵ **Fg Off N. A. Pirie**, m.i.d.; **Napier**; born **Christchurch**, 25 Nov 1922; P & T Dept mechanician.

⁶ **Flt Lt J. R. Day**, MBE; **Dunedin**; born **Invercargill**, 24 Nov 1912; mechanic.

⁷ **Sqn Ldr M. T. Vanderpump**, DFC, DFC (US); **Hastings**; born **Auckland**, 14 May 1920; farmer.

⁸ **W/O J. E. Miller, DFC (US); Kawa Kawa; born Whangaruru, 23 Jul 1914; mechanic.**

decorations. During its tour of duty, which ended in September, the squadron's aircraft flew a record of 2100 flying hours.

On 11 and 15 September No. 17 Squadron moved up from the **New Hebrides** and took over, and with its arrival New Zealand air strength in the forward zone was increased to two squadrons, with a third in reserve on **Espiritu Santo**. No. 15 Squadron returned for its second tour of duty on 14 September, and No. 18 Squadron took over fighter defence duties in the **New Hebrides** on 17 September. Their arrival coincided with the landing of 3 New Zealand Division on **Vella Lavella**, for which aircraft from both 15 and 17 Squadrons helped to cover disembarkation and subsequent ship-to-shore operations. These aircraft were based on **Guadalcanal**, but operated from **Segi** airfield (which had been constructed by the Americans at Segi Plantation, in **New Georgia**, to assist with the final attack on **Munda**) and **Munda** itself, long since in American hands and now headquarters of the American **14 Corps** under Griswold. On 1 October pilots of No. 15 Squadron claimed seven Japanese dive-bombers from a concentration which attacked a **3 Division** convoy off **Vella Lavella**.

During this time important changes had been made in the organisation and administration of the **Royal New Zealand Air Force** units in the South Pacific zone. Early in 1943, as the drive through the **Solomons** gained momentum, the Dominion's increasing air strength provoked such problems of administration as to warrant the establishment of a group headquarters. From their earliest participation in the **Pacific** war, units were scattered over several widely separated islands, each operating under different commands. Moreover, operational command was exercised by the commander in whose area the unit happened to be stationed, but administrative control was still exercised from Air Department in **Wellington**. To achieve some unity of control in the forward zone, No. **1 (Islands) Group** was established at **Espiritu Santo**

on 10 March, under command of Group Captain S. Wallingford,¹ who had been RNZAF staff officer on McCain's headquarters in the USS *Curtiss*, then anchored in **Segond Channel**, near the principal American air bases. At this time administration of the several units was confused. On *Espiritu Santo* were the advanced echelons of Nos. 9, 14, and 15 Squadrons, all separated from their ground and headquarters organisations, which were hundreds of miles away on other islands. The rear details of No. 3 Squadron, which administered

¹ **Air Cdre S. Wallingford**, CB, CBE, Legion of Merit (US); **Wellington**; born Hythe, England, 12 Jul 1898; **RNZAF**; served First World War 1916–20 (Rifle Bde and **RAF**); Air Force Member for Personnel 1941–42; AOC No. **1 (Islands) Group**, 1942–43; AOC Northern Group, 1944; Air Member for Supply 1945–46; Air Member for Personnel 1948–52.

No. 4 Repair Depot, were also on **Espiritu Santo**. Some further unity of command was desirable as the year progressed, for New Zealand's air strength was still further increased in the forward zone and greater expansion was planned for 1944. The changing strategical situation towards the end of 1943 also made it desirable to move administrative headquarters farther forward. Ancillary and maintenance organisations had grown proportionately and increased problems of administration, which had not been helped by the haphazard method of unloading supplies at Santo, where representatives of each service sought its own from the immense quantities dumped ashore from ships eager to make a quick turn-round. At times goods destined for **Espiritu Santo** sometimes lay at **Noumea** for weeks. This was due principally to the existing multiplicity of commands, and also to the fact that as soon as ships reached the South Pacific area their destination could be altered by Halsey's headquarters, according to the demand for shipping in any certain given area.

Since many of the functions of a base organisation were already being undertaken by No. 1 Group Headquarters, it was decided late in

1943 to establish a base depot on **Espiritu Santo** and move Group Headquarters to **Guadalcanal**, which would take it 600 miles farther forward. At the end of October Wing Commander I. E. Rawnsley, MBE,¹ who had been commanding the New Zealand station on **Espiritu Santo**, was appointed to command the station on **Guadalcanal**. A base depot, with a strength of 1196 all ranks, was established at Santo on 1 November and Wing Commander H. L. Tancred, AFC,² appointed to command it. By the end of the month Air Commodore M. W. Buckley, MBE,³ succeeded Wallingford, who in the meantime had been promoted to similar rank. At its formation the base depot administered the following units: No. 14 Squadron, No. 3 Squadron (back from **Guadalcanal**), No. 6 Flying Boat Squadron (then based on **Segond Channel**), No. 4 Repair Depot, No. 1 and No. 12 Servicing Units, Base Depot Headquarters, and No. 2 RNZAF Hospital. A transit camp and group headquarters were also sited at base depot. As part of the 1943 reorganisation, fighter and bomber maintenance units were divorced from flying squadrons and renamed servicing units, by which they were known

¹ **Wg Cdr I. E. Rawnsley**, MBE; **Wellington**; born **Wellington**, 14 Jan 1898; company director; CO RNZAF, **Espiritu Santo** and **Guadalcanal**.

² **Wg Cdr H. L. Tancred**, AFC; **Blenheim**; born Kingaroy, Queensland, 30 Dec 1908; airline pilot.

³ **Air Cdre M. W. Buckley**, CBE, m.i.d., Legion of Merit (US); born Seacliff, 3 Aug 1895; **RNZAF**; served in RNAS in First World War; commanded 75 (NZ) Sqn, 1940–41; AOC Northern Group, 1942–43; AOC No. 1 (**Islands**) Group, 1943–44; Deputy Chief of Air Staff, **RNZAF**, 1944–45; AOC RNZAF HQ, **London**, 1946–50.

until the end of the war. Then, in January 1944, Group Headquarters moved forward to **Guadalcanal**. These and other changes were achieved only after long-delayed negotiations and a lengthy exchange of

correspondence between the group commander and Air Headquarters in **Wellington** regarding the respective responsibilities of the two units, and a visit to **Wellington** by the group commander to urge his claims, most of which were finally agreed to by Air Headquarters. These are only the broad details of an involved organisation, the domestic details of which will be told in the separate Air Force history.

The consolidation of the **New Georgia** Group and the island of **Vella Lavella**, throughout September and October 1943, which forced the Japanese evacuation of **Kolombangara**, enabled air units to move still farther forward in readiness to cover advances by ground troops into the Treasuries and on to **Bougainville** itself, in accordance with the plan to destroy the strategic base of **Rabaul**. Two New Zealand fighter squadrons were therefore welded into a fighter wing under Wing Commander T. O. Freeman, DSO, DFC, ¹ and with their ground staffs moved forward to **Ondonga** in October, where they came under direction of the **United States Marine Corps** for impending operations. The wing consisted of No. 15 and No. 18 Fighter Squadrons, No. 2 and No. 4 Servicing Units, a tunnelling and sawmilling detachment (which was based on Arundel Island, separated from **Ondonga** by a narrow channel). Two radar units, Nos. 56 and 57, which had also gone forward and were stationed at **Munda** and **Rendova** respectively, also came under Freeman's command, as did the American operational aircraft in the area. The wing was based in a coconut plantation which became a sea of deep, evil-smelling mud, churned by constant activity and deluges of rain, but by 23 October, by dint of long hours of strenuous labour, the field was ready for operations and in time to give air protection for the landing in the Treasury Group on 27 October. That morning, as New Zealanders went ashore, eight aircraft from No. 18 Squadron covered the landing beaches from 5.40 a.m. to 8.40 a.m., and another four aircraft from 5.40 a.m. to 8.10 a.m. Other patrols maintained observation at two-hourly intervals. No. 15 Squadron also flew patrols throughout the day, but the enemy was not encountered until the afternoon when 30 to 40 Japanese divebombers and 50 to 60 fighters attacked landing craft on the beaches and in **Blanche Harbour**, a sheltered reach of water between the islands of Mono

¹ **Wg Cdr T. O. Freeman**, DSO, DFC and bar; born Lawrence, 5 Jun 1916; **RAF**; killed on air operations, 17 Dec 1943.

accounted for four of them without loss. Four days later, aircraft from both squadrons maintained patrols over Rear-Admiral Aaron S. Merrill's huge task force for the landing at **Empress Augusta Bay** on 1 November, covering it until the small craft reached the beaches. Here eight aircraft from No. 18 Squadron patrolled the area and watched a landing which spread over twelve miles of beach below. One flight of eight aircraft, commanded by Flight Lieutenant R. H. **Balfour**,¹ attacked a formation of 50 to 60 Japanese Zekes flying south towards **Kahili** and shot down seven of them. One pilot of this flight, Flying Officer K. D. **Lumsden**,² lived through a series of misadventures which, in a few minutes, brought him near to death more than once. Two Japanese aircraft chased him south and anti-aircraft shells from an American destroyer damaged his plane; then an Allied aircraft fired at him by mistake and forced him to ditch his machine in the sea off **Vella Lavella**. The crew of the rescue barge which came from the shore mistook him for a Japanese and almost machine-gunned him before he could establish his identity. Two days later he returned to his unit.

November and December were periods of intense activity for the air units of the **South Pacific Command**, particularly the New Zealand fighter squadrons, for the thrust into **Bougainville** required the maintenance of constant pressure on any remaining Japanese bases. Despite fatigue, hard and difficult working conditions, heat, rain, mud and monotonous food, which were the daily lot of both air crews and ground staffs, flights operated from dawn to dusk, always on the offensive. Then, when the machines returned, maintenance crews took over, working through the night to have them ready for their missions the following day. The New Zealand fighter wing flew more than 1000 sorties in November and created a record no other air unit has ever

established. Circumstances made this possible, since it was the first time two New Zealand squadrons operated together as a fully established wing. **Rabaul** was bombed almost daily after the **Bougainville** landing to prevent and break up any counter-attack from that quarter. On 11 November, anniversary of Armistice Day of the 1914–18 War, 700 aircraft took off from **Munda** in the heaviest attack made up to that time on the rapidly crumbling Japanese stronghold. On 17 December, by which time the **Torokina** airfield inside the perimeter at **Empress Augusta Bay** was ready for operation, 24 New Zealand aircraft under Freeman joined the Americans for a still heavier raid. The

¹ **Sqn Ldr R. H. Balfour**, DFC, DFC (US); Cheviot; born Waimate, 15 Apr 1917, stock agent.

² **Flt Lt K. D. Lumsden; Nelson**; born Waimate, 7 Sep 1921; draughtsman.

machines left **Ondonga** and refuelled for the first time at **Torokina** before continuing their flight. Five Japanese aircraft were shot down by the New Zealanders during the raid, but unfortunately Freeman was lost. His damaged aircraft was last seen attempting to land in **New Ireland**, but no trace of him was ever found. On Christmas Eve another big strike at **Rabaul** included aircraft from the fighting wing. They shot down twelve Japanese aircraft and registered four probables, with the loss of five New Zealand pilots. It was the biggest daily bag of Japanese obtained by them in the **Solomons**.

During a reconnaissance raid on the **Green Islands** Group by elements of **3 Division** on 31 January-1 February 1944, aircraft of No. 18 Squadron maintained a watch over **Nissan Island** to report any enemy counter-attack and maintain communication with the ground forces.

During the foregoing period No. **1 Bomber Reconnaissance Squadron**, commanded by Squadron Leader H. C. **Walker**,¹ and using Venturas, began working in the area from its base on **Guadalcanal** and then moved

forward to **Munda**. One of its more important tasks was directing Catalinas to pick up airmen from the sea after they had baled out from damaged machines. The squadron flew 135 of these 'survivor' patrols and saved many airmen, particularly round **Rabaul**. For example, the Christmas Eve attack was followed by two of the squadron's machines, piloted by Flying Officer R. J. **Alford**² and Flying Officer D. F. **Ayson**.³ Just as Alford spotted a pilot floating in the water in St. George's Channel, off **Rabaul**, his machine was attacked by three Japanese fighters. He damaged two of them and escaped into a cloud, but not before he had signalled the airman's position to the Catalinas. Ayson's aircraft was attacked by six Japanese machines over the same channel. One of the crew, Flying Officer S. P. **Aldridge**,⁴ who was acting as fire controller, was wounded in the running fight which ensued, and the navigator, Warrant Officer W. N. **Williams**,⁵ took over and continued the fight. Three of the Japanese machines were shot down. Ayson's Ventura was badly damaged but returned to its base. This action was commended in a personal letter from the American air operations commander. Ayson and Williams

¹ **Wg Cdr H. C. Walker**, AFC, m.i.d., Legion of Merit (US); Union Airways, **Palmerston North**; born Edinburgh, 15 Mar 1908; airline pilot.

² **Fg Off R. J. Alford**; **Cambridge**; born **Auckland**, 1922; farmhand.

³ **Flt Lt D. F. Ayson**, DFC; **Palmerston North**; born **Mosgiel**, 9 Apr 1915; linotype operator.

⁴ **Fg Off S. P. Aldridge**; born **Te Kuiti**, 16 Jan 1920; engineer and farmer; killed on air operations, 20 Aug 1944.

⁵ **Fg Off W. N. Williams**, DFC, DFM; **Christchurch**; born **Dunedin**, 28 Nov 1913; hairdresser.

were awarded the DFC, and the air gunner, Flight Sergeant G. E. **Hannah**,¹ who was credited with two and a half Japanese fighters, was awarded the DFM.

New Zealand fighter pilots took part in all strikes on **Rabaul**, often acting as escort for American bombers, the crews of which frequently asked for New Zealand fighter cover. The New Zealanders' flying discipline was high, and only severe damage diverted them from their tasks and objectives. By the time No. 17 Squadron was due for relief in January, its strength had been gravely reduced by sickness and casualties. Both New Zealand and American airmen operated under extreme difficulty during the **Solomons** campaign, because of swiftly changing weather conditions and the fact that airfields were often widely scattered on islands hundreds of miles apart. On 17 January 1944 the New Zealand Fighter Wing moved still farther forward to the **Torokina** airfield on **Bougainville**, a move which reduced flying time to **Rabaul** by three hours. Squadron Leader J. S. Nelson acted as commanding officer after Freeman's death until the appointment of Wing Commander C. W. K. Nicholls, DSO, **RAF**, in February 1944.

The New Zealanders fought their last **Solomons** air battle against Japanese machines on 13 February 1944, when fighter pilots of No. 18 Squadron escorted American bombers over **Rabaul**. They brought the total of Japanese aeroplanes destroyed in the **Pacific** by **RNZAF** fighter squadrons to 99, but could never achieve the century. When **3 Division** occupied the **Green Islands** Group on 15 February, the fighter wing, working with American units, maintained a solid cover over the atoll, but never encountered any Japanese. By the time the New Zealand pilots came on station the landing was over, and all Japanese opposition had been shot out of the skies.

From February 1944 the Japanese air force in the South and South West Pacific ceased to exist, though there were still many thousands of their ground forces in the jungles of **Bougainville**, **New Britain**, and **New Guinea**. Of 700 navy and 300 army aircraft which had flown into **Rabaul**

throughout 1942 and 1943, only 70 remained to fly out again. With the capture of the **Green Islands** Group, which was virtually the end of the **Solomons** campaign, all ground activity centred on **Bougainville**, where the remains of 17 Japanese Army were trapped and isolated. New Zealand aircraft remained in the perimeter and assisted the American squadrons in bombing enemy concentrations and in driving off the attack which developed later by the fanatical

¹ **W/O G. E. Hannah**, DFM; **Invercargill**; born **Invercargill**, 7 Oct 1913; boot repairer.

remnants of the ground forces. In March the fighter wing modified its aircraft and fitted bomb racks in place of belly tanks, so that these machines rated as fighter-bombers, carrying 500-pound bombs at first and later 1000-pounders. Nicholls led the first of these fighter-bombers over **Rabaul** on 7 March. Further changes were made in March 1944 when two dive-bombing squadrons, No. 25 commanded by Squadron Leader T. J. MacLean de Lange, ¹ and No. 30 commanded by Squadron Leader R. G. **Hartshorn**, ² reached **Bougainville** and were stationed at **Torokina**. Their servicing units arrived at **Empress Augusta Bay** during the Japanese attack on the perimeter. When the squadrons reached **Torokina** at the end of the month, they immediately joined the Americans in bombing and strafing enemy concentrations and gun positions beyond the perimeter. In May, when these two squadrons returned to New Zealand and were disbanded, they were replaced on **Bougainville** by No. 31 Squadron, under Squadron Leader M. **Wilkes**, ³ and No. 20 Squadron, led by Squadron Leader S. R. Duncan, which was the first to reach **Bougainville** with the Corsairs with which the **RNZAF** fighter squadrons had been re-equipped in 1944. Although there was no air opposition in the final stages of the war in **Bougainville**, the New Zealand squadrons were constantly employed on reconnaissance work and in spraying Japanese gardens and rice fields with oil, after which these sources of food were bombed with incendiaries. This routine continued when American formations withdrew in 1944 and were

replaced by an Australian command, which remained on **Bougainville** until the Japanese surrender in August 1945. Any necessary air support for the Australians was supplied by the New Zealanders.

New Zealand air units in the **Pacific** were as scattered as those of the Army, and much of their work, valuable and necessary to the vast strategic plan, was necessarily dull and monotonous, with only occasional missions to give it variety. Two of these units did particularly good work in saving survivors from torpedoed ships and in saving ships from submarine attack. No. **4 Bomber Reconnaissance Squadron**, stationed in **Fiji**, gave cover to the American ship *William Williams* when she was attacked 120 miles south of **Suva** in May 1943, and saved her from further

¹ Wg Cdr T. J. MacLean de Lange, DFC; **Wellington**; born Simla, 16 Jun 1914; accountant; OC 25 (Dive Bomber) Sqn, **Pacific**, 1944; RNZAF Liaison Officer, SEAC, 1945–46; Air Representative, NZ Joint Services Liaison Staff, **Melbourne**, 1950–52.

² Sqn Ldr R. G. Hartshorn, m.i.d.; **Auckland**; born Hastings, 13 Dec 1919; bank clerk.

³ Wg Cdr M. Wilkes, m.i.d.; Wakefield, **Nelson**; born **Nelson**, 29 Sep 1906; sheep-farmer; OC 31 (Torpedo Bomber) Sqn; CO Los Negros; Com Air Admiralty Group.

attack while she was being towed into that port. Later that month when another American ship, the *Hearst*, was sunk near **Suva** by submarine, Hudsons from the squadron dropped supplies to the survivors. On 25 June 1943 a Hudson dropped depth charges on a submarine 180 miles south-west of **Suva**. It was probably RO-107, which the Japanese recorded losing that month in the South Pacific. The following month, while Hudsons of the squadron escorted the USS *Saugatuck* between **Fiji** and **Tonga**, they sighted and attacked another submarine. When the USS

***San Juan* was torpedoed and sunk 300 miles south-east of [Suva](#) on 11 November, the squadron's aircraft covered her during rescue operations.**

Catalinas of No. 6 Squadron, commanded by Wing Commander G. G. Stead, DFC, ¹ also originally based on [Fiji](#), guided rescue ships to the *San Juan* after she was torpedoed, and picked up survivors from the American ship *Vanderbilt* who were found floating on rafts off [Fiji](#). When the squadron moved to [Espiritu Santo](#), Stead was succeeded by Squadron Leader I. A. Scott. ² It then moved forward into the [Solomons](#) and was based at Halavo, on [Florida Island](#), from which it flew its first mission to rescue ten survivors seen floating on rafts 220 miles north of Florida. One of the squadron's Catalinas, piloted by Flying Officer W. B. Mackley, DFC, ³ landed on the water and flew them back to safety. The next was the rescue of American airmen 100 miles south of Nauru, when a Catalina piloted by Flying Officer D. S. [Beauchamp](#) ⁴ picked up five survivors from a Liberator which had been forced down on the water while returning from a bombing raid on [Kwajalein](#). This was a tricky operation, hindered by a bumpy sea which so strained the hull of the craft that, after several attempts, she lifted off the water only with great difficulty. In February 1944 two Catalinas of No. 6 Squadron were detached and based on [Blanche Harbour](#), in the Treasury Group, from which they flew on mercy missions and rescued 28 airmen from the sea between [Bougainville](#) and the approaches to [Rabaul](#).

At Halsey's request, New Zealand supplied several radar units for service in the [Pacific](#) at a time when this vital service was most urgently needed and there was a shortage of trained men to operate the equipment. Radar was the silent service of the Air Force and

¹ **Wg Cdr G. G. Stead**, DFC; England; born Hastings, 8 Sep 1911; [RAF](#); British Overseas Airways Corporation.

² **Wg Cdr I. A. Scott**, OBE; Civil Aviation Branch, [Wellington](#); born [London](#), 1 Nov 1913; [RAF](#) and [RNZAF](#); OC 6 (Flying Boat) Sqn, [Pacific](#); Director of Operations, Air Department, [Wellington](#).

³ **Flt Lt W. B. Mackley**, DFC and bar; **Auckland**; born **Lower Hutt**, 10 May 1915; factory manager.

⁴ **Flt Lt D. S. Beauchamp**, DFC; **Auckland**; born **Masterton**, 23 Oct 1910; bank clerk.

little was heard of these units, some of which were sited from necessity on isolated islands. Their difficulties were many, due principally to a lack of suitable sites on the islands. On 21 March 1943 the first **RNZAF** radar unit to reach **Guadalcanal** began operations with the American forces. Several more followed, and on 15 August No. 62 Radar Squadron came into existence under the command of Flight Lieutenant J. Conyers **Brown**.¹ One of the most isolated units was No. 53, which was sited on the unoccupied island of **Malaita**, where the natives were none too friendly and the staff worked far from any other service organisation. No. 52 unit was sited on **Guadalcanal**, and received a letter of commendation from the **United States** Air Command for the accuracy of its plots of enemy aircraft during one of the heaviest raids on 7 April. It did similar work during another raid in June, when its information was invaluable in directing American fighters to the enemy. No. 56 unit was sited at **Munda, New Georgia**; No. 57 across the water at **Rendova**; No. 58 at West Cape on **Guadalcanal**; and No. 59 on **Bougainville**. Their work was of inestimable value to fighter control, with which they were linked, the whole being part of the anti-aircraft and air defence of any occupied locality. They gave adequate warning of the approach of enemy aircraft and directed the defending fighters towards enemy machines. The Japanese frequently confused New Zealand and American pilots by dropping strips of metal which distorted the readings on radar screens. Radar was not infallible, but it was invaluable to both navy and air force elements in battle. The last radar units returned to New Zealand from the forward area in February 1945.

By the end of February 1944, No. 1 (**Islands**) **Group** had been expanded to three fighter squadrons, three bomber reconnaissance, one

dive-bomber, one torpedo and one flying boat squadron, with a total strength of 5108 all ranks. These were being expanded still further to twenty squadrons, which were to be ready by the end of the year as New Zealand's commitment to the war in the Pacific. Fifteen of them were to be employed in the forward area and the remainder on the home front to ensure exchange and relief, and all were to be equipped with American types of aircraft. This scheme was almost completed when the war ended.

¹ Flt Lt J. Conyers Brown, m.i.d.; London; born Melbourne, 8 Feb 1920; radio engineer.

THE PACIFIC

CHAPTER 10 – FIJI UNITS IN ACTION

Contents

I: Training a Brigade Group p. 261

II: Guerrillas in the Jungle p. 264

III: Battalions Move to the Solomons p. 272

THE PACIFIC

I: TRAINING A BRIGADE GROUP

I: Training a Brigade Group

THE history of the **Fiji** Defence Force became inseparably linked with New Zealand from the time the Dominion accepted responsibility for the defence of the Crown Colony. Officers and non-commissioned officers were despatched from Army Headquarters in **Wellington** to train the **Fijians** and to direct the activities of the organisation, and the senior command became a New Zealand appointment from 1940 when **Cunningham** arrived with 8 Brigade Group. When 3 New Zealand Division was relieved by American forces in June and July 1942, the remaining **Fiji** Defence Force came under American command, though retaining its identity as an individual organisation with a New Zealander as commander. Finally, when the danger from **Japan** receded in the **Pacific** in the last days of the war, command reverted to **Fiji** and the New Zealanders returned to the Dominion. Invaluable work was done during those years and provided a pattern for any similar future operation.

Although, under the principle of unity of command, responsibility for the military security of both **Fiji** and **Tonga** was vested in the **United States** from 1942, New Zealand continued to provide essential equipment, supplies, and personnel for both the **Fijian** and **Tongan** forces, the majority, of course, going to the Crown Colony. When **3 Division** left **Fiji**, New Zealand also agreed to the American request for the retention of certain units and men, principally coast and anti-aircraft artillery, until their relief by American units later in the year or early in 1943. Colonel J. G. C. Wales was gazetted in his new appointment as Commandant of the **Fiji** Defence Force and Commander 2 NZEF Pacific Section on 18 July, at which date there were 1500 New Zealanders in **Fiji**, including 1035 with artillery units. He established his new headquarters at New Zealand Camp, in the village of **Tamavua** on

the main **Suva- Samambula** road, taking with him a nucleus of New Zealand officers and non-commissioned officers necessary to staff and direct the various services. Throughout

August and September new units were formed and the force expanded by agreement with the New Zealand Government until, on 1 November, the formation of an infantry brigade group was announced and Wales was promoted to the rank of Brigadier. At that time there were 221 New Zealand officers and 1340 other ranks with the **Fiji Defence Force**, which the following month changed its title to the **Fiji Military Forces**. From the complex organisation which then existed, all units, both New Zealand and Fijian, were regrouped to come under command of either brigade or administrative headquarters. By that time Wales had selected the following staff and commands:

Brigade Major	Maj A. J. Neil, MBE
DA and QMG	Maj J. I. L. Hill
GSO 3	Capt J. M. Crawford
Staff Captain	Capt E. E. McCurdy
Intelligence Officer	Lt W. E. Crawford
1 Field Battery, Fiji Artillery Regiment	Maj H. G. Flux
1 Field Company, Fiji Corps of Engineers	Maj F. H. Stewart
1 Section, Fiji Corps of Signals	Lt A. T. Fussell
Composite Company, ASC	Capt F. G. Tucker
Reserve Motor Transport Company	2 Lt C. Turner
36 Light Aid Detachment	Lt R. W. R. Johnson
Senior Medical Officer	Lt-Col W. D. Stoney Johnston
Ordnance Workshops	Capt H. B. New
Pay Section	Lt F. J. Martin
Records Section	Capt G. A. R. Johnstone
1 Bearer Company	2 Lt R. D. McEwan
School of Instruction	Maj E. E. Lloyd
1 Battalion, Fiji Infantry Regiment	Lt-Col J. B. K. Taylor
3 Battalion, Fiji Infantry Regiment	Lt-Col F. G. Forster
4 Battalion, Fiji Infantry Regiment	Lt-Col R. Fraser
Eastern Independent Commando	Capt P. G. Ellis
Southern Independent Commando	Capt C. W. H. Tripp

Colonel J. P. Magrane, a member of the Fiji civil service (Police), was officer in charge of administration and controlled 2 Territorial Battalion, which provided officers and men for the three regular battalions. Two labour battalions and home and bridge guards also remained under Magrane's command.

Under the Americans Fiji became a separate island command, commanded by Major-General C. F. Thompson, and all Fiji forces came under him for operations. American artillery ultimately took over the coastal batteries at Vunda, Momi, Bilo, and Suva from the combined New Zealand and Fijian gunners, leaving only the Flagstaff Hill battery to the Fiji command. As the Americans withdrew in February 1943 they handed back the Suva and Bilo batteries, and 1 Heavy Fiji Regiment was created to control them, with Lieutenant-Colonel P. M. B. Barclay in command of the fixed coastal defences.

The Fijian Infantry Brigade came into being with the idea of sending a force overseas to play a more active part in the war, and this no doubt affected the commitment of units to the battle in the Solomons. At a meeting of the Council of Chiefs in September 1942, they were informed by the Governor that further calls would be made for men and materials on the Fijian community. The Council agreed but expressed the wish that a detachment of Fijians should be sent overseas. Recruiting among the villages was stimulated with this as the objective, since years of garrison duty in Fiji led to ultimate boredom. Although at this date New Zealand was hard-pressed to provide sufficient men to bring 3 Division to full strength, she fulfilled the Fijian request for further key personnel—first for 58 officers and 214 noncommissioned officers, most of whom reached the Colony at the end of the year, and a further 45 officers in January 1943. Increased supplies of equipment were also sent from New Zealand, which was not always kept as fully informed of the activities of the brigade as was consistent with calls for aid. This was remarked by Puttick in March 1943, in his comment on a signal from Fiji asking for further supplies and equipment because of the immediate prospect of one

battalion and one commando unit leaving for the battle area. Puttick emphasised that New Zealand had not been consulted about any departure of troops from **Fiji** and that there was a danger that New Zealand might be compelled, through the pressure of events, to contribute resources in replacing men and equipment without having had any voice in the prior arrangements. This emphasised, also, the difficulties of commanding a small force within the framework of a large command. Wales was responsible to the Americans for operations, to New Zealand for supplies and some of his personnel replacements, and to the Governor of **Fiji** for the satisfactory employment of Fijian ground forces. However, the brigade was never committed as a formation. Negotiations to incorporate it in **3 Division** foundered when the Governor, Sir Philip Mitchell, who succeeded Luke in 1942, refused to allow the commitment of single battalions at different places. In a message to the New Zealand Government during these negotiations he explained that he would have to explain to the **Fiji** Legislative Council why the Colony had gone to great pains and expense to raise, train, and equip a brigade, only to break it up unused and scrap its ancillary services. The whole trend of the discussions between Governments and commanders which followed proposals to use the brigade with **3 Division**, suggested a desire by the American command to use the Fijians as scouts and small patrols in the jungle, and this they eventually did. Two battalions, the 1st and the 3rd, and two units of commandos served in the **Solomons** under American command but never under their own brigade command, and the ultimate despatch of these units to the battle area suggested a political desire to keep faith with the promises made earlier to the Fijian Council of Chiefs.

In reorganising the **Fiji** forces Wales disbanded the commandos, which emerged as new units organised into guerrilla groups. By 31 December 1942 his force had increased to 6519 all ranks. Peak strength was reached in August 1943, when the number increased to 8513, of whom 808 were New Zealanders. ¹ Changes of command, both of staff and units, were frequent, and there was a constant flow of returning sick and replacements passing between New Zealand and the Colony as

climate and conditions weeded out those not physically fitted for such arduous tasks. Wales insisted on hard training and placed emphasis on individuality and initiative in leadership. Indeed, one of the exercises he organised became memorable as a training exploit and indicated the excellent standard of physical endurance achieved by all members of his force. This required each battalion to march 100 miles in five days over the most rugged country and made exhausting demands on the men, who were required to climb a cliff face, cross rivers while harrassed by commandos, and traverse broken jungle tracks rising to more than 1000 feet. In February, the hottest time of the year in **Fiji, 1 Battalion** completed the exercise with the loss of only one man. Only a few months previously many of those men had been brought from distant villages, knowing neither the feel of boots on their feet nor the sight of rifles and accoutrements of war.

¹ By this time artillery units manning fixed coastal defence guns had been withdrawn from the Colony.

THE PACIFIC

II: GUERRILLAS IN THE JUNGLE

II: Guerrillas in the Jungle

The first Fijian force to undertake service in the **Solomons** was a special party of 23 guerrillas, commanded by Captain D. E. Williams, which was drawn from the Southern and Eastern Independent commando units formed as part of **3 Division** and retained in **Fiji** after the division's departure. Williams had Lieutenant D. Chambers as his second-in-command and Sergeants S. I. Heckler, L. V. Jackson, F. E. Williams, R. H. Morrison, and M. V. Kells as section leaders. They reached **Guadalcanal** via the **New Hebrides** and disembarked at Lunga Beach on 23 December 1942. The Japanese garrison was then still fighting desperately along the Matanikau River-Koli Point line, and the American command employed the Fijians to probe the wooded country behind the Japanese garrison. The first patrol, led by Heckler on Christmas Day, was uneventful, but on 28 December a second small patrol led by Sergeant Williams, acting as scouts for 182 US Infantry Regiment, wiped out a Japanese patrol at short range, and without loss or injury, on the left bank of the Lunga River.

This little action was fought out with grenades, rifles, and revolvers on sloping ground round the massive, tangled roots of a banyan tree, and was characteristic of swift individual action and thought which spelled victory in a type of warfare these men were fighting for the first time. As the remnants of the Japanese force fell back before the Americans towards Cape Esperance throughout January and February, patrols from Williams' small but resolute force moved ahead of the advance, producing vital intelligence and creating havoc among the Japanese, whose morale was born of desperation. Their work was of such value that Major-General Alexander M. Patch, island commander of **Guadalcanal**, asked for more Fijian troops similarly trained for patrol work in densely wooded country.

The guerrillas wore camouflaged American jungle suits, the green and blotched material of which was difficult to detect among the tangled growth. New Zealand army boots were preferred to the soft rubber-soled jungle boot, and had a longer life. Arms were varied and consisted of Owen guns, rifles, revolvers and hand grenades, and the men all carried sufficient rations to last them for at least five days. Because mobility was of the first importance, these guerrillas carried as little personal gear as possible, consequently they suffered in some places from the unmerciful attention of mosquitoes. Patrols sometimes worked only one hundred yards apart but were unaware of the existence of each other. Malaria, control of which was not strictly administered until later, played havoc with this special party during its brief but intense period of activity, and when the **Guadalcanal** campaign ended every member of it returned to **Fiji** with the exception of Captain Williams and Heckler, who transferred to units which followed them into the combat zone. Before departing, however, they trained a group of Solomon Islanders under Major M. Clemens, a member of the civilian administration, who moved forward from island to island with the advancing troops, both American and New Zealand.

The American request for more **Fiji** guerrilla troops was met by the despatch of two further units—1 Commando **Fiji** Guerrillas and 1 **Battalion**, **Fiji** Brigade Group, both of which landed on **Guadalcanal** on 19 April. Tripp commanded the guerrilla unit, which the American command designated South Sea Scouts. It was made up of 39 New Zealand officers and non-commissioned officers selected from the Southern and Eastern Independent Commandos, and 135 Fijians from the same units, organised into a headquarters of 24 all ranks and two companies of 75 all ranks, each commanded by a lieutenant. Each company was broken into three platoons, each of three sections, with a New Zealand sergeant in charge of each platoon and New Zealand corporals as section commanders. Twenty-eight Tongans, commanded by Lieutenant B. **Masefield**,¹ increased the strength of Tripp's unit to 203 before it went into action on **New Georgia**. Further training was carried out on **Guadalcanal** to accustom all ranks to the new territory in which

they were to fight. During this time two hundred Solomon Islanders were absorbed into the unit, and changes made in its organisation so that each platoon became a patrol, commanded by a New Zealand sergeant with a New Zealand corporal as his second-in-command. A unit patrol under Lieutenant P. M. **Harper**² reconnoitred the island of **San Cristobal**, but apart from obtaining valuable experience in the jungle no Japanese were encountered there.

By the time the Fijian patrols were committed to action on **New Georgia**, American units of **14 Corps** had established a bridgehead at **Zanana**, on the shores of the **Roviana Lagoon**, as a preliminary to an overland advance on their objective, the **Munda airfield**, instead of a more costly frontal attack across the water from **Rendova Island**, where a strong landing had been made on 30 June. From **Zanana** began the slow, difficult, and exhausting move forward through particularly dense forest country to the **Bariki River**, from which the final advance on the airfield, a distance of four miles, was to be made. The only lines of approach were along narrow, boggy native tracks.

Conditions and territory, the worst encountered up to that time, hindered all action. The **Tongans** under **Masefield** gave valuable assistance to American units, who found the jungle a barrier not easily overcome, either physically or mentally, since the narrow trails were stoutly defended by Japanese strongposts. Between **Zanana** and stretching for miles towards **Munda** was a swamp cut through by the outlets of the **Bariki River**, but another patrol of **Tongans**, led with courage and initiative by Sergeant **B. W. Ensor**,³ reconnoitred territory behind the Japanese lines

¹ **Lt B. Masefield**, m.i.d., Silver Star (US); born NZ 21 Apr 1920; killed in action 11 Jul 1943.

² **Lt P. M. Harper**, m.i.d. born NZ 18 May 1914; shepherd; killed in action 3 Aug 1943.

³ **Sgt B. W. Ensor**, m.i.d., Silver Star (US); born **Christchurch**, 11 Mar 1919; shepherd; killed in action 4 Aug 1943.

and discovered a good bridgehead site at Laiana, some distance nearer to the objective. This gave the American forces two bridgeheads on the Roviana Lagoon, divided by the swamp which ran for some distance inland into the jungle.

In planning his attack on **Munda**, Griswold gave his force ten days in which to capture the airfield, but it was not finally captured for 35 days, during which three divisions of American troops were committed to action. The Corps commander wished to employ both 1 Commando and 1 **Battalion** as scouts, but this scheme was abandoned because of Taylor's objection to committing his battalion piecemeal instead of as a whole unit. The scouting work therefore fell to the commandos under Tripp, and the battalion remained in the rear on the island of Florida until the following October.

The first task allotted to Tripp's unit was the clearance of islands in the Roviana Lagoon. This was little more than an exercise. Patrols were then allotted to units of 43 US Division, one with 169 Regiment on the right flank and others with 172 Regiment, both of which worked as combat teams. Fighting was confused and uncertain in the early stages of the costly struggle for **Munda airfield** as the division moved forward only a few hundred yards a day, clearing out nests of Japanese strongpoints and avoiding ambushes. On one occasion, when an American battalion ran out of food, it was supplied by the commandos, who transported rations and ammunition in native canoes up the Bariki River. Malaria and war nerves, brought on by close fighting under dense overhead cover, rapidly reduced the American strength.

Led by New Zealanders, the commando patrols acquitted themselves fearlessly in their first clashes with the enemy along the **Munda** and Lambeti trails, which led towards the airfield. Their information enabled American artillery to be used with reasonable precision on any

strongpoints encountered along the jungle trails. Masefield, a most able leader, was the first New Zealand casualty among the commandos. He had spent some days with four of his Tongans in enemy territory, reaching the Bairoko Trail and moving along it to the outskirts of the **Munda airfield**. He was unfortunately killed while patrolling ahead of the Americans, caught in their artillery barrage. Two of the Tongans were wounded by splinters from the shell which killed their leader. On 12 July, while patrolling about 100 yards ahead of an American platoon of 172 Regiment, Tripp and 23 of his men were cut off when the Japanese opened fire on the platoon. They had run against a defended enemy bivouac area, with several patrols established in the thick undergrowth. In the confused fighting which took place as the Fijian patrols tried to regain regimental headquarters, they were ordered to break into small groups and made their way to the rear under cover of darkness. Most of them eventually regained the main force the following day after personal adventures involving narrow escapes. Tripp, with some Tongans, encountered a patrol strongpoint. In a personal encounter he shot a Japanese, and was himself saved from injury when a cigarette lighter and cartridge clip deflected an enemy bullet, the force of which felled him. Before he regained his feet he accounted for another Japanese whose companions were firing at the fleeing Tongans. He then hid in the undergrowth. Under cover of darkness he made his way back to the American regiment, investigating enemy positions on the way.

Two other New Zealanders, Corporal A. M. J. Millar and Corporal W. F. Ashby, ¹ escaped by avoiding three enemy machine-gun posts and then got trapped in the line of fire of American artillery, which they eluded by moving only when the noise of the exploding shells drowned the sounds they themselves made. However, they destroyed an enemy machine-gun post on the way back. One of the Tongans who accompanied Tripp was knocked unconscious and woke to find himself stripped naked, with Japanese standing round him. He eluded them and returned to camp dressed in jungle leaves. The commando losses included their Tongan officer, 2 Lieutenant Henry Taliai, who was killed, and Sergeant W. G. **Conn**, ² a New Zealander, whose body was never

found, but the information obtained enabled the American forces to ambush the Japanese and establish, at Laiana, the most important bridgehead for the **Munda** operation. It was only three miles from the airfield.

After fourteen days of such action, which tried both nerves and stamina to the limits of human endurance, most of the commandos were withdrawn on 15 July for a rest at **Rendova**. Tripp remained at Laiana, and a patrol under Sergeant N. B. **MacKenzie**³ continued to work with 169 Regiment. Reinforcements under Captain Williams reached **Rendova** on 16 July from the rear base which had been established on **Guadalcanal**. The following day Williams, with 70 other ranks, reached the headquarters of 43 US Division

¹ **Lt A. M. J. Millar**; **Trentham Military Camp**; born **Wellington**, 27 Nov 1920; shop assistant. **S-Sgt W. F. Ashby**, m.i.d.; **Te Awamutu**; born **Te Awamutu**, 22 May 1916; milkman.

² **Sgt W. G. Conn**, m.i.d., Silver Star (US); born **Gisborne**, 24 Mar 1918; farmhand; killed in action 13 Jul 1943.

³ **Sgt N. B. MacKenzie**, m.i.d., Legion of Merit (US); **Hastings**; born **Auckland**, 22 Oct 1919; farmer.

in time to assist clerks, orderlies, and drivers who were manning their perimeter to drive off an enemy attack which developed after dusk in such close country that concentration was possible only a few yards away. On 18 July Harper relieved MacKenzie's patrol and joined 169 Regiment, taking Sergeant W. A. **Collins**¹ and thirteen Fijians with him through Japanese-held territory. All this time Japanese patrols had been creating havoc and disorganisation among the American units by infiltration in the darkness, and on his return from **Rendova**, to which he had gone for discussions, Tripp organised several patrols to work with American units, reducing each of them, from necessity, to one New Zealander and four Fijians.

Casualties, malaria, and nervous exhaustion so depleted 43 US Division that **37 Division** was committed to the battle on 23 July, making its headquarters north of the Laiana beach-head. The attack was then pushed forward, though slowly. Commandos worked ahead to points overlooking the airfield, and enemy concentrations were pinpointed so that artillery fire could be directed on them. Corporal J. H. E. **Duffield**² was killed while working with 161 US Regiment, and Collins, who was personally credited with killing nine Japanese and destroying more than one enemy machine-gun post, was also killed when within five yards of a machine-gun post on the Munda Trail he was attempting to put out of action.

At the end of July the third American division, the 25th, was committed in the final struggle for **Munda airfield**, the outskirts of which were reached by Corporal V. D. **Skilling**³ and his Fijians on 27 July. Japanese resistance weakened under the increased pressure of this fresh division, and by 2 August the enemy garrison was retreating to the coast at **Ondonga**, fiercely resisting as it went, in order to cover a general evacuation to **Kolombangara**.

During the final assault on the airfield, a period of three days marked by determined and ruthless fighting, valuable work was done by the commando patrols, but they lost heavily. Heckler's patrol reported the withdrawal of stretcher cases and supplies down the Bairoko Trail to the coast, and this information enabled the **United States** forces to shell and bomb the track. One of the tragedies of the campaign was the death of Harper, who was killed after volunteering to take food and water to an American detachment which was cut off on the Bairoko Trail. On the way he fought off an ambush, killing the Japanese and capturing their

¹ **Sgt W. A. Collins**, m.i.d., Silver Star (US); born **Palmerston North**, 28 Nov 1919; bacon-factory hand; killed in action 27 Jul 1943.

² **Cpl J. H. E. Duffield**, m.i.d.; born NZ 23 Apr 1914; labourer;

killed in action 26 Jul 1943.

³ **Sgt V. D. Skilling**, m.i.d.; born NZ 8 Nov 1916; farm labourer; died as result of accident, 24 Mar 1945.

machine gun which, unfortunately, the patrol carried on with them. As they approached the isolated detachment, Harper and an American were killed before they could reveal their identity to a distraught garrison which was unable to distinguish friend from foe. The following day Ensor was killed while taking part in an attack for which he and his patrol had made the necessary reconnaissance. His desire to see the result of his work cost him his life. Munda was finally occupied by the American forces on 5 August. It had taken three divisions five weeks to fight through eight miles of jungle and swamp.

The American divisional commanders paid generous tribute to the courage and enterprise of the Fijian guerrillas and their New Zealand leaders. Beightler, commander of 37 US Division, in a reference to the work of the non-commissioned officers of the commandos, said that their capacity for traversing the jungle both by day and by night for many miles was not equalled by any American troops. The 43rd Division's commander reported at the conclusion of the operations that 'During the entire period in which South Pacific Scouts were attached to this division, they patrolled constantly to our front and flanks and carried out special small patrols at our request. The work of these scouts undoubtedly was of great aid in the campaign and played a definite part in the capture of Munda airfield.'

These tributes were both modest and just. The New Zealand officers and non-commissioned officers exercised a steadying influence on the less-experienced American troops, many of them seeing action for the first time. Others had fought through the Guadalcanal campaign and were battle weary. Their losses were heavy from sickness, and malaria took its toll of exhausted men. Information obtained by forward patrols, which were never free from danger, was of immense value in giving the

exact site of Japanese bivouac and defence areas, so that artillery fire could be directed on them with precision. As in other campaigns, the only reliable information available was obtained by men creeping through the jungle, since dense cover prevented any accurate observation from the air.

The commando unit returned to **Guadalcanal** on 12 August for rest and reorganisation, for after six weeks in the forward zone their relatively small force had lost 11 killed and 20 wounded. In the meantime American units continued pressing the Japanese and moved forward to **Vella Lavella**. On 31 August 50 commandos under Tripp landed on the island to join the 35 Regimental Combat Team, which was already there, and undertake reconnaissance work in the north of the island. Tripp took one party of 16 men up the east coast to Lambu Lambu; Captain Williams, with a patrol of 20, followed the west coast, and then moved inland along old native tracks to a site in the jungle where coastwatchers, under Josselyn, were hidden with their wireless equipment; Graham, of 3 Division Intelligence, also reconnoitred Japanese tracks on the west coast of the island. These three groups worked through country later cleared of the enemy by 14 Brigade, but they made no actual contact with the Japanese since their task was solely one of investigation, recording the movement and dispersion of the enemy garrison.

These patrols were recalled to **Barakoma** on 18 September, the day on which **3 Division** took over command of **Vella Lavella** from the American garrison. While waiting here they were visited by Wales, during the course of his tour of Fijian units in the forward zone prior to handing over his command before returning to New Zealand. He was succeeded on 12 September by Brigadier G. Dittmer, DSO, MBE, MC,¹ after commanding the **Fiji Military Forces** for 14 months, during which he moulded them into a highly efficient organisation. Malaria had taken its toll, and many of the commandos were too ill to undertake further patrol work. The whole unit was therefore withdrawn from **Vella Lavella** on 25 September and returned to **Guadalcanal**, where it remained until 5

October and then moved to **Florida Island**. Brigade Headquarters, however, in the interests of morale and health, decided to withdraw the unit from the combat zone and replace it with another group. In November 1 Commando returned to **Fiji** and was finally disbanded on 27 May 1944.

The active service life of 2 Commando **Fiji** Guerrillas, commanded by Major P. G. Ellis, was a brief and unspectacular one. The unit was made up of 38 New Zealanders, 88 Fijians selected from the Northern, Southern, and Eastern Independent Commandos, all of which ceased to exist with the formation of the new unit, and 22 Tongans who joined the unit in November 1943. Training in **Fiji**, with which Ellis was associated from the inception of the Commandos, had hardened the men and made them efficient. Further training in the jungle was carried out on **Florida Island**, which the unit reached on 24 November and took over the camp occupied by 1 Commando. Patrols were also despatched to **Santa Isabel Island**, which was declared free of

¹ **Brig G. Dittmer**, CBE, DSO, MC, m.i.d.; **Auckland**; born Maharashtra, 4 Jun 1893; Regular soldier; **Auckland Regt** 1914–19 (OC 1 NZ Entrenching Bn); CO 28 NZ (Maori) Bn, Jan 1940–Feb 1942; commanded 1 Inf Bde Gp (in NZ) Apr 1942–Aug 1943; commanded 1 Div, Aug 1942–Jan 1943; commanded **Fiji Military Forces** and **Fiji** Inf Bde Gp, Sep 1943–Nov 1945; Camp Commandant, **Papakura Military Camp**, 1946; Commandant, **Central Military District**, 1946–48.

the enemy. Ellis moved his unit forward to **Empress Augusta Bay** to come under command of 14 US Corps, landing there on 8 February 1944, and was delegated to undertake patrol work beyond the American perimeter. When the Japanese attack developed on 6 March, 2 Commando was given the task of defending 21 US Evacuation Hospital but resumed active patrolling on 14 March. In April, however, the unit was withdrawn, as its work was overlapping with that of 1 and 3 (**Fiji**) Battalions, which were also working with **14 Corps** in the **Empress Augusta Bay** theatre. Most of the officers and men of 2 Commando

transferred to the battalions and worked with them on Bougainville. The remainder returned to Fiji, where the unit was finally disbanded on 31 May 1944.

THE PACIFIC

III: BATTALIONS MOVE TO THE SOLOMONS

III: Battalions Move to the Solomons

Almost three years after its formation, **1 Battalion, Fiji Military Forces**, sailed for the **Solomons** on 15 April 1943 in the USS *President Hayes*. Half the officers and many of the non-commissioned officers were New Zealanders, three of them former instructors lent to **Fiji** in November 1939. The battalion, commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel J. B. K. Taylor, who had served with the New Zealand Division in Egypt and **France** during the 1914–18 War and later joined the **Fiji** administration, reached **Guadalcanal** on 19 April and occupied a camp at Kukumbona. On 8 May, after the American command had complied with Taylor's desire not to break up his unit into small groups for action in **New Georgia**, the battalion moved to a more agreeable camp site in the island of Florida. It remained there for five months, practising jungle tactics and landing exercises and carrying out such routine tasks as beach patrols and coastwatching.

Because of the increasing number of **Fiji** units in the forward zone and difficulties in obtaining particular stores and equipment, some of which took months to reach them, a forward base was established at Tenaru, on **Guadalcanal**, to service the battalion and the two commando units. The system of obtaining the necessary supplies from the American units to which they were attached did not prove satisfactory to the bulk of the troops, and it was felt that the increasing numbers of the force reaching the combat area warranted the establishment of a base to serve their needs. Lieutenant P. E. Holmes was the first quartermaster on whose shoulders fell the task of organisation. He was followed in December by Lieutenant F. G. K. Gilchrist. The original site was unsatisfactory and the unit's early life disastrous. Soon after



RAID BY 30 NZ INFANTRY BATTALION ON NISSAN ISLAND
A mortar crew bombing Japanese barges concealed on the shore

Raid by 30 NZ Infantry Battallion on Nissan Island
A mortar crew bombing Japanese barges concealed on the shore



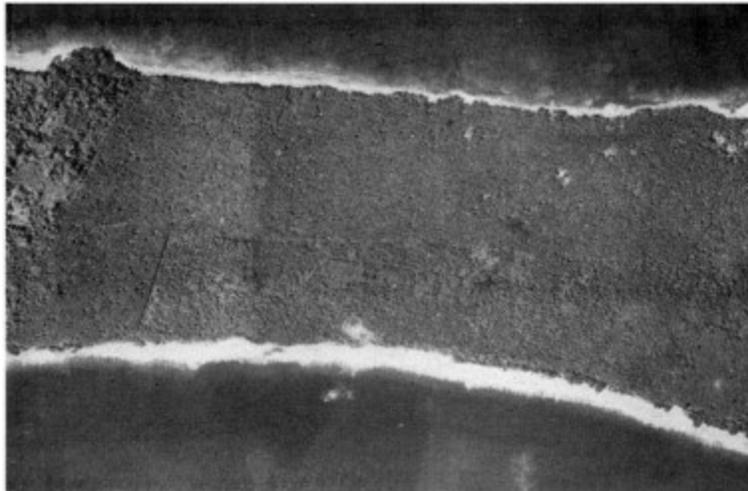
WOUNDED OF 30 NZ INFANTRY BATTALION WAITING TO
BE TAKEN OFF NISSAN ISLAND

Wounded of 30 NZ Batallion waiting to be taken off Nissan Island

26 FIELD COMPANY NEW ZEALAND ENGINEERS FORMING A
ROAD THROUGH THE JUNGLE OF NISSAN ISLAND



26 Field Company NZ Engineers forming a road though the jungle of Nissan Island



THE TANGALAN PLANTATION FROM 10,000 FEET BEFORE THE
AIRSTRIPS WERE CONSTRUCTED

The Tangalan plantation from 10,000 feet before the airstrips were constructed

14 AND 18 RNZAF FIGHTER SQUADRONS LAND ON THE
FIGHTER STRIP AT NISSAN A FEW WEEKS LATER



14 and 18 RNZAF Fighter Squadrons land on the Fighter strip at Nissan a few weeks later



FIRST COMMANDO FIJI GUERRILLAS IN THE SOLOMONS

First Commando **Fiji** guerillas in the **Solomons**



OFFICERS' MESS, FIJI COMMANDOS, Teneru, Guadalcanal (from left to right) Lt F. G. K. Gilchrist, Capt D. E. Williams, 2 Lt P. E. Holmes, Major C. W. H. Tripp, 2 Lt L. R. Taylor

Officers' mess, **Fiji** commandos, Teneru, **Guadalcanal** (from left to right) **Lt F. G. K. Gilchrist, Capt D. E. Williams, 2 Lt P. E. Holmes, Major C. W. H. Tripp, 2 Lt L. R. Taylor**

the camp was established, a Japanese aeroplane crashed 300 yards away and damaged tents and equipment. Two floods inundated the area, and then, on Thanksgiving Day 1943, an American ammunition dump a few hundred yards away caught fire and showered the camp with flaming fragments and sections of hot metal, which cut tents to pieces and set fire to store buildings. The unit then moved to Kukumbona on hills overlooking the sea, remaining there until the arrival of Captain M. P. Whatman in March 1944. A final site for the base was found in buildings vacated by **24 Field Ambulance of 3 Division** when it moved forward to **Green Islands** in February. Here the forward base remained to serve all

Fiji units in the **Solomons** until the end of their operational period.

On 8 October 1943, following the return of 1 Commando from the forward combat zone, **1 Battalion** embarked on its first task, patrol work on the island of **Kolombangara**, to which the remnants of the Japanese garrisons from **New Georgia** and the surrounding islands had withdrawn on the first stages of their retirement to **Bougainville**. American units of **14 Corps** had already crossed to the island and occupied Vila airfield on the southern coast, which they found deserted, but some uncertainty existed regarding the more mountainous north. On 11 October the battalion disembarked and occupied a bivouac area round the airfield, combing the coast and the jungle, only to find that the Japanese evacuation had taken place a week previously.

Units of **3 Division** had by this time completed their task of consolidating **Vella Lavella**, only seven miles away from **Kolombangara** across the Vella Gulf. After a brief period of garrison work, **1 Battalion** moved forward to **Empress Augusta Bay, Bougainville**, disembarking there from landing craft on 21 December. Taylor and his adjutant, Captain M. M. N. Corner, flew up the previous day from **Munda** for consultation with the American command, and on the evening of 20 December the battalion commander was injured during an enemy bombing raid on the American perimeter. He was succeeded by his second-in-command, Major G. T. Upton, whose arrival in **Fiji** in 1940 had been delayed a month when the **Niagara** in which he was travelling was sunk by an enemy mine outside Auckland Harbour on 19 June. He was promoted Lieutenant-Colonel, and commanded the battalion throughout the whole of its combat life.

The battalion now found itself a part of 14 US Corps, which had taken over the perimeter at **Empress Augusta Bay** from **1 Marine Amphibious Corps** on 15 December, after the Marines had extended and consolidated the area.

The conquest of the whole of the large island of **Bougainville** was never considered in the overall **Pacific** strategy by Halsey and his staff,

nor by MacArthur. However, a hold on the island was essential for the construction of airfields to cover further forward moves and to bring enemy air and naval bases in the **New Britain- New Ireland** and **Caroline Islands** regions within range of Allied aircraft. **Empress Augusta Bay** was selected for this next by-passing movement, and because it also provided an anchorage for a minor naval base. The Japanese command was deceived and mystified by activity promoted by American strategy which preceded the landing at **Empress Augusta Bay**. In addition to the landing by New Zealand elements in the Treasury Group and the diversionary raid by American troops on **Choiseul**, patrols were put ashore from submarines in the Buin and Shortland areas during October to confuse the issue. During October, also, aircraft under Brigadier-General Field Harris, commander of air forces in the Northern Solomons, averaged four attacks a day on Japanese concentrations and installations at **Kahili**, **Kara**, **Ballale**, **Buka** and **Kieta**. Altogether they flew 3259 sorties, for which aircraft of the **Royal New Zealand Air Force** squadrons stationed in **New Georgia** frequently acted as close cover.

All this activity had the desired effect. The Japanese commander moved men, artillery, and heavy equipment from the mainland of **Bougainville** to the **Shortland Islands** and to the south of **Bougainville** itself in anticipation of landings there. A naval task force under Rear-Admiral Frederick C. Sherman, built round the two carriers *Saratoga* and *Princeton*, held off any surface interference during the actual **Empress Augusta Bay** landing, which took place on twelve miles of beaches, some of them so unsuitable that 86 valuable landing craft were stranded during the operation. Marines landed on 1 November and established themselves in a perimeter after bitter fighting in country almost as aggressive as the enemy. Behind the beaches wild tangles of jungle covered broken and swampy ground cut by rivers, much of which became lagoons as the rising tide blocked the silted outlets and inundated large tracts of the foreshore. In areas devoid of trees, coarse native grasses and reeds higher than the men themselves created a barrier as formidable as the jungle.

The original beach-heads were extended throughout November and December until, by March, the perimeter ran roughly four miles along the coast and three miles inland, but it was overlooked by a series of low foothills shelving down from high mountain ranges which form the backbone of **Bougainville**. Patrols worked beyond the perimeter and gradually pushed out until the extreme boundaries were the Laruma River on the north and the Torokina River on the south, both of which issued from gorges in the Crown Prince Range. Strongposts in the foothills were held by American troops, and a 75-yards-wide strip of country had been cleared round the perimeter and partly protected with belts of barbed wire and land mines and covered with mortars and machine guns. Beyond the perimeter rose the 6560-foot crown of Mount Bagana, a steaming volcano which could occasionally be seen through the layers of storm clouds which swathed it.



The island of Bougainville, where Fiji units fought as part of 14th United States Corps. Severe fighting took place in dense jungle beyond a perimeter first established between the Laruma and Torokina Rivers and afterwards extended beyond them.

The island of **Bougainville**, where **Fiji** units fought as part of 14th **United States Corps**. Severe fighting took place in dense jungle beyond a perimeter first established between the Laruma and **Torokina Rivers** and afterwards extended beyond them

Inside this giant bite of country, American engineers and naval construction battalions, working with the speed and precision which made them essential to any **Pacific** advance, constructed three airfields and a network of roads linking camps, dumps, and troop concentrations, as well as draining as much of the swamp lands as they could. It was a gigantic undertaking, second only to that on **Guadalcanal**. From the

perimeter former native tracks radiated along the foreshore and into the mountains, following up river valleys to the opposite coast.

When the **Fiji** Battalion landed, American forces had established road blocks on these trails to prevent any surprise attacks from the main Japanese forces occupying the south and north-east coasts of **Bougainville**, with their principal concentrations round Buin, **Kahili**, and Kieta. The most disputed of these tracks was the Numa Numa Trail, which led through the mountains from the gorge of the Laruma River. Air observation by aeroplanes based on the **Torokina** and **Piva** airstrips, though valuable, was unreliable in country where ground movement could not be accurately discerned, so that all vital intelligence was obtained from patrols working through the rough country beyond the limits of the perimeter. Because of the desire to obtain as much intelligence information as possible without revealing their own strength, patrols were at first instructed not to fight unless they were forced to do so. Enemy patrols, on similar missions, worked down from the forest-clad hills towards the perimeter, so that these alert opposing groups, creeping through the jungle, continually tried to ambush each other and frequently succeeded. Lieutenant M. F. **Fantham**¹ lost his life in one such ambush in February, after surviving earlier action.

Active patrolling by small groups from 1 **Fiji** Battalion began on Christmas Day in country as dense as any in the **Solomons**. First blood went to 2 Lieutenant N. N. MacDonald, whose patrol accounted for seven Japanese. Late in December loyal natives reported concentrations of Japanese along the north-east coast at Numa Numa and Tenekau, 40 miles across the island opposite **Empress Augusta Bay**, and in order to confirm these reports the battalion embarked on its most important undertaking, a reconnaissance in strength of the enemy area.

The task was allotted to a reinforced company of six officers and 198 other ranks under the command of Captain R. O. Freeman, which set out on 29 December for Ibu, a native village 30 miles beyond the perimeter and 1700 feet up in the dense forests of the Crown Prince Range. The route led along the Numa Numa

¹ **Lt M. F. Fantham; born NZ 28 Aug 1919; bank clerk; killed in action 6 Feb 1944.**

Trail, which began at the Piva stream inside the perimeter and followed the gorge of the Laruma River into the mountains. Its tortuous path, through ravines and over broken country, rose from stifling valleys where not a breath of wind stirred the heavy air, to chilly highlands of continual drenching rain, for this area is continually swept by thunderstorms of great violence. When the outpost was finally established at Ibu five days after leaving the perimeter, the men in their thin tropical uniforms suffered at that altitude from rain and cold. Because of the danger of ambush in the forest the men travelled as lightly as possible, and supplies were dropped to Freeman and his men from the air by parachutes gay with the colours which indicated their contents. Four large Douglas aircraft based in the perimeter spilled down the first supplies on the day of arrival, 2 January. This also helped to overcome the problem of warmth at night, for the men wrapped themselves in the parachutes and were able to sleep.

Ibu, 30 miles inside enemy territory, was immediately developed as a strongpoint. Road blocks were established along the approaches and patrols fanned out along the jungle trails, some of them reaching the north-east coast and returning with information of vital importance to the Corps commander, who was thus able to harass the enemy by directing air attacks on his concentrations and bivouac areas. The Japanese, aware of the activities of the patrols based on Ibu, frequently tried to ambush them. Lieutenant G. A. Thompson and Lieutenant Fantham, leaders of one strong patrol, fell into such a trap but fought their way out, Thompson spending the night under a fallen tree and escaping in the early morning by wriggling to a river bank, where he was helped by friendly natives.

Because of its value in supplying information, Griswold decided to retain the Ibu outpost for longer than at first anticipated, but the

problem of evacuating the sick and wounded, which would have taken several precarious days over mountain trails, had first to be overcome. Upton and officers of Corps Headquarters visited the outpost early in January and decided that the problem could be overcome by carving a small airfield out of the forest. This was soon accomplished, using a few axes dropped from the air and the garrison's entrenching tools and bayonets to clear an area of ground 200 yards long by 50 yards wide. Every available man worked throughout the daylight hours, and on the third day a small reconnaissance plane landed and took off again without mishap. A regular but hazardous service began the following day from this tiny strip, so dwarfed by the forest around it that it looked like a pencil from the air. Machines landed up the hill and took off down the slope. It was named the Kameli airstrip in honour of the first Fijian killed on the Ibu expedition and was an example of the ingenuity, enterprise, and spirit of the battalion.

Fortified by this means of communication, the work of the patrols went on through January, penetrating into the heart of enemy territory. The action of one such patrol, audaciously led by **2 Lieutenant B. I. Dent**,¹ who was killed in a subsequent action, ultimately found its way into American army textbooks as a model of jungle patrol work and determined leadership. It took place near the native village of Pipipaia, far beyond the outpost, when **Dent's** platoon was fired on by Japanese snipers in trees. These were disposed of, only to find that the patrol was close beside an enemy bivouac area. After fifteen minutes of brisk action, during which two machine guns were silenced and an unspecified number of Japanese shot down, **Dent's** sergeant suggested a temporary cease-fire. This ruse worked. When the Japanese emerged from cover in the belief that the Fijians were retiring, the waiting patrol mowed them down, concentrating on an old tin shed, in and out of which they ran confusedly. **Dent** and his men killed 47 Japanese without loss to themselves before they retired.

Intelligence reports at the end of January continued to indicate the massing of enemy strength in and around Ibu, despite the work of the

patrols. Reinforcements under Captain J. W. Gosling were therefore despatched from the perimeter on 3 February to strengthen the garrison to ten officers and 411 other ranks. Then, on 8 February, Upton flew out to take over command, but by that time the Ibu garrison was almost surrounded by enemy moving in from both **Buka** and Buin. Such was his concern at the gathering enemy strength, for 600 of them were reported in high country at Vivei, well behind his small force, that Upton feared all escape routes back to the perimeter via the Laruma River would be cut off. On 14 February, in accordance with a prior arrangement, he requested **14 Corps** headquarters to establish a road block to keep the escape route open.

A strong combined patrol from 129 US Infantry Regiment and 1 **Fiji** Battalion set out from the perimeter, but was driven back soon after it entered the rough hill country towards Sisivie and Tokua, two native villages which gave their names to the forest tracks leading to the garrison area from the rear. Almost simultaneously the Japanese began their attacks on road blocks

¹ **Lt B. I. Dent**, MC; born **Timaru**, 14 Nov 1921; student; killed in action 25 Mar 1944.

established along the tracks covering the Ibu post. Upton decided to evacuate the position and withdraw his force down the Ibu-Sisivie trail, which would bring him to the Laruma River and the Numa Numa Trail and so into the perimeter. Early on the morning of 15 February he despatched Corner from the outpost with the first section of the garrison, which included 120 native carriers with ammunition and radio equipment, and 100 native women and children from mountain villages who feared enemy reprisals. Upton followed at midday, leaving Gosling with a small rear party to cover him and join up later.

Meanwhile Corner found his way blocked by determined Japanese attacks on the road posts and retired along the trail he had just traversed, taking up a defensive position at a ravine which offered the

only good natural barrier. He was joined there later in the afternoon with the main force under Upton, who was confronted with a disturbing situation. All escape routes were blocked by the Japanese, who greatly outnumbered him, and no help was available from American or **Fiji** units from the perimeter. He had little time to decide how to get 400-odd men and 200 natives over a mountain range and down to the perimeter unknown to the Japanese, who were now pressing the battalion patrols blocking the tracks along which Upton's force was extended. A Fijian sergeant, Usaia Sotutu, who had been a missionary on **Bougainville** for twenty years, saved the day. He remembered an old, disused track near the ravine and led the battalion along it, carefully camouflaging the entrance where it branched off the main trail the force had just used. The men began to move late on the night of 15 February, but the inky darkness in the dim recesses of the jungle and the pouring rain forced a halt until daybreak.

Gosling and his party were guided in that night by Corner, in such darkness that each man was instructed to hold the equipment of the man in front of him. A check of all ranks revealed that 25 were still missing, including a section under Sergeant B. D. Pickering which had manned a road block while the main party escaped. They rejoined Upton next day, after fighting their way through the jungle, as did all other small groups from the battalion. On 19 February the force reached the coast intact and with only one man wounded. In those four days, travelling slowly and with the utmost difficulty, the Ibu force climbed 5000 feet through dense forest drenched with rain, and carried arms and equipment, which included Vickers guns, 3-inch mortars, and food for more than 600 people—soldiers and natives. ‘The success of the battalion at the Ibu outpost was one of the finest examples of troop leading that has ever come to my attention’, Griswold generously recorded in his report from Corps Headquarters.

The massing of these enemy troops in the neighbourhood of Ibu was a prelude to an attempt to drive the American forces off the island in a co-ordinated attack from both land and sea. Intercepted signals gave

Corps Headquarters ample warning to prepare for this attack, which began on 9 March with an assault on the perimeter in what became known as the 'Easter action'. All possibility of air and naval support from the sea, however, had been dissipated by the capture and occupation of **Green Islands** by 3 New Zealand Division on 15 February, a forward move which had immobilised **Rabaul**. Some dents were made in the perimeter defences, but American artillery, both field and anti-aircraft, boxed in the gaps in the wire through which the Japanese were attacking, and counter-attacks restored the line. At night battery searchlights and the headlights of tanks were directed on to low-lying clouds, which deflected the beams into ravines and valleys below so that any Japanese who moved there were revealed as targets. By 17 March 700 Japanese dead were counted before they were buried by bulldozers. During this action **1 Battalion** remained in reserve behind 132 US Infantry Regiment of the **Americal Division**, one of the three American divisions holding the perimeter, but during lulls in the intermittent fighting, which continued for some time afterwards, battalion patrols searched areas outside the perimeter for snipers and infiltration groups.

On 23 March the Japanese attacked again, but with decreasing violence, and once more the American line was restored by vigorous counter-attacks. Immediately action died away, **1 Battalion** began active patrolling outside the perimeter, usually moving with about 200 men from two companies extended on a 500-yard front, combing the jungle, brushing aside any small opposing groups, or indicating enemy positions for attention by artillery or aircraft. It was the kind of fighting requiring initiative and dash, for which the battalion was noted. On 25 March, during a battalion sweep in front of the sector held by 129 US Regiment which developed into an all-day engagement, **Dent** was killed and the unit lost one of its most promising young officers. The Japanese did not go easily. They stubbornly contested the pressure of battalion patrols along the Numa Numa Trail as they were forced back to the mountains.

Daily encounters developed into sullen actions, which often required the support of artillery and mortars before nests of Japanese could be

driven from the protection of splaying tree roots in which their defence posts were concealed. This work continued until 1 April, when patrols declared the area clear between the Numa Numa and Logging Trails, which ran into the valley of the Laruma River, on the left of the perimeter. Unburied dead and deserted stores and equipment indicated a retreat under cover of darkness. During one of its last patrols in this area, a Fijian soldier reported missing and killed three days previously was found still alive in a deserted Japanese dugout. He was Private Esivoresi Kete, a virile member of A Company, whose remarkable powers of endurance kept him alive. During an attack on an enemy strongpost he was shot through the head, the bullet entering behind the right ear and coming out below the left eye. When the Japanese found him they took his clothing and his rations, bayoneted him twice in the chest and once through an arm and believed him dead. The area in which he lay was thrice shelled by American artillery after the patrol to which he belonged retired. But he still lived, and in a period of semi-consciousness he crawled into the dugout in which he was found. Kete completely recovered and returned to his home on the island of Kandavu.

When the Japanese attacked the perimeter in March, **RNZAF** aircraft had moved from **New Georgia** and were stationed at **Torokina** with American formations. Because enemy artillery was able to reach the airstrips and endanger them, aircraft were flown each night for safety to **Green Islands**, where the strip was already operating, to **Stirling Island** in the Treasury Group, and to **Ondonga** in the **New Georgia** Group, returning to **Torokina** each morning to begin daily operations and aid the ground troops. All available New Zealand airmen were organised into three companies to assist with the defence of the airfields in the reserve area, and the commanders, Pilot Officer F. J. J. Angus, Flying Officer J. M. Molloy, and Pilot Officer E. D. B. Bignall, with a reserve company under Flight Lieutenant R. B. Watson, were allotted to positions covering the junction of the Piva Road and Marine Drive, two main roads leading to the **Torokina** strip.

Late in March, while **1 Battalion** was engaged on extensive patrols,

other **Fiji** units reached **Empress Augusta Bay**: they were **3 Battalion**, command of which passed to Lieutenant-Colonel F. W. Voelcker, MC,¹ on 22 December 1942, **1 Docks Company**, and

¹ **Lt-Col F. W. Voelcker**, CBE, DSO, MC, Bronze Star (US); **Samoa**; born **London**, 9 Oct 1896; King's Shropshire Light Infantry, 1914–28; CO Reserve Bn, **Fiji**, May 1941–Jan 1942; 34 Bn, Jan–Jun 1942; 3 Bn, **Fiji** Infantry Regt, Dec 1942–Sep 1945; Administrator of **Western Samoa**, 1946, and High Commissioner, 1947–49.

Advanced Brigade Headquarters under Major J. R. **Griffen**.¹ They went ashore on 24 March, and officers and non-commissioned officers from the battalion immediately joined those of **1 Battalion** for experience. By 27 March the battalion's first patrol began operations, searching broken country for three days between the coast and Laruma River. At the same time the rest of the battalion was sent to clear a hill feature dominating a sector of the Numa Numa Trail known as OP9, but in face of determined opposition the force withdrew so that artillery fire could be directed against it. Even after an artillery barrage the enemy could not be dislodged, and finally a composite force consisting of two battalions from 37 US Division and 1 **Fiji** Battalion was brought in, only to find that the Japanese had withdrawn farther into the mountains.

When the force withdrew, **1 Battalion** remained in the area until 6 April, after which **3 Battalion** returned, took over, and combed the Java Creek-Laruma River area. Among the graves discovered in this area was that of Major-General Saito, who had been killed in the previous week's fighting and probably inspired the resistance. Battalion patrols moved in the wake of dive-bombing and artillery fire, with instructions to count the enemy dead, pick up any survivors and obtain all the intelligence information possible, but only one wounded Japanese was found. When this search was complete, **3 Battalion** moved to its next assignment, the left-flank protection of an American force attacking Japanese detachments entrenched on a ridge overlooking the Saua River, on the

southern rim of the perimeter, in country where bitter fighting had taken place soon after the original landing.

The East-West Trail, leading south from the Piva River and crossing the **Torokina** and Saua Rivers, cut through this area, well inland past Hill 600 and Hellzapoppin Ridge, two familiar and disputed features. Here the battalion spent a week, its patrols clashing almost daily with small enemy forces, during one of which Lieutenant O. W. **Stratford**² was killed. Enemy attempts to ambush the Fijian patrols and isolate them by cutting the battalion supply line were constantly avoided.

At the end of a week's continuous activity, patrols reported that the enemy had moved into the valleys from the higher country, and artillery fire was directed on them, forcing them to retire still further beyond the perimeter. Road blocks established on both the East-West and Waggon Trails were taken over by **1 Battalion** on 19 April to permit **3 Battalion** to return for a rest.

¹ **Maj J. R. Griffen**, MBE, ED; **Eastbourne**; born **Wanganui**, 26 Apr 1905; school teacher; Brigade Major, **Fiji Military Forces**.

² **Lt O. W. Stratford**; born **Auckland**, 6 Jul 1919; motor salesman; killed in action 14 Apr 1944.

Forward elements of **1 Battalion** immediately advanced these road blocks and continued deeper into the enemy territory. On 21 April Lieutenant D. N. **Mowatt**¹ showed resourcefulness and initiative in handling his platoon in one of the frequent situations calling for such qualities. He and his men were attached to a composite force ordered to sweep across the Saua River and then down to the coast to investigate enemy lines of communication. It was country thick with tall reeds and undergrowth and cut by tracks. As his forward section reached the beach it was attacked on both flanks, but the rear sections swung into action and killed 20 Japanese. An American platoon followed, fighting its way through to the beach to establish a bridgehead, which it did under cover

of Mowatt's men. Mowatt afterwards skilfully withdrew his platoon, section by section, without loss, and landing craft uplifted the little force, which had accounted for 46 Japanese. Other patrols assisted an American force to clear two prominent features, Hill 150 and Hill 350, after which the battalion withdrew to the perimeter, where the Governor, Sir Philip Mitchell, visited all **Fiji** units and informed them that they would soon be returning to the Colony.

Meanwhile **14 Corps** commander decided to push the Japanese farther back from the perimeter as they were still able to reach the airfields with field guns sited on high country, and on 29 May **1 Battalion** moved back into the jungle to relieve American units holding posts in the foothills along the Laruma River. There, for sixteen days, working from a base established in the Doyabie River valley, strong patrols again combed country as rough as any encountered outside the perimeter. Almost daily they encountered enemy posts established to prevent any Allied movement through the mountains along the Numa Numa Trail, which had been widened to enable native carrying parties to maintain the Japanese during their attack on the perimeter during the Easter action.

Meritorious work was accomplished by Lieutenant A. P. **Spittal**² and Lieutenant T. C. **Scott**³ in daring reconnaissance raids to pinpoint enemy positions for the supporting artillery. Arms, equipment, and documents captured by the battalion were a valuable indication of the enemy's condition. Solomon Island natives carried food and supplies to the battalion during this period of action, which ended with a return to the perimeter on 13 June. Preparations for departure continued through the next fortnight, and the

¹ **Capt D. N. Mowatt**, MC; Hunterville; born Waikari, 11 Jun 1909; school teacher.

² **Capt A. P. Spittal**, m.i.d.; Waitara; born **Lyttelton**, 25 Feb 1914; school teacher.

³ Lt T. C. Scott, m.i.d.; Timaru; born Timaru, 26 Apr 1920; salesman.

battalion sailed from **Bougainville** on 26 July. It had been engaged from 21 December to 13 June almost continuously, and claimed to have killed 418 Japanese and captured eight prisoners, with the loss of 33 killed in action and died of wounds and sickness and 64 wounded.

While **1 Battalion** was engaged on its final task on **Bougainville**, **3 Battalion** moved south on 31 May with instructions to eliminate enemy gun positions near the mouth of the Jaba River on the southern extremity of the perimeter. The force, supported by American artillery and engineers, moved south across **Empress Augusta Bay** in two LCTs protected by gunboats, and from a beach-head established without opposition at dawn, pushed patrols out along the Jaba Trail. The country here was difficult, and progress was hampered by tidal swamps and inland marshes cutting through the coastal strip. In places dense jungle gave way to more open tree-covered country of tall reeds and native grasses. On the fifth day the battalion reached the Maririci River, established a perimeter, and repulsed an enemy attack. Two days later, moving slowly, it reached the Mawaraka Trail along the coast which led inland to the Japanese headquarters at Mosigetta, a native village surrounded by plantations, from which well-protected trails radiated to mountain and coast.

During those seven days the battalion gathered up a considerable quantity of equipment, including two 75-millimetre guns, two 47-millimetre and two 37-millimetre, and destroyed quantities of stores and equipment. As the main force of the battalion moved along the coast and inland, other patrols moved up and down the coast, increasing their mobility by using small landing craft to establish beach-heads, and investigated any signs of enemy activity in the locality. When a gunboat arrived off the coast to support the ground force Japanese gunners opened fire on it, thus revealing the site of their 6-inch gun to the

spotting aircraft which was operating with **3 Battalion**. Dive-bombers from the perimeter attacked the gun site. After further brushes with the enemy the battalion was recalled to the perimeter on 6 June, where it continued training in readiness for other tasks to be undertaken after the departure of **1 Battalion**.

On 21 June the battalion was again despatched to the Mawaraka area, with the dual task of destroying the Japanese headquarters at Mosigetta and aiding Solomon Island natives who had obtained arms and ammunition and were engaged in a limited resistance movement in country at the headwaters of the Jaba River. As on the former occasion, Voelcker's battalion was strengthened by the addition of American artillery, engineer and chemical mortar units, and accompanied by a tank liaison officer, as it was anticipated that if the attack progressed satisfactorily tanks could be usefully employed. Once more the force moved south along the coast in landing craft to the mouth of the Jaba River. There was some confusion in getting the force ashore under cover of a smoke screen, as the wind changed, blowing the smoke back on the landing craft. E Company went in at the wrong point and had to be taken off again, but fortunately there was no opposition. After establishing a bridgehead, patrols moved out to secure with road blocks the Jaba Trail, which ran inland to the foothills. Late that same afternoon 100 natives who had escaped from the Japanese were brought in, giving the battalion information on enemy dispositions, but in view of later events this seems to have been inaccurate and of little use.

Maps of the region, although supplemented with air photographs, were incomplete and often led to confusion in the identification of rivers and tidal lagoons along the coast, most of which closely resembled each other. Early on the morning of 22 June three companies of the battalion moved farther south, with the intention of landing at Tavera River, three miles beyond the Jaba, leaving one company to protect the supporting artillery at the original beach-head. Once again there was confusion and the force landed instead at the Maririci, still farther to the south in enemy territory and within reach of Mawaraka. Here

another perimeter was established for further operations. Behind the beach tidal lagoons and swamps of the river deltas made the country almost impassable, but a trail led along the coast, following the sandhills and a narrow belt of reasonably firm foreshore. The Japanese ranged on the beach-head, but fortunately any shells burst in the tops of the surrounding trees. At daybreak on the morning of 23 June, D Company continued to move south along the beach to Mawaraka Point, a small feature jutting out towards an off-shore reef and covering a village of that name which was occupied by Japanese. Good progress was made until the company began to cross an open stretch of country, which unhappily was covered by Japanese emplacements on the point. A supporting barrage for the advance was given by American artillery units on the coast and gunboats in the bay, and the company was able to establish another perimeter in preparation for a further advance. C Company, in continuing the advance to the point, ran into trouble where a section of beach was backed by tidal swamps and lagoons of the Hupai River delta. A Company attempted to go to its aid but was also pinned down.

Meanwhile E Company, which had moved about 300 yards inland in an attempt to join the Mawaraka Road, reached within 100 yards of its objective when it also was pinned down by enemy machine-gun and mortar fire. For three hours the company held to its swampy ground, while other companies of the battalion lent support until it could be withdrawn. This was done with difficulty and individual sacrifice which won the only Victoria Cross in the **Pacific**. When the company's leading scouts were hit, other men were wounded in abortive attempts to rescue them. Two of the wounded were rescued by Corporal Sefanaia Sukanaivalu, who in going back a third time was himself seriously wounded in making that perilous journey. Attempts at rescue only resulted in further casualties, and the Fijian NCO called to his men to leave him where he was. This they refused to do, calling out in their native tongue that they would never permit him to fall alive to the enemy. The Fijian corporal realised that such loyalty to him would result in further death and injury to his own men. He lay exposed to

enemy fire, so that any movement drew a hail of bullets whipping through the rough grasses about him. In full view of the enemy and his own people he deliberately raised himself and was shot down. The following October, when Australian troops took over the perimeter at **Empress Augusta Bay** from 14 American Corps, they found his body and buried him with full military honours, with Fijian, New Zealand, Australian, and American servicemen in attendance.

Late in the afternoon of 23 June, Voelcker asked for and received permission to withdraw his force and return to the perimeter. Under cover of darkness that night the companies transferred to landing craft waiting off the beaches, to which some of the units made their way after losing direction and wandering for hours in the swamp. In this, the last active operation of the Fijian forces in the **Solomons**, **3 Battalion** lost four men killed and fifteen wounded, but did not succeed in reaching the Japanese headquarters.

Dittmer, who retained his brigade headquarters in **Fiji**, flew to **Bougainville** to inspect the battalions before their departure. Griswold, the Corps commander, inspected the troops at a farewell ceremonial parade on 11 July, after which the units completed their final packing. On 26 July **1 Battalion** sailed in USS *Altnitah*, calling at **Guadalcanal** to embark men and stores of the disbanded forward base. The ship reached **Suva** on 4 August and returned to **Bougainville** to embark **3 Battalion**, which left **Empress Augusta Bay** on 23 August and reached **Suva** on 6 September. The **Fiji Docks Company** remained under American command, with Major A. W. Lewis as port operations officer, and assisted with the departure of the American forces and the arrival of the Australians who relieved them. This company remained in the perimeter with the Australian command and departed from **Torokina** on 26 February 1945. With its arrival at **Suva** on 23 March the return of all **Fiji** units from the **Solomons** was completed.

Intensive training of the Fijian brigade continued in the Colony in anticipation of another move overseas to the **Burma** front, as the services of the force had been offered for that theatre, but it was never

employed there. When the last of the American forces left [Fiji](#) in 1945, Dittmer moved his headquarters back to Borron's House and occupied the same quarters and offices as the first New Zealand force, remaining there until the end of hostilities. On 23 August 1945 a victory parade on Albert Park, scene of so many parades in the early days of the war, marked the end of the war service of the [Fiji Military Forces](#). Demobilisation began from 1 September, but New Zealand officers and non-commissioned officers remained until the final records were completed. Brigade Headquarters ceased to function on 27 October, by which time there were still about 150 New Zealanders remaining with the force. Dittmer handed over to Magrane on 21 November 1945, and the intimate partnership of three years between New Zealand and Fijian soldiers ended.

THE PACIFIC

CHAPTER 11 – THE SMALLER GARRISONS

Contents

I: Fanning Island p. 288

II: Tonga p. 292

III: Norfolk Island p. 300

THE PACIFIC

I: FANNING ISLAND

I: Fanning Island

NEW Zealand's participation in the 1939–45 War began and ended in the Pacific. Her first expeditionary force was a small detachment made up of two officers and thirty other ranks known as No. 1 Platoon, A Company, which on 30 August 1939 sailed from Auckland for tiny, palm-clad Fanning Island to guard the cable station there and prevent a repetition of the 1914 damage done by a raiding party from the German cruiser *Nurnberg*. These men learned of the outbreak of the European war on 3 September 1939 as they neared their destination in HMS *Leander*, at that time commanded by Captain J. W. Rivett-Carnac, DSC, RN. ¹

Fanning Island is a remote coral atoll lying 3.54 degrees north of the Equator, just off the Auckland- Suva- Honolulu trade route. Its total area of rather barren soil is 15 square miles, the average height of which is only 17 feet above sea level. Cable station and plantation administration officials at the outbreak of war made up a European community numbering about thirty. Most of the 250 to 270 natives were employed on the coconut plantations which cover the island. There was no regular steamer or schooner service with Fanning, which was supplied from Fiji or Honolulu.

In May 1939 the New Zealand Cabinet confirmed its decision to despatch a small force to Fanning Island should the necessity arise, and gave authority for its increase from 60 to 150 men. The total strength of the New Zealand regular forces was correspondingly increased to provide for this garrison, since the country was not at war. Orders for the defence of the island and the installation of one 6-inch naval gun to protect the cable station were signed by Major-General John Duigan, Chief of the New Zealand General Staff, on 1 December that same year. The support and periodical relief of this small garrison is an example

¹ **Vice-Admiral J. W. Rivett-Carnac**, CB, CBE, DSC; born England, 12 Dec 1891; served First World War, 1914–18 (DSC); captain HMS *Leander* and Commodore Commanding NZ Squadron, 1937–39; Flag Officer, British Assault Area, Normandy, 1944; Vice-Admiral (Q) **British Pacific Fleet**, 1945–47.

of the difficulties attending such an isolated expedition, and one which continually exercised the New Zealand Government until the **United States** took over the defence of the island. Fanning was only one of a number of islands on which New Zealand garrisons, either Army or Air Force, were stationed.

The first men for the defence of the island assembled in some secrecy at **Trentham Military Camp** in June 1939, as political tension mounted in **Europe** and an outbreak of war seemed inevitable. The men were equipped and given as much training as the brief period before departure allowed them. The commander was instructed to be on the alert against enemy ruses, as in 1914 the German raider had approached the island flying the French flag and landed a party which cut the cable and temporarily dislocated all cable traffic across the **Pacific**. He established his small detachment in a camp at Napari, on the shores of Whaler Anchorage, named it Duigan Camp, and constructed machine-gun posts (his only armament other than rifles) to cover the entrance to English Harbour, the only deep-water entrance to the lagoon on Fanning.

Like all other pioneering service units in the **Pacific** in the early days of the war, the **Fanning Island** garrison suffered acute discomfort from heat and humidity and the lack of suitable cool storage for food supplies. After the first novelty of life in the tropics wore off, the men settled down to a routine in which work was the only relief from boredom, and swimming and fishing their only amenities. Indeed, from 1939 until 1941 an interesting record was kept of all varieties of fish caught by members of the garrison. During the first six months of 1940, 115 inches of rain fell in exceptional downpours, though the average

rainfall is only 99 inches. This produced an atmosphere which hastened the deterioration of both food and clothing. Everything perishable rotted quickly, particularly all supplies of fresh vegetables. Canvas shoes with which the men were equipped in **Trentham** fell to pieces in a fortnight. Weevils infested the flour and biscuits, and tinned foods soon became inedible because of rusting. Rats were also a recurring pest, so that during the early period of its history the garrison was much concerned with the preservation and protection of food and supplies. Many of these early problems were later overcome by the installation of two refrigerators.

The first officer in charge of the detachment was not temperamentally suited to command an isolated garrison in a trying climate, and his conduct brought adverse reports from the administration because of his disturbing influence among a small community thrown on its own resources. After two months on the island he was replaced by Captain G. P. O'Leary. ¹ At a cost of £800, the Union Steamship Company's liner *Aorangi* was diverted to Fanning early in November to embark one officer and one sick member of the garrison. The new commander's knowledge of the native language enabled work to be speeded up on long-delayed and ill-organised camp construction, and more suitable native huts replaced the tents. By the end of the year the first medical officer, Captain A. A. **Lovell**, ² reached Fanning and spent the first fortnight repairing skin troubles and ulcers resulting from neglect, though the health of the troops was generally very good. At the end of a six-months' tour of duty, the originally prescribed period for each garrison, members of the platoon were relieved in March 1940 by another platoon commanded by Captain W. A. Moore, MM. ³ They left for New Zealand on 29 March 1940, leaving behind them a reputation for good behaviour which brought letters of praise from the officials. After a period of leave, these men joined units for further service overseas with **2 Division**.

Moore continued to speed up the work in hand, extending and completing reasonable defences and constructing a road from English

Harbour to the camp to avoid sea transport of supplies in lighters. The loss of the *Niagara* outside Auckland Harbour on 19 June 1940 delayed the arrival of Captain B. Houston, MC, DCM,⁴ a relief officer for O'Leary, and two urgently required tradesmen, a carpenter and a plumber. These men, travelling as civilians to avoid curiosity regarding their mission and destination, lost all their equipment and personal property. Nine bags of mail and 25 tons of supplies destined for the Fanning garrison were also lost. After being re-equipped they reached Fanning on 3 August via **Honolulu**, to which O'Leary returned on the same ship to await transport to New Zealand in the *Aorangi*. The movement of army personnel between New Zealand and Fanning was complicated by the fact that the Government of the **United States of America** was not yet at war with either **Germany** or **Japan**, consequently American passports and a supply of dollars were required for those staging through **Hawaii**. A direct shipping service to the island was impossible, and any diversions from the normal trade routes were costly.

¹ Lt-Col G. P. O'Leary, OBE; **Wellington**; born Strathmore, Victoria, 9 Sep 1888; Regular soldier; OC A Coy, **Fanning Island**, Nov 1939-Aug 1940.

² Lt-Col **A. A. Lovell**; Tanganyika; born England, 10 Feb 1910; medical practitioner; OC NZ Mil Hosp (**UK**) 1944–46.

³ Capt **W. A. Moore**, MM; **Auckland**; born **Auckland**, 24 Oct 1892; clerk; Auckland Regt 1914–19.

⁴ Capt **B. Houston**, MC, DCM; born **Scotland**, 31 Jul 1891; public servant; died 26 Aug 1949.

The second relief, consisting of two officers and 33 other ranks, reached Fanning on 3 October 1940 in the *Matai*, the hire of which cost the Army Department £3366 5s. In March 1941, however, following an earlier decision by the New Zealand Chiefs of Staff, the garrison was

increased by the addition of **45 Battery**, RNZA, and the defences strengthened by a 6-inch naval gun obtained from **Australia**. A draft of 30 artillery personnel and 42 infantry travelled in the *Aorangi*, which was escorted to Fanning by HMS *Monowai*, and reached the island on 7 April. Moore, after a period in New Zealand, returned to the island with this draft, and took command of a garrison of 105 all ranks, with Houston as his second-in-command. All ranks assisted with the emplacement of the naval gun, which was completed with urgency and gave the garrison and inhabitants a reasonable sense of security.

Passing ships transported small groups to Fanning during the succeeding months. Four signallers arrived on 11 August 1941, and in five weeks established communication by wireless with **Suva** and two neighbouring island stations— **Washington** and Christmas. The *Limerick* called to embark a sick man, who was not replaced until the *Waikato* arrived with supplies the following November. Then, on 24 November 1941, the *Monterey* arrived at English Harbour with the last relief consisting of 41 men, and uplifted 38 who had been on the island for more than a year. These men were taken to **San Francisco** on the *Monterey*, arriving there a week before the Japanese attack on **Pearl Harbour** on 7 December 1941. Their return voyage to New Zealand was consequently involved and long-delayed. They embarked on the USS *Lurline* and reached **Honolulu** on 22 December, remaining there for a week and then being ordered back to **San Francisco**. They made their second departure from the Californian coast in the American transport *President Monroe* on 12 January 1942, and reached **Suva** on 29 January. Sixteen members of the party reached **Auckland** in the *Matua*, via **Lautoka**, on 6 February and the American transport *President Monroe* on 12 January 1942, Accommodation for these troops in **San Francisco** had cost £607.

The Fanning garrison of 113 all ranks was relieved by 150 American troops, artillery and infantry, in May 1942, and returned to New Zealand in the USS *Rigel* on 17 May. After leave the men were drafted into units, and most of them went overseas, as the previous garrisons had done, to

serve with 2 Division in the Mediterranean sphere. Two hundred and nineteen officers, non-commissioned officers, and men served on Fanning between 1939 and 1942. The cost of the garrison, including the gun and its ammunition and transport, amounted to £42,750.

THE PACIFIC

II: TONGA

II: Tonga

The defence of the Kingdom of **Tonga**, like other island defences in the **Pacific**, meant the creation of a fighting force from a minimum of men and material, and became a New Zealand responsibility inasmuch as **Fiji** became one by the Government's acceptance of defence obligations beyond her own shores. As with **Fiji**, New Zealand undertook to train and direct the Tongan Defence Force and to provide essential supplies and war equipment, the cost of which was originally met by the Tongan Government's provision of £20,000 a year from its slender resources, though financial changes later became necessary.

On 22 September 1939 the first 100 Tongans were attested and became the nucleus of a small defence force under the native Minister of Police. The following day the first military supplies reached the port and capital of Nukualofa in the *Maui Pomare* from New Zealand—a limited number of sets of web equipment and rifles with which to arm the recruits. Two instructors reached **Tonga** on 18 October—Captain J. S. Rennie and Sergeant-Major G. Stevens—and set about organising the small force and directing its training and duties. They were forerunners of many New Zealand officers and non-commissioned officers who moved at intervals to and from **Tonga**, until the **United States** assumed responsibility for the Kingdom's defence in 1942 at a critical period of the **Pacific** war.

When 8 Brigade Group moved into **Fiji** in October 1940, the small Tongan Defence Force came under the operational command of Cunningham, and the establishment of a New Zealand air arm in **Fiji** soon afterwards enabled a reasonable liaison to be maintained between headquarters at **Suva** and those in **Tonga**, since the journey could be made in four hours in one of the converted de Havillands based at **Nandi**. By November 1941 the Tongan force consisted of 13 New Zealand

officers and non-commissioned officers and 442 Tongans, organised on a battalion basis into four small companies with a headquarters in Nukualofa. Except for coastwatchers established on the outlying islands of the group, all military activity was centered on the largest island, **Tongatabu**, which also contained the seat of Government, the port, and the residence of Queen Salote, constitutional monarch of the only remaining native kingdom in the **Pacific**. New Zealand instructors, though short of essential equipment in any quantity, did what they could to mould the raw but enthusiastic Tongans into a force to serve the needs of the moment, which at that time envisaged possible bombardment or attack by landing parties from German raiders. The force was made as mobile as possible, and concerned itself with defending port installations, guarding vital points and an aerodrome which had been constructed some miles from the town. Thirteen coastwatching stations throughout the three groups of islands, which make up the Kingdom of **Tonga**, relayed their information to a central station at Nukualofa for onward despatch to **Suva** and **Wellington** if of sufficient importance. Their value and their work increased with the outbreak of war with **Japan**.

Hostilities with **Japan** also increased the demand for a senior commander from New Zealand. Lieutenant-Colonel R. Bagnall, the first to be appointed by Army Headquarters, reached Nukualofa on 23 February 1941 in a ship which carried four urgently needed motor trucks and one motor ambulance. Although limited by necessity, these increased the mobility of a force which until then had moved on foot over the earth roads leading to various strategical points. Bagnall, a retired army officer who had formerly served in **India**, was not happy in his command. The frustration caused by isolation and lack of supplies, and the prevailing state of affairs on other **Pacific** islands, led to his return to New Zealand the following July. He was succeeded by his adjutant, Captain R. W. **Norris**,¹ who held the post until the appointment on 10 January 1942 of Lieutenant-Colonel J. M. C. **McLeod**,² of **37 Battalion**, who took with him from **Fiji** his own adjutant, Captain B. Jones. **Tonga** was woefully short of essential

equipment. Recommendations made in July 1941 by General Sir Guy Williams, after his tour of inspection, could not be fulfilled immediately, though New Zealand supplied what she could from limited resources which had also to satisfy the demands of **Fiji**. Two 4-inch guns from **Auckland** reached **Tonga** on 18 February and were emplaced to cover entrances through the reef at Nukualofa. They were manned by personnel under Major C. H. **Gallagher**,³ who had arrived in December. Other more vulnerable beaches, some of which lacked even the natural defence of a coral reef, were protected only by machine guns. For the remainder of that year New Zealand continued to supply what equipment she could, including material for tropical uniforms. During the year 1941–42 the Government of **Tonga** spent £23,564 on its defence programme, which was £3564 above the original estimate of £20,000 a year,

¹ **Maj R. W. Norris; Wellington**; born Cheltenham, England, 4 Nov 1896; printer; Gloucestershire Regt, 1914–18.

² **Lt-Col J. M. C. McLeod**, MC and bar; Kurow; born NZ 23 Sep 1894; sharebroker and accountant; Canterbury Regt 1916–19; OC **Tonga** Defence Force, 1942; CO 4 Bn, **Fiji** Infantry Regt, Jun 1943-Mar 1944.

³ **Maj C. H. Gallagher**, MBE; **Wellington**; born **Auckland**, 20 Aug 1880; Regular soldier.

any excess of which New Zealand had agreed to meet. However, no claim was made on New Zealand for the excess amount. Only towards the end of the war, when all danger of attack was long past, did the Tongan Government criticise defense costs.

With the advent of American forces into the **Pacific** and the acceptance of American responsibility for the defence of certain selected islands and island groups, **Tongatabu** became one of a chain of interlocking bases beginning in the **New Hebrides** and extending to the

rear through **New Caledonia, Fiji, and Samoa**. Those bases were organised to provide each other with land, sea and air support, so that if the Japanese drove farther south from the **Solomons**, they would become blocks in an extended defence line and springboards for offensive action once the Allies built up sufficient strength to attack.

Although **Tonga** was farthest from the actual combat zone, a great quantity of vital Allied shipping passed within range of the group, which lay on the long lines of communication between the **United States** and the principal **Pacific** bases in New Zealand and **Australia**. A **United States** survey ship, the *Sumner*, reached Nukualofa on 3 March 1942 to chart the harbour and investigate its possibilities as a minor naval base. She was given a hostile reception by the New Zealand battery emplaced at Kologa, which put a shot across her bows when she entered the harbour through the wrong channel and failed to give the correct recognition signals. Advanced parties for the ground forces followed and **Tongatabu** was quickly developed into a naval fuel base, a protected anchorage, and an alternative staging depot on the South Pacific air ferry route from the **United States** to bases in **Australia**, New Zealand, **New Caledonia**, and the **New Hebrides**, for at that time New Zealand aircrews were ferrying aircraft from the **United States**. When the **United States** forces under Brigadier-General B. C. Lockwood took over the defence of the kingdom and established a separate island command responsible directly to South Pacific Headquarters, the Tongan Defence Force, with its New Zealanders, was absorbed into the organisation. **United States** aircraft also moved into the aerodrome, using it as a base from which patrols kept watch over the sea lanes in and around the group, and working in co-operation with similar air patrols based on **Fiji**. The American command which numbered 7500 of their own men, combined the defence of the kingdom, which has also been a British protectorate since May 1900, with training and conditioning troops before they were committed to the battle on **Guadalcanal**, and as such it was an admirable site:

The time came, however, when New Zealand was called upon by

South Pacific Command to replace American units withdrawn from **Tonga** to reinforce the forward areas. The first request came in October as Barrowclough was preparing to move **3 Division** into the **Waikato** for its final training, and hard on the heels of a request to the New Zealand Government to provide a garrison for **Norfolk Island**. And, as with the Norfolk force, the battalion required for **Tonga** had to be drawn from **3 Division**. Eyre's ¹ **34 Battalion** from **8 Brigade** was selected and despatched in the US transport *President Jackson*, after advanced parties had been recalled from the **Waikato** where they were preparing to billet the battalion at **Te Awamutu**. On 27 October it disembarked at Nukualofa, moving first into the reserve area for a brief period before taking over the eastern sector of the island, with headquarters established at Mua. During its five months' stay on **Tongatabu**, **34 Battalion** remained under American command and, in conformity with the American forces, each battalion was organised as a mobile striking force consisting of rifle, carrier, mortar, and machine-gun companies. Slender watch-towers, 90 feet high and rather like flimsy wireless masts with a small platform at the top, were erected by the Americans for easier observation of the beaches and far out to sea from the uniformly flat island, and the manning of them became part of the routine. Eyre, in December, was appointed executive officer of all ground forces on the island.

This battalion was the first of **3 Division** to work for any length of time under American command and to become acquainted with American army food, clothing, and procedure; it was the first, also, to establish the cordiality so characteristic of the association of New Zealand and **United States** forces during the **Pacific** war. Life was not arduous. There were the usual alarms, accompanied by stand-tos at dawn and dusk. Despite a seasonal plague of fleas so merciless that despairing requests for advice on their destruction were sent to Army Headquarters, the troops enjoyed their tour of duty in **Tonga**, where climate and conditions were both agreeable for soldiering in a setting not too tropical.

The satisfactory progress of the battle for **Guadalcanal** relieved anxiety in rear bases such as **Tonga**, but left them only thinly held as units moved forward to replace others depleted in combat. Once more a call was made on New Zealand by **South Pacific Command** for both ground and air replacements of units leaving

¹ **Lt-Col R. J. Eyre; Christchurch**; born **Wellington**, 30 Oct 1894; Regular soldier; NZ Fd Arty 1917–19; CO 34 Bn, Aug 1942–Dec 1943; later Commandant, **Burnham Military Camp**.

Tonga. On 23 October 1942 No. 15 Squadron RNZAF arrived to relieve 68 (US) Pursuit Squadron and to allow it to move forward. New Zealand was also asked in October to take over the defence of **Tonga** and supply further ground forces in addition to **34 Battalion**, though in the opinion of **South Pacific Command** the battle situation was such that any such garrison could now be reduced. Halsey asked for another infantry battalion, a regimental headquarters, and artillery details. Although sorely pressed for men for **3 Division** and her other service commitments, as well as for industry, the New Zealand Government agreed, but on 5 November asked that **34 Battalion** be returned to **3 Division** as soon as possible.

In the negotiations with South Pacific Command Headquarters, the New Zealand Government deprecated any tendency to distribute New Zealand units unnecessarily, and especially odd units in **United States** formations, because of the administrative problems involved. In this personal letter to Halsey, Fraser gave an indication of the Dominion's mounting difficulties:

I assure you that we are most anxious to co-operate in every possible way, and the last thing we wish is to play a passive role, especially in existing circumstances. We will make immediate inquiry as to the possibility of meeting this request, but it would be unfair to you and to us not to tell you at once our immediate reaction, which is this: This Dominion has been at war for three years during which period our

resources have been seriously strained. WE are now attempting to maintain two divisions overseas in addition to substantial air force and naval units, together with the minimum forces required for the defence of this country. All told, we have withdrawn from industry for the armed services the equivalent of 11 per cent of the total population of the Dominion. We are confronted with a very serious manpower problem which it is impossible for us to solve while we are, as at present, entirely in the dark as to the situation in the zone of Pacific operations and as to future demands that may be made upon us both for men and supplies. Our first thought, therefore, is that this further request adds point and urgency to our desire for a conference with you at the earliest date upon which you can make it convenient.

That was written on 6 November 1942 when 3 Division, still on a two-brigade basis and without a clearly defined role, was beginning to move to New Caledonia, and about 5000 officers and men of New Zealand army and air force units were widely dispersed over the Pacific on Fanning Island, Fiji, Tonga and Norfolk, with individual coastwatchers doing duty on many smaller islands. Several conferences with senior officers of Halsey's headquarters did take place, but 34 Battalion remained in Tonga until March 1943, when it returned to New Caledonia via Suva and rejoined 3 Division in readiness to train for the Solomons. By that time negotiations with South Pacific Command had resolved themselves into New Zealand's acceptance of the defence of Tonga by the formation of 16 Brigade Group, using 6 Battalion, Canterbury Regiment, to replace 34 Battalion, and two battalions of Tongans, as well as New Zealand officers and non-commissioned officers for the artillery units and headquarters. In recommending to War Cabinet acceptance of this task, Puttick asked for a reduction in the strength of the force required.

By July all United States army units, ground and air, had been withdrawn, with the exception of ten men employed on the aerodrome. Although the battle situation in the Solomons put Tonga almost 2000 miles behind the combat zone, the South Pacific Command still desired

some protection there against possible raiding parties from enemy submarines. By August 1943, although the enemy had been thrown out of the **New Georgia** Group, Japanese submarines were still operating far into the South Pacific. The steamer *Young* was torpedoed 40 miles south of **Tonga** that month but reached Nukualofa badly damaged.

Brigadier F. L. Hunt was given command of the brigade group and established his headquarters at Vaikeli, taking over the installations vacated by the Americans, with his battalions tactically disposed in the former areas. His principal staff officers and commanders, most of them from New Zealand, were:

GSO 1	Lt-Col J. M. C. McLeod
GSO 2	Maj H. D. Harvey
GSO 3	Capt J. P. Gresson
Staff Captain	Capt H. R. Cameron
DAA & QMG	Maj A. G. Gillies
Senior Medical Officer	Lt-Col J. R. H. Fulton
Artillery	Lt-Col C. B. Menzies
Engineers	Maj A. H. Bogle
ASC	Maj A. McIntosh
Signals	Maj W. G. F. Pinkham
Ordnance	Maj F. Reid
Dental Officer	Capt E. R. Wimsett
6 Battalion, Canterbury Regiment	Lt-Col F. M. Mitchell
1 Battalion, Tongan Defence Force	Lt-Col A. W. Reynolds
2 Battalion, Tongan Defence Force	Lt-Col W. H. Fortune

The strength in armament contrasted impressively with the few rifles and machine guns possessed by the original hastily trained units of 1939–40. Included in the brigade group were one heavy and one light anti-aircraft battery and two field batteries of 18-pounders, officers and NCOs for which, as well as for the two Tongan battalions, were provided by New Zealand. Six 6-inch naval guns emplaced by the Americans for coastal defence were also manned by New Zealanders, though as many Tongans as possible were trained for employment in all arms of the service. Newly recruited Tongans, necessary to maintain a steady stream

of reinforcements and to provide sufficient manpower for the second battalion, were given three weeks' training at a recruit depot before being posted to units. Unlike the Fijians, the Tongans trained without the stimulus of prospective overseas service, though before the arrival of the brigade group 28 members of the Tongan Defence Force, led by Masefield, a splendid example of the young New Zealand officer working with native troops, served with the Fijian guerrillas who were attached to 14 US Corps in the **Solomons**. One of them gained the Military Medal and another the American Silver Star for their bravery in the jungle.

Although the Canterbury battalion was under strength, by may 1943 there were 2662 New Zealand officers and men in **Tonga**, including coastwatchers and attached troops. Three months later the battle situation in the **Solomons** changed so rapidly that a reduction in the Tongan garrison was warranted and was recommended by New Zealand. **South Pacific Command** agreed, and the brigade group was reduced from 1948 New Zealanders and 2224 Tongans to 1018 New Zealanders and 1554 Tongans. This was done in August. The next reduction came in October, by which time the Japanese had been pushed back to **Bougainville** so that any danger to **Tonga**, even from raiding parties, was remote.

Puttick's recommendation for cutting down the force to 530 New Zealanders and 1215 Tongans was accepted by Halsey, who stated in reply that he considered the only garrison necessary should be sufficient simply for the maintenance of the existing service installations and that any reduction would be in accordance with his 'established policy of rolling up the rear areas and bringing all South Pacific resources to bear upon the enemy in the combat zone.' Puttick, a little over-cautious in the light of events, thought the anti-submarine defence was still necessary, so that a considerable body of New Zealanders remained on the island until the end of the year. Most of them, however, departed late in December, when the strategical and tactical role of 16 Brigade Group ended its existence of less than a year, but a number stayed until the following year to assist with the demobilisation of the Tongans and

the disposal of military equipment.

Major R. B. Hardy ¹ took over command of a reduced Tongan

¹ Maj R. B. Hardy, ED; Auckland; born Rakaia, 3 Jan 1899
schoolmaster CO Tonga Defence Force, Feb 1944–Apr 1946.

Defence Force on 15 February 1944, and remained until it was finally disbanded in 1945 with the cessation of hostilities. From 15 February, also, Tonga reverted tactically to the Fiji command, completing the circle begun in the early days of the war. One of Hardy's subsidiary appointments required him to watch the interests of the War Assets Realisation Board in disposing of surplus equipment to the Tongan Government which, by 1944, had grown a little critical of the cost and maintenance of a defence force when the kingdom was no longer in danger. Financial resources had been extended to their limit and the war had reduced revenue. In 1943 Tonga's contribution to war costs had been raised to £43,000, but this was reduced to £12,500 by February 1944, at which date Parliament suggested a reduction to £8000, the grant to cease altogether from the end of October 1944. Relations with the Tongans were close and untroubled for the most part throughout the war years. Before Hunt departed, Ata, the Premier, wrote in felicitous terms, expressing his appreciation for the lack of interference in Tonga's domestic life and the absence of friction during the garrison period. However, not all the cost of the war effort fell on Tonga. Both the United States and New Zealand forces metalled considerable lengths of roads which served the defence areas of Tongatabu, but such were the demands on the Government for their upkeep when they crumbled under the weight of constant service vehicles that New Zealand contributed £500 for their maintenance in 1944.

Not the least of New Zealand's contribution to the agriculture of Tonga was in the benefit derived from surplus stock from a farm which, with their natural aptitude for husbandry, the New Zealanders had

organised on a piece of land presented by the Tongans, where they bred pigs and poultry and raised vegetables for the messes. Only one incident marred the whole occupation period. That occurred after Hardy took over command and towards the end of the garrison period, when some of the men, fatigued by long years of service, were difficult to hold. In October 1944 the Tongan non-commissioned officers and men walked out of their camp but without creating any disturbance. Queen Salote, a woman of determined character, took part in the ensuing investigations, which involved a long list of complaints about leave, the use of transport, the cigarette supply, and a rather bogus excuse that the New Zealand flag was flown at the camp instead of the Tongan flag. The discontent was traced to the unsettling effect on soldiers who had returned to their villages and the efforts of one Tongan officer who desired to make himself camp commander. During the war years the Queen used her influence to combat any disturbing influence caused by the influx of great numbers of American and New Zealand servicemen, whose outlook and ideas were so vastly different from those of the easy-going Tongans. Her advice and discretion kept in control the rather excessive nationalism of some of the individuals to which this 'walkout' was directly attributed, but any grievances were soon adjusted and there were no further differences during the remainder of Hardy's command of the force.

It may be appropriate here to mention that defending any **Pacific** island was not undertaken by New Zealand without considerable preliminary discussion and negotiation between the governments concerned. Before finality was reached on any of such agreements, the Government of the **United Kingdom** was kept fully informed and its approval obtained. As with **Fiji**, before the arrival of the **United States** forces and the American assumption of responsibility for defence, the governments concerned entered into long and technical agreements defining the respective liabilities, duties, and privileges of the occupying forces. Such agreements were necessary in assisting the administration and operation of the defending forces, and for the legal protection of persons and property. They are all part of the economy of war, which is

not conducted without payment by friendly governments for the lands and buildings occupied.

THE PACIFIC

III: NORFOLK ISLAND

III: Norfolk Island

Although **Norfolk Island** is administered by the Commonwealth of **Australia**, the task of maintaining a garrison there from October 1942 until February 1944 fell to New Zealand. This small and isolated island of 8528 acres, the only land on the direct air route between New Zealand and **New Caledonia**, carries a link in the submarine cable across the **Pacific**, just as **Fanning Island** does many miles to the north. **Australia**, however, was not unduly concerned with its defence or its strategical value in the **Pacific** defence scheme.

Soon after the outbreak of war with **Japan**, a small Australian detachment of 57 all ranks was despatched to Norfolk to reinforce the island's own detachment and prevent sabotage of the cable station and its equipment, but in reply to a query by the New Zealand Government regarding **Australia's** assistance with the defence of **New Caledonia**, and in which reference was made to Norfolk, the Australian Government replied that the defence of **Norfolk Island** was primarily a naval responsibility and that any aerodrome constructed on it would be more of a liability than an asset. Ghormley, however, thought otherwise when he was drafting his early strategic defence of the South Pacific area. Because of its unique position, almost equidistant from **New Caledonia**, New Zealand and **Australia**, he saw that Norfolk had undoubted advantages of which he desired to make use. Although the island possessed no good harbours or reliably sheltered anchorages, he viewed it as a kind of stationary aircraft carrier, as so many other islands in the **Pacific** were to become as the battle moved north. A site for an aerodrome was readily available, and as soon as this was constructed it could become a base for anti-submarine patrols, a refuge for aircraft in distress, and a staging depot for land-based aircraft moving on the long hop over water between New Zealand, **Australia** and **New Caledonia**, and

the battlefield in the **Solomons** farther north. For this last reason it was strongly supported by Air Commodore R. V. Goddard, Chief of the Air Staff in New Zealand at that time.

An adequate garrison, however, was necessary for its defence and to deny it to possible enemy raiding parties. The South Pacific Command immediately set about its plans for the construction of an aerodrome, and early in September 1942 despatched 4400 tons of construction equipment and supervising engineers to the island. In the same month 200 workmen of the Australian Commonwealth Main Road Department reached the island to begin preliminary work.

For defence and protection Ghormley requested from New Zealand a minimum garrison force of one infantry battalion, three batteries of anti-aircraft artillery, hospital and other services and, when the airfield was complete, one flight each of fighter and dive-bomber aircraft. The only units suitable and ready were those from **3 Division** (or the Kiwi forces as they were known), at that time being reorganised and trained in preparation for further service in the **Pacific** under Barrowclough.

On 29 September 1942 that New Zealand War Cabinet approved the despatch of the necessary garrison force for Norfolk, though Army Headquarters pointed out to the **South Pacific Command** that in supplying garrisons for both Norfolk and **Tonga** the preparation and departure of the Kiwi force, then requested by Ghormley, would be delayed. Calls on the Dominion's dwindling manpower reserves were then creating a problem which was soon to curtail any further expansion. However, a small force known as N Force, consisting of 1488 all ranks under Lieutenant-Colonel J. W. Barry, commander of **36 Battalion**, was assembled and despatched. It consisted of Barry's own battalion, with detachments of engineers, ASC, and Ordnance, and a strong supporting group of artillery made up of four 155-millimetre guns of 152 Heavy Battery, commanded by Major G. L. Falck, four 3.7-inch anti-aircraft and eight 40-millimetre guns of **215 Composite Anti-Aircraft Battery** under Major J. M. Ewen, and a field troop of 25-pounder guns under Captain C. S. Dickson. Later the members of the Australian detachment

domiciled on the island became part of N Force, the remainder returning to the Australian mainland. An advanced party, consisting of the commander and representative officers with C Company and the carrier platoon, landed on 26 September through rough seas which were indicative of future shipping problems. After conferring with the island administrator, Major-General Sir Charles Rosenthal, camp areas were selected in readiness for the arrival of the main body, which came in two flights on 9 and 14 October in the troopship *Wahine*, escorted by HMS *Monowai* and the **United States** destroyer *Clark*.

By the time N Force reached the island, work had been started on preparing the land for the aerodrome, and most of the garrison saw the mile-long avenue of 100-foot-high Norfolk pines before it was sacrificed to the remorseless dictates of war, much to the grief of the islanders, most of them descendants of the historical ship *Bounty*. There were about 700 of them, living an uneventful and detached life on an island where natural beauty and an equable climate combined to make it most pleasantly habitable. They found that the influx of twice their number in service personnel gave an impetus and industry to their daily round such as they had never previously known, and they were soon to be linked with the outside world, hitherto available only by infrequent visits from ships, by a regular air service.

Barry established Force Headquarters in the house and grounds of ‘**Devon**’, with unit camps disposed in idyllic sites round the 23 miles of rugged coastline, which gave them glimpses of cliff and creaming reef and blue sea between the stately pines which take their name from the island. A 24-hour watch was instituted, and the task of defending the island and its installations against sudden raids from enemy submarines was begun in circumstances more pleasant than on any other **Pacific** island garrisoned by men of **3 Division** units. Discomforts were few after the force was installed. Because of the lack of protected roadsteads, embarkation and disembarkation were at the mercy of the elements. There were stone piers at **Kingston** (the second oldest British settlement in the **Pacific**) and at Cascade—piers which dated from the grimmest

page in the island's history, when it was a convict settlement with an evil reputation, but their availability depended on the weather. More often than not stores were taken ashore in whaleboats from ships lying off the shore, and on one occasion a supply ship, the *Karsik*, lay there for 23 days. Unfortunately rain fell soon after the arrival of the force, turning the dusty red roads into bogs and adding to the discomfort of those sleeping out of doors. Because of faulty loading, tents did not come off the supply ship *Waipari* for some weeks, so that many of the troops slept under improvised shelters, in deserted houses or under the pungent vaults of the pines, which they had preferred to do in the fine weather.

A natural barrier of cliffs defends most of the Norfolk coastline, so that any tactical scheme involved the defence of only certain possible landing areas. Units and guns were tactically sited to meet such eventuality, remote though it was, with mobility the underlying principle of every scheme. Coastwatchers were linked with a central operations room, but there were the usual alarms and blasphemous excursions before the arrival of any ships off the island.

As soon as defence plans had been exercised to operational efficiency, a roading and camp construction plan, invariably associated with every New Zealand project in the **Pacific**, was started by the engineers under Captain W. P. Hitchcock. They put a disused sawmill into operation and were soon producing 65,000 superficial feet of timber a month. They built a 20-bed hospital, metalled earth and clay roads which served the camps and others serving the aerodrome, the maintenance of which the engineers took over on 5 March. The ASC detachment under Major R. C. Aley, who was also AA and QMG of the force, extended the scope of its supply activities by embarking on the production of fresh vegetables in quantity, ultimately producing so many kumaras that they lost their popularity as army food.

In order to ensure a regular supply of fresh meat and overcome the tendency to reduce too drastically the island's limited stock of beef, a modest flock of 300 sheep reached the island on New Year's Day 1943.

Only one was lost getting the flock ashore under the professional eye of one of the battalion's many farmers, Major B. H. Pringle,¹ the second-in-command. This had been preceded by some excitement on Christmas Day, when ambitious arrangements were made to provide a dinner suitable for the occasion by flying from New Zealand sufficient lamb, green peas, and new potatoes for the force and dropping them by parachute on the runways, one of which was rapidly nearing completion. Some of the parachutes failed to open so that the containers burst as they struck the ground, scattering the thoughtfully shelled peas

¹ Lt-Col B. H. Pringle, ED; Feilding born NZ 3 Oct 1905; stock buyer; CO 36 Bn, Dec 1943-Apr 1944.

over the runway. One of the aircraft decided to make a landing and achieved the distinction of being the first to land on the aerodrome, No. 1 runway of which occupied the site of the former avenue of pines. Two Hudson bombers landed on 28 December and three the following day, and the era of dawn-dusk patrols began from **Norfolk Island**.

N Force staff worked ceaselessly to prevent an epidemic of that peevish condition known as 'browning off', which became so prevalent in the **Pacific**. Route marches, sports meetings, varied training exercises and manœuvres kept the men occupied and particularly fit, and for recreation there were bathing beaches, a concert party organised by Padre K Liggett¹ at his recreational centre at 'Four Pines', and tramps to the more historical corners of the island. The generous inhabitants, with little produce to spare, welcomed the New Zealanders and presented them periodically with an ox and quantities of fruit and vegetables. There were, of course, the usual problems resulting from the influx of double the number of inhabitants to an island remote from any regular trade routes. On 25 February 1943 the Australian Government sent a mild protest to New Zealand, stating that because soldiers bought all the milk from the farmers the butter factory on the island had ceased operations, and also that they had bought such quantities of passion

fruit that the pulp factory's output had been greatly reduced. **Australia** had also been obliged to assist with supplies of bread, flour, and meat, though the New Zealand garrison should have been self-contained. These complaints were a legacy from the arrival of the force, when the unloading of the first supply ship was held up by bad weather. After 19 weeks on the island, only one supply ship had reached Norfolk.

At the end of March 1943, **36 Battalion** and the artillery units began their move to rejoin **3 Division** in **New Caledonia**. N Force was replaced by 2 Battalion, **Wellington-West Coast Regiment**, under Lieutenant-Colonel A. R. Cockerell, DSO,² who took over command of the island defences from Barry on 9 April. Cockerell inherited an organisation which required little change. Artillery units from New Zealand under Major A. B. Chappell replaced those returning to **3 Division**, and detachments of other services similarly took over.

Three months after the relief moved in, however, the strength of N Force was reduced. All Grade I men, of whom there were

¹ Rev. K. Liggett; **Cambridge**; born England, 29 Apr 1905; Anglican minister; SCF 2 NZEF IP, Apr 1943-Apr 1944.

² Lt-Col A. R. Cockerell, DSO, m.i.d.; **Invercargill**; born Macraes Flat, Otago, 21 Nov 1891; Regular soldier; Otago Regt 1914–19; **2 NZEF**, Egypt, 1940–41; CO 2 Bn WWC Regt; CO N Force, 1943.



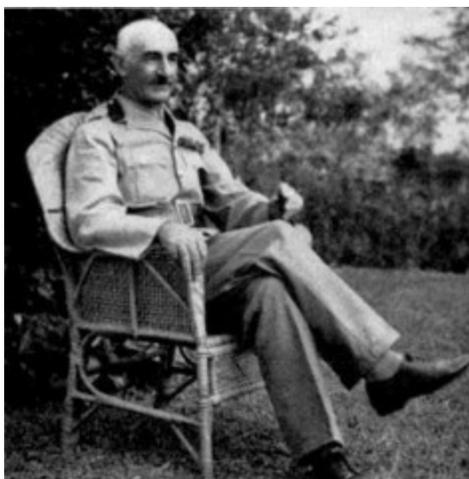
READY TO LEAVE STIRLING ISLAND, TREASURY GROUP, FOR
RETURN TO NEW CALEDONIA

Ready to leave **Stirling Island**, treasury Group, for return to **New Caledonia**

34 NZ INFANTRY BATTALION MESS, OUTPOST 13, TONGA



34 NZ Infantry Battallion Mess, Outpost 13, Tonga



Major-General W. H. Cunningham,
First Commander in Fiji

Major General W. H. Cunningham, First Commander in Fiji

Brigadier R. A. Row, Commander
of 8 Brigade, and Sir Cyril Newall,
Governor-General of New Zealand,
on an inspection tour in the
Treasury Group



Brigadier R. A. Row, commander of 8 brigade, and Sir Cyril Newall, Governor-General of New Zealand, on an inspection tour in the Treasury Group

Lieutenant-Colonel F. C. Cornwall, Brigadier
L. Potter, Commander of 14 Brigade, and
Lieutenant-Colonel J. F. Moffatt on Nissan
Island



Lieutenant-Colonel F. C. Cornwall, Brigadier L. Potter, Commander of 14 Brigade, and Lieutenant-Colonel J.F. Moffat on Nissan Island



ON A TRANSPORT AT NOUMEA HARBOUR, NEW CALEDONIA
(from left to right) Major-General Rush B. Lincoln, Brigadier L. G. Goss,
Brigadier C. S. J. Duff, Major-General H. E. Barrowclough, Colonel
J. M. Twigg, captain of the transport (name unknown), Colonel J. I.
Brooke, Hon. F. Jones, Minister of Defence

On a transport at Noumea Harbour, New Caledonia
(from left to right) Major-General Rush B. Lincoln, Brigadier L. G. Goss, Brigadier C. S. J. Duff,
Major-General H. E. Barrowclough, Colonel J. M. Twigg, captain of the transport(name
unknown), Colonel J. I. Brooke, Hon. F. Jones, Minister of Defence



2 NZEF IN JAPAN
22 NZ Battalion controlling the Japanese repatriation centre at Sensaki

2 NZEF in Japan
22 NZ Battallion controlling the Japanese repatriation centre at Sensaki



New Zealanders watch Japanese farm labourers plant the new season's rice

600 with the force, 338 of them between the ages of 19 and 37, were recalled to New Zealand in July. By September the strategical situation was such that, in the opinion of the **South Pacific Command**, a garrison was no longer necessary, except to operate and maintain the airfield. Cabinet approved the withdrawal of the force on 15 November, and on 8 December 478 members of the garrison embarked for **Auckland**. A small rear party remained until 11 February 1944, on which day command passed to the officer commanding the **RNZAF** station at the aerodrome, and Norfolk became an Air Force responsibility until the end of hostilities. A message of congratulation from Mr. John Curtin, Prime Minister of **Australia**, in which he paid generous tribute to the behaviour and co-operation of the New Zealanders, farewelled the military garrison.

One of the more important aspects of the value of **Norfolk Island** was its use as a navigation aid to aircraft passing along the air route New Zealand- **New Caledonia**- **Fiji**. A radar station established on the island by the **RNZAF** in May 1943 remained in operation there until the end of hostilities and saved both lives and aircraft. One example of its work is sufficient. A Flying Fortress, which developed engine trouble at the height of a storm, was flying in circles 90 miles south of the island when it was picked up on the screen and brought to a safe landing on the airfield when visibility was at tree-top level.

Before the **United States** assumed responsibility for the protection of the Society Group in 1942, New Zealand had given considerable assistance to the French administration there. After the outbreak of war in **Europe**, **Australia** undertook to defend the French possession of **New Caledonia**, and New Zealand undertook a similar responsibility for **Tahiti**. On 6 September 1940 HMS *Achilles*, commanded by Captain W. E. Parry, RN, was despatched to Papeete with Mr. C. A. Berendsen, head of the Prime Minister's Department, who held discussions with the administration authorities, after which a New Zealand representative was sent to take up temporary residence there. New Zealand was primarily concerned for the protection of the valuable phosphate works on Makatea, one of the smaller of the **Society Islands**, where several Japanese were employed until their country entered the war. The French community of **Tahiti** was split by political strife and intrigue between the de Gaulle and Vichy factions; the defences of the group were outmoded and quite useless, and the New Zealand Government requested that de Gaulle be so informed.

New Zealand's assistance included the supply of 24 Thompson sub-machine guns, 24,000 rounds of ammunition, web equipment, and drill cloth for uniforms. Her Government also established a credit of £7000 to tide the French administration over the early war period and the collapse of **France**. As soon as a contingent of residents from the Society Group was ready to move overseas to join the Free French forces in **Africa**, HMS *Monowai* and the Canadian ship *Prince Rupert* were sent in April 1941 to transport 300 of them of **Noumea**. In June that year, at the request of the Governor of **New Caledonia**, New Zealand sent Major J. W. Barry to examine and report on the defences of the Society Group, which he did very fully, confirming earlier reports of their inefficiency and uselessness. Then, in January 1942, **United States** forces secretly moved into Bora Bora, where they established a naval station and air bases which were operating by April of that year. The French administration bargained for some months on reparations, but the

Americans were by then firmly established and remained until the end of the war. No New Zealand land forces were ever sent to the group, though a request was made by the authorities early in the war to provide at least 200 ground troops as the nucleus of a defence force.

THE PACIFIC

CHAPTER 12 – OCCUPATION IN JAPAN

CHAPTER 12

Occupation in Japan

IN the final thrust against Japan MacArthur, who assumed command of all **United States Army Forces in the Pacific** on 6 April 1945, and Admiral Chester Nimitz, commander of all naval forces, prepared plans for an amphibious assault of immense proportions on the mainland. The first phase of this assault, known as Operation **OLYMPIC**, provided for a landing by 6 US Army on the southern coast of Kyushu, the southernmost island of **Japan**, in the autumn of 1945. Nine infantry divisions were to be employed, with a floating reserve of three divisions which were to make a feint attack off the island of Shikoku. The second phase, designed to take place four months later, in the early spring of 1946, required a landing on the coast along the Kanto Plain, east of **Tokyo**. This was given the code-name Operation **CORONET**, for which nine infantry divisions, two armoured divisions, and three Marine divisions of 8 and 10 US Armies were to be employed, with a floating reserve of eleven divisions of 1 US Army which was to follow the first two armies ashore. These two landings were to be supported by fifty air groups and the Third and Fifth Fleets of the **United States Navy** and the **British Pacific Fleet**, as well as a strong British aircraft carrier task force as part of the Fifth American Fleet. The whole armed might of **America**, built up through the war years and perfected by battle experience, was to be employed in the final subjugation of the Japanese mainland.

While these plans were being worked out in detail, the results of the experimental atom bomb, detonated in a desert area of New Mexico, were revealed to Truman, Churchill and Stalin, then meeting at **Potsdam**. An immediate decision instructed Lieutenant-General Carl Spaatz, commander of the **United States Strategic Air Forces**, to use the bomb on the industrial installations of one of four selected Japanese cities any time after 3 August. The bomb was dropped on the military city of **Hiroshima** on 6 August and another on the port of **Nagasaki**, in the south of Kyushu, on 9 August, both with devastating results. The smoke from the **Nagasaki** bombing rose to a height of 175 miles. Both

cities were practically wiped out. On 14 August **Japan** surrendered unconditionally. Long before the new atomic weapon was used, however, every large industrial city in **Japan** had been bombed into such impotence that the country was incapable of fighting other than a suicidal war, which her service leaders were still prepared to do. The formal surrender was signed on board Halsey's flagship, the **United States** battleship *Missouri*, in Tokyo Bay at 0908 hours on 2 September 1945, after being delayed for two days by a hurricane. Air Vice-Marshal L. M. Isitt ¹ signed for New Zealand. He had with him as personal assistant Lieutenant I. D. Allingham, RNZNVR, from the *Gambia*, New Zealand's cruiser, commanded by Captain R. A. B. Edwards, CBE, RN, then serving with the **British Pacific Fleet** under Admiral Sir Bruce Fraser.

Units of the British Commonwealth sea, land, and air forces were included in the American armies detailed for the final assault before **Japan's** surrender removed such operations from the planning table. New Zealand was prepared to send a land force of 16,000 men, consisting of a headquarters and two infantry brigades, as part of a combined British Commonwealth organisation. She also agreed to the despatch of 8320 all ranks of an air component made up of eight fighter squadrons, two bomber reconnaissance, two flying boat and two transport squadrons, with one half-strength bomber reconnaissance and two fighter squadrons in reserve in New Zealand. Final details were never reached, but the broad outline assumed that army units were to be assembled and trained in the **Middle East** and despatched from that theatre. Surrender, however, turned negotiations to the preparation of forces to assist with the occupation of **Japan**, which the **United States** began immediately after 14 August.

Discussions regarding the size and task of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force were long delayed and the subject of lengthy political exchanges beginning in the middle of August 1945, but it was not until 18 December that agreement was reached with the **United States** Government. Even then no public announcement was

made, as the role of the **British Commonwealth Force** and the appointment of its commanders, the countries accepting responsibility, and the size of their respective components had all to be finalised and approved. On 8 January 1946 a statement was released to the New Zealand press stating that a force representing the Dominion would probably sail from **Italy** about the middle of February, but an agreement signed in

¹ AVM Sir Leonard Isitt, KBE, Legion of Merit (US); **Wellington**; born **Christchurch**, 27 Jul 1891; NZ Rifle Bde 1915–16; RFC and **RAF** 1916–19; Deputy Chief of Air Staff, 1943; CAS 1943–46; chairman National Airways Corporation and Tasman Empire Airways.

Tokyo between MacArthur and Lieutenant-General John Northcott of the Australian Military Forces, the first Commander-in-Chief of the British force, covering details of the occupation, was not confirmed by the Government of the **United States** until late in January, thus delaying official announcement of New Zealand's participation. Finally, on 31 January, Northcott announced that a force of 40,000 all ranks representing **Australia**, the **United Kingdom**, New Zealand, and **India** (then still one country and part of the Commonwealth) would take part in the occupation of **Japan**. In February components of the force began to arrive at **Kure**, the former Japanese secret naval base on the south coast of **Honshu**, and for the first time in history an integrated force from British Commonwealth countries assembled in a conquered country. Northcott's force consisted of one brigade each of **United Kingdom**, Australian, New Zealand and Indian troops, and a large headquarters and base organisation, as well as an air component consisting of three squadrons of the **Royal Australian Air Force**, three squadrons of the Royal Air Force, one squadron of the **Royal New Zealand Air Force**, and one of the Indian Air Force, with a separate headquarters under Air Vice-Marshal C. A. Bouchier, **RAF**, who was second-in-command to Northcott, and later to Lieutenant-General H. C. H. Robertson when he became Commander-in-Chief. There was also a

small naval port detachment, but destroyer units of the Royal Australian and Royal Indian Navies, though based from time to time on **Kure**, remained under operational command of the Fifth **United States Fleet**.

Component countries were each required to supply their quota of officers and other ranks from the three services for the headquarters of the force. It was the first experiment of its kind and a pointer to future operations requiring small units from the Commonwealth to be co-ordinated under one commander. This took time to reach a workable basis, until the difference between integration and co-operation was understood. Part of the trouble was due to individual directives from governments which were sometimes at variance with the wishes of the BCOF commander, or to the vigorous nationalism which sometimes mitigated against the success it finally achieved.

Australia was selected as the principal supply base for the force in **Japan**, and the initial planning was done from **Melbourne** by a group of senior officers of the three services, representing the four respective countries, known as JCOSA—Joint Chiefs of Staff in **Australia**. Delays in reaching decisions with this organisation added to the early difficulties of the force, which moved into areas completely destroyed by fire and bomb. The country itself, exhausted by years of war, was completely without European amenities except in some of the larger cities. It took years of building to overcome the early disadvantages in the BCOF area, and only when some of the components of the force began to withdraw at the end of the first year were the amenities reaching a desirable state of comfort.

Under the original agreement only one prefecture, that of **Hiroshima**, was allotted to the British Commonwealth Occupation Force, with American forces taking over the remainder of **Japan**. Soon after his arrival, however, Northcott was requested by MacArthur to take over further territory until finally the force, with the approval of each Commonwealth government concerned, occupied nine prefectures—**Hiroshima**, **Yamaguchi**, Tottori, Shimane and Okayama, which made up the whole of the south of **Honshu**, and the four prefectures of the island

of Shikoku. New Zealand's ground forces were assigned to the prefecture of **Yamaguchi**, an area of 2000 square miles containing 1,376,000 Japanese, on the southern tip of **Honshu**. No. 14 Squadron RNZAF, New Zealand's contribution to the air component of BCOF, reached the Inland Sea in the aircraft carrier HMS *Glory* on 23 March and flew its planes into Iwakuni, a large Japanese aerodrome on the shores of the Inland Sea, later moving to Bofu, terminal in **Japan** for regular air services from **Australia** and, for a time, from New Zealand. Squadron Leader J. J. de Willimoff, DFC, ¹ commanded the squadron until April 1947, when he was succeeded by Squadron Leader D. F. St. George, DFC, ² who retained command until the unit returned to New Zealand in November 1948. During the New Zealand component's tour of occupation duty a remarkable record was achieved by No. 41 Squadron which, with Dakotas, maintained a weekly service between New Zealand and **Japan** using the route **Whenuapai- Brisbane-Cloncurry-Darwin-Morotai- Manila- Okinawa** to Bofu or Iwakuni. Not one machine was lost in two years of flying over this unpredictable route.

Because of the legal aspect of an occupation force and the powers of the commanding officer, the New Zealand component of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force was known officially as **2 NZEF, Japan**, and familiarly as J Force during the period of organisation. It was commanded by Brigadier K. L. Stewart, CBE, DSO, and built round 9 Infantry Brigade Group. The force, commanded before Stewart took over by Brigadier

¹ Wg Cdr J. J. de Willimoff, MBE, DFC; **Wellington**; born **Auckland**, 14 Feb 1917; farmer; Operations I, Air Dept, 1949-.

² Wg Cdr D. F. St George, DFC; **London**; born **Nelson**, 7 Sep 1919; clerk.

W. G. **Gentry**, ¹ was assembled and trained at **Florence** throughout October and November 1945 from elements of **2 NZEF** remaining in the

Mediterranean theatre after the end of the war in **Europe**. It consisted of a brigade headquarters and the following units and services:

Chief Administrative Officer	Lt-Col W. S. McKinnon
2 Divisional Cavalry Regiment	Lt-Col D. MacIntyre, DSO
22 Battalion	Lt-Col W. B. Thomas, DSO, MC
27 Battalion	Lt-Col G. P. Sanders, DSO
25 Field Battery	Maj J. F. Spring
5 Engineer Company	Maj D. A. Hudson
Signal Company	Maj V. P. Missen
19 ASC Company	Maj H. W. Barnett, MBE
16 Workshops	Maj J. M. Wilson
6 General Hospital	Lt-Col K. R. Archer
Nursing Services	Matron A. G. Shewan

While the units and services were assembling, Stewart flew to New Zealand for political and service consultations, leaving Sanders in command and to accompany the force to **Japan** by sea. The majority of the men were non-volunteers of the 14th and 15th Reinforcements who had reached **Italy** as hostilities in **Europe** ended. Leave had been generous at New Zealand clubs established in the best hotels, discipline was relaxed, and the interminably delayed departure from **Italy** only lowered morale and added to a feeling of indifference in the expedition. Stewart had endeavoured to overcome the impatience of delay by issuing a reasoned statement to all ranks of the force, part of which read:

After the surrender of **Japan**, New Zealand was asked by the British Government to furnish a brigade group as part of the British Commonwealth force for the occupation of **Japan**. Our country is much concerned in Pacific Ocean affairs and for this reason, and also as its contribution towards the Empire post-war commitments, the **New Zealand Government** agreed to the British request. **Jayforce** was accordingly formed and preparations made for its despatch to **Japan**. The occupation of **Japan** has hitherto been an American responsibility, with General MacArthur as the Supreme Allied Commander. For some time there has been an agreement in principle that a British force would share in the occupation. Agreement as to details took longer to reach

than was anticipated. There was further delay waiting for the formal approval of the USA Government. This has now been given and the British Empire forces are moving to **Japan**.

The force sailed from **Naples** in the *Strathmore* on 21 February 1946 and reached **Kure**, the BCOF port and base in **Japan**, on 29 March, where it disembarked two days later. Because of an

¹ **Maj-Gen W. G. Gentry**, CBE, DSO and bar, m.i.d., MC (Greek), Bronze Star (US); **Lower Hutt**; born **London**, 20 Feb 1899; Regular soldier; commanded 6 NZ Inf Bde, Sep 1942-Apr 1943; DCGS (NZ) Jul 1943-Jul 1944; commanded 9 Bde (**Italy**) Feb 1945-Jan 1946; DCGS Jul 1946-Nov 1947; Adjutant-General Apr 1949-Mar 1952; Chief of the General Staff, Apr 1952-.

outbreak of measles no leave was permitted at **Colombo**, **Singapore**, or **Hong Kong**, where some of the patients were put ashore for hospital treatment. Stewart flew to **Japan** from New Zealand to meet the force and established his headquarters at **Chofu**, near the sea port of **Shimonoseki**, in former Japanese barracks adjoining a large steel works, with almost half the force ultimately quartered in the town of **Yamaguchi** itself, some miles away. Until quarters were available to them, hospital units and the Divisional Cavalry remained on the island of Etajima, in buildings of the Japanese naval academy, finally taken over as headquarters of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force when a move was made from **Kure** the following May.

Yamaguchi, an old university town of some historical interest, contained flimsy Japanese barracks which were reconditioned to house the units stationed there. It also accommodated a large Education and Rehabilitation service under Major K. I. Armour, and later a radio station serving the New Zealand area. Units were at first widely scattered throughout the prefecture, with detachments quartered at vital points on an operational basis. New Zealand also took over two of the Japanese repatriation centres, one at **Senzaki** and the other at Otake, and also maintained posts at selected coastal towns in an effort to prevent the

infiltration of Koreans moving into **Japan** by sea under cover of darkness. Through these two posts, and a small one at **Shimonoseki**, New Zealand units supervised the repatriation of almost 300,000 Japanese soldiers and illegal Korean immigrants. Strong patrols combed the whole prefecture, uncovering stores of hidden arms and reporting any war supplies for destruction, since one of the major objectives of occupation was to remove all war potential. Another important patrol task was to ensure that occupation directives were enforced, particularly in schools, and to supervise local body and parliamentary elections.

The majority of the first New Zealand component of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force consisted of non-volunteers, who were not vastly interested in demonstrating to a conquered people the democratic way of life, another of the objectives of the occupation policy. Circumstances helped to provoke this attitude. Conditions at first were not all the men had been led to believe by some ill-advised advance publicity, and the drab and dreary barracks and camp areas, after the delights of **Italy**, caused a slump in morale which was not overcome until the first troops were relieved by volunteers from New Zealand the following June, July, and August. As in all other areas occupied by the British Commonwealth force, that allotted to the New Zealand component was devastated by years of war and there were no amenities of any kind. It was a difficult period. Supplies were short, **Japan** was far from the principal Commonwealth centres, and there was little shipping to spare. The Japanese economy also aggravated the situation. Troops could not enter public restaurants or hotels as they had done so freely in **Italy** to add change to a monotonous army diet, and for their own protection they were forbidden to buy Japanese foods, of which the Japanese themselves were acutely short. Apart from that the Japanese method of using human excreta as fertiliser for all growing crops made the purchase of fresh vegetables most undesirable, consequently there was little variety in the army diet, bulky and sufficient though it undoubtedly was.

There were no leave centres ready, though such organisations as the

YMCA, under Mr. A. K. Thompson, the acting commissioner, did what they could to meet the needs of those not interested in the Japanese landscape or arts, and they made up the majority. One of the controversial problems was fraternisation. Northcott never issued an order against fraternisation with the Japanese, but he did issue a directive which threw the responsibility for behaviour on the individual. All members of the occupation force were asked to be firm but just and decent, and to maintain the dignity and honour of the British Commonwealth.¹ In general, the adoption of this attitude developed among the Japanese a respect for the members of the force, and New Zealanders rarely departed from it.

Some thousands of Japanese, both men and women, employed by the force as servants and labourers, watched closely the bearing and conduct of the men of all ranks, and it was this personal behaviour which conveyed the idea of democracy to the Japanese as nothing else did among the masses. Close contact with the Japanese people was difficult for a number of reasons and in many instances undesirable. One of the factors was the insuperable language barrier; another was the high incidence of venereal disease and tuberculosis among the poorer farming, labouring, and artisan classes which constituted the majority of the people in the British Commonwealth Occupation Force area. These were the greatest arguments against fraternisation, but healthy contacts were made with Japanese employees, shopkeepers, and

¹ Part of this directive read: 'Every member of BCOF must bear in mind that ... in dealing with the Japanese, he is dealing with a conquered enemy who, by making war against us, has caused deep suffering and loss in many thousands of homes throughout the British Empire. Your relations with this defeated enemy must be guided by your own individual good judgment and your sense of discipline. You must be formal and correct. You must not enter their homes or take part in their family life. Your unofficial dealings with the Japanese must be kept to a minimum.'

dealers and officials, and an undefined working arrangement was ultimately achieved which had the desired results and at the same time overcame a tortured problem. But for constant vigilance on the part of authority, the health of the occupation troops would have suffered more than it did. The venereal disease rate caused considerable concern. It was highest among the Maori members of the New Zealand force, their percentage being eight times greater than among European members.

Soon after settling in, and in conformity with the other components of the force, **2 NZEF, Japan**, embarked on an ambitious programme of building new barracks and reconditioning old ones, as well as providing buildings for clubs and recreation centres. All such supplies were provided from Japanese sources, paid for by the **Japanese Government** and obtained under procurement—a system which led to irritating delay, since all projects had first to be forwarded to BCOF Headquarters for consolidation. They were then passed on to American Eighth Army Headquarters for processing, as all service units in **Japan**, American and British, had embarked on similar programmes. This called for immense quantities of materials of all kinds, from timber to household furnishings. Ultimately, however, the programme began to take shape. Hotels were taken over as leave centres in some of the most interesting and attractive parts of **Japan**; gift shops for the purchase of souvenirs of Japanese origin were opened, as well as generously stocked canteens which ended the era of rationing such goods; clubs were established in each centre, and touring concert parties provided entertainment, in addition to the ubiquitous film. Unfortunately, this programme was not fulfilled until some of the earlier arrivals had returned to their respective countries, including the first New Zealanders, and the initial shortages led to inevitable comparisons with the apparent plenty to be seen in American organisations.

In an effort to provide some relief from camp life, **2 NZEF** Headquarters selected a beautiful stretch of sandy beach backed by pine trees and established among them a tented rest centre, which was named Waikuku. It was only a few miles from **Chofu** and enjoyed a

deserved popularity. Further relief came later when a scheme was inaugurated whereby one battalion from the British Commonwealth Occupation Force took over guard duty in **Tokyo**, units succeeding each other in rotation. Troops were quartered for their month's tour of duty in Ebisu Barracks, in the city, and were able to see something of the Japanese capital and neighbouring scenic resorts and tourist attractions during their periods off duty. This periodical move to **Tokyo**, which also enabled them to meet men from other components, prevailed until the New Zealand component was withdrawn, and in that short time they established a reputation for smartness and efficiency which was rarely equalled, and against whose neatness and precision of movement the corresponding American guards looked careless and a little weary.

One of the most disturbing features of the occupation, particularly during its early period, was the operation of the black market, which was partly the fault of an unfair rate of exchange—a rate so low that servicemen were unable to purchase anything other than a few necessities at their own canteens. The Japanese, so acutely short of such essentials as clothing, sugar, tobacco, matches, soap and bread, willingly gave more than the market value for these commodities, which brought one hundred times their value when sold surreptitiously. Officers were not exempt from such transactions. Periodical increases in the rate of exchange eased black market traffic in canteen supplies, but never entirely wiped it out, even when the yen rate was raised from 60 to more than 1000 to the £ sterling.

In accordance with prior planning, the men who arrived from **Italy** were replaced as soon as possible by volunteers recruited in New Zealand. The first relief of 1605 all ranks reached **Japan** in June 1946 in the *Empire Pride* and the remainder in the *Chitral* in August. By 18 August, except for volunteers who remained from the original force, the change-over was complete. At the end of June Brigadier L. Potter reached **Japan** to take over command from Stewart, which he did on 6 July and, with the exception of a leave period in New Zealand when he was relieved by Brigadier S. H. **Crump**,¹ retained command until the force was

withdrawn.

Originally **2 NZEF, Japan**, was organised for an operational role, but conditions were such, with an almost hearty acceptance by the Japanese of the occupying forces and their regime, that a revision of establishments was necessary to conform to a static role and the regrouping of units in concentrated areas. This revision was done by Lieutenant-Colonel R. A. **Hogan**,² who was sent to **Japan** by Army Headquarters in August. At no time was the New Zealand component called upon to subdue or prevent uprisings or demonstrations of force against the occupation, one of the more impressive achievements of which, in the New

¹ **Brig S. H. Crump**, CBE, DSO, m.i.d., Bronze Star (US); **Lower Hutt**; born Dunedin, 25 Jan 1889; Regular soldier; NZASC 1915–19; CRASC, 2 NZ Div, 1940–45; commanded **2 NZEF (Japan)** Jun-Sep 1947; on staff of HQ BCOF and NZ representative on Disposals Board in **Japan**, 1948–49.

² **Lt-Col R. A. Hogan**, OBE, ED; **Wellington**; born **Auckland**, 14 Jun 1892; sales manager; NZ Fd Arty 1916–18; Director of Mobilization, Army HQ, 1942–46

Zealand as in other areas, was the work of the Provost Courts. These were established to try Japanese who had committed offences against the force, most of them petty and concerned with theft. Japanese offenders were permitted to have members of the force as defending counsel, and in these concrete demonstrations of British justice the democratic ideal was conveyed to them so that they could readily understand it. New Zealand also carried democracy a little further by the institution of children's sessions in the courts, and by setting up committees of parents to exercise some control over child delinquents.

With the change-over to young and enthusiastic volunteers, a different atmosphere pervaded the force and prevailed until it was withdrawn. This was confirmed by a senior battalion commander in his

evidence during a court of inquiry in September 1946, which fully investigated complaints, the state and behaviour of the force and its clothing and equipment, much of this last brought from **Italy** and in poor condition after years of use. 'The dogged determination to do as little as possible and to be as troublesome as possible has disappeared,' he said. The later arrivals, as is inevitable in such circumstances, enjoyed the benefits and comforts which had been planned earlier and which permitted regular periods of leave at such holiday resorts as Kawana, **Kobe**, Kyoto and Chuzenji. Among its many commitments New Zealand was responsible for the staffing of a series of hotels which were taken over in the thermal seaside city of Beppu, on the island of Kyushu, and for providing certain staff members, both men and women, for other leave centres and clubs throughout **Japan**. Competitive sport was encouraged and enabled members of the New Zealand component to meet teams from other components in Rugby, tennis, swimming, and athletic championships.

After almost two and a half years as part of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force, the New Zealand component was withdrawn in September 1948. By that time there had been many changes in command and numbers of replacements among unit personnel. Headquarters closed at **Chofu** on 7 August and moved to Camp Wellington in readiness for departure. This was a new camp, only recently completed, and was handed over to an American detachment.

The Air Force representatives remained with BCOF until 31 March 1949, when No. 14 Squadron vacated Bofu, to which it moved when the air units were reorganised after the departure of the **United Kingdom** and Indian air force squadrons. All United Kingdom units, both army and air, were the first to be withdrawn; **India** followed soon after her division to two separate states was achieved. When New Zealand withdrew only the Australian component remained of the original force to represent the British Commonwealth.

In addition to **2 NZEF**, **Japan**, and No. 14 Squadron RNZAF, New

Zealand was represented in all branches of the headquarters of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force by officers and other ranks. A small sub-base organisation established in [Tokyo](#) in Empire House, opposite the Imperial Palace, to watch the interests of the Commander-in-Chief there and maintain close liaison with the headquarters of the Supreme Commander, also became a New Zealand responsibility, its first commander being Colonel L. W. Thornton, OBE. ¹

The New Zealander, with few exceptions, made a reliable soldier for occupation duty—a duty which carried with it immense privilege and power among a people to whom obedience was implicit. He rarely departed from an attitude of fairness and decency and controlled with ease a population among which, in the [Yamaguchi](#) prefecture, he was outnumbered by 343 to one.

¹ Brig L. W. Thornton, OBE, m.i.d.; [Wellington](#); born [Christchurch](#), 15 Oct 1916; Regular soldier; CO 5 Fd Regt, Jun-Dec 1943; GSO 1 2 NZ Div, 1943–44; CRA 2 NZ Div, 1945; DCGS Apr 1948-Jan 1949; Commandant, Linton Military Camp, Jan 1949-May 1951.

THE PACIFIC

CHAPTER 13 – REFLECTIONS

CHAPTER 13

Reflections

THE uncertain state in which 3 New Zealand Division was maintained from its inception, and its removal from the order of battle at the height of its efficiency as an amphibious fighting force, suggest that it was beyond the manpower resources of New Zealand to maintain two divisions in the field, or that the available resources were mishandled and not employed to their greatest advantage.

At the outbreak of war, the state of the Dominion's defences and shortages of military equipment were eloquent proof of the condition into which her armed services had drifted during the years when disarmament replaced preparedness as a political ideal. In 1940, when New Zealand sent a brigade group to garrison **Fiji, the force which was ultimately expanded into **3 Division**, there was not sufficient equipment available either to arm or even properly clothe that small force. Deficiencies were met piecemeal, and over a period of years, from the **United Kingdom** and the **United States**, themselves hard pressed to supply their own increasing needs and those of Allied countries clamouring for more and more armament.**

It is readily admitted that New Zealand's commitments in the **Pacific were undertaken largely at the request of the **United Kingdom** and in fulfilment of agreements reached at the Wellington Conference in 1939 and, after she entered the war, of the **United States**; but the number of formations and headquarters maintained in the Dominion itself from the middle of 1942 and on a diminishing scale until late in 1944 appears to have been excessive. One properly constituted and well-trained division on the home front would have been preferable to three or four incompletely trained and equipped divisions. Had New Zealand maintained one division in the **Pacific** in addition to that in the **Middle East**, instead of scattering her limited resources and at the same time maintaining large forces on the home front, the life of **3 Division** could have been longer and more effective.**

If the Japanese were to be held as far from New Zealand's shores as possible, a policy advocated in 1942–43 by the Chiefs of Staff and common sense, this could have been done only by equipping and maintaining a strong force for the forward zone to give the Americans as much support as possible where they most needed it—that is, to break enemy resistance and destroy his advanced bases, then established as far south as the **Solomons** and in the northern **Gilbert Islands**. Yet in April 1942 New Zealand was asking for six divisions to be stationed in the Dominion itself, in addition to strong forces in **Fiji**; also for fully manned squadrons of aircraft and for service equipment such as tanks and artillery. (See also **Appendix II**.) At least two of the divisions and much of the equipment were requested from **America**. Even when American forces began moving in strength into the **Pacific** throughout May–June–July of 1942 and assumed responsibility for the defence of several island groups, on which they established a series of interlocking bases as far north as the **New Hebrides**, and even after the victories of Coral Sea and Midway, New Zealand was slow in realising that she was no longer directly menaced.

There were times, too, when New Zealand's demands for men and material to defend her as yet unmolested shores seemed to ignore the more pressing needs of actual and vital battle fronts, though no doubt the lack of intelligence concerning Japanese intentions influenced all Allied planning.

It was increasingly obvious in 1942 that until the American Pacific Fleet was annihilated and such intervening island groups as the **New Hebrides**, **New Caledonia**, and **Fiji** captured and consolidated by the Japanese, there could be little danger to New Zealand except from hit-and-run raids, either by surface craft or submarines. After the Battle of Midway, all Japanese plans for any advance farther south were abandoned and even submarine activity in the **Pacific** was undertaken on a reducing scale. Many formations in New Zealand might have been disbanded in 1942–43, when the force of the Japanese drive was blunted and her initiative lost, and the men used to maintain a full-strength

division capable of undertaking important roles with admirably trained and highly disciplined troops. But at no time, with her limited manpower so widely dispersed and so cautiously used, could New Zealand support two full-strength divisions on active service, particularly after she was committed to a policy of air force expansion to twenty squadrons in the **Pacific**.

With only two brigades, **3 Division** could not be employed interchangeably with an American division of three regiments—the equivalent of brigades in the British Army. Consequently it was assigned to smaller, individual tasks which, although they tested the organising ability and peculiar self-reliant qualities of the New Zealander, prevented it from being employed in major undertakings. As military operations these tasks were never really serious, but strategically they were important in a campaign of by-passing which reduced the loss of life and avoided the waste of essential materials, at that time so difficult to obtain. Had they not been undertaken by New Zealand formations (and the same applies to the **RNZAF** elements employed) units of 14 US Corps or 1 US **Marine Amphibious Corps** would have been diverted, with a consequent reduction in their efficiency by dispersal. This also would have so delayed the **Solomons** campaign that enemy resistance would have stiffened and thus prolonged all subsequent action.

The existence of **3 Division** seems to have been governed primarily by a desire to use its presence in the campaign as a bargaining factor at the end of the war, but there is no doubt that Fraser sincerely desired to maintain it in the **Pacific** to aid the Americans, since it was evidence of the Dominion's increasing prestige and prominence as a **Pacific** power. He was influenced, no doubt, in its ultimate withdrawal and disposal by the desire of Churchill and Roosevelt, supported by Puttick, to retain **2 Division** in **Italy** until the end of hostilities in **Europe**. On 4 August 1944, after a lengthy and closely-reasoned appreciation, Puttick recommended the Minister of Defence to disband the remaining cadres of **3 Division** and retain **2 Division**, a recommendation which was in accordance with the wishes of the war leaders and the British Chiefs of

Staff. (See [Appendix IX.](#))

Even after the Division was withdrawn from the forward zone, so that men could be diverted to industry on the home front for the production of increased food supplies for the American Pacific forces and the [United Kingdom](#), manpower was wasted and frustrated waiting upon a decision from [London](#) on the future employment of New Zealand's forces in the continuation of the war with [Japan](#).

During the whole of its existence [3 Division](#) was inevitably overshadowed by [2 Division](#), whose prestige as a fighting force was high and attracted the publicity it richly deserved. Nor was there any desire by men of [2 Division](#) to return to New Zealand and serve in the [Pacific](#), where conditions were as unattractive as they possibly could be. The waste of shipping involved in transporting troops already deployed from one theatre to another was perhaps the decisive factor.

In the [Pacific](#), New Zealanders for the first time fought the jungle as well as the Japanese in conditions where there is no substitute for individual courage, for the jungle exhausts men mentally and physically and throws a great responsibility on the individual soldier. Elements of [3 Division](#) fought on heavily timbered islands which had never previously known war except among scattered tribes of naked savages using bows, arrows, and spears. In the [Pacific](#) there were no distractions of civilisation, which was one of the factors contributing to the division's high standard of discipline. Their own companions of the unit and the battle were their only companions; their only possible expeditions were to innocuous beach or forest or neighbouring service establishments. Even in [New Caledonia](#), the island where they found the nearest approach to the amenities of their own civilisation, they remained in the isolated regions which make that island a most perfect army training ground, for the climate is superb and vast tracts of hill and plain, as well as beach, river and forest, are available over which to exercise troops, armour and artillery.

Barrowclough's task, as frustrating as any New Zealand commander

has been called on to undertake, was made more exacting and involved by perplexing changes and lack of resources which would have reduced to impotence a leader less resilient and resolute. Outwardly unemotional and completely free from displays of temperament or showmanship, his logical mind and inflexible character enabled him to overcome great difficulties. His brigades were often separated by leagues of ocean and his whole command dispersed over thousands of miles, a condition which contributed little to the smooth functioning of the force. His tact and discretion enabled him to adapt himself, with the least noticeable discord, to the too rigid rules of the American high command which, when issuing operation orders, leave subordinate commanders little or no freedom to meet any tactical situations as they present themselves.

Barrowclough's 'charter', which placed him under Army Headquarters, did not allow him the authority accorded the GOC of **2 NZEF** in the **Middle East**. **Freyberg** was given authority to communicate directly with the New Zealand Government on policy decisions, the use of troops, and on training and administration, and he did so frequently in despatches to the Prime Minister. Only in the most exceptional circumstances was Barrowclough permitted to communicate direct with the Prime Minister and, except in the gravest emergency, he could not employ his force without reference to New Zealand. This meant, of course, that he was unable to act without constant communication with Army Headquarters in **Wellington**.

One predominant aspect of the **Solomons** campaign was the proved ability of the American and New Zealand servicemen— representatives of two peoples differing widely in outlook, temperament and tradition, and often in their interpretation of service language, despite a common tongue—to work together without confusion, dissension, or recrimination. New Zealand components of all three services worked under senior American command with an understanding as complete as with people of the Commonwealth itself. This was stressed again and again by commanding officers and proved by the lack of friction during both planning and execution of any operation. ¹ New Zealand forces

worked as part of the **South Pacific Command**, but in individual action New Zealanders frequently commanded American units. On more than one occasion Barrowclough had under his authority more American servicemen than New Zealanders, not only of the Army but of Navy and Air Force. As 'island commander', which under the American system he became as each island was captured and consolidated, he was responsible for all servicemen and service functions to the **South Pacific Command**, through corps or task force commanders. Never once was his authority questioned, nor did New Zealand question American authority. Only once did Barrowclough ask Wilkinson to replace an American officer, and this was done at the request of his own people. Senior American officers, particularly Harmon, Fitch, Breene and Wilkinson, expressed the greatest confidence in the ability of the New Zealanders, and at the time the division was withdrawn from an active role, considered it the most efficient striking force in the **South Pacific Command**. By that time the whole division, with its thousands of tons of stores, equipment and transport, could be prepared in a few days for an operational move by landing craft to any island.

The division evolved a system of training, tactics, and maintenance, proved by the test of actual experience over a period of years, which should be invaluable for future guidance. Each succeeding action revealed that troops engaged in amphibious operations among groups of tropical islands require equipment undreamed of in land combat—small landing craft for the use of senior officers, specially designed wireless equipment to overcome the peculiar difficulties of communication in the jungle, a special habitable boat for the divisional commander, a revised list of transport for island warfare where landing craft are often more necessary than motor vehicles, special clothing for the jungle and the heat, and special foods to overcome the exhaustion of heat and fatigue. That Barrowclough trained his division to a high state of efficiency was proved by the despatch with which its tasks were completed, reduced casualty lists which could have been much higher with less competent troops, and the emergence of the whole force from its engagements as knowledgeable and proficient in jungle and amphibious operations, in

the opinion of the American command, as any troops in the **Pacific**. The fighting in the **Solomons** tested the individual, his initiative and stamina, as no other form of warfare did. There was no support from massed artillery or aircraft as in the later years in **Europe**. Actions were limited and restricted, often fought at close quarters with rifle, automatic weapon, grenade or revolver; and the country was such that working in anything other than small groups would have caused unnecessary waste of life.

It is impossible to write of New Zealand's commitments and action in the **Pacific** without reference to the broad plans of the American command. Nor can this be done without comparison in numbers and equipment, for by comparison, and without disparagement, New Zealand's contribution in men and equipment was not great, though what her fighting men of all three services lacked in numbers they made up in fortitude and enterprise. Credit must also be given to American generosity in the supply of material and equipment. They were issued to Barrowclough without hesitation if he required them, even though, on occasion, the Americans were themselves short because of losses in transit. The Pacific war was fought not only on a lend-lease basis but with an even-handed distribution of service material which revealed the mutual esteem and admiration of one nation for another, and perhaps indicated a future policy for both.

All operations in the earlier stages of the South Pacific war were governed by time, space, and limited resources. There were never sufficient men or equipment to mount an overwhelming offensive; the whole campaign was conducted with an economy which made its ultimate success all the more meritorious. If landing craft were lost in an action or by storms they could not be replaced. Reserves of men and material were held on islands hundreds of miles away from the scene of action. During the greater part of 1943, perhaps the most critical year in the **Solomons**, the **South Pacific Command** was restricted to the use of only eight transports and four cargo ships with which to move and supply the whole of the forces engaged on islands north of **New**

Caledonia. Supply was an ever-recurring problem, for the Americans required six tons of equipment for every fighting man and one additional ton a month to maintain him in action. The New Zealanders, more economical by nature and necessity in the use of material, got along with a lot less.

Another difficulty in the advance through the **Solomons** was the lack of reliable intelligence information. This was hard to obtain, but for individual actions it was sought by landing small groups of officers and men at night from submarine, motor torpedo boat, or canoe to interrogate natives and reconnoitre the proposed assault areas. Little information was revealed by captured Japanese.

New Zealand ground forces played no part in the battle for **Guadalcanal**, which will be regarded by future historians as one of the critical battles of history, but her air force and, to a lesser degree, units of her navy, aided the Americans in their initial assault on **Japan's** outer bastion in the **Solomons**. Fijian scouts, led by New Zealand officers and non-commissioned officers, entered the battle there and went on to **New Georgia** with **14 Corps**, but **3 Division** was not committed until the final stages of the conquest of that group.

One of the more unfortunate aspects of campaigning in the **Pacific**, particularly in the opinion of the men in the ranks in the earlier days of the war, was the public attitude towards those who had served there. This was no doubt due to the lack of publicity which, correctly interpreted and efficiently distributed, would have informed public opinion on activities in the **Pacific**. No publicity was extended to the division until long after it was established in **New Caledonia**. This lack of attention by the press and radio irked most of the men and no doubt added considerably to their sense of frustration.

As yet the importance of the **Pacific** war has been insufficiently understood, since it was overshadowed by the European and **Mediterranean** campaigns. Not until the years adjust them to their proper perspective will the **Pacific** campaign be fitted correctly into its

¹ The amicable relations which existed at all times between the commander of **3 Division** and the senior members of Halsey's staff are revealed by this action of Major-General Breene, head of the American Service of Supply in the South Pacific and always a good friend to all New Zealanders. Late in 1943 Breene's headquarters issued a memorandum drawing attention to the wasteful and extravagant practice of overdrawing rations, and listing some American formations and **3 Division** as the worst offenders. As it was addressed to every unit in the **South Pacific Command**, **3 Division**'s apparent shortcomings were given wide and adverse publicity. The document was not delivered officially to divisional headquarters, but Americans under Barrowclough's command gleefully and maliciously quoted it to members of his staff. A serious mistake had been made at Breene's headquarters. Before leaving **New Caledonia** to go north, the usual three months' reserve of hard rations which the division was required to hold had been vouchered over to the relieving American division and a fresh supply drawn at **Guadalcanal**. This had been done by arrangement with Breene to conserve shipping space, but the transaction had been overlooked by his staff. When Barrowclough wrote a friendly note to Breene pointing out the obvious error, his reaction was characteristic. He signalled an apology to Barrowclough, circulated a new memorandum to every addressee omitting the name of the New Zealand Division, and ordered the destruction of the earlier one. Not content with that he flew 2000 miles from **New Caledonia** to express his regret personally to Barrowclough, and also asked whether there was anything further he could do to make amends. Barrowclough reminded him that in the effort to complete the airfields on **Nissan Island** the whole command, New Zealand and American, had been deprived of camp equipment and all amenities in order to provide extra shipping space for vital military stores and equipment. The men had had nothing to drink except water distilled from the sea. Within two days Breene sent a special shipment of beer to the island, and a wet canteen was immediately opened there for all New Zealand and American servicemen.

THE PACIFIC

APPENDIX I

Appendix I

Barrowclough's special order, published on 19 October 1944 at Manurewa, disbanding 3 NZ Division:

The greater part of 2 NZEF IP has now been dispersed in one way or another and the Third New Zealand Division Headquarters will cease to function as from 1700 hours on 20 October 1944. The manner of our dispersal has unfortunately prevented me from speaking personally to more than a handful of you and I am unable to say goodbye except through the medium of this special order. Even that will fail to reach many of those to whom I would have wished to speak.

I want to tell you how proud I have been of the Division and the whole of its Base organisation. It was not my privilege to command the Force from its inception nor to have any part in its initial training. It was my good fortune to command it when the supreme test of battle tried out the value of that initial training, and I am eternally indebted to Generals Cunningham and Mead and to all of you for the fine spirit and stern discipline which was so manifestly engendered in the early days of your existence. A commander owes everything to his troops. His own reputation depends so utterly and entirely on their behaviour in action. I very gratefully acknowledge your courage and devotion to duty and the uniformly high standards you established in the performance of every task it was my duty to call upon you to perform.

For most of you the war is not yet over and your services may be required in another theatre. It is a matter of regret that this further service will not be with the Division nor with the units for which we have so warm a love and regard. This is as inevitable as it is regretful. I know, however, you are qualified to take your place in any formation to which you may be posted and that you will serve therein with credit to

**yourselves and to your new units. My own interest in ex-members of 3
New Zealand Division and its ancillary services will never wane and I
shall regard it as my pleasing duty to further your interests in any way I
can. I wish you the best of good fortune—for the rest of the war and
afterwards.**

(sgd) H. E. BARROWCLOUGH,

Major-General,

GOC 3 NZ Division

THE PACIFIC

APPENDIX II

Appendix II

APPEALS FOR ASSISTANCE

Cable message from the Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. Peter Fraser, to the Rt. Hon. Winston Churchill, care of the British Embassy, Washington, despatched from Wellington on 24 December 1941:

The New Zealand Government have from time to time called attention to the strategic importance of **Fiji**, not only to New Zealand but to the British Commonwealth and its Allies. In accordance with the responsibility which we accepted for the defence of that territory we have, as you perhaps know, had a Brigade Group of New Zealand troops stationed there for a lengthy period, and we have done what lay in our power to strengthen the defences of the territory. Recent events in the **Pacific**, including the crippling of the **United States Pacific Fleet** at **Pearl Harbour**, the loss of HMS *Prince of Wales* and HMS *Repulse*, the violent and successful attacks by the Japanese upon **Malaya**, the **Philippines**, **Hong Kong**, **Guam**, and Wake Island have, in our opinion, increased both the probability of an attack on **Fiji** and its importance to the general scheme of Allied defence in a degree that can scarcely be exaggerated. If, as indicated by Mr. Duff Cooper in his telegrams conveying the recommendations of the recent **Singapore Conference** (which have now been approved by the Chiefs of Staff and His Majesty's Government in the **United Kingdom**) and as indicated in the recent Chiefs of Staff appreciation of the general situation, it has become essential to reinforce the **Far East** from **America**, then the retention of **Fiji** becomes, in our opinion, absolutely essential, especially as regards reinforcements by air which, at the moment, would appear to be completely impracticable without that base.

As you may perhaps know also, the New Zealand Government, at the

suggestion and with the co-operation of the **United States**, are hastening to the utmost of their power the extension of **Nandi** aerodrome in **Fiji** which is, of course, intended as an essential landing ground for air reinforcements crossing the **Pacific** from the **United States**. This aerodrome; unless properly defended, becomes not an asset but a distinct liability, and while the New Zealand Government can and will despatch immediately to **Fiji** another Brigade Group of troops, they would regard this reinforcement as inadequate for the task while they themselves are quite unable to send more. Further, with conditions as they are, the New Zealand Government would be quite unable to equip the troops that they can send. We have already despatched a substantial proportion of our very exiguous air defences to **Fiji**. We have sent the only (four) heavy AA guns and the only (four) Bofors guns which we possess, and we have denuded ourselves, to a degree which causes us the gravest concern for the safety of this Dominion, of such artillery and other equipments as are required in **Fiji**, but this, despite the risk to the Dominion, is also quite inadequate. A list of the Army deficiencies in New Zealand itself, the supply of which is urgently required, is set out in my immediately following telegram. Lists of Naval and Air deficiencies will follow as soon as possible. In two further telegrams addressed to-day to the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, repeated to the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of **Australia**, to the Governor of **Fiji**, and to the New Zealand Naval Liaison Officer at **Washington** for the information of the Joint Staff Mission, and to you, a list of what we consider to be the minimum requirements at **Fiji** has been set out. While I do hesitate to trouble you in the midst of your many preoccupations, I would most strongly urge you to impress upon President Roosevelt the extreme importance of **Fiji**, not solely or primarily as an outpost of the defence of New Zealand, but as an essential link with the **United States** in the general Allied scheme of operations in the **Pacific** and the **Far East**, and to request him to provide as quickly and as completely as possible the deficiencies set out in the list, as well as the list of New Zealand deficiencies.

Early offensive action by the substantial **United States** Pacific Fleet

still available would, of course, immediately assist the general situation, but until the British and **United States** Fleets are in a position to reassert naval supremacy in the **Pacific** we are definitely up against a tough proposition in this area. No one here is dismayed and we will overcome our present difficulties, but this matter of equipment both for **Fiji** and New Zealand we regard as, in the strongest sense of the word, vital, and I do urge you to give it your personal and immediate consideration.

Another telegram to Mr. Churchill, setting out the equipment required for the New Zealand Military Forces, followed the same day and asked for the following:

List of equipment required by New Zealand Military Forces:

	ARMY	HOME GUARD
Rifles	19,310	28,516
Light MGs	2,067	627
Vickers MGs	243	10
3-inch Mortars	118	32
2-[inch] [Mortars]	476	
Field and light artillery guns	39	35
60-pounders	4	
Anti-tank	86	
Heavy AA guns	20	
Light [AA] [guns]	70	
Coast artillery, 6-inch and above	9	
Coast artillery, 4-inch	2	
Armed Motor Torpedo Boats	8	
Coast Artillery Searchlights	10	
Field Signal cable	5,599 miles	
Telephones	1,016	
Switchboards	273	
Wireless sets	818	

On 25 December Fraser despatched another signal to **London** detailing this list of equipment required for **Fiji**:

ARMY

Rifles	3,920
Light MGs	142
Vickers MGs	36
3-inch Mortars	18
2-[inch] [Mortars]	24
Thompson Sub-MGs	98
6-inch Howitzers	2
60-pounders	4
Anti-tank guns	12
[Anti-tank] rifles	120
Heavy AA Guns	24
Light [AA] [Guns]	24
6-inch Coast Artillery gun	2
Tanks	60
AA Searchlights	24
Coast Artillery Searchlights	4
Field Signal cable	31 miles
Telephones	26
Switchboards	8
Wireless sets	23
Sea mines	300
Patrol boats, fully equipped	4
Minelayer, small	1

AIR

Two reconnaissance bomber squadrons each of 18 aircraft

27 Fighters

4 Radio Direction Finding sets.

On 27 December a further signal was sent to Mr. Churchill containing deficiencies in Naval and Air equipment, and asking that 171 light tanks be added to the list of Army deficiencies sent on 24 December. The more important parts of this message read:

Naval requirements:

A detailed list of deficiencies in vessels (which include 13 port minesweepers, 15 port anti-submarine vessels, 12 Fairmile motor

launches, and 7 ocean convoy anti-submarine vessels) and Naval equipment is being despatched to the Admiralty (repeated to New Zealand Naval Liaison Officer, **Washington**). Attention is, however, drawn to the urgent necessity for the completion of all orders for RDF (Naval) equipment placed with the New Zealand Supply Mission, and particularly of motor generators.

Air requirements:

A: Equipment required for **Fiji (as recommended in my telegram dated 25 December) which might be procured from American sources:**

Bomber reconnaissance squadrons 2; Fighter squadron 1; Catalina squadron 1; RDF sets 4.

These squadrons to be fully equipped to the normal operational scale, plus appropriate reserves of aircraft and engines, all necessary maintenance and handling equipment, including transport and arms for personnel. (The arrival of the above bombers will permit the return to New Zealand of 12 Hudsons out of the aircraft stationed in **Fiji.) Bombs and ammunition for the above squadrons to appropriate scale. (Details of the above must depend upon aircraft types to be provided and the aircraft strengths of squadrons.)**

B: Equipment urgently required and already on order to complete original 1942 programme for New Zealand:

Hudson III 34; Ansons 14; Catalinas 6; Tanker trailers, 900-gallon, 14; rifles 5000; revolvers .38, 700; RDF sets 7.

C: Additional equipment urgently required to bring New Zealand air strength up to four GR squadrons and one flying boat squadron, plus reserves. (This strength is regarded as the minimum necessary to deal with enemy raids but not invasion.):

Hudson III 32, Catalinas 6; tanker trailers 7; and RDF sets 4.

D: Equipment required to enable pilots in future to be operationally

trained in New Zealand as requested by Commander-in-Chief Far East, and also to provide: (i) emergency fighter support for land operations in New Zealand, and (ii) additional bomber effort in such operations:

Hurricane I, or similar American fighter type, 36; Hudson III, or other fairly modern medium bomber type, 24.

By February information had been received from London that a considerable quantity of defence material had been diverted to New Zealand, but on 19 February Fraser despatched a signal to the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs; for Churchill, setting out the immediate defence requirements for New Zealand, pointing out that these were related to the defence of New Zealand against a division of Japanese troops supported by warships and four aircraft carriers. This was an immensely long signal of eight typewritten pages, from which the following are the principal items: [Figures are what New Zealand required, in addition to what she already had or were on the way]

AIR:

Hudson	39 (59 on hand or on way)
Ansons	14
Kittyhawks	72
Beaufighters	48
Medium or torpedo bombers	48
Army Co-operation dive-bombers	24
Catalinas	12
RDF sets	21
900-gallon tanker trailers	28
Bombs: ranging from 500-pounders to 20-pounders	
13,375	
Heavy equipment and earth-moving plant for construction of aerodromes, etc.:	
D8 tractors & carryalls	72
5-ton capacity dump trucks	180
4-ton [capacity] flat top trucks	40

5-seater Sedan cars	12
½ to ¾-ton utility trucks	28
Ditching machines, to cut 24 ins wide	4
Power shovels	8
Road graders	16
Concrete mixers	16
Field lighting sets	32
Electric welding sets	8
Electric field cable	50 miles
Communication Equipment:	
Telephone wire	1000 miles
Five pair leaded cable	200 [miles]
Telephone exchange 20 and 50 connections	18
ARMY: Artillery:	
<i>Coast defence artillery</i>	
9.2-inch guns	9
6-[inch] [guns]	17 (24 in hand)
Fire units for armed motor torpedo boats	6
Searchlights	6 (45 in hand)
<i>Field Artillery</i>	
25- or 18-pounder	23 (101 in hand)
Anti-tank guns	91
Spare barrels	24
Artillery & anti-tank tractors (3 types)	172 (120 in hand)
Theodolites	37
<i>Anti-aircraft Artillery</i>	
Heavy guns	138 (4 in hand)
Light [guns]	252 (4 in hand)
AA Searchlights	189
Predictors Nos. 1, 2, and 3	158 (15 in hand)
Tractors, light and heavy	376 (8 in

3-ton lorries	hand) 183 (15 in hand)
<i>Engineers:</i>	
Air compressors trailer type	28 (3 in hand)
Assault boats	80
Recce [boats]	40
Folding dinghies	10
Lighting sets	18
Pumping [sets]	23
Welding plants	14
Tubular scaffolding sets (3-inch, 10 and 20 ft each)	25
Dynamo exploders	84
Electric cable	17 miles
Anti-tank Contact Mines	100,000
<i>Signals Equipment:</i>	
Electric cable	3,130 miles
Cable-laying apparatus	105
Mechanical cable-layers	68
Switchboards 6- and 10-line	251
Telephone sets (3 types)	1,344 (650 in hand)
Wireless sets	569
Charging sets	61
<i>Army Tank Brigade:</i>	
Armoured Command vehicles	1
Cruiser tanks	2
Valentine [tanks]	26 (30 in hand)
Close-support tanks	18
Carriers (3 types)	48
Scout cars	47
Light tanks for Armoured Regiment	171
Carriers	99
<i>Infantry:</i>	
Rifles	96,270

Bren guns	2,924
Vickers MGs	157
Thompson Sub-MGs	973
Anti-tank rifles	1,398
3-inch Mortars	8
2-[inch] [Mortars]	710
Steel helmets	46,500
Gas respirators	90,900
<i>Ammunition:</i>	
.303 rifle	64,000,000 rounds.
Armour-piercing	2,496,700 [rounds.]
Tracer	2,484,000 [rounds.]
Anti-tank	1,560,500 [rounds.]
Thompson Sub-MG	5,500,000 [rounds.]

NAVY:

- 7 vessels for anti-submarine escort.**
- 8 port anti-submarine vessels.**
- 13 port minesweepers.**
- 2 anti-submarine vessels for **Fiji**.**
- 2 sweepers for **Fiji**.**
- 20 harbour defence motor launches.**
- 100 Oerlikon gun emplacements.**
- 500 pistols.**
- 20 depth-charge throwers.**
- 2 boom defence Asdics.**

Victualling and medical stores for 14 trawlers and 12 Fairmile motor launches constructed in New Zealand.

8 control stations, 42 mine loops, loop minelayer, 11 guard loops, 3 observation stations, 80 observation mines, and 1350 independent mines.

THE PACIFIC

APPENDIX III

Appendix III

DIRECTIVE TO THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE

1. By agreement among the Governments of **Australia**, **New Zealand**, the **United Kingdom**, the **Netherlands**, and the **United States**, the **Pacific Theatre** (see **Annex 1**) is designated an area of **United States** strategic responsibility.
2. The **Pacific Ocean Area**, comprising the **North**, **Central**, and **South Pacific Areas**, has been constituted as defined in **Annex 1**. You are designated as the **Commander-in-Chief** of the **Pacific Ocean Area**, and of all armed forces which the governments concerned have assigned, or may assign, to this area.
3. You will appoint a commander of the **South Pacific Area**, who, acting under your authority and general direction, will exercise command of the combined armed forces which may at any time be assigned that area. You will exercise direct command of the combined armed forces in the **North** and **Central Pacific Areas**.
4. In consonance with the basic strategic policy of the governments concerned, your operations will be designed to accomplish the following:
 - (a) Hold the island positions between the **United States** and the **South West Pacific Area** necessary for the security of the line of communications between those regions; and for supporting naval, air, and amphibious operations against Japanese forces.
 - (b) Support the operations of the forces in the **South West Pacific Area**.
 - (c) Contain Japanese forces within the **Pacific Theatre**.
 - (d) Support the defence of the continent of **North America**.
 - (e) Protect the essential sea and air communications.
 - (f) Prepare for the execution of major amphibious offensives against positions held by **Japan**, the initial offensives to be launched from the **South Pacific Area** and **South West Pacific Area**.
5. You will not be responsible for the internal administration of the respective forces under your command. You are authorised to direct

and co-ordinate the creation and development of administrative facilities and the broad allocation of war materials.

6. You are authorised to control the issue of all communiques concerning the forces under your command.
7. When task forces of your command operate outside the **Pacific Ocean Area**, co-ordination with forces assigned to the area in which operating will be effected by the Joint Chiefs of Staff or the Combined Chiefs of Staff, as appropriate.
8. Commanders of all armed forces within your Area will be immediately informed by their respective governments that, from a date to be notified, all orders and instructions issued by you in conformity with this directive will be considered by such commanders as emanating from their respective governments.
9. Your Staff will include officers assigned by the governments concerned, based upon requests made directly to the national commanders of the various forces in your Area.
10. The governments concerned will exercise direction of operations in the **Pacific Ocean Area** as follows:
 - (a) The Combined Chiefs of Staff will exercise general jurisdiction over grand strategic policy and over such related factors as are necessary for proper implementation, including the allocation of forces and war materials.
 - (b) The Joint **United States** Chiefs of Staff will exercise jurisdiction over all matters pertaining to operational strategy. The Commander-in-Chief, **United States** Fleet, will act as the Executive Agency for the Joint **United States** Chiefs of Staff. All instructions to you will be issued by or through him.
 - (c) The New Zealand Chiefs of Staff will be responsible for the land defence of New Zealand, subject to such strategic decisions affecting this responsibility as may be made by you for the conduct of naval operations in the **Pacific Ocean Area**.

Change September 1942

- (c)
 - (i) In the exercise of command over armed forces which the New Zealand Government has assigned, or may assign, for the local defence of New Zealand, the New Zealand Chiefs of Staff will be the Agency through which such local command is exercised.
 - (ii) In the exercise of command the principles of command as set forth in paragraph 14 of ABC-1 are applicable.
 - (iii) With regard to the possible movement of New Zealand forces

out of New Zealand territory, the following by the **United States Chiefs of Staff** to the President is self-explanatory:

‘Proposals of the **United States Chiefs of Staff** (for operation in the **Pacific Ocean Areas**) made to the President as **United States Commander-in-Chief** are subject to review by him from the standpoint of higher political considerations and to reference by him to the **Pacific War Council** in **Washington** when necessary. The interests of the Nations whose forces or whose land possessions may be involved in these military operations are further safeguarded by the power each Nation retains to refuse the use of its forces for any project which it considers inadvisable.’

Annex I

DIVIDING LINE BETWEEN INDIAN THEATRE AND PACIFIC THEATRE

From Cape Kami in the Luichow Peninsula around the coast of the Tonkin Gulf, **Indo-China**, **Thailand**, and **Malaya** to **Singapore**: from **Singapore** south to the north coast of **Sumatra**, thence round the east coast of **Sumatra** (leaving the Sunda Strait to the eastward of the line) to a point on the coast of **Sumatra** at Longitude 104 degrees East, thence south to Latitude 08 degrees South, thence south-easterly towards Onslow, **Australia**, and on reaching Longitude 110 degrees East, due south along that meridian. The Pacific Theatre extends eastward of this dividing line to the continents of North and South America.

DEFINITION OF SOUTH WEST PACIFIC AREA

The westerly boundary of the South West Pacific Area is the westerly boundary of the Pacific Theatre, the Area including necessary naval and air operational areas off the west coast of **Australia**. The north and east boundaries of the South West Pacific Area run as follows: From Cape Kami (Luichow Peninsula) south to Latitude 20 degrees North: thence east to Longitude 130 degrees East; thence south to the Equator; thence east to Longitude 165 degrees East; south to Latitude 10 degrees South; south-westerly to Latitude 17 degrees South, Longitude 160 degrees

East; thence south.

DEFINITION OF SOUTH EAST PACIFIC AREA

From the Mexican-Guatemala western boundary south-westerly to Latitude 11 degrees North, Longitude 110 degrees West; thence south.

DEFINITION OF THE

The Pacific Ocean Area includes all of the Pacific Theatre not included in the South West and South East Pacific Areas, and is subdivided into the:

NORTH PACIFIC AREA, North of Latitude 42 degrees North;

CENTRAL PACIFIC AREA, between the Equator and Latitude 42 degrees North;

, South of the Equator.

THE PACIFIC

[SECTION]

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5. You will not be responsible for the internal administration of the respective forces under your command. You are authorised to direct and co-ordinate the creation and development of administrative facilities and the broad allocation of war materials.

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 - (c) The New Zealand Chiefs of Staff will be responsible for the land defence of New Zealand, subject to such strategic decisions affecting this responsibility as may be made by you for the conduct of naval operations in the **Pacific Ocean Area**.

Change September 1942

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 - (iii) With regard to the possible movement of New Zealand forces out of New Zealand territory, the following by the **United States** Chiefs of Staff to the President is self-explanatory:

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THE PACIFIC

ANNEX I

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THE PACIFIC

APPENDIX IV

Appendix IV

Letter from General Barrowclough to General Puttick concerning the use of Fijian units with 3 NZ Division and the employment of the division in the forward area:

NZEF IP

24 May 1943

MY DEAR GENERAL

Your letter of 18 May did not reach me till ten o'clock yesterday (Sunday) evening, and I am replying to it at once. Fortunately I had my two senior Brigadiers with me for a conference on other matters and I discussed the situation, in confidence, with them.

I appreciate the extraordinary difficulties which confront the War Cabinet in meeting my demand for troops, and I hope I may be permitted to say how much I appreciate the efforts that are being made by War Cabinet and you personally to implement the policy of bringing this Division up to strength. Tactically and strategically it is unquestionably right to deploy such forces as New Zealand can deploy, in the islands that constitute the outer fringe of our defence. New Zealand cannot be invaded whilst we hold the line **Hawaii, Fiji, Guadalcanal and New Guinea**. On the other hand I fully recognise that whilst we need not mobilise anything but a small garrison for New Zealand, we may have to mobilise a large army of workers to maintain supplies to troops in the island perimeter. It is that factor which causes the difficulty.

I ought to say at once that I should be very happy and proud to accept a Fijian Brigade. **Fiji** recognises the military truism that its best defence is to engage the enemy as far as possible from its own shores. It is prepared to denude its own territory of its own defenders so that they

may be sent forward. It is the more justified in that because there are always Allied troops there. It is a British Colony and its troops should be allowed to serve in a British formation. With all respect I heartily concur in your decision to advise War Cabinet to accept Mitchell's offer of a brigade.

But I feel bound to renew my request that the Fijian Brigade be accepted in addition to and not in substitution for any part of 3rd New Zealand Division. I have not overlooked the manpower difficulties that stand in the way of my proposals. On the information before me it seems practically impossible to maintain both 2nd and 3rd Divisions, especially if the older members of **2nd Division** are to be sent back to New Zealand and be relieved by reinforcements on the very much larger scale that such a policy involves. It seems to me that this raises the very vital question as to whether 3rd Division is always to be regarded as the Cinderella of the Forces and is perpetually to be called on to make, directly and indirectly, the contributions that are necessary for the maintenance of **2nd Division** in the **Middle East** or **Europe**.

What I am about to say may touch on matters of policy, the decision of which rests with War Cabinet and not with me. I disclaim any intention of attempting to usurp the functions of War Cabinet in such matters of policy; but I think War Cabinet would wish me to state certain aspects of this matter as they appeal to the very large number of men whom I represent and for whom I am responsible. I therefore state these aspects in the belief that they may assist War Cabinet in coming to a decision on a matter which is admittedly their function and certainly not mine, though of course I and every man in my command are intensely affected by that decision.

1. The resolution to bring this Division up to full strength has had a very marked effect on the morale of this Force. The belief that we shall eventually be given an active role as distinct from a purely garrison job has resulted in an unbelievable improvement in our state of training and readiness for war. I know that, but for the fact that we are still short of some of our units, we are an infinitely better division than any American division that I have seen—Marines

included. Our physical standards, our tactical knowledge, our willingness and keenness to work, our staff and administrative work, far surpasses that of the American Forces. This is no vain or idle boast. It can be demonstrated to any observer and is virtually admitted by American officers, who are astounded at the vigour of the exercises we are performing in the steep, bush-clad mountains of this Island. There is now a fine unit, brigade, and divisional spirit throughout the Force.

2. I am sure I am correct in saying that the men in this Force want to fight as the 3rd New Zealand Division or the KIWI Division. Whilst many of the men would like to go to the **Middle East** *if there was no prospect of our fighting here*, I am sure none of my units would wish to go if there was a prospect of our getting an active role. I am certain they would not wish to go as reinforcements whose unit organisation would be broken up on arrival in Egypt.
3. If any units are sent from this Division as reinforcements to the **Middle East**, the whole Division would immediately assume that it was no longer regarded as a fighting formation but merely as a reinforcement pool for the more famous **2nd Division**. And it would be a fact that the time when this Division would be ready for action would be inevitably postponed. The period of garrison duty, already overlong, would be prolonged and we should lose a very fine spirit which many of us have laboured night and day to create.
4. This conflict between the manpower demands of the **2nd Division** and of this Division is not unknown to the troops. They have read the newspaper references to it. Now that the North African campaign is over, I think the opinion of the average man in this Force is something to the following effect: 'The **2nd Division** has had an opportunity of showing its worth. It has proved to be the best division in the **Middle East**. We feel from seeing the American divisions out here—that we are at least as good as the best of them. We ought to be given a chance to demonstrate our worth and it is scarcely fair that we should continually be depleted in order to keep the **2nd Division** at full strength.' That, I think, is a fairly generally accepted view amongst my troops.
5. I am sure none of us have anything but pride and affection for the **2nd Division**. All would recognise the fairness of bringing the whole Division back or, alternatively, of bringing back 5 or 6000 at a time. But the troops here would feel that it was unfair that the relief of the **2nd Division** should be carried out at the expense of the 3rd Division. Nor do the men fail to see that this war in the **Pacific** is New Zealand's peculiar interest. I think they feel that as a nation New

Zealand would lose some prestige if its own troops were represented here only in a garrison role. I do earnestly submit for consideration the suggestion that if **2nd Division** has earned a rest (and no doubt a rest has been well earned), it should be given that rest by reduction in its own strength. It may well be proper to give it—for a time—a garrison role. I think I can assure War Cabinet that if the **2nd Division** were less actively employed and 3rd Division were permitted to assume out here its active role, the reputation of the New Zealand soldier would not thereby suffer. It may be thought an advantage that New Zealand troops should come into some prominence in operations directly connected with the defence of their own country.

Sentimentally it may seem harsh to suggest even a temporary reduction in the strength of the **2nd Division**, and no one has a higher sentiment than I have towards that Division in which I had the privilege of serving in its darker days. But I have now a duty to express the sentiments of 3rd Division, which has for long endured all the hardships of rigorous training and absence from home and indeed all the rigours of warfare other than actual battle experience. I would be failing in my duty if I did not stress (what War Cabinet will no doubt already have considered) namely, that it would be a very serious matter if the men who have served in this Force so loyally were, after the war, to be subject to some sort of stigma because they had served only in a second-rate Division.

6. I do not forget that the suggestion is that by the inclusion of the **Fiji Brigade** it may be possible to keep us at fighting strength and give us an active role; but I question very much whether that will really be possible. A Brigade represents only some 2500 men including its own Signals, its Defence Platoon and its LAD, all of which I assume the Fijian Brigade would bring with it. This is a small part of the Division which, with Divisional troops and hospitals and Base organisation totals up to about 17,000 men. If the demands of **2nd Division** proceed on the scale now indicated as possible, it is obvious that we shall be called on to supply not only two battalions of infantry mentioned in your letter but also many other troops, including Artillery, Signals, Army Service Corps, and other technical arms. Inevitably it must be the beginning of the complete disintegration of this Division. We shall never be able to attain complete preparedness for action and could probably never undertake more than a garrison role. At best we might be included as a Brigade Group in some composite American formation.

7. A few of us for years have regarded the bearing of arms in defence of the State as both the duty and the privilege of every citizen of the State. When the war broke out most people recognised it as a duty

though they did not all see it as a privilege. Today, after long and arduous preparation, most of my troops now regard it as a privilege as well as a duty. That privilege has been extended to the **2nd Division** and has been richly and honourably enjoyed. I make a plea that the same privilege be extended to 3rd Division, every man of whom has worked hard to fit himself to enjoy it. If, as seems inevitable, the two Divisions cannot both be maintained in an active role, then I submit that a decision must be taken on the vital question as to whether **2nd Division** (already covered with honours) must always take precedence over 3rd Division which has not yet had one single opportunity of fulfilling its justifiable military ambitions.

In conclusion I wish to repeat that I have no intention of attempting to formulate the policy of War Cabinet on this matter. I regard myself as merely the advocate before Parliament of the troops which Parliament has placed under my command. If the decision is against us we shall see broken and destroyed the work of many arduous months, but I know we shall all be willing to 'stoop and build it up with worn-out tools.' I ask that these views be placed before the Prime Minister and I enclose an extra copy of this letter for that purpose. If any question should arise which makes it desirable that I should visit **Wellington**, I hope you will let me know and I shall make time somehow to undertake the journey. I am appreciative of the full information you are giving me on this subject.

With very kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

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THE PACIFIC

[SECTION]

*Letter from General Barrowclough to General Puttick concerning the use of Fijian units with **3 NZ Division** and the employment of the division in the forward area:*

THE PACIFIC

NZEF IP – 24 MAY 1943

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In conclusion I wish to repeat that I have no intention of attempting to formulate the policy of War Cabinet on this matter. I regard myself as merely the advocate before Parliament of the troops which Parliament has placed under my command. If the decision is against us we shall see broken and destroyed the work of many arduous months, but I know we shall all be willing to 'stoop and build it up with worn-out tools.' I ask that these views be placed before the Prime Minister and I enclose an extra copy of this letter for that purpose. If any question should arise which makes it desirable that I should visit **Wellington**, I hope you will let me know and I shall make time somehow to undertake the journey. I am appreciative of the full information you are giving me on this subject.

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(sgd) H. E. BARROWCLOUGH

Contents

Appendix V p. 341

Appendix VI p. 342

Appendix VII p. 344

Appendix VIII p. 346

Appendix IX p. 353

Appendix X p. 359

Appendix XI p. 360

Appendix XII p. 362

Bibliography p. 363

Index p. 365

THE PACIFIC

APPENDIX V

Appendix V

*Special order of the day disbanding two battalions of the division, promulgated on 1 July 1943, in **New Caledonia**:*

It is with very great regret that I have to announce that it has been decided that this division will be reorganised on a two-brigade basis. This will necessitate the disbandment of two of our infantry units—the First Battalion of the Ruahine Regiment and the First Battalion of the Scottish Regiment. An infantry battalion is much more than a mere tactical unit. It is a band of men associated together by a strong bond of comradeship and brotherhood in arms. It is an association that is unique in human experience, and there is nothing less than tragedy in the contemplation of the breaking up of such a special community.

I need hardly say that the decision to disband these two fine battalions was accepted only because it was inevitable. The demand for men, already very considerable in respect of New Zealand's commitments in the **Middle East, has been accentuated by the expansion of the **RNZAF**. The requirements of industry for war production are increasing rather than diminishing. New Zealand simply cannot, at this juncture, bring the Third (NZ) Division to full strength and furnish adequate reinforcements. The Ruahines and the Scots must be used as reinforcements for the other two brigades or our very existence as a division would be impossible.**

A soldier suffers many vicissitudes of fortune and many disappointments. There can be no greater disappointment than that which is felt by the soldier who is compelled to sever his association with the regiment of which he is a part and of which he is so justly proud. On behalf of every member of this force I wish to tender to the commanding officers and members of the Ruahines and the Scots our

sincerest sympathy with them in the disbandment of the battalions which they are compelled to leave, and a warm welcome into the ranks of any infantry battalion to which they may ultimately be posted. We shall indeed be proud to have them serving with us.

(sgd) H. E. BARROWCLOUGH,

Major-General

Moindah

1 July 1943

THE PACIFIC

APPENDIX VI

Appendix VI

Interview with Governor Laigret, 18 December 1943

In order to avoid misunderstanding and to ensure amicable relations with the French administration in **New Caledonia**, Barrowclough appointed a committee to investigate and settle all civilian property claims. The American forces, on the other hand, settled such claims according to a prescribed scale of charges which they refused to alter. On 18 December 1943 the Governor of **New Caledonia**, Monsieur Laigret, made the following observations during an interview with American and Australian newspaper correspondents:

Before coming to **Noumea** I knew that:

- (1) For 90 years the French flag has been floating over **New Caledonia**.
- (2) The population which lives here is formed of native elements entirely civilised according to French methods of colonisation; of Indo-Chinese elements, introduced to the island before the war to supplement the labour supply (the Indo-Chinese equally civilised); Javanese elements, refugees from the Netherland East Indies; and finally and above all French elements of French stock who have populated **New Caledonia** for several generations.
- (3) That the inhabitants of **New Caledonia** had already in the course of the Great War, 1914–18, given evidence of their attachment to the Mother Country by coming to fight on the European front; many were killed or wounded there; many were distinguished by their bravery, and one can still see today among the men over 40 Military Medals and Croix de Guerre awarded for deeds of courage done by them 25 years ago on the battlefields of **France**, at Verdun, in Champagne, and on the **Somme**.
- (4) That, as in 1914, from 3 September 1939 people of **New Caledonia** replied enthusiastically to the order for general mobilisation; the country prepared itself as in 1914 to send an expeditionary force to **Europe**. The setbacks of June 1940 prevented this contingent

from leaving.

- (5) That from 29 September 1940, rallying to the appeal of General de Gaulle, **New Caledonia** and its Dependencies lined up with enthusiasm by the Lorraine Cross, and a few months afterwards the first contingent of volunteers left the island to form the Pacific Battalion and fight in **Africa** with the British Eighth Army.
- (6) That when, December 1941, **Japan** entered the war, not only was **New Caledonia** on the side of the **United Nations** (and its territory was consequently free of any enemy element), that also **New Caledonia** stood alone to defend its territory against the Japs should they come. The Caledonians put the island in a state of defence. I had the honour recently to take the high Allied military authorities, English and American, over the points of resistance established by the French with no outside help. I can state that these high military authorities were very much impressed with what they saw.
- (7) That **New Caledonia** has welcomed with enthusiasm the Allied troops stationed here for the needs of war, and while the inhabitants of the country were undergoing (and are still undergoing as a duty) the great inconveniences arising from this influx of troops, a second contingent of volunteers left for **Africa** to fill the spaces of **Bir Hacheim**.

Today I know that:

- (1) Publicly Dr. Evatt, Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, paid a striking homage to **New Caledonia** when he said in a recent speech that by their courageous attitude in September 1939, and afterwards, the inhabitants of this country had earned the right to the thanks of the **United Nations** in the war against **Japan**.
- (2) That the inhabitants of **New Caledonia** are suffering considerably, both in their interests and too often also in their rightful susceptibility, from the attitude of the American troops which is too frequently unconcerned from the French point of view. The Americans appear to forget that there is a great difference between being stationed in a friendly country and occupation of an enemy country.
- (3) That the New Zealanders, on the other hand, appreciate this difference, and it is a pleasure for me to point this out.
- (4) That the New Caledonians are more attached to **France** than I thought before I came here. Two examples, added to those mentioned above, are the subscription for the patriots of 11

November; and the vote of a credit of 5 millions by the Administrative Council of [New Caledonia](#) for the benefit of the French Committee for National Liberation.

In the near future I shall be leaving this country with this happy and comforting conviction. And since I have the opportunity of meeting journalists belonging to the great American democracy, I shall say in conclusion that I wish to Governor Tallec, who will be here soon, that he may find from the American High Command on the island more understanding in his dealing that these authorities have to have with the local Government.

I hope that the American citizens will never forget that, if their troops are in [New Caledonia](#), it is because the French, a handful of French, have permitted it. And this has had its effect on the fate of the war in the [Pacific](#). It is without doubt a historic event which has still more importance than [Pearl Harbour](#).

THE PACIFIC

APPENDIX VII

Appendix VII

Mr. Fraser's public statement on role of New Zealand's Armed Forces, made in September 1944:

As a result of the Quebec Conference, and of the advice just received from Mr. Churchill, it is now possible to come to decisions regarding the role of our Armed Forces in the remaining phases of the war against **Germany** and in the war against **Japan**, and for a decision to be made regarding the disposition of New Zealand land forces overseas. War Cabinet has had this question under continual examination, and it has also been the subject of discussions with both the British and American Chiefs of Staff, as well as with Mr. Churchill. Since the beginning of the year, it has been agreed that New Zealand cannot maintain two Divisions overseas, a large Air Force, and its naval contribution, and, at the same time, increase production of foodstuffs and raw materials, which are so urgently needed, and so essential, for the **United Kingdom** and for the Allied Forces in the **Pacific**. In the light of the **Quebec** decisions, and in view of the developments in **Europe** and the **Pacific**, it has been decided therefore that New Zealand land forces, at the present time, can be of the greatest use in **Italy**, and that the Second Division should remain overseas until the conclusion of the Italian campaign, after which its future role will again be examined. It may be necessary at a later stage to give consideration to the question of making New Zealand land forces available in the war against **Japan**. Meanwhile, however, the personnel of the Third Division now in camp, and those who are due to return to camp on the expiration of their leave, will be drafted to district mobilisation camps, where the men will become available for posting to the Second Division. Because of the developments and decisions to which I have referred, it is now possible to make arrangements for the introduction of a scheme for replacement

of long-service personnel in the Second Division. I discussed this question with **General Freyberg** while I was in **Italy**, and it has since been thoroughly examined, and details are being worked out. The object of this scheme is progressively to relieve the men who have been overseas for three years or more by others who have not, so far, had an opportunity to serve, and by those who have had a short period of service overseas. The replacement drafts from New Zealand will comprise, in the first place, men still remaining in the Third Division who are fit and of the required age and domestic status, and Grade A men held on appeal as soon as they can be released, and all others liable for military service, including men from the Third Division temporarily released to industry earlier in the year, and who remain liable to be called up for overseas service. The policy of replacement will take the place of the furlough scheme in future, and, as men become available for sending overseas, the various reinforcements will be returned in succession, and also the men of the First, Second, and Third Echelons who returned to the **Middle East** at the conclusion of their furlough. It must be made clear that, under the replacement scheme, men who return to New Zealand will be released from military service and directed into essential industry. This direction is necessary, so long as the war lasts, for two reasons—first, to enable a scheme of industrial replacement to be carried out, namely, the substitution of men in essential industry now held back from military service by those of similar skill who return from overseas; secondly, to enable New Zealand to continue to produce the foodstuffs and raw materials which are so essential a contribution to our own and the **United Nations'** war effort.

THE PACIFIC

APPENDIX VIII

Appendix VIII

**Army Headquarters,
New Zealand Military Forces,
Wellington, C. 1
19 February 1944**

MEMORANDUM for:

Rt. Hon. the Prime Minister

**APPRECIATION OF THE PROBLEM OF THE WITHDRAWAL OF ONE OR OTHER OF THE 2ND OR 3RD
NEW ZEALAND DIVISIONS**

- 1. As directed I have prepared the attached appreciation for your perusal.**
- 2. I have the following comments to submit regarding it:**
 - (The appreciation deals with the problem of withdrawing one of the**
 - a) Divisions and does not discuss the question whether such action should or should not be taken.**
 - b) You will appreciate that certain factors such as ‘Relative Strategical Importance of European and Pacific Theatres’, ‘Present and Pending Operations’, and ‘Shipping’ to some extent, require a more extensive knowledge of Allied resources, strategical plans and intentions, and of enemy resources than is available to me to discuss them exhaustively, but the arguments advanced in the appreciation in respect of these matters admit, I suggest, of little variation, being generally in the nature of principles or self-evident truths.**
 - c) In arriving at a final conclusion, the chief difficulty is to give appropriate weight to each factor. In my view, practically all considerations on the military side are strongly in favour of the retention of the 2nd Division overseas, while on the political side, of which my knowledge of probable and genuine reactions is admittedly superficial and based chiefly on hearsay, the considerations, on the short view at least, favour**

the retention overseas of the 3rd Division. The difficulty confronting the statesman is to weigh the military considerations against his more intimate knowledge of the political considerations, while the soldier is in precisely the opposite position.

3. While the question of whether New Zealand's war effort should be concentrated more on production than hitherto, and if necessary at the expense of the fighting effort, is a matter for advice from the highest Allied authorities, the question of how the increased production is to be obtained, whether in fact it is necessary to reduce the fighting effort to obtain it, and if so by how much, is clearly a matter for the **New Zealand Government**, which alone is able to determine what sacrifices should be required of the people, what reorganisation or adjustments are feasible, and the effect of them.
4. It may interest you to know that after preparing the appreciation, I discussed the main factors and my conclusions with my colleagues at the conclusion of a Chiefs of Staff meeting, and the Chief of the Naval Staff and the Deputy Chief of the Air Staff (in the absence of the Chief of the Air Staff) have authorised me to say that they agree with my conclusions.

(Signed) E. PUTTICK,
Lieutenant-General,
Chief of the General Staff

APPRECIATION BY THE CHIEF OF THE GENERAL STAFF

19 February 1944

1. **OBJECT** Return of 2nd or 3rd Division to New Zealand

2. **FACTORS**

(a) *Relative strategical importance of European and **Pacific** theatres*

2nd Division

- (i) **Germany** is still the chief enemy. She has a highly important Allied country under attack by air and submarine and under some threat of invasion. She is affecting to some degree British production and morale and reducing Allied shipping strength. Although unlikely, it is still possible that she could win the war if by inventions or strategical surprise her submarine and air attacks again became sufficiently effective, or she might create

a stalemate. She exposes the people of **Britain** to danger and imposes restrictions in lighting, assembly, and food which after over four years may seriously affect morale.

- (ii) **British** and **United States** weakness in **Europe** is the small number of battle-experienced divisions to meet the war-experienced German Army. Every battle-experienced division in **Europe** is literally vital to the success of pending operations. There are signs that a really big effort may defeat **Germany** quickly.
- (iii) Participation in the European theatre is marked evidence of the cohesion of the British Commonwealth to our Allies and enemies, stiffens British morale which has been under strain for over four years, and follows the principle of true strategy in concentrating on the principal and most dangerous enemy. An example of a similar attitude to that of New Zealand is **Canada**, who, although her interest in the **Pacific** must be very real, has, except for **Hong Kong** and **Kiska**, concentrated her armed effort in **Europe**.

3rd Division

- (i) **Japan** has no important Allied country other than **China** under similar attack or threat. She is not affecting Allied production or morale, nor reducing shipping to any appreciable extent. Her submarines and air strength are not favourably situated, as are **Germany's**, to create a danger of Allied defeat. She does not affect to any degree the safety or comfort of any large Allied population other than **China**, and her operations have little effect on morale.
- (ii) Proportionately, the number of battle-experienced divisions employed and likely to be employed immediately in the **Pacific** areas is very high, and the loss of one is relatively of nothing like the same importance as is the case in **Europe**. There are no indications that **Japan** can be defeated in the near future.
- (iii) Participation in the **Pacific** theatre from the British Empire point of view is more defensive than offensive in character, in that it protects New Zealand and is not directed against the most dangerous enemy. It offers no prospects of quick success, with the consequent relief from various dangers of losing the war and power to concentrate total forces against the one remaining enemy, as is the case in the European war.

CONCLUSION

The advantages resulting and the dangers avoided through the defeat of **Germany** are so important as to make the European theatre of predominant strategical importance, and consequently the fullest possible concentration should be made there to defeat **Germany** at the earliest possible date.

(b) Political

2nd Division

- (i) Has very favourable effect in **Britain** and will be of great value of **British** statesmen in combating war weariness after the defeat of **Germany**, when directing **British** forces against **Japan**.
- (ii) Has unfavourable effect on **Australia**, which, faced with a very different strategical problem involving invasion of her territory, attack on her mainland, and exposure to an invasion by balanced forces moving by bounds under cover of shore-based aircraft, withdrew her forces to the **Australian** and **Pacific** theatres.
- (iii) May have an unfavourable effect on that section of **United States** opinion which regards the **Pacific** war as the more important, but in view of the heavy **United States** participation in the **European** theatre, this section is likely to be at most proportionate to the forces engaged and events in **Europe** may well reduce it, i.e., success and the power resulting from it to concentrate overwhelming forces against **Japan**, will convince waverers or advocates of concentrating against **Japan** of the wisdom of the ' **Germany** first' strategy. As the war with **Japan** will continue well beyond the end of the war with **Germany**, there should be ample opportunity for **New Zealand** to finish the war with **Germany** and then concentrate on **Japan** so as to participate in the decisive concluding stages, and so remove any earlier unfavourable opinion, if such exists, in both **Australia** and the **United States**.

3rd Division

- (i) Has no effect on **British** war weariness which is not already obtained by the spectacle of a favourite **Dominion** endangered by a powerful **Asiatic** nation.
- (ii) Has a favourable effect on **Australia**, which favours **Pacific** nations concentrating on the **Pacific** war and would like to see all **New**

Zealand forces in the Pacific. (Note: Australia's attitude is probably influenced by two main factors, firstly her original fear of Japanese invasion and later her desire to concentrate all possible forces to push the Japanese further away, and secondly, the political difficulties created by comparisons between the New Zealand and Australian attitude to the global war.)

(iii) Has a favourable effect on that section of United States opinion which considers the Pacific war the more important.

CONCLUSIONS

The withdrawal of 2nd Division, while it would cause acute disappointment in England and probably other parts of the Empire as well as to many in New Zealand, would be unlikely to cause any political difficulties.

The withdrawal of 3rd Division would create an unfavourable impression in the United States Forces in the Pacific, and in that section of United States opinion which, for the moment at least, regards the Pacific as the more important theatre. Although this unfavourable impression would be reduced if the withdrawal was effected in order to increase production to the level required to meet Allied demands for supplies, it would, on the other hand, be increased because of the prevalence of opinion amongst United States personnel that the same result could be achieved by other methods, without reducing the present fighting effort, e.g., by a reorganisation and readjustment of available civil manpower, increased working hours, abolition of non-essential activities. (Note: Opinions in this direction are created or strengthened by the frequency of and the attendances at race meetings, reduced or absence of work on Saturdays (including the closing of many Government offices all day Saturday), apart from any actual knowledge of hours worked or of existence of non-essential activities.)

Australian opinion would be unfavourable to withdrawal of 3rd Division as a breach of what Australia regards as the true role of Australian and New Zealand Forces, namely, concentration of forces against the Japanese.

The importance to be placed on the creation of unfavourable opinion in the **United States** and Australian is a matter for statesmen, not for soldiers. It is very probable, however, in the event that it is decided to withdraw 3rd Division, that it will be well within the capacity of New Zealand, on the conclusion of the war with **Germany**, to provide one division for the war against **Japan**, and such action would in all probability entirely remove any unfavourable impression existing prior to such re-participation. In the meantime New Zealand's record in the **Pacific**, including weakening of her Home Defences to secure **Fiji**; provision of troops for **Fiji**, **Tonga**, and **New Caledonia** to release **United States** troops for offensive action; garrisoning **Norfolk Island**; construction of airfields in **Fiji**; provision of powerful air forces in the forward area; provision of valuable Naval forces forward, at the expense of her Home Defences and interior economy should, it is suggested, be a sufficient answer to any Australian or **United States** adverse opinion, if any importance is ascribed to such opinion.

(c) Present and Pending Operations

2nd Division

(i) 2nd Division is engaged in full strength against the enemy in **Italy** and has been allotted a highly-important tactical role, for which its special organisation, training and experience make it peculiarly suitable. There appears to be little if any surplus Allied strength in the Italian theatre, while the operations there are undoubtedly part of the greater invasion plan. Consequently the replacement of 2nd Division by another division would be essential, and within the next several months appears likely to create peculiarly difficult problems of suitability of the replacement division and disorganisation of prepared plans, quite apart from administrative difficulties such as the provision of shipping. The particular value of the 2nd New Zealand Division in influencing the outcome of large-scale operations has already been emphasised on at least two occasions.

3rd Division

(i) 3rd Division has 2/3 rds of its strength in a very forward position on the South Pacific front, i.e., **Nissan Island**, with the remainder

chiefly in Treasury Island in close proximity to strongly-held Japanese areas. Both components of 3rd Division are now in a garrison role, though it is possible and perhaps probable that the force holding Treasury Island will shortly be given an offensive role, i.e., to capture islands north of Nissan Island. Operations of 3rd Division are undoubtedly part of a general offensive plan designed to isolate Rabaul, in which, probably, all available divisions have been allotted their roles. Withdrawal of forces in Nissan Island is a dangerous operation and may be classed as impracticable until Allied forces are much farther north. Withdrawal of forces in Treasury Island though exposed to attack is possible, while withdrawal of reinforcements &c., in Guadalcanal and New Caledonia is also practicable, but would result in forward units being unsupported and falling below establishment, besides disorganising the United States offensive plans during a critical period.

CONCLUSION

The withdrawal of either 2nd or 3rd Division is impracticable at the present time and its practicability in future depends upon tactical developments.

The disruptive effect of withdrawal would be most serious in either case but would have wider and more important disadvantageous effects in the case of 2nd Division though tactically less dangerous to the New Zealand troops in their present situations than in the case of 3rd Division.

(d) Shipping

2nd Division

(i) 2nd Division is almost double the strength of 3rd Division, the distance from New Zealand is five times greater than in the case of 3rd Division, and there is practically no shipping returning to New Zealand with spare accommodation for personnel, equipment, and stores.

3rd Division

(i) The probable availability of shipping returning from the Islands to New Zealand, and the much lower strength of 3rd Division

compared with 2nd Division and proximity of 3rd Division to New Zealand would make provision of shipping for 3rd Division much easier than for 2nd Division. On the other hand, loading of heavier stores and equipment in view of the primitive facilities would be much more difficult and perhaps impracticable because the time required for loading could not be spared on account of the primary tasks on which the ships are engaged.

CONCLUSIONS

The movement of 2nd Division would be very much more expensive in shipping than that of 3rd Division and in view of concentrations of shipping for the invasion of **Europe** is likely to be impracticable.

The movement of 3rd Division utilising returning ships may be feasible and is much less expensive in shipping.

(e) Time Factor

The practicability of withdrawing either division is dependent upon developments in both theatres and cannot be judged with any accuracy. The conclusions reached under the headings of *(c) Present and Pending Operations*, and *(d) Shipping*, particularly the latter, indicate that the 3rd Division could reach New Zealand much earlier than an equal number of men from 2nd Division. Further, the tendency thus far has been to employ 3rd Division by brigade groups and not as a complete division, and the probabilities are that this will continue, opening up the possibility of returning one brigade group and leaving the second brigade group in action. There is no such possibility in the case of 2nd Division, and all considerations therefore favour a substantial part of 3rd Division being available in New Zealand many months earlier than in the case of an equal number from 2nd Division.

(f) Climate, Relief, and Casualties

2nd Division

(i) 2nd Division has been approximately four years abroad, the first year on a garrison and training role. It has had severe fighting

punctuated by periods in reserve. Casualties have been light judged by 1914–18 standards. The number of long-service men has been considerably reduced by earlier casualties and prisoners, and by exemptions and defections from the furlough draft. Practically all men of over three years' service have now had lengthy furlough.

- (ii) 2nd Division has had some three years in a semi-tropical but healthy climate with good amenities. It is now in a temperate climate. Normal relief from the forward area into a reserve role provides the necessary relief from active service strain.
- (iii) 2nd Division will have fewer climatic casualties and less post-war ill-health on that account, but is likely to have higher battle casualties.
- (iv) Periodic reliefs of 2nd Division from forward area raises no question of return to New Zealand and therefore no difficulties in return of the Division to the forward area.

3rd Division

- (i) 3rd Division has been approximately two years in being, as regards 50 per cent of the force, a proportion having about three years' service, but both above categories have had a break of several months' Home Service. Remainder of the Division has had approximately 18 months' service. The Division has had little fighting and negligible casualties.
- (ii) 3rd Division has been in a tropical climate, which in the areas they have occupied during the last six months has been oppressive. Amenities have been poor. For climatic reasons, normal relief to a reserve role is not sufficient, and the Division requires relief at about six-monthly intervals in a more temperate climate.
- (iii) 3rd Division will have higher climatic casualties with the possibility of a more or less serious legacy of post-war ill-health. It is likely to have lower battle casualties than 2nd Division, but it cannot be assumed that this will continue, in view of the isolated nature and amphibious character of its operations.
- (iv) Periodic reliefs of 3rd Division could be suitably carried out by return to [New Caledonia](#), but the absence of amenities and sentiment will lead to a demand for leave in New Zealand. If this leave is granted, there is likely to be difficulty similar to that experienced with the furlough draft when the men are due to return to the forward area.

CONCLUSIONS

The factors of length of service abroad and severity of fighting favour return of 2nd Division. The strain on these accounts can be efficiently met by periods of relief in the operational area.

The 3rd Division, however, must have relief from the climate requiring retirement to rear areas, which would bring them within easy distance of New Zealand and lead to insistent demands for leave in New Zealand. This, in turn, is likely to cause difficulty in the men rejoining the division. On the grounds of military necessity, therefore, and discarding sentiment the factors favour withdrawal of 3rd Division.

(g) Re-employment of Troops

Whichever division returns, a considerable proportion of the men will require to be sent as reinforcements to the other division over a period.

2nd Division

(i) Men of the 2nd Division would almost certainly flatly refuse to proceed to the 3rd Division so long as there were fit men in New Zealand who had not been overseas.

3rd Division

(i) Men of 3rd Division would in all probability readily proceed to 2nd Division, but some difficulty would probably be encountered through the contention being continued that fit men in industry should go overseas before returned troops are required to proceed twice.

CONCLUSION

It would be much easier to use men of 3rd Division to reinforce 2nd Division than vice versa.

(b) Temporary return of either Division

This would lead to the disappearance of the division as a fighting formation, requiring reorganisation and training over a period of not less than six months before the division was fit for active service.

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

Of the factors considered above, the conclusions arrived at in regard to *(a) Relative Strategical Importance of European and Pacific Theatres*, *(d) Shipping*, *(e) Time Factor*, *(g) Re-employment of Troops* are decisively in favour of retaining 2nd Division in **Europe**.

(c) Present and Pending Operations—slightly favour retaining 2nd Division abroad, while *(f) Climate, Relief and Casualties*—favour retaining 3rd Division in the **Pacific**, except for the difficulties created in 3rd Division through the necessity on account of climate to grant leave in New Zealand.

(b) Political—strongly favour retaining 3rd Division in the **Pacific** though, subject to expert judgment on political issues, it seems that a sufficient answer to any Australian or **United States** adverse opinion is available in New Zealand's past record in the **Pacific** and in the Air and Navy forces remaining there, and a complete answer when after the defeat of **Germany**, a New Zealand division again takes the field against **Japan**.

(b) Temporary return of either Division—applies equally to both divisions.

COURSE RECOMMENDED

Retain 2nd Division abroad.

Return 3rd Division to New Zealand when the operational situation permits.

E. PUTTICK,

**Lieutenant-General,
Chief of the General Staff**

THE PACIFIC

APPENDIX IX

Appendix IX

APPRECIATION OF THE SITUATION REGARDING STRENGTH OF NEW ZEALAND ARMY OVERSEAS

4 August 1944

Object

1. To reduce NZ Army overseas to one division plus detachments in **UK**, **Fiji** and miscellaneous. *Courses Open*
2. (Withdraw 2 Div, or
 - a)
 - (Complete withdrawal of 3 Div, including cadres of approximately
 - b) 6000 all ranks, which under existing decision is to be retained to assist in re-forming the division.

Factors

3. It is the policy of the Government that NZ should maintain one division in the field until the conclusion of hostilities. Therefore, if the 2nd Division is withdrawn, the 3rd Division should be re-formed; if the 3rd Division is disbanded, the 2nd Division should be retained.
4. The withdrawal of the *2nd Division* involves its disbandment. It would not be possible to move the division to NZ and re-employ it against **Japan**, though a proportion of officers, NCOs, and men would be available for such operations.
5. The decision to withdraw the cadres (6000 all ranks) of **3 Division** from **New Caledonia** to NZ will lead to the following results:
 - (Constant demands for the release to civil life of considerable
 - a) numbers of men from the cadres.
 - (The retention of 6000 men for several months in NZ camps with
 - b) consequent boredom and unrest. These men can only be employed on the following tasks:

Maintaining equipment.

Training, especially officers, NCOs, and prospective NCOs.

Seasonal work as units.

If employed to any great extent on seasonal work, or if released from the Army for any lengthy periods, the value of the officers, NCOs, and men as cadres on which to reform will deteriorate considerably.

6. The withdrawal of the *2nd Division* has the following *disadvantages*:

- (*Strategical situation in Italy*: Allied strength in **Italy** would be
- a) reduced to the very considerable detriment of the full success of operations there, which, as part of the whole strategy of the war against **Germany**, have an important effect on the operations in **France** and **Russia** and on the duration of the war against **Germany** and consequently on the war against **Japan**. The reduction of Allied strength in **Italy** through withdrawal of 2nd Division is, therefore, a matter of high importance, and becomes more so if any reduction takes place there for other causes, such as, for example, to support or to conduct operations elsewhere. This disadvantage applies at any stage of the operations in **Italy**, as the Allied forces there, whatever success they attain territorially or in the destruction of Axis forces, remain a constant threat to the Axis, offensively, because of their ability to operate through **France** or round the North of the Adriatic into **Yugoslavia** and beyond. *Defensively*, the Allied forces in **Italy** may be required to contain or hold German forces in Northern Italy or vicinity which could be reinforced to dangerous strength if a stalemate occurred in **France**, or if the Russian operations were halted on the borders of **Germany**. In either of these cases, the Axis might well be able to form strategic reserves for employment against **Italy**.
- (*Shipping*, which is still a vital factor in operations, would be
- b) withdrawn for a considerable period, to move the 35,000 men of the 2nd Division from **Italy** and Egypt to NZ. In view of the shipping situation and impending operations, this movement would probably be slow, leading to the NZ troops being held in base camps overseas for a lengthy period, thus causing discontent and waste of manpower resources. During this period NZ would have no Army participation in either theatre of war, and if, as has been stated, a new division could not be raised until the 2nd Division returns, the raising of the new division would be delayed accordingly.
- (*Manpower wastage*: The disbandment of 2nd and 3rd Divisions
- c) and the raising of a fresh division would cause a heavy waste of manpower, in addition to that referred to in sub-para (b)

above. From the time the decision is taken to raise a fresh division until its appearance on the battlefield, approximately 12 months would elapse. During this period, approximately 25,000 men would be neither producing nor fighting.

Assuming the strength of the new division, plus corps and base troops to be 25,000 men and that it would take six months to return the 2nd Division to NZ, the total manpower wastage would be:

New division	= 25,000 for 12 months
2nd Division (35,000 return over 6 months)	= 8,750 [for] [12] [months]
Total wastage	= 33,750 men for 12 months

Such a loss of manpower resources to either the fighting or production forces of the country at this stage in the war, and having regard to the heavy demands for production, merits the fullest consideration. On the other hand, while a decision to retain the 2nd Division in **Europe** would avoid this waste of manpower in the meantime, a decision to raise a new division on the conclusion of the European campaign would create more or less the same situation.

There are two reasons, however, why it is advisable to postpone any wastage of manpower as long as possible:

- (i) At the end of the German war there should be less need for NZ to produce munitions and war equipment, since British and US production should be sufficient to meet the reduced requirements at that stage, consequently, the manpower situation in NZ should then be eased to some extent.
- (ii) By the time **Germany** is defeated, the war against **Japan** may have developed in such a way as to make it unnecessary for NZ to provide a new division.

The retention of 2nd Division in **Europe** would therefore offer at the least some prospect of avoiding a heavy wastage of manpower and also the possibility that if it did occur, the manpower situation would then be easier.

- d) *Sentiment:* The withdrawal of the 2nd Division if decided upon might well be in progress just as victory in **Europe** is achieved, leading to NZ troops being deprived of participation

in the spectacular and easy final stages of the campaign after having fought through the hard stages up to that point. To see their comrades of the Eighth Army participate and be publicised while the NZ troops are in base camps awaiting ships might possibly cause bitterness both amongst the troops and the NZ public. On the other hand, this would presumably be reduced by the prospects of an early return to NZ, and it is only fair to say that in a somewhat similar situation in 1918 the men of the 1st NZ Division showed considerable objection to participating in the advance into **Germany** after the Armistice. One factor in the present war which may, however, alter the situation is the fact that very few of the troops of 2nd Division have seen Great Britain, whereas the 1st NZ Division of 1914–18 was based there, and the prospects of visiting Great Britain, **France**, and other European countries may have a strong appeal, and would not be without considerable value to NZ generally in various directions.

7. The withdrawal of 2nd Division has the following advantages:

(*Sentiment*: The feeling sometimes expressed that the 2nd

a) Division has been too long in the field and that fit men who have not yet served overseas should take their share of the fighting would be fully met. It is commonly stated that the division has been overseas for 4 ½ years. This is only partly true since through casualties and discharge in NZ the majority of the long-service men, i.e., over 3 years' service, are no longer with the division, and the greater number of those who are still on the strength have had a recent and lengthy furlough in NZ. This feeling regarding length of service can be adequately met without withdrawing the division, by the adoption of a replacement policy, under which men who have served for a prescribed period are replaced and returned to civil life. As this policy would require an increased call-up of men who have not yet served overseas, that point also would be met to a considerable degree, but not to the same extent as if a fresh division were formed. On the other hand, a large number of men of the 2nd Division have had little service and should be required to continue service in a new division if one were formed.

(*NZ Participation against **Japan***: Withdrawal of 2nd Division

b) would enable a fresh division to be raised at an earlier date than would otherwise be possible, since the new division could not be formed until the 2nd Division returned. This earlier

participation in the war against **Japan** would depend upon where the new division would be used, since if it were required to fight alongside British troops, it might be ready before such troops could reach the new theatre. In that event, the new division might be required to await the arrival of the British forces, or possibly it could be employed with the Australians, which in the more probable future strategical developments, does not appear to be likely. While there seems little likelihood that the presence or absence of an NZ division in the war against **Japan** would have much strategical importance, in view of the large forces likely to be available from elsewhere at that stage—and certainly an importance not comparable with the importance of the 2nd Division in **Europe**—it would have some political advantage. The early participation of an NZ division in the Japanese war would be welcomed by Australian statesmen and it would increase NZ's claim to be heard on **Pacific** policy when the war ends. On the other hand, even without an NZ division participating in the final stages of the war against **Japan**, NZ has a notable contribution to the global war against **Germany**, **Italy**, and **Japan** to rely upon, together with a casualty list which, on the basis of population, is unlikely to be exceeded by any nation. In addition, NZ would be strongly represented by powerful air forces and very useful naval forces in a war which we and US Commanders have recognised as predominantly a naval and air war.

(*Delay in return:* Withdrawal of 2nd Division before the end of the war with **Germany** might possibly reduce the lengthy delay which seems certain to occur in the return of the division after the end of the German war, when shipping will be fully engaged in movements of troops and stores to **America** and the Japanese area, and in the repatriation of prisoners of war.

8. The advantages and disadvantages of the withdrawal of the 3rd Division need not be discussed, since in actual fact the withdrawal has already taken place. The factors connected with the retention of the cadres for this division—6000 all ranks—have been mentioned in para 5. There is no doubt that these cadres would be of the greatest value in the reforming of the 3rd Division or of a new division, but in view of the time that is likely to elapse before the cadres could be expanded to a full division, the unrest caused by a long waiting period, and the certain attrition due to pressure for men to be released to civil life, it is at least doubtful whether much of this

value will not be dissipated to such an extent as to make it inadvisable to accept the disadvantages mentioned. If, however, the 2nd Division is to be withdrawn in the near future, the cadres of the 3rd Division should be retained and the new division built up immediately; if the 2nd Division is to remain in **Europe** the cadres of 3rd Division, less the strength required to take care of the equipment, should be disbanded.

9. Apart from the participation of one NZ division in the war, there are other directions in which the NZ Army can give a most valuable contribution to victory. These are:

- (Increased assistance to Fijian and Tongan forces by provision of
 - a) officers, NCOs, and technical personnel, to enable an infantry brigade to proceed to an active theatre of war, plus a Fijian-Tongan infantry battalion for garrison duty in the **Pacific**, or alternatively two Fijian-Tongan brigades to be provided for garrison work.
 - b) Provision of NZ officers and NCOs as instructors for British troops in **Australia**.
 - c) Provision of NZ officers for British forces in **India**, or wherever required by the British authorities.

Requests have already been received for assistance in these directions and if acceded to on the largest possible scale would have the highest value in the successful prosecution of the war.

Summary

10. Withdrawal of 2nd Division before the end of the European war would have an adverse effect on the war against **Germany** (para 6 (a)). It would increase shipping difficulties (para 6 (b)). It would create an immediate manpower wastage equivalent to 8750 men for 12 months, or a total wastage of 33,750 men for 12 months if a new division were raised to keep NZ army participation at the level of one division (para 6 (c)). It would deny the 2nd Division participating in the final victory against **Germany** (para 6 (d)). *On the other hand*, it would meet popular feeling that the division should be withdrawn and that men who have not yet fought should be sent overseas (para 7 (a)). It would enable a new division to be raised against **Japan** at an earlier date than would otherwise be possible, but this does not necessarily mean earlier operations against **Japan** (para 7 (b)). Whether, in the event that 2nd Division remains in **Europe** till the end of the German war, a new division should be raised against **Japan**, depends upon the strategical situation obtaining at the time (para 6 (c)). While NZ participation in the final stages of the war

against **Japan** is desirable on political grounds, NZ's record in the war, together with continuing naval and air forces, is sufficiently noteworthy to date to support political objections, and the withdrawal of 2nd Division and the raising of a new division does not necessarily ensure that an NZ division would, in fact, participate against **Japan**. Such a course might conceivably lead to NZ Army forces not being present at the final stages of either the German or the Japanese war (para 7 (b)). Apart from a division participating in the war, there are other directions in which NZ can make a notable contribution to the early and successful conclusion of the war (para 9). *Conclusions*

11. From the above survey, I come to the conclusion that the best course for NZ to follow, in all the circumstances, known and probable, is as follows:

(Retain 2nd Division in **Europe** till the end of the war against
a) **Germany**.

(Disband the cadres of the 3rd Division, with the exception of the
b) personnel required to guard and maintain equipment.

(Provide officers, NCOs, and technical personnel to the extent
c) required by—

(i) **Fijian and Tongan forces**.

(ii) **British forces, as instructors and/or leaders for British units in **Australia****.

(iii) **India**, for any purposes required.

(Adopt a liberal replacement policy to replace men of long service
d) in the 2nd Division, the replacements to be provided from men in civil life who have not yet served abroad, from short-service personnel of 3rd Division, and from other officers, NCOs, and men of 3rd Division who volunteer for such service.

(sgd) **E. PUTTICK**,

Lieutenant-General,
Chief of the General Staff

THE PACIFIC

APPENDIX X

Appendix X

Mr. Fraser's telegram to Mr. Churchill, dated 9 September 1944, stating that cadres of 3 Division would be disbanded:

Thank you for making available your message to Mr. Curtin, the implications of which are of immediate concern to New Zealand.

You are well aware of the problem we face in regard to our two Divisions, and I appreciate the ready acceptance given by yourself and the Chiefs of Staff to the general understanding that our 2nd Division should return from **Italy when it could be spared in order to enable us to build up a new division for service in the war against **Japan**.**

I should like to add that since I saw you there has been a further change in the disposition of our forces in the **Pacific. As you will recall, it was decided on the advice of the Combined Chiefs of Staff to withdraw 3rd Division from active operations in the **Pacific** and to concentrate cadres in **New Caledonia**, which were to be used for rebuilding a new division for service against the Japanese in 1945. At the instance of the Americans, however, these cadres have now been moved from **New Caledonia** back to New Zealand.**

We have delayed taking a final decision with regard to the disposition of our land forces overseas, firstly, because we were reluctant to take our 2nd Division out of action in the European theatre unless we had some firm indication that New Zealand troops would be required in the **Pacific and would be given a definite role in the war against **Japan**, and secondly, because we did not wish to request the withdrawal of our Division in **Italy** at a time when those forces were actively engaged in what may well be the final victorious stage of the war against **Germany** and in operations in which, as you yourself advised me only a few days**

ago, they are sorely needed.

From the tentative plans being discussed while I was in **London**, it was assumed that a New Zealand Division would take its place with **United Kingdom** and Australian divisions in a British Commonwealth force, but it would appear from your telegram to Mr. Curtin that the British Commonwealth task force—land, sea, and air—is now rated only as a second alternative to a British naval force which it is desired should serve with the Americans.

This continued lack of certainty as to the probable future use of our men, and the rapidly changing circumstances in **Europe**, have rendered it impracticable to reach any final decision. At this stage, however, we have come to the conclusion we should decide that our Division in **Europe** should continue to be maintained and that its future should be reviewed at the close of the Italian campaign, and further, that the cadres of the 3rd (**Pacific**) Division should therefore be disbanded and the men used as replacements and reinforcements for the 2nd Division. It will be appreciated that this course will necessarily delay the building up of another Pacific Division if such a force should be required.

In view of its bearing on future participation of New Zealand troops in the war I would be glad to have at the earliest possible opportunity the decision of His Majesty's Government in the **United Kingdom** as to their present plans for participation of British Commonwealth forces in the **Pacific**.

THE PACIFIC

APPENDIX XI

Appendix XI

Letter from the Hon. W. Nash, New Zealand Minister in Washington, to the President of the United States, written on 24 January 1944, on the subject of manpower in the Dominion:

MY DEAR MR. PRESIDENT,

May I first thank you for your courtesy in arranging at such short notice to discuss the problem stated by me to you in connection with manpower in New Zealand.

My delay in making the case in writing has been due to my desire to obtain Mr. Fraser's latest views on the situation. He has now advised me that Mr. Churchill would be glad to see me in London as soon as possible.

The position in New Zealand requires some clarification in order to determine the most effective method by which we can use our manpower to help the war effort.

Our position at the time of the most recent full analysis was as follows:

Total number of males between the ages of 14–64	600,000
Of this total those engaged either full time with war and defence forces—in munition and war equipment manufacture—essential work, or minor less essential work numbered	560,000
Total number of males between Service ages (18–40)	330,000
Of this total, at middle of last year those serving full time in Army, Navy, or Air services (exclusive of casualties) numbered	149,000
Of this 149,000, the forces overseas totalled	70,000

The large proportion engaged in full-time war services is causing a reduction in our production of primary products.

When I left New Zealand, for instance, in December last it was not possible to obtain full production in our meat freezing works (corresponding to your meat packing houses) owing to shortage of manpower. Our butter, cheese, and meat production from the farms is also declining owing to shortage of manpower (and of fertiliser, which is in very short supply).

We are anxious to use our full resources to finish the war at the earliest possible date and also to meet all our commitments overseas, but we have to determine now where our manpower can best be used.

Where is the need greatest?

- (a) Is it in providing airmen for **Europe, India, and the Pacific,**
- (b) Is it to meet naval requirements in the **Pacific** and other areas,
- (c) Or in maintaining a division in the **Mediterranean zone,**
- (d) Or in maintaining two brigades in the **South Pacific Area?**

On present evidence we have decided to endeavour to maintain our air strength, which on 31 October last totalled 40,547 men—and to provide for expansion already planned; this means that the airmen required will absorb most of the young men reaching Service age (18 years for service in New Zealand, 21 years for service overseas).

It is proposed to maintain the Navy at its present strength—8356.

The Army strength at 31 October was:

In New Zealand	31,402
In the South Pacific war zone	21,903
In Europe	33,505
Minor additions	206
This gave a total of	87,016

If the Air Force is to be fully provided for and the Navy strength maintained, there are no resources from which we can send reinforcements to either the European or Pacific Armies.

When the question as to the place where New Zealand's manpower

could best be used was raised early last year, the advice given by yourself and Mr. Churchill was to keep the land forces in the field in both the European and Pacific Areas—even though it was not possible to send men to replace casualties, etc. It is thought that on present evidence it would be unwise to pursue this policy to its limit.

It is not possible with our existing resources of men and women to maintain the strength of our present forces.

The problem therefore resolves itself into requiring the answer to the question: How can New Zealand best serve?

(By maintaining and expanding its Air Forces?

a)

(By maintaining its present naval strength?

b)

(By maintaining its Division in **Europe**?

c)

(By maintaining its Forces in the **Pacific** zone?

d)

(By maintaining and if possible expanding its production of food supplies, particularly butter, cheese, and meat? Presuming that it is decided that the wisest course would be to maintain a force in one zone only—European or **Pacific**—in which place could New Zealand best serve the war effort?

A further question which immediately arises is:

If any changes of the present programme are to be made *when* would be the best time for them to take place?

If you so desired I could set out the reasons for and against utilising our forces in the **Pacific** or European zones, but they are so well known to you that I have presumed it not necessary to do so. This, of course, would include the timing of changes and the other factors associated with the fluid nature of the war in **Europe** and the **Pacific**.

The New Zealand Government would be helped by your advice as to what you consider is the best course to follow under present

circumstances.

My present plans are being made on the assumption that (weather permitting) I will leave for London to obtain Mr. Churchill's advice not later than the end of next week. If I could obtain your opinion and advice prior to my leaving, it would help me to prepare my report from London to Mr. Fraser for submission to the New Zealand War Cabinet, with whom the final decision will rest.

Again thanking you for your help and advice, and with every good wish.

I am,

Yours sincerely,

(sgd) WALTER NASH

THE PACIFIC

APPENDIX XII

Appendix XII

Japanese Army daily ration

The daily staple foods rationed to each individual during the war for the Japanese Army were:

(*a*) 660 grammes of rice and 210 grammes ¹ of wheat, or

(*b*) 690 grammes of hard tack or compressed dried foods.

However, there were times when the ration (*a*) was reduced and supplemented by a portion of (*b*).

Subsidiary rations were as follows:

Canned meat (beef or fish)	150 grammes
Dehydrated vegetables	120 [grammes]
Pickled plums (or pickled sliced vegetables)	45 [grammes]
Soy sauce (mainly in powdered form)	30 [grammes]
Bean paste (mainly in powdered form)	30 [grammes]
Salt	5 [grammes]
Sugar	20 [grammes]
Tea	3 [grammes]
Confectionery (candy made of tea, butter, milk, sugar, eggs, flour)	45 [grammes]

Because of the difficulty in transporting supplies during the **Solomons** campaign, the combat forces ordinarily received one half to one third rations. During the worst situations, many units were cut off from supplies for many days. When the supply situation was very bad,

staple foods were substituted with coconuts, taro roots, and sweet potatoes found in the locality. Moreover, sea water was often used since there was a lack of salt. There were also many units which resorted to eating grass and nuts from trees in order to overcome hunger and continue fighting.

¹ One gramme equals approximately 1/16th of an ounce.

THE PACIFIC

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THE PACIFIC

INDEX

Index

ABDA area, 57.

***Achilles*, HMNZS, 24, 36, 43, 46, 53, 240–1, 305.**

A Company. See *Fanning Island*.

Adachi, Lt-Gen F., 213.

Adams, Capt P. R. W., 187.

Adams, Capt R. T. J., 136.

Ainsworth, Rear Admiral W. L., 180, 241–2.

Albon, Lt J. S., 132, 134.

Aldridge, Fg Off S. P., 256.

***Aleutian Islands*, 209.**

Aley, Maj R. C., 26, 54, 231, 303.

Alford, Fg Off R. J., 256.

Allan, Maj H. F., 112, 114, 166.

Allen, Lt F. R., 174.

Allingham, Lt I. D., 308.

Anderson, Fg Off D. A., 56.

Anderson, Capt S. E., 48, 81.

Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 1–2.

Anglo-Japanese Commercial Treaty, 8, 11.

Angus, Pt Off F. J. J., 281.

Anzac Area, 57.

Anzac Naval Force, 53, 57, 61.

Appreciations—

- **Churchill, 8.**
- **Fraser, 66, 107.**
- **Jellicoe, 3–4.**
- **Mackesy, 7.**
- **New Zealand Chiefs of Staff, 19–20, 67.**
- **Puttick, 72, 346–58.**
- **Singapore staff talks, 14.**
- **United Kingdom Chiefs of Staff, 8, 61, 196.**
- **United States, 61, 67.**
- **Wellington Conference, 7.**
- **Williams, 36–7.**

Arabis, HMNZS, 243.

Arbutus, HMNZS, 243.

Archer, Lt F. P., 173–4, 190.

Archer, Lt-Col K. R., 311.

Armour, Maj K. I., 312.

Armstrong, Sgt F. A., 158.

18 Army Troops Company, 24.

Ashby, S-Sgt W. F., 268.

Ashwin, B. C., 74.

Ata, Premier of Tonga, 299.

1 Auckland (T) Battalion, 85–6.

Auckland Islands, coastwatching, 228, 230, 238–9.

Australia—

- **Appreciations of Japanese threat to, 6, 8, 61.**
- **Attitude to Pacific affairs (1895–1941), 1–3, 9–10.**
- **British Commonwealth Occupation Force components, 309, 317.**
- **Coastwatching responsibility, 43, 229.**
- **Japanese war plans concerning, 206, 210–1.**
- **New Caledonia defence, 43, 305.**
- **Norfolk Island defence, 300–2, 304.**
- **Pacific—**
 - **Areas of command in, 57–60.**
 - **Centralisation of command in, 60–1.**
- **United States Forces, 59, 69, 220.**
- **Withdrawal of Commonwealth and New Zealand forces from**

Middle East, 67, 107.

Avery, Brig H. E., 96.

Aylward, Pte W. T. A., 176.

Ayson, Flt Lt D. F., 256.

BAGNALL, Lt-Col R., 42, 293.

Bain, Lt D. W., 116.

Baird, Gp Capt D. W., 34, 42.

Balfour, Sqn Ldr R. H., 255.

Banks, Cpl E. C., 151.

Bannerman, Air Cdre R. B., 109.

Baragwanath, Padre O. T., 165.

Barbour, L-Sgt J. W., 137.

Barcham, Maj P., 163.

Barclay, Lt-Col P. M. B., 263.

Barnett, Maj H. W., 311.

Barns-Graham, Lt A. B., 116.

Barrett, Maj-Gen C. D., 102, 125.

Barron, Capt K. H., 123, 182.

Barrowclough, Lt-Col F. G., 166, 179.

Barrowclough, Mrs. H. E., 102.

Barrowclough, Maj-Gen H. E., 59, 72, 78, 80, 84, 87, 91, 102, 115,

118, 123, 139, 158, 160, 165–6, 170, 199–200, 202–3, 321–3.

- **Command, 72, 74, 91, 130, 161, 170, 321–2.**
- **Green Island operations, 168–72, 178–9, 189–91.**
- **3 NZ Division—**
 - **Employment of, 108, 337–40.**
 - **Equipment and maintenance for, 96–8, 124, 131.**
 - **Reorganisation for Pacific service, 75–6, 79, 104–6, 109–11, 161.**
 - **Training, 78, 84–6, 98.**
 - **Withdrawal and disbandment of, 196–203, 327.**
- **Special orders of the day, 111, 327, 341.**
- **Treasury Island landings—**
 - **Composition of New Zealand force, 143, 153, 155.**
- **Vella Lavella operations, 125–6, 130, 140, 161.**

Barry, Lt-Col J. W., 45, 55, 82, 112, 301–2, 304, 306.

Bartlett, Sgt A. T., 185.

Bartos, Lt S. J., 136.

Bassett, Col W., 113.

Beauchamp, Flt Lt D. S., 259.

Beaumont, Lt J. W., 132, 134–6.

Beckham, Cpl C. T. J., 135.

Beechey, Maj H. G. St. V., 81.

Beetham, Sgt R. H. H., 186.

Beightler, Maj-Gen R. S., 54–5, 270.

Bennett, Lt-Col P. L., 55, 80, 112, 126, 169, 172, 179.

Berendsen, Sir C., 74, 107, 305.

Berkeley, Lt-Col S. S. H., 54, 80, 112.

B Force. See 8 NZ Infantry Brigade Group.

Bickley, Pte W. F. A., 133.

Bignall, Pt Off E. D. B., 281.

Biss, Capt G. H., 185.

Black, Maj R. J., 26.

Blacker, Capt E., 111.

Blair, Lt N. D., 243.

Blake, Lt-Col H. W. D., 81.

Blamey, Fd Mshl Sir T., 59.

Blazey, Lt-Col C. A., 112, 179.

Blewett, G., 211.

Blundell, Capt P. M., 139.

Bockett, H. L., 199, 201–2.

Bogle, Maj A. H., 297.

Booth, Capt L. T. G., 152.

Bouchier, AVM C. A., 309.

Bougainville—

- **Campaign on, 126, 142–3, 147, 161–2, 191, 223, 226, 245, 255, 257–8, 272–87.**
 - **Allied preparations and strategy, 126, 142–3, 147, 226, 274.**
 - **Australian Forces, 286–7.**
 - **Casualties, 278, 280, 283–4, 286.**
 - **Fiji Military Forces, 272–3, 276–87.**
 - **Ibu operations, 276–80.**
 - **Japanese forces, strength of, 223, 226.**
 - **Mawaraka actions, 284–6.**
 - **Royal New Zealand Navy, 245.**
 - **United States Forces, 272–6, 278, 280, 282–6.**
- **Japanese airfield construction, 222.**
- **Royal New Zealand Air Force, 250, 255–8, 260, 274, 281.**

Bowerbank, Maj-Gen Sir F. T., 32.

Boyd, Capt W. P., 111.

Bracewell, Maj J. G. S., 145, 166.

Brain, Maj C. W. D., 115–16.

Braithwaite, Maj J. C., 156.

Breene, Maj-Gen R. G., 98, 106, 322.

Breeze, HMNZS, 242, 245.

Brereton, Sgt H. B., 125.

Bridson, Cdr G., 242–3.

British Commonwealth Occupation Force, Japan, 308–17.

British Overseas Defence Committee, 19.

British Pacific Fleet, 243, 307–8.

Brooke, Col J. I., 80, 87, 125, 169, 179.

Brooke-Popham, Air Chf Mshl Sir R., 13–14.

Brooke-White, Col J., 145.

Brooker, Maj L. F., 186.

Broomhall, Dvr C. F., 185.

Brown, Maj C. McL., 179.

Brown, Flt Lt E. H., 250.

Brown, Flt Lt J. Conyers, 260.

Brunette, Maj P. C. E., 48, 140, 179.

Bryden, Lt-Col W. A., 48, 55, 87, 111, 148,

Buchanan, Ldg Sigmn C. H., 243.

Buchanan, Lt N. H., 164.

Buckley, Air Cdre M. W., 253.

Bullen, Maj A. B., 174, 186–7.

Burden, Maj J. A., 136.

Burgess, Capt C. E., 21–2.

Burma Road, closing and re-opening of, 10.

Burnett, Lt R. I. M., 116.

Burns, Capt B. L., 81.

Burns, Lt-Col D. McN., 81, 126, 163, 179.

Busch, Gp Capt J. J., 247.

CALLAGHAN, Rear Admiral D. J., 217–18.

Cameron, Capt H. R., 297.

Campbell Islands, coastwatching, 228, 230, 238–9.

Campling, Maj C. D. B., 80.

Carney, Rear Admiral R., 188.

Caroline Islands. See Truk.

Carpenter, Telegraphist G., 238.

Casey, Rt. Hon. R. G., 60.

Cassells, C., 115.

Casualties—

- **Fiji Military Forces, 270, 284, 286.**

- **Japanese Forces—**

- **8 Area Army, 227.**

- **Bougainville, 278, 280, 283–4.**

- **Green Islands, 176, 184, 187–8.**

- **Guadalcanal campaign, 219, 221–2.**
- **New Georgia campaign, 224.**
- **Pearl Harbour, 16.**
- **Treasury Islands, 155, 157–8.**
- **Truk, 193.**
- **Vella Lavella, 136, 138.**
- **3 NZ Division—**
 - **Green Islands, 176, 184, 187–8.**
 - **Treasury Islands, 153, 158.**
 - **Vella Lavella, 136, 138, 141–2.**
- **United States Forces, 16, 140–2, 153, 158, 176, 188, 209–12, 222.**

Catley, Maj R., 187.

Cauty, Maj J. V. M., 52.

Central Pacific Area, 60.

Chambers, Lt D., 264.

Chandler, Lt E. C., 158.

Chappell, Maj A. B., 304.

Chatham Islands, coastwatching, 43, 230, 239.

Chiang, Kai-shek, 13, 17.

China, 3, 6, 9–10, 12–13, 17.

Choiseul Island, 143–4, 147.

Churchill, Rt. Hon. W. L. S., 4, 8, 68, 107, 195, 202.

Civil Construction Unit, Fiji, 41–2, 56.

Clark, Maj J. K. H., 179.

Clayton, LAC A. N., 56.

Clemens, Maj M., 265.

Clouston, Capt B. W., 131.

Clouston, Lt R. P., 185.

Coastwatching, 23, 33–4, 40, 43–4, 45, 49, 64, 127, 212, 215, 228–39, 249, 271, 293, 303.

- **Organisation, 229–30.**
- **Rank and status of civilian personnel, 228–9, 232, 235–6.**
- **Soldier companions, employment of, 230–2.**

Coates, Rt. Hon. J. G., 37, 74, 104–5, 109.

Cockerell, Lt-Col A. R., 304.

Cole, Capt B. S., 81.

Collin, Lt J. T., 179.

Collins, Sgt W. A., 269.

Combat teams, 76, 93, 117, 178, 267 (*see also* 3 NZ Division— **Vella Lavella).**

Combined Chiefs of Staff, 65.

Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference (1939), 8.

Compton, L-Bdr M. J., 151.

Congalton, Lt A. A., 164.

Conn, Sgt W. G., 268.

Conway, Brig A. E., 14, 202.

Cooke, Capt O. J., 80.

Cook Islands, 42–3, 230, 239.

Coral Sea, Battle of, 206, 208–9.

Corner, Lt-Col M. M. N., 232, 273, 279.

Cornwall, Lt-Col F. C., 130, 173–4, 176, 180, 186.

CORONET, Operation, 307.

Cotterell, Cpl M. H., 135.

Coulam, Maj A. G., 81, 131.

Cowan, Sgt W. A., 146–7.

Crace, Rear Admiral J. G., 53.

Craig, Maj A., 26, 81.

Craigie, Sir R., 9, 12, 15.

Crawford, Capt J. M., 262.

Crawford, Lt W. E., 262.

Crawley, Capt J. A., 80.

Crawley, 2 Lt R. H. C., 174.

Crump, Brig S. H., 315.

Cunningham, Maj-Gen W. H., 24–5, 27, 31, 36–8, 46–7, 51.

Curtin, Rt. Hon. J., 107, 305.

DALTON, Capt D., 183.

d’Arcy, Maj E. N., 48.

Davidson, Cpl P. A., 183.

Davie, Lt-Col P. C., 26, 31.

Davis, Lt-Col F. L. H., 112, 148, 201.

Davis, Pte R., 135.

Day, Flt Lt J. R., 251.

Dearden, Lt Crd P., 33, 229.

de Lange, Wg Cdr T. J. MacL., 258.

Dent, Lt B. I., 278, 280.

Denton, Capt H. M., 172.

Devery, Lt-Col C. N., 83.

de Willimoff, Wg Cdr J. J., 310.

Dick, 2 Lt R. D., 148.

Dickson, Capt C. S., 302.

Dill, Fd Mshl Sir J. G., 195.

Dittmer, Brig G., 271, 286–7.

Dove, Brig W. W., 82, 87, 98, 112, 114, 116, 118, 200.

Dowell, Capt J. A. H., 156.

Downer, A. F., 41.

Downes, Lt A. L., 26, 41, 55.

Duff, Brig C. S. J., 79, 80, 126, 179.

Duffield, Cpl J. H. E., 269.

Duigan, Maj-Gen Sir J. E., 19, 23–4, 288.

Duncan, Spr J. K., 151.

Duncan, Sqn Ldr S. R., 248, 258.

Dunlea, Cpl L. N., 137.

Dyer, Flt Lt W. R., 33.

Dutch East Indies. See Netherlands East Indies.

Dyett, N., 228.

EADY, Capt T. C., 179.

Eden, Rt. Hon. R. A., 10.

Edwards, Capt R. A. B., 308.

Ellis, Maj P. G., 52, 262, 271–2.

Ellis, Pte R. A., 236.

Ensor, Sgt B. W., 266, 270.

Erridge, Lt N., 26.

Evans, Pte D. W. T., 133.

Evans, Lt T. K., 186.

Evers, Maj J. W., 82.

Ewen, Maj J. M., 302.

Eyre, Lt-Col R. J., 55, 82, 148, 166, 295.

FAHEY, Maj L. J., 81, 130, 179.

Falck, Maj G. L., 80, 302.

Falloon, Padre G. D., 165.

Fanning Island—

- **Coastwatching, 43, 230.**
- **NZ Garrison (A Company), 288–91.**
 - **45 Battery, 291.**
 - **Operational command, 29.**
 - **Wellington Conference recommendations, 7.**
- **Seaplane landing areas, 20.**
- **United States Forces, 291.**

Fantham, Lt M. F., 276–7.

Far Eastern War Council, 60, 65.

Farland, Sister M. S., 167.

Fea, Lt-Col W. R., 111, 179.

Featherston Prisoner of War Camp, 44.

Ferguson, Maj R. G. S., 179.

Fiji—

- **Airfields, 20–2, 27, 34–5, 39–41, 48, 51, 64.**

- **Civil Construction Unit, 41–2, 56.**
- **Coastwatching, 23, 33–4, 49, 228–30, 239.**
- **Defence—**
 - **Appreciations and recommendations, 4, 7, 19–20, 24, 36–7, 67–8.**
 - **Expenditure for, 20–1.**
 - **New Zealand requests for assistance, 66–8, 328–31.**
 - **State of defences, 4, 21–2, 29–30, 39, 42–3, 45, 48–9, 51–2, 54, 207.**
- **Hurricane (1941), 34–5.**
- **Japan—**
 - **Appreciations of threat from, 19, 37, 53, 61, 66.**
 - **Plans to attack and establish base, 206–8.**
- **Koro Island rehearsal for Guadalcanal, 212.**
- **Lauthala Bay seaplane base, 21, 27, 42.**
- **Namaka area, 27–9, 33, 35–6, 39, 41, 46–8.**
- **New Zealand—**
 - **Defence contribution, 7, 19–22, 41, 45–6.**
 - **Equipment from, 21, 30, 38, 45–6, 50, 54, 70, 261, 263.**
 - **Operational command, scope of, 29, 36–7, 51.**
- **New Zealand Military Forces—**
 - **Amenities, 30–2.**

- **18 Army Troops Company, 24.**
- **Defence schemes and preparations, 27–30, 33, 36, 38–40, 46–8, 50, 52–3.**
- **Expansion and reorganisation, 45–7.**
- **Medical reports and services, 24–5, 31–2, 38–9, 47, 56.**
- **3 NZ Division, 45–56, 261–2.**
- **8 NZ Infantry Brigade Group, 24–46, 229, 231–2.**
 - **Equipment deficiencies, 25, 28–9, 31–2, 36–8.**
 - **Morale, 30–1, 33, 37.**
- **Personnel remaining after United States relief, 54, 56, 66, 69–70, 104, 106, 261–2.**
- **Provision of, 19–20, 22, 24.**
- **Training, 32, 34, 36–7, 43, 50–1, 53.**
- **Role as Allied base, 20, 41, 53, 59, 64, 70, 294.**
- **Royal New Zealand Air Force, 34–5, 37, 42, 44–5, 51–2, 245, 258–9.**
- **Suva, 4, 21–3, 26–7, 29–30, 32, 36, 38–41, 45–7, 53, 230.**
- **United States equipment for, 50.**
- **United States Forces, 42, 48–9, 53–5, 69–70, 261–2, 287.**

Fiji Defence Forces, 20–3, 29, 42, 45, 47–8, 54, 56, 261–2.

Fiji Forces—

- **Command, 29, 69, 261–4.**

- **Employment of, 105–6, 263–4, 287, 337, 339.**
- **Infantry Brigade, formation of, 262–3.**
- **New Zealand personnel, 20–2, 54, 56, 262–4, 287.**
- **Units—**
 - **Artillery, 22–3, 48, 262–3.**
 - **1 Battalion, 29, 48, 264, 267, 272–3, 276–84, 286.**
 - **2 (T) Battalion, 29, 46, 48, 262.**
 - **3 Battalion, 281–2, 284–6.**
 - **1 Docks Company, 281, 286–7.**
 - **Forward Base, Guadalcanal, 272–3, 286.**
 - **Guerrilla units, 52–4, 105, 127, 264–72, 298.**
 - **1 Commando, 265–71.**
 - **2 Commando, 271–2.**
 - **Special party, 264–5.**

Fiji Military Forces, 105–6, 127, 262–87, 337, 339.

- **Bougainville, 272–3, 276–87.**
- **Commands and staff, 262.**
- **Florida Island, 271–2.**
- **Guadalcanal, 264–6, 270–3.**
- **New Georgia, 266–70, 273.**
- **Training, 264, 266, 271–2, 284, 287.**

- **Vella Lavella, 127, 270–1.**

Fisher, Wg Cdr G. H., 246.

Fisken, Fg Off G. B., 250.

Fitch, Vice Admiral A., 180, 188, 322.

Fitzgerald, Maj H. A'C., 26, 55.

Fitzgerald, Pte R. J., 135.

Fletcher, Vice Admiral F. J., 208–9, 215.

Florida Islands, 148, 259, 271–2.

Flux, Maj H. G., 262.

Foote, Maj C. C., 155.

Foote, Capt G. W., 82, 114.

Foreman, Maj R. M., 81, 148.

Forster, Lt-Col F. G., 48, 262.

Fort, Rear Admiral G. H., 148, 188.

Fortune, Lt-Col W. H., 297.

Forward, Lt J. C., 187.

Foster, Sister H. B., 167.

Four Power Pact, 5.

Fraser, Admiral of the Fleet Lord, 308.

Fraser, Rt. Hon. P., 8, 10, 26, 41, 74, 103, 200, 236, 296.

- **Defence of Fiji and New Zealand, 66, 68, 70, 328–33.**

- **2 NZ Division, employment of, 68, 103, 106–7, 195, 202, 344–5.**
- **3 NZ Division, policy regarding, 106–9, 195–7, 202, 320, 344–5, 359.**

Fraser, Lt-Col R., 262.

Free, Maj C. W., 22, 25–6.

Freeman, Capt R. O., 276–7.

Freeman, Wg Cdr T. O., 254–6.

Freyberg, Lt-Gen Lord, 103, 113, 195–6, 202, 321.

Fulton, Lt-Col J. R. H., 297.

Furkert, Col F. W., 52.

Fussell, Lt A. T., 262.

Gale, HMNZS, 44, 242.

Gallagher, Maj C. H., 293.

Galloway, Sister J. G., 167.

Galway, Rt. Hon. Viscount, 26.

Gambia, HMNZS, 308.

Ganongga Island. See New Georgia.

Gapes, Maj R., 48, 81, 148.

Garry, 2 Lt A. R. I., 130.

Gentry, Maj-Gen W. G., 311.

German raiders in Pacific, 23, 35.

- **False alarms about, 34.**

Gettins, Capt J. L. J., 55.

Ghormley, Vice Admiral R. L., 54, 60, 63–4, 66, 73–5, 300–1 (see also South Pacific Command).

Gibbons, Maj G. B., 112, 172.

Gilbert and Ellice Islands—

- **Coastwatching, 45, 230–7.**
- **Execution of personnel, 235–6.**
- **United States landings, 166.**

Gilchrist, Lt F. G. K., 272.

Gilfillan, Cpl W. M., 147.

Gillespie, Lt-Col O. A., 26, 54.

Gillies, Maj A. G., 297.

Gizo Island. See New Georgia.

Gladney, Capt, 43.

Goddard, Air Mshl Sir R. V., 246, 301.

Goodall, Sgt N. S., 184.

Gosling, Capt J. W., 278–9.

Goss, Brig L. G., 46, 91, 124, 166, 199.

Goto, Rear Admiral, 215.

Graham, Lt D. G., 125, 135, 271.

Graham, Lt D. H., 243.

Graham, Capt I., 154–5.

Green Islands, 163, 168–94, 199–200, 245, 256–7, 280.

- **Airfield construction, 169–70, 174, 190–2.**
- **Casualties, 176, 184, 187–8.**
- **Japanese forces, strength of, 169, 174, 177, 184.**
- **Native population, 170, 174, 182–4, 188, 190.**
- **30 NZ Battalion reconnaissance, 170–1, 173–7.**
- **14 NZ Brigade, 163, 168–94, 199–200.**
- **Preparations and planning for landings, 168–73, 177–8.**
- **Strategic importance of, 280.**
- **Royal New Zealand Air Force, 177, 182, 191, 256–7.**
- **Royal New Zealand Navy, 245.**
- **Strength of personnel and equipment landed, 172, 178, 181, 188.**
- **Tanaheran action, 185–7.**
- **United States Forces, 171–4, 176, 180, 182, 188–91, 199.**

Greig, Capt H. J., 159.

Gresson, Capt J. P., 297.

Grey, Capt H. H., 151.

Grieves, Capt L. M. G., 81.

Griffen, Maj J. R., 282.

Griffiths, 2 Lt C. D., 135.

Griffiths, Flt Lt E. N., 34.

Grigg, Wg Cdr D. E., 246.

Griswold, Maj-Gen O. W., 125, 141-2, 224-5, 267, 277, 280, 283, 286.

Guadalcanal—

- **Airfields, 64, 120-1, 213-15, 217-19, 250.**
- **Allied offensive planning, place in, 64.**
- **Campaign on, 73-4, 210-22, 243-4, 247-8, 264-5.**
 - **Casualties, 211-12, 219, 221-2.**
 - **Japanese forces—**
 - **Attempts to reinforce, 214-17, 219-21.**
 - **Strength of, 213-16, 219-22.**
 - **Naval actions, 74, 211, 213-20, 243-4.**
- **Coastwatching, 64, 212.**
- **Fiji Military Forces, 264-6, 270-3.**
- **3 NZ Division, 118-24, 143, 167, 171, 179, 200.**
- **Royal New Zealand Air Force, 122, 247-8, 251-4, 256, 260.**
- **United States Forces, 120-1, 211-14, 216-18, 220-2, 265.**

Gudsell, Sqn Ldr G. E., 247.

Gwilliam, Sister M. G., 167.

HALL, Capt G. F. T., 81.

Hallwright, Maj W. W., 190.

Halsey, Admiral W. F., 104, 108, 166–7, 169, 171, 188, 193–4, 197, 208, 216–17, 219–20, 237, 245, 249, 259, 274, 296, 298 (*see also* South Pacific Command).

Hamilton, Lt G. R., 186.

Hannafin, S-Sgt D. O., 156.

Hannah, W/O G. E., 257.

Hardie, Maj L. C., 96–7.

Hardy, Maj R. B., 298–9.

Harmon, Maj-Gen M. F., 100, 106, 108, 111, 119, 123, 170, 197–8, 322.

Harper, Lt P. M., 266, 269–70.

Harris, Lt E. G., 130.

Harris, Brig-Gen F., 180, 274.

Hart, Admiral T. C., 57.

Hartshorn, Sqn Ldr R. G., 258.

Harvey, Maj H. D., 297.

Haslett, Maj K., 133.

Hata, General, 9.

Hawkins, Maj N. W. M., 80.

Healy, Sgt M. J., 141.

Hearn, Cpl H. R. C., 236.

Heatherwick, Maj G. W., 81, 179.

Heckler, Sgt S. I., 264–5, 269.

Heenan, Cpl A. C., 236.

Heffernan, A. J., 116.

Henderson, WO M. H., 172.

Herrick, Sqn Ldr M. J., 154, 248.

Hewin, Capt H. J. W., 172.

Hewland, Lt J. L. H., 164.

Highland, F., 235.

Hill, Maj J. I. L., 262.

Hilliard, Lt Cdr J. G., 242.

Hirohito, Emperor, 16.

Hislop, Pte S., 135.

Hitchcock, Capt W. P., 303.

Hitchon, Pte R. I., 236.

Hogan, Lt-Col R. A., 315.

Holden, Cdr A. D., 242.

Holland, H. E., 5.

Holmes, Lt P. E., 272.

Hopkins, Capt D. R., 111, 178.

Horan, Rear Admiral H. E., 19.

Horii, Maj-Gen T., 207.

Horler, Lt Cdr A. O., 242.

Houston, Capt B., 290–1.

Howe, Pte D. H., 236.

Hoyte, Sister D. H., 167.

Hudson, Maj D. A., 311.

Hull, C., 12–13, 16.

Hunt, Brig F. L., 53, 55, 297.

Hunter, Lt-Col S., 81, 148.

Hurley, Maj-Gen P., 74.

Hutchison, Lt J. C., 130, 136.

Hyakutake, Lt-Gen H., 206, 213, 217, 221.

IBBOTSON, Plt Off C. G., 56.

Ilala, Sgt., 146–7.

Imamura, Lt-Gen, 213.

Imperial Conferences, 2–3, 5–6.

India, British Commonwealth Occupation Force components, 309, 316.

Indian Ocean Area, 58, 336.

Indo-China, 11, 13, 15–17.

Inouye, Vice-Admiral, 208.

Irving, Lt-Col J. H., 25, 36, 48.

Irwin, Maj R. M., 163, 179.

Isitt, AVM Sir L. M., 308.

1 Island Command. See New Caledonia.

6 Island Command, 171.

1 (Islands) Group, 252–4 (see also RNZAF—Solomons Campaign).

JACK, Maj D. McK., 162.

Jackson, Sgt L. V., 264.

Japan—

- **Aggression and infiltration, pre-war, 1–3, 5–6, 9–13, 15–17.**
- **Allied occupation of, 308–17.**
 - **2 NZEF, Japan, 310–17.**
 - **Royal New Zealand Air Force component, 310, 316.**
 - **Sub-base, Tokyo, 317.**
 - **Tokyo guard, 314–15.**
- **Credits, ‘freezing’ of, 10–11, 13.**
- **Foreign policy, 16–17.**
- **Germany, relations with, 9, 24, 205.**
- **Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere, 16–17.**
- **Prisoners of war and internees in New Zealand, 44.**

- **Rise of, 1–17.**
- **Russia, relations with, 1, 11.**
- **Trade with New Zealand, 6, 8, 11.**
- **United States and United Kingdom, negotiations with, 9–10, 12–13, 15–16.**
- **War (1914–18), 2–3.**
- **War (1941–45)—**
 - **Atom bombs, dropping of, 307.**
 - **Declaration of, 17.**
 - **Early successes in, 17–18, 205.**
 - **Planning and strategy, 204–6, 210–11, 222–3, 225.**
 - **Preparations for Allied assault on, 307–8.**
 - **Surrender, 307–8.**

Japanese forces—

- **1 Air Fleet, 207.**
- **Air forces, annihilation of in South Pacific, 193, 257.**
- **8 Area Army, 169, 213, 223, 227.**
- **14 Army, 207.**
- **17 Army, 138, 206–7, 213, 221, 223, 226–7, 257.**
- **18 Army, 213.**
- **35 Army, 207.**

- **Combined Fleet, 204, 209–10, 225.**
- **2 Division, 213–14.**
- **6 Division, 224, 226.**
- **38 Division, 213–14, 217, 219, 221–2, 224.**
- **2 Fleet, 207.**
- **4 Fleet, 208–9.**
- **8 Fleet, 207, 214, 227.**
- **Rations, 221, 362.**
- **19 Seaplane Tender Division, 209.**
- **South East Area Fleet, 154.**
- **South East Area Headquarters, 177, 180.**
- **South Sea Garrison Unit, 226.**
- **South Seas Detachment, 207.**
- **Southern advance, components for, 206–8.**
- **Southern Army, 204–6.**
- **Submarine operations, 49–50, 118, 154, 216, 243–5, 248, 259, 297.**

J Force. See 2 NZEF, Japan.

Java Sea, Battle of, 18.

Jefferis, Pte J. H., 176.

Jellicoe, Admiral of the Fleet Lord, 3–4, 19.

Jenkins, Lt-Col F. G. M., 55, 81, 112.

Johnson, Capt H. N., 82, 114.

Johnson, Lt R. W. R., 262.

Johnston, Maj A. H., 81, 148.

Johnston, Lt-Col W. D. Stoney, 48, 262.

Johnstone, Capt G. A. R., 26, 262.

Joint Chiefs of Staff in Australia, 309.

Jolly, Maj S. N., 167.

Jones, Capt B., 293.

Jones, Hon. F., 26, 37, 100, 107, 112.

Jones, Lt-Col H. A., 110.

Jones, Cpl J. M., 233.

Jones, Pte R., 236.

Jordan, Rt. Hon. W. J., 6, 60, 65, 196.

Josselyn, Lt H. E., 127, 238, 271.

Joyce, Lt-Col J. P., 54.

KAIMAIS, Battle of the, 84–7.

Kakafuji, Mr. 10.

Kawaguchi, Maj-Gen K., 207.

Keith, Maj G. F. R., 187.

Kellaway, Maj G. T., 26.

Kells, Sgt M. V., 264.

Kelly, Lt Cdr R. B., 153.

Kennedy, Maj D. G., 237–8.

Kermadec Islands, coastwatching, 228, 230.

Kerr, Lt C. E. G., 131.

Kete, Pte E., 281.

Kilpin, Pte C. A., 236.

King, Admiral E., 63–4, 69–70, 73.

Kinkaid, Vice-Admiral T. C., 216–17, 219.

Kirk, Capt L. J., 156.

Kiwi A, B, C, D. See 3 NZ Division—Reorganisation for Pacific service.

***Kiwi*, HMNZS, 242–4.**

Knapp, S. R., 165.

Knipe, Spr F. L., 160.

Koga, Admiral M., 223.

Kolombangara, See New Georgia Group.

Kolombangara, Battle of, 241–2.

Kondo, Admiral N., 207, 223.

Konoye, Prince, 10, 12.

Krueger, Lt-Gen W., 59.

Krulak, Lt-Col V. H., 147.

Kurusu, S., 12–13, 16.

LAIGRET, Governor, 342–3.

Lamont, Capt A. M., 81.

Law, Lt D. J., 136, 165.

Lawford, Capt D., 141, 179, 183.

Lawrence, Capt R. S., 145.

***Leander*, HMNZS, 21, 43, 53, 241–2, 288.**

Leary, Vice-Admiral H. F., 53, 57.

Lee, Rear Admiral W. A., 219.

Lees, Lt-Col C. E., 123.

Lempriere, L-Cpl J. B., 147.

Lend-Lease, 11, 59, 112.

Leslie, Lt J. C., 55.

Lethbridge, Maj-Gen J. S., 166.

Lewis, Maj A. W., 286.

Liggett, Padre (Lt-Col) K., 116, 165, 304.

Lincoln, Lt-Col L. A., 24.

Lincoln, Lt-Gen R. B., 91, 100.

Line Islands. See **Fanning Island.**

Lloyd, Maj E. E., 262.

Lockett, Lt R. B., 130.

Lockwood, Brig-Gen B. C., 294.

Logan, Maj G. W., 110, 148, 154, 156–7, 166.

Loganforce, 154–8.

Long, Pte A. T., 102.

Louden, Capt K. E., 150.

Loughnan, Maj C. H., 26, 55.

Lovell, Lt-Col A. A., 290.

Lovelock, Capt L. D., 81.

Luke, Sir H., 35, 37, 50, 231.

Lumsden, Flt Lt K. D., 255.

Luoni, W/O G. I., 155.

Luxford, Maj E. M., 81.

Lyons, Rt. Hon. J. A., 6.

MACARTHUR, Gen of the Army D., 18, 60, 62–4, 169, 274, 307, 309–10 (see also South West Pacific Command).

MacArthur, Maj I. H., 55, 82, 112, 166.

McCain, Rear Admiral J. S., 245.

McCarthy, Capt H. N., 124.

McCarthy, Cpl J. J., 236.

McClure, Jnr Cdr G. V. M., 116.

McCowan, Maj A. I., 82.

McCullough, Pte A., 137.

McCurdy, Capt E. E., 262.

MacDonald, Rt. Hon. J. Ramsey, 5.

MacDonald, 2 Lt N. N., 276.

MacDonald, Lt O. W., 131.

McEwan, 2 Lt R. D., 262.

McGhie, Sgt W. Q., 135.

McGowan, Capt W. P., 26, 55, 82.

Macindoe, Capt H. L. G., 81.

McIntosh, Maj A., 297.

McIntosh, A. D., 74.

MacIntyre, Lt-Col D., 311.

McKay, Sgt-Maj, 140.

McKay, Maj W. G., 40, 54, 81, 118, 141, 179.

McKenna, Cpl A. E., 236.

MacKenzie, Sgt N. B., 268.

McKenzie, Pte R. M., 236.

McKenzie-Muirson, Lt-Col K. B., 83, 112, 148, 166.

Mackesy, Maj-Gen P. J., 7.

McKillop, Col A. C., 54.

McKillop, Col E. R., 24–5, 29, 40.

McKinnon, Lt-Col W. S., 81, 112, 148, 179, 311.

Mackley, Flt Lt W. B., 259.

McLachlan, Sister A. M., 167.

MacLeod, Lt Cdr C., 242.

McLeod, Sgt G. G., 144.

McLeod, Lt-Col J. M. C., 293, 297.

McNamara, Lt-Col S. A., 55, 82, 130.

McNaught, Sgt R., 165.

McNeight, Lt W. J., 133.

McQuinn, Cpl M. P., 233.

McRae, Sgt M., 125.

Magrane, Col J. P., 29, 262, 287.

Malaita Island, 260.

Mansergh, Rear Admiral C. A. L., 240–1.

Maori forces, employment in the Pacific, 79, 104–5.

Maori War Effort Parliamentary Committee, 104–5.

Marceau, Flt Lt C. S., 248.

Marshall, Gen of the Army G. C., 59, 62–4, 70.

Marshall, Maj S. F., 54, 80, 166.

Martin, Lt F. J., 262.

Martin, Maj R. M., 155.

Masefield, Lt B., 266–7.

Massey, Rt. Hon. W. F., 2, 5.

***Matai*, HMNZS, 242–3, 291.**

Mawson, Lt-Col J. B., 26, 29, 48.

Mead, Maj-Gen O. H., 51–2, 54–6.

Menzies, Lt-Col C. B., 297.

Menzies, Pte J. M., 233, 236.

Menzies, Pte M., 233, 236.

Merrill, Rear Admiral A. S., 180, 255.

Merrill, Capt J., 145.

Midway, Battle of, 208–11.

Mikawa, Vice-Admiral G., 207, 214, 226.

Millar, Lt A. M. J., 268.

Millar, Capt D. J. S., 155.

Miller, W/O J. E., 251.

25 Minesweeping Flotilla. See Royal New Zealand Navy.

Missen, Maj V. P., 311.

Mitchell, Capt F. J., 159.

Mitchell, Lt-Col F. M., 297.

Mitchell, Sir P., 105–6, 263, 283.

Moa, HMNZS, 242–4.

Moffatt, Lt-Col J. F., 166, 180.

Molloy, Fg Off J. M., 281.

Momotake, Lt-Gen, 208.

Mono Island. See **Treasury Islands.**

Monowai, HMNZS, 26, 34, 43, 46, 49, 291, 302, 306.

Montchamp, Col H., 113.

Moon, Maj N. C., 179.

Moore, Lt-Col A. J., 36, 55, 82, 112.

Moore, Lt-Col J. E., 180.

Moore, Capt W. A., 290–1.

Moosbrugger, Cdr F., 224.

Morgan, R. G., 234.

Morrison, Sgt R. H., 264.

Mowatt, Capt D. N., 283.

Muir, Capt A. E., 82.

Muir, Capt J. B., 179.

Muller, Pte L. H., 233.

Munda. See **New Georgia Group.**

Murphy, Col W., 45, 48, 54, 80, 112, 118, 124.

Murray, Lt-Col A., 81, 173, 179.

Murray, Lt C. G., 81.

Murray, Rear Admiral G. D., 216.

Murray, Cpl T. C., 234, 236.

Myers, Maj M. S., 55, 82.

Mynott, Maj W. L., 111, 179.

NAGUMO, Vice-Admiral C., 207, 216.

Nairn, Flt Lt R. C., 250.

Nankivell, Col J. H., 104.

Nash, Cpl J., 146.

Nash, Hon. W., 5, 60, 66, 68–9, 112, 195–6, 244, 360–1.

Neil, Maj A. J., 262.

Nelson, Sgt H. L., 185.

Nelson, Sqn Ldr J. S., 251, 257.

Netherlands East Indies, 11–12, 14, 17–18, 204–5.

Nevill, AVM Sir A. de T., 30.

Neville, Capt J. H., 148.

New, Capt H. B., 262.

Newall, Mshl of the RAF Lord, 165–6.

New Britain—

- **Air raids on Rabaul, 177, 188, 191–2, 255–8.**
- **Operations in, 58–9, 62–4, 166, 193, 205, 210.**

New Caledonia—

- **Australia's commitments in, 43, 305.**
- **Defences (1941), 43.**
- **French and native forces, 93–4.**
- **Japanese infiltration, pre-war fear of, 1–2.**
- **Japanese plans to attack and establish base, 206–8.**
- **Laigret, interview with, 342–3.**
- **3 NZ Division, 77, 83, 87–118, 197, 200–1.**
 - **Artillery organisation, 77, 93–4.**
 - **Base organisation, 93, 113–16, 118.**
 - **Defence scheme and preparations, 91–4.**
 - **Equipment, supply and maintenance, 95–8, 101.**
 - **Medical, 114–15.**
 - **8 NZ Infantry Brigade, 93–4, 98–100, 110, 116.**
 - **14 NZ Infantry Brigade, 93–4, 99–102, 110, 116.**
 - **15 NZ Infantry Brigade, 91, 93, 100, 110.**
 - **Training, 98–102.**
 - **Welfare and recreation, 95–6, 102, 115–16.**
- **Noumea, 60, 89–90, 93–4, 101, 114, 116–17, 220.**
- **Role as Allied base, 59–60, 64, 89, 93, 220, 294.**
- **Royal New Zealand Air Force, 245–6.**

- **United States Forces, 69, 89–90, 93–5, 99, 115.**

New Georgia Group (see also Vella Lavella)—

- **Campaign in, 126, 138, 223–5, 240–2, 249–50, 266–70, 273.**
- **Casualties, 224, 270.**
- **Coastwatching, 238.**
- **Fiji Military Forces, 266–70, 273.**
- **Japanese forces, strength of, 223–5.**
- **Kolombangara, 126, 222–5, 273.**
- **Munda airfield, 126, 222, 224–5, 240, 248, 252, 254–6, 266–7, 269–70.**
- **Naval operations, 138, 224–5, 240–2.**
- **3 NZ Division—**
 - **Gizo and Ganongga Islands reconnaissance, 141.**
 - **Simbo Island, 141.**
- **Royal New Zealand Air Force, 166, 248–50, 252, 254, 256.**
- **United States Forces, 223–5, 266–70.**

New Guinea—

- **Campaign, 59, 62–4, 154, 166, 205–6, 210.**
- **Withdrawal of Japanese troops to Guadalcanal, 213.**

New Hebrides—

- **3 NZ Division amphibious training, 116–18.**

- **1 NZ Field Bakery, 140.**
- **Role as Allied base, 59, 246, 294.**
- **Royal New Zealand Air Force, 246–7, 251–3.**
- **United States Forces, recommendations for, 69.**

Newlands, W/O I. D., 236.

Newman, Lt E. R., 82.

Newton, Vice-Admiral J. H., 193, 200.

Newton, Wg Cdr P. G. H., 251.

New Zealand—

- **Allied plans concerning, 8, 66.**
- **Appreciations of Japanese threat to, 6, 8, 61, 319.**
- **Armed Forces—**
 - **Strength (to 1944), 67, 110.**
 - **Wellington Conference recommendations, 7.**
- **Chiefs of Staff, 19–20, 24, 37, 65, 67–8, 103, 229, 291, 318.**
- **Coastwatching commitments, 43–4, 229–30.**
- **Defence—**
 - **Assistance from United Kingdom and United States, 44, 50, 65–7, 69, 319, 328–33.**
 - **Estimated requirements, 61, 67.**
 - **State of defences (1941), 43–4, 46, 61.**

- **Japanese submarine operations, 49–50.**
- **Japanese war plans concerning, 206, 210–11.**
- **Manpower, 67–8, 79–80, 106, 109–10, 195–8, 201, 296, 319, 360–1.**
- **Pacific command areas, 57–60.**
- **Provision of bases and supplies for Allies, 59, 195–6.**
- **Relations with Australia, 107.**
- **Trade with Japan, 6, 8, 11.**
- **United States Forces, 59, 63, 212, 220.**

New Zealand, HMS, 1, 4.

New Zealand Army Nursing Service, 26, 31, 167.

16 NZ Brigade Group. See Tonga.

2 NZ Division—

- **Employment of, 68, 103, 106–8, 195–7, 199, 201–3, 346–59.**
- **Reinforcements and replacements from Pacific, 22, 105–6, 108–10, 200–3, 290–1, 344–5.**

3 NZ Division—

- **Appointments and commands, 48, 54–5, 80–2, 112, 166.**
- **Disbandment of, 202–3, 327, 359.**
- **Employment of, 70–6, 78, 83, 103–8, 123, 193, 197, 201, 319–20, 337–40, 353–8.**
- **Equipment, 86, 95–9, 101, 124, 131, 148, 178, 201, 323–4.**

- **Fiji, 46–56, 261–2 (see also 8 NZ Infantry Brigade Group).**
- **Ganongga and Gizo Islands reconnaissance, 141.**
- **Green Islands operations, 163, 168–94, 199–200.**
- **Guadalcanal, 118–24, 143, 167, 171, 179, 200.**
- **Morale, 84, 87, 108, 138, 162–4, 167, 183, 325.**
- **New Caledonia, 77, 83, 87–118, 197, 200–1.**
- **New Hebrides, 116–18.**
- **New Zealand, 71, 77–9, 82–7, 201, 203.**
- **8 NZ Infantry Brigade (see also 8 NZ Infantry Brigade Group).**
 - **Employment of, 143, 170, 197.**
- **Fiji, 46–8, 50–1.**
 - **Guadalcanal, 118–19, 143.**
 - **New Caledonia, 93–4, 98–100, 110, 116.**
- **New Zealand, 71, 78, 83–5.**
 - **Treasury Islands, 143–66, 168, 170, 199–200.**
- **14 NZ Infantry Brigade—**
 - **Fiji, 45–8.**
 - **Green Islands, 170–1, 173–94, 199–200.**
 - **Guadalcanal, 118–19.**
 - **New Caledonia, 93–4, 99–102, 110, 116.**
 - **New Zealand, 71, 78, 84–5.**

- **Vella Lavella, 125–42, 159–65, 167, 173, 178, 271.**
- **15 NZ Infantry Brigade, 91, 93, 100, 104–5, 110–11, 123.**
- **Reinforcements and replacements for 2 NZ Division, 106, 108–9, 200, 202–3, 344–5.**
- **Releases for RNZAF, 109.**
- **Reorganisation for Pacific service, 71–80, 83, 103–12, 301.**
- **Simbo Island, 141.**
- **Training, 78, 84–7, 98–102, 116–18, 122, 143, 173.**
- **Units—**
 - **29 Battalion 48, 71, 84–5, 93, 99, 143–4, 146, 150, 153, 158.**
 - **30 Battalion, 48, 71, 85, 88, 93, 130, 141, 153, 160, 170–1, 173–8, 181, 183–7, 190.**
 - **34 Battalion, 48, 71, 104, 110, 143, 146, 152, 155, 157–8 (see also Loganforce and Tonga).**
 - **35 Battalion, 39, 45, 48, 71, 84–5, 93, 129–37, 178, 184, 185.**
 - **36 Battalion, 45, 48, 71, 104, 110, 143, 146, 150, 152–3, 157–8 (see also Norfolk Island).**
 - **37 Battalion, 45, 48, 71, 85, 93, 102, 110, 129–31, 133, 136–7, 165, 178, 184, 187.**
 - **Defence and Employment Platoons, 179, 183–4.**
 - **Divisional Headquarters, 47, 71, 84, 91, 116, 118, 123–4, 127–8, 130, 140, 167, 171, 179, 181, 189, 200–1.**
 - **4 Field Security Section, 141, 179, 183.**

- **Machine Gun Company, 8 Brigade, 110, 148 (see also Loganforce).**
- **Machine Gun Company, 14 Brigade, 110, 130–1, 180, 183, 185–7.**
- **NZ Army Service Corps, 49, 84, 86, 96, 100.**
 - **4 Composite Company, 48, 85, 93, 151.**
 - **16 Composite Company, 48, 85, 87, 93, 102.**
 - **29 Composite Company, 93, 111.**
 - **4 Motor Transport Company, 93, 148.**
 - **10 Motor Transport Company, 140, 179.**
 - **16 Motor Transport Company, 130–1, 179.**
 - **Reserve Mechanical Transport Company, 93.**
- **NZ Artillery, 48–9, 54, 76–9, 84, 87–8, 93–4, 100, 104, 106, 111–12, 132, 136–7, 139, 146, 153, 182 (see also Norfolk Island).**
 - **53 Anti-Tank Battery, 93, 130–1, 179.**
 - **54 Anti-Tank Battery, 93, 148, 153.**
 - **12 Field Battery, 130.**
 - **35 Field Battery, 45, 48, 93, 102, 131.**
 - **37 Field Battery, 48.**
 - **17 Field Regiment, 93, 160, 179, 184.**
 - **37 Field Regiment, 111.**

- **38 Field Regiment, 111, 148, 151–3, 155.**
- **28 Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regiment, 94, 111.**
- **33 Heavy Regiment, 94, 111.**
- **144 Independent Battery, 170, 179, 182–3.**
- **207 Light Anti-Aircraft Battery, 102, 130–1, 136.**
- **209 Light Anti-Aircraft Battery, 93, 141.**
- **214 Light Anti-Aircraft Battery, 93.**
- **29 Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment, 94, 122, 148, 152–3, 179.**
- **144 Light Howitzer Battery, 93.**
- **27 Mixed Anti-Aircraft Battery, 45, 48.**
- **4 Survey Troop, 179.**
- **NZ Dental Services, 148, 167, 179.**
- **NZ Engineers, 78, 84, 86, 95, 100, 104, 111, 122, 161, 164, 167, 177, 182–3, 189, 191.**
 - **20 Field Company, 48, 85, 87, 93, 102, 130–1, 141, 179.**
 - **23 Field Company, 48, 85, 93, 148, 159.**
 - **26 Field Company, 111, 124, 141, 179.**
 - **37 Field Park Company, 93, 167, 173, 179, 190.**
- **NZ Medical Services, 87, 93, 111, 114–15, 141, 162–3, 190.**
 - **2 Casualty Clearing Station, 124, 159, 167.**
 - **2 Field Ambulance, 48.**

- **7 Field Ambulance, 48, 85, 93, 148, 155, 159.**
- **22 Field Ambulance, 85, 93, 100, 102, 130–1, 179, 190.**
- **24 Field Ambulance, 111, 124, 179.**
- **6 Field Hygiene Section, 115, 163, 179.**
- **1 Field Surgical Unit, 140, 179.**
- **2 Field Surgical Unit, 148.**
- **1 Malaria Control Section, 148, 162, 179.**
- **Namaka Hospital, 48.**
- **NZ Ordnance Corps, 200.**
 - **Divisional Ordnance Workshops, 48, 93.**
 - **20 Light Aid Detachment, 160.**
 - **36 Light Aid Detachment, 48.**
 - **37 Light Aid Detachment, 93.**
 - **64 Light Aid Detachment, 93.**
- **NZ Signals, 84, 86–7, 100–1, 111, 123, 130–1, 139, 148, 159–60, 163, 174, 179, 182, 189.**
- **1 Ruahine Battalion, 83, 93, 110–11, 341.**
- **1 Scottish Battalion, 83, 93, 99, 111, 341.**
- **Tank Squadron, 83, 111, 124, 143–4, 170, 178, 182–3, 186.**
- **Vella Lavella, 123–42, 159–65, 167, 171, 173, 178, 271.**
- **Welfare and recreation, 95–6, 102, 115–16, 162, 164–5, 167–8, 190, 200.**

- **Withdrawal from operations, 195–203, 346–58.**

2 NZEF IP—

- **Administrative problems, 115, 122–3.**
- **Appointments and commands, 80–2, 112, 114, 166.**
- **Base organisation, 82, 93, 111, 113–16, 123–4, 167.**
- **Title, 72.**
- **Units—**
 - **Army Education and Welfare Service, 164, 190.**
 - **Artillery Training Depot, 111.**
 - **Chaplains' Department, 165.**
 - **Convalescent Depot, 111.**
 - **1 Field Bakery, 140.**
 - **Field Maintenance Centre, 123–4, 167.**
 - **4 General Hospital, 113–15, 159.**
 - **Public Relations Service, 116.**
 - **Wharf Operating Company, 111.**
 - **Works Construction Company, 110.**

2 NZEF, Japan, 308–17.

- **Appointments and commands, 311.**
- **Formation in Italy, 310–11.**
- **Morale, 311–12, 316.**

New Zealand Government—

- **Employment of forces in Pacific**, 72, 74–5, 83, 103–4, 106–11, 197, 288, 296, 308, 320.
- **Fanning Island defence**, 288.
- **Fiji defence commitments**, 7, 19–22, 30, 36–7, 41, 45–6, 54.
- **Japan—**
 - **Declaration of war on**, 17.
 - **Reaction to rise of**, 1–17.
- **Lend-lease transactions**, 59, 112.
- *New Zealand*, HMS, gift of, 1.
- **Pacific policy to 1941**, 1–17.
- **Requests for assistance in defence commitments**, 65–9, 319, 328–33.
- **Singapore defence contribution**, 5, 66.
- **Society Islands**, assistance to, 305–6.
- **South West Pacific defence responsibility**, 36–7, 300.
- **Support for unification of Pacific war direction**, 60–1.
- **Thailand**, defence of, 14.
- **Tonga**, defence commitments in, 37, 292, 296–7, 299.
- **United States defence responsibility**, attitude to, 60, 69–70.
- **Withdrawal and disbandment of 3 Division**, 195–7, 201–2.

New Zealand Home Guard, 44, 67, 85.

8 NZ Infantry Brigade Group, Fiji, 22, 24–46, 229, 231–2.

- **Appointments and commands, 25–6.**
- **Coastwatching commitments, 229, 231–2.**
- **Equipment, 25, 28–9, 31–2, 36–8.**
- **Formation of, 22, 24–5.**
- **Units—**
 - **29 Battalion, 25, 29, 36.**
 - **30 Battalion, 25, 29, 33–4, 36, 39.**
 - **34 Battalion, 25, 29, 36.**
 - **4 Composite Company ASC, 25, 30, 35.**
 - **7 Field Ambulance, 25.**
 - **35 Field Battery, 25, 29, 33, 36, 45.**
 - **20 Light Aid Detachment, 36.**
- **NZ Engineers, 25, 28–30, 35, 39–40.**
- **20 Field Company, 25.**
- **NZ Signals, 25, 35.**
- **Training school, 36.**

New Zealand Military Forces—

- **Assault on Japan, proposed force for, 197, 202, 308.**
- **Expansion, pre-war, 7, 288.**
- **Mackesy report, 7.**

- **Reduction to meet manpower problem, 109.**
- **Strength, 43–4, 61, 67, 110, 318–19.**
- **South Pacific Command, position under, 65.**
- **Wellington Conference recommendations, 7.**

New Zealand National Patriotic Fund Board, 32, 115–16, 165.

New Zealand Post and Telegraph Department—

- **Operators as coastwatchers, 229–30.**

New Zealand Public Works Department—

- **Coastwatching commitments, 229, 238.**
- **Fiji airfield construction, 41–2.**

New Zealand Territorial Forces, 7, 44, 109.

New Zealand Women's Army Auxiliary Corps, New Caledonia, 116.

New Zealand YMCA, 32, 115, 165, 313.

N Force. See Norfolk Island.

***Niagara*, RMS, 290.**

Nichol, Pte J. H., 236.

Nicholls, Gp Capt C. W. K., 191, 257–8.

Nicholls, Lt O., 137.

Nimitz, Admiral C., 60–4, 69, 307.

Nissan Island. See Green Islands.

Nomura, Admiral, 12–13, 16.

Norfolk Island—

- **Airfield construction, 300–2.**
- **Australian personnel, 300–2.**
- **Defence responsibility for, 300–1, 305.**
- **N Force, 104, 301–5.**
- **36 Battalion, 104, 301, 304.**
- **2 Battalion, Wellington West Coast Regiment, 304.**
- **NZ Army Service Corps, 303.**
- **NZ Artillery, 301–2, 304.**
- **215 Composite Anti-Aircraft Battery, 302, 304.**
- **152 Heavy Battery, 301–2, 304.**
- **NZ Engineers, 303.**
- **Royal New Zealand Air Force, 301, 303–5.**
- **Strategic importance of, 300–1, 305.**

Norris, Maj R. W., 293.

North, Maj N. H., 162.

North Pacific Area, 60.

Northcott, Lt-Gen Sir J., 309, 313.

Northern Landing Force, 130, 161 (see also Vella Lavella).

Nurse, Lt-Col F. N., 22.

OCEAN ISLAND, coastwatching, 43, 230, 234.

O'Dowd, Lt P., 175–6.

Oldfield, Wg Cdr J. A., 154, 182.

O'Leary, Lt-Col G. P., 290.

OLYMPIC, Operation, 307.

O'Neill, Maj I. G., 157.

Ormsby, Lt M. M., 135.

Ota, Admiral, 223.

Owen, Pte C. J., 236.

Owen, Pte E. V., 151.

—

- **Air facilities, organisation of, 20.**
- **Allied strategy and planning, 7–8, 14, 20, 57–9, 62–6, 122, 126, 142–3, 166, 169, 224, 274, 294, 307.**
- **Command in, 57–8, 60–5, 169.**
- **Command areas, 57–60, 64, 336.**
- **State of Allied defences (1941), 42–3, 61.**

Pacific Ocean Area, 57–8, 60, 334–6 (see also South Pacific Command).

- **Directive to Commander-in-Chief, 334–5.**

Pacific Section 2 NZEF. See 3 NZ Division.

- **Title, 72.**

Pacific War Council, 60–1.

Page, Fg Off I. M., 247.

Park, Pte R. J., 134.

Park, Brig R. S., 60.

Parker, Padre J. W., 165.

Parker, Pte W. A. R., 235–6.

Parkhouse, Capt G. M., 81, 148, 179.

Parry, Admiral Sir W. E., 14, 24, 74, 305.

Patch, Maj-Gen A. M., 220, 265.

Patterson, R. P., 123.

Pattullo, Lt-Col H. A., 55.

Pearl Harbour, Japanese attack on, 10, 15–16, 43.

Pearsall, Cpl C. A., 236.

Pearson, Sgt W. J., 159.

Peck, Maj-Gen De W., 104.

Perry, Hon. W., 109.

Peterson, Maj H. C. F., 80.

Philippine Islands, 4, 14, 17–18, 58, 204.

Phipps, Lt Cdr P., 242–4.

Phipps, Sgt T. J., 155.

Phoenix Islands, 20, 43, 230, 239.

Pickering, Sgt B. D., 279.

Pierce, Padre J. C., 165.

Pinkham, Maj W. G. F., 297.

Pirie, Fg Off N. A., 251.

Pitcairn Island, coastwatching, 228.

Pithie, Maj L. E., 166, 180.

Potter, Brig L., 46–7, 55, 77, 82, 85, 93, 125, 130–1, 137–8, 170, 174, 178, 180, 181, 315.

Powles, Maj G. R., 179.

Pratt, Pte W. M., 135.

Priest, Pte P. M., 186.

Primrose, Lt G. H., 184.

***Prince of Wales*, HMS, 18.**

Pringle, Lt-Col B. H., 166, 303.

Prisoners of war and internees, 44, 233–7.

Purton, 2 Lt F. W., 82.

Puttick, Lt-Gen Sir E., 37, 41, 71–2, 74, 83, 104–5, 109, 112, 201, 263, 297–8.

- **Employment and organisation of NZ Divisions, 71–2, 74, 83, 104–5, 195–6, 201, 346–58.**

Pym, Maj J. A., 45.

QUILL, Wg Cdr S. G., 182, 249–50.

. See [New Britain](#).

Rarotonga. See Cook Islands.

Ratcliffe, Cpl L. G., 187.

Rawnsley, Wg Cdr I. E., 253.

Reesby, Sgt G. H., 187.

Reid, L-Cpl C., 183.

Reid, Maj F., 297.

Reidy, Lt-Col J. M., 82, 112, 166.

Rennie, Capt J. S., 292.

***Repulse*, HMS, 18.**

Revell, Capt T. P., 130.

Reynolds, Lt-Col A. W., 297.

Rice, Capt S. R., 110.

Richard, Pte R. T., 186.

Riley, Col W. E., 169.

Rivett-Carnac, Vice-Admiral J. W., 288.

Roberts, Air Cdre G. N., 42, 245.

Robertson, Lt-Gen H. C. H., 309.

Robinson, 2 Lt P.H., 55.

Roche, WO II R. A., 135.

Rochester, Capt H. A., 180.

Rogers, Maj D., 159.

Ronaldson, Maj C. W. H., 82.

Roosevelt, President F. D., 9, 14, 15, 74, 103, 195.

Rosenthal, Maj-Gen Sir C., 302.

Ross, Maj L. A. S., 110, 180.

Rout, Lt-Col O. E. L., 82.

Row, Brig R. A., 46, 53, 82, 85, 93, 144–8, 153, 155, 157–8, 166.

Royal New Zealand Air Force—

- **Assistance to shipping, 258–9.**
- **Bougainville, 250, 255–8, 260, 274, 281.**
- **British Commonwealth Occupation Force components, 310, 316.**
- **Command, 65, 245, 252–4.**
- **Fighter Wing, 154, 177, 182, 191, 254–8.**
- **Fiji, 34–5, 37, 42, 44–5, 51–2, 245, 258–9.**
- **Florida Island, 259.**
- **Green Islands, 177, 182, 191, 256–7.**
- **Guadalcanal, 122, 247–8, 251–4, 256, 260.**
- **Japan, forces for final assault on, 308.**
- **New Caledonia, 245–6.**
- **New Georgia, 166, 248–50, 252, 254, 256.**
- **New Hebrides, 246–7, 251–3.**
- **Norfolk Island, 301, 303–5.**

- **Pacific air ferry service, 294.**
- **Pacific air survey, 20.**
- **Rabaul, raids on, 191, 255–8.**
- **Solomons campaign, 154, 177, 182, 245, 247–60, 274, 281.**
- **Strength, 44, 61, 67, 109–10, 196, 260.**
- **Support for 3 NZ Division training in New Zealand, 78, 85.**
- **Tonga, 248, 296.**
- **Treasury Islands, 154, 254, 259.**
- **Units—**
 - **1 Bomber Reconnaissance Squadron, 256–7.**
 - **3 Bomber Squadron, 246–8, 252–3.**
 - **4 Bomber Squadron, 245.**
 - **4 Bomber Reconnaissance Squadron, 258–9.**
 - **6 Flying Boat Squadron, 253, 259.**
 - **9 Bomber Squadron, 246, 252.**
 - **14 Fighter Squadron, 182, 249–53, 310, 316.**
 - **15 Fighter Squadron, 154, 248–9, 252, 254–8, 296.**
 - **16 Fighter Squadron, 251–2.**
 - **17 Fighter Squadron, 251–2, 257.**
 - **18 Fighter Squadron, 154, 182, 252, 254–7.**
 - **20 (Torpedo-Bomber) Squadron, 258.**

- **25 (Dive-Bomber) Squadron, 258.**
- **30 (Dive-Bomber) Squadron, 258.**
- **31 (Torpedo-Bomber) Squadron, 258.**
- **41 Squadron, 310.**
- **Radar squadrons, 254, 259–60, 305.**
- **4 Repair Depot, 253.**
- **Sawmilling detachment, 122, 254.**
- **Servicing units, 253–5, 258.**
- **Vella Lavella landings, 252.**
- **Wellington Conference recommendations, 7.**

Royal New Zealand Navy (*see also* under names of ships)—

- **Command in the Pacific, 65.**
- **Components with British Pacific Fleet, 243, 308.**
- **25 Minesweeping Flotilla, 242–5.**
- **Solomons Campaign, 240–5.**
- **Strength, 43, 67, 110, 196.**
- **Title, 26.**
- **Wellington Conference recommendations, 7.**

Rupertus, Brig-Gen W. H., 212.

Rusden, Pte C. M., 147.

Russell Islands, 244, 249–50.

Rutherford, Capt J., 80, 87.

Rutherford, Maj R. J., 111, 179, 186.

Rutherford, Capt W. G., 179.

Ryan, Lt E. H., 183, 185.

SAITO, Maj-Gen, 282.

Salmon, Col C. W., 113, 198.

Salote, Queen, 292, 299–300.

Samoa—

- **Coastwatching, 43, 230.**
- **Defences, 4, 42.**
- **Japanese plans to attack and establish base, 206–8.**
- **Role as Allied base, 59, 294.**
- **United States Forces, 53, 69.**

San Cristobal, 266.

Sanders, Lt-Col G. P., 311.

Sanderson, Capt N. R., 179.

Sandston, Capt G. C. C., 180.

Santa Cruz, Battle of, 216–17.

Santa Isabel Island, 222–3, 271.

Sasaki, Rear Admiral N., 223–4.

Saunders, Air Chf Mshl Sir H., 14, 19, 24.

Savage, Rt. Hon. M. J., 6–7.

Sayers, Col E. G., 163, 166.

Sayers, WO R., 164.

Scott, Wg Cdr I. A., 259.

Scott, Rear Admiral N., 215, 217–18.

Scott, Lt T. C., 283.

Seaward, Lt-Col C. F., 55, 82, 130, 166.

Seltzer, Col E. T., 48.

Sexton, Ch Sister J., 167.

Shanahan, F., 37, 109.

Sheild, Padre E. O., 165.

Sherman, Rear Admiral F. C., 274.

Sherson, Pte C. H., 156.

Shewan, Matron A. G., 311.

Shirer, Lt-Col W. F., 81, 166.

Shirley, Lt D. M., 136.

Shortland Islands, 142–3, 168, 221, 226, 274.

Silk, Capt B. M., 145, 172.

Silvester, Rev A. W. E., 238.

Simmers, Maj J. C. M., 82.

Simmiss, Maj G. C., 82.

Simpson, Capt D. G., 130.

Sinclair, Maj R., 133.

Singapore, 2, 4–8, 14, 18, 66.

Singapore staff talks, 11, 14, 66.

Skilling, Sgt V. D., 269.

Smith, Pte J. E., 157.

Smith, Cdr J. MacD., 174–6.

Society Islands, 43, 69, 305–6.

Solomon, Maj D. A., 55, 80.

Solomon Islands—

- **Campaign in, 62–4, 74, 122, 166, 210, 221, 225–7, 242–5, 247–60, 274, 323–4 (see also Bougainville, Green Islands, Guadalcanal, New Georgia, Treasury Islands, Tulagi, Vella Lavella)—**
 - **Allied strategy and planning, 62–4, 122, 126, 142–3, 166, 169, 224, 274.**
 - **Japanese 8 Area Army casualties, 227.**
 - **NZ Base organisation, 111, 113–16, 123–4, 167.**
 - **NZ Medical Services, 140–1, 159, 162–3, 190.**
 - **Royal New Zealand Air Force operations, 154, 177, 182, 245, 247–60, 274, 281.**
 - **Royal New Zealand Navy operations, 240–5.**
 - **Solomon Islanders as guerrilla troops, 238, 265–6, 284.**

- **Japanese air bases, 206, 222.**

Somerville, Capt G. N., 178.

Sotutu, Sgt U., 279.

South, Capt R. M., 81.

South Pacific Command (see also Ghormley and Halsey).

- **Air strength (1943), 249–50.**
- **Area of, 60, 64, 336.**
- **New Caledonia, headquarters on, 89.**
- **New Zealand forces, 65, 73, 75–6, 83, 95, 97, 101, 104–5, 108, 140, 197–8, 245–6, 295–6, 322–4.**
- **Norfolk Island, airfield construction and defence, 301, 305.**
- **Shipping problems, 220, 253, 324.**
- **Strategic planning, 126, 143, 147, 169, 274.**
- **Tonga defence, 295–8.**

South Pacific Scouts. See Fiji Forces—Units—1 Commando, Fiji Guerrillas.

South West Pacific Command, 46, 59–60, 64, 143, 169, 274, 336.

Spaatz, Lt-Gen C., 307.

Speedy, Pte L. B., 236.

Speight, Col N. C., 112, 118, 179.

Spittal, Capt A. P., 283.

Spring, Maj J. F., 311.

Spruance, Vice-Admiral R. A., 192, 209.

Spurdle, Wg Cdr R. L., 251.

SQUAREPEG, Operation. See Green Islands.

Stannard, Pte R. C., 186.

Stead, Wg Cdr G. G., 259.

Steel, L. H., 229.

Steele, Maj A. G., 157–8.

Steele, Capt N. W., 262.

Stenhouse, Sgt L. V., 125.

Stephens, Lt L. C., 26.

Stevens, D. H., 135.

Stevens, Sgt-Maj G., 292.

Stewart, Capt D. W., 21–2.

Stewart, Maj F. H., 262.

Stewart, Maj-Gen K. L., 46, 74, 105, 310–12, 315.

Stewart, Lt L. C., 131.

St. George, Wg Cdr D. F., 310.

Stirling Island. See Treasury Islands.

Stout, Rt. Hon. Sir R., 1.

Stowell, Maj A. R., 82, 114.

Stratford, Lt O. W., 282.

Stronach, Capt J. F. B., 180, 185–6.

Sugden, Lt-Col A. H. L., 45, 55, 82, 130, 180.

Sukanaivalu, Cpl S. (VC), 286.

Sykes, Capt J., 178.

Syme, Lt R. W., 131.

. See [Society Islands](#).

Taliai, 2 Lt H., 268.

Tancred, Wg Cdr H. L., 253.

Task Forces. See [United States Forces](#).

Tassone, Carpenter's Mate A., 151.

Taylor, Lt A. L., 234, 236.

Taylor, Lt D., 130.

Taylor, Maj E. G., 183–4.

Taylor, Lt-Col J. B. K., 48, 55, 262, 267, 272–3.

Taylor-Cannon, Lt L. G., 179.

Tennent, Lt-Col A. A., 81, 166.

Terauchi, Gen J., 204, 224.

[Thailand](#), 11, 13–15, 17–18.

Third, Sgt R., 234.

Thom, Maj A. H., 116, 164.

Thomas, Lt-Col W. B., 311.

Thompson, A. K., 313.

Thompson, Maj-Gen C. F., 262.

Thompson, Lt G. A., 277.

Thompson, Padre G. R., 165.

Thompson, Lt-Col H. J., 26.

Thorburn, Cpl P. B., 236.

Thornton, Brig L. W., 317.

Thwaites, Matron G. L., 26, 31.

Tisdale, Rear Admiral M. S., 240.

Tod, Cpl J. J., 160.

Tojo, Gen, 12, 210–11.

Tokelau Islands, coastwatching, 43, 239.

'Tokyo Express,' 214, 217, 222, 241, 247–8.

Tolich, Pte I. N., 183.

Tomline, Lt-Col G. H., 48.

Tonga—

- **Coastwatching, 40, 228–30, 239, 293.**
- **Defence force, 38, 42, 104, 292–300.**
 - **Artillery, 293–4, 297–8.**
 - **34 NZ Battalion, 104, 295–6.**
 - **16 NZ Brigade Group, 297–8.**

- **6 Canterbury Battalion, 297–8.**

- **Reduced force (1944), 298–9.**

- **Defence recommendations, 19–20, 24, 36, 293.**
- **Guerrilla units. See Fiji Forces—Guerrilla Units.**
- **New Zealand contribution to defence, 70, 230, 261, 292–4, 299.**
- **Operational command of, 36–7, 69–70, 292, 294, 297, 299.**
- **Role as Allied base, 59, 294.**
- **Royal New Zealand Air Force, 248, 296.**
- **United States Forces, 69–70, 294–7, 299.**

Tongan Government defence contribution, 292, 293, 299.

Treasury Islands—

- **Campaign in, 126, 142–59, 161, 254.**
 - **Allied preparations and planning for, 126, 142–8.**
 - **Casualties, 150, 153, 155, 157–8.**
 - **Japanese forces, strength of, 147, 150.**
 - **Reconnaissance for, 146–7, 155.**
 - **Soanotalu action, 154–7.**
- **Mono Island, 142–3, 145–7, 150–9, 168.**
- **8 NZ Infantry Brigade, 143–66, 168, 170, 199–200.**
- **Royal New Zealand Air Force, 154, 254, 259.**
- **Royal New Zealand Navy, 245.**

- **Stirling Island**, 142–3, 146–7, 150, 152, 159–62.
- **United States Forces**, 144–6, 148–9, 155–6, 158–9, 162, 199.

Trench, Maj D. C. C., 158.

Trevarthen, Maj D. E., 114.

Tripp, Maj C. W. H., 52, 125, 262, 265, 267–71.

Truk, 2, 49–50, 58–9, 192–3, 206.

Tucker, Capt F. G., 262.

Tui, HMNZS, 242, 244–5.

Tulagi, 4, 62–4, 121, 206, 209, 212, 242, 244.

Turnbull, Lt C. E., 155.

Turner, Lt C., 22, 262.

Turner, Capt G. H., 81.

Turner, Rear Admiral R. K., 217–18.

Thwigg, Brig J. M., 81, 112, 116.

—

- **British Commonwealth Occupation Force components**, 309, 316.
- **Chiefs of Staff**, 8, 61, 196–7, 202.

United Kingdom Government—

- **Declaration of war on Japan**, 17.
- **Fiji defence contribution**, 20–1, 66.
- **Japan**, relations with, 1–17.

- **New Zealand Forces, employment of, 68, 107, 195–6, 202.**
- **Pacific policy (1905–41), 1–17.**
- **Pacific War Council, attitude to establishment of, 60.**
- **Singapore defence, 5.**
- **Thailand, defence of, 13–14.**

United Kingdom-United States War Council, 65.

United States of America—

- **Chiefs of Staff, 65, 68, 197.**
- **Fiji—**
 - **Airfield construction, 40–1.**
 - **Equipment for, 50.**
- **Foreign policy (1929–41), 8–17, 40.**
- **Japan, relations with, 8–17.**
- **Joint Chiefs of Staff, 59–60, 62–4, 66, 169.**
- **Joint Working Committee, 67, 69.**
- **New Zealand Forces, employment of, 71, 74, 103, 195 (see also South Pacific Command).**
- **Pacific—**
 - **Defence responsibility in, 54, 57–8, 69–70.**
 - **Lack of defence preparations in, 4–5.**
 - **Offensive planning, 57–70, 169.**

United States Forces—

- **Americal Division**, 217–18, 220, 280.
- **Australia**, 59, 69, 220.
- **Bougainville**, 272–6, 278, 280, 282–6.
- **Choiseul**, 144, 147.
- **14 Corps**, 125–7, 130, 220, 223–6, 244, 252, 265–70, 272–6, 278, 280, 282–6, 320.
- **37 Division**, 54–5, 269, 282 (*see also* 14 Corps).
- **43 Division**, 90, 99, 104, 244, 267–9 (*see also* 14 Corps).
- **93 Division**, 199.
- **Early raids in the Pacific**, 53, 208.
- **Fanning Island**, 291.
- **Fiji**, 42, 48–9, 53–5, 69–70, 261–2, 287.
- **Green Islands**, 171–4, 176, 180, 182, 188–91, 199.
- **Guadalcanal**, 120–1, 211–14, 216–18, 220–2, 265.
- **Japan—**
 - **Components for assault on**, 307.
 - **Occupation areas in**, 310.
- **Marine Amphibious Corps**, 140, 144, 161, 273–4, 320.
- **Marine Corps**, 62–3, 70, 73, 140, 211–14, 216–17, 220, 254.
- **Move into Island bases**, 68–9.

- **Naval strength, 18, 61, 209, 211, 216, 220.**
- **New Caledonia, 69, 89–90, 93–5, 99, 115.**
- **New Georgia, 223–5, 266–70.**
- **New Zealand, 59, 63, 212, 220.**
- **Society Islands, 69, 306.**
- **Strategic Air Force, 307.**
- **Task Force 3, 61.**
- **Task Force 31, 125, 144, 153, 169, 172, 178, 193.**
- **Task Force 63, 247.**
- **Tonga, 69–70, 294–7, 299.**
- **Treasury Islands, 144–6, 148–9, 155–6, 158–9, 162, 199.**
- **Vella Lavella, 125–7, 130, 140, 161, 171, 270.**

Upton, Lt-Col G. T., 23, 273, 277–9.

VANDEGRIFT, Maj-Gen A. A., 62, 125, 212, 217, 220.

Vanderpump, Sqn Ldr M. T., 251.

Vaughan, Lt D. L., 237.

Veitch, Lt H. C., 164.

Vella Lavella—

- **Casualties, 136, 138, 140–2.**
- **Coastwatching, 127, 238, 271.**
- **Fiji Guerrilla Forces, 127, 270–1.**

- **Japanese forces—**
 - **Evacuation of, 137–8, 225.**
 - **Strength, 127, 137.**
- **14 NZ Brigade, 123–42, 159–65, 167, 171, 173, 178, 271.**
 - **Gift to mission hospital, 160.**
 - **Reconnaissance party, 125, 127, 271.**
- **Strategic importance of occupation, 126, 142, 225.**
- **Royal New Zealand Air Force operations, 252.**
- **United States Forces, 125–7, 130, 140, 161, 171, 270.**

Versailles, Peace Conference, 3.

Voelcker, Lt-Col F. W., 26, 55, 281, 286.

Voss, Lt C. A., 26.

WADDELL, Maj G. W., 166.

Wainwright, Maj A., 22.

Wakefield, Capt R. F., 80.

Waldman, Cpl R. G., 134.

Wales, Brig J. G. C., 26, 43, 54, 56, 262–4, 271.

Walker, Wg Cdr H. C., 256.

Wallace, Cpl S. R., 233.

Wallingford, Air Cdre S., 252.

Walsh, Sgt T. J., 139.

Ward, Ch Sister R. J., 167.

Ware, Sgt-Maj, 140.

Warren, W/O R. C., 237.

Warrington, Maj J. G., 54, 80.

Washington Conference, 4–5.

Waterworth, Maj G. E., 148.

Watson, Capt D. O., 81.

Watson, Maj F. R. M., 141, 174.

Watson, Flt Lt R. B., 281.

Wavell, Fd Mshl Earl, 57.

Webb, Hon. P. C., 41.

Wellington Conference, 7, 20–1.

Wells, Lt-Col J. R., 24.

Were, Pte B., 233, 236.

Wernham, Maj H. A., 166.

Western Pacific High Commission, 21, 228–9, 237.

Whatman, Maj M. P., 273.

White, Wg Cdr G. R., 34.

Whyte, Cdr C. H., 180, 200.

Wickham, WO F., 146.

Wicksteed, Lt-Col B., 22, 54, 80, 111, 179.

Wilce, Sgt S., 22.

Wilkes, Wg Cdr M., 258.

Wilkinson, Rear Admiral T. S., 108, 125, 144, 168–9, 172, 178–9, 193, 322.

Williams, Brig A. B., 30, 60.

Williams, Maj D. C., 166, 172.

Williams, Capt D. E., 125, 264–5, 268, 271.

Williams, Sgt F. E., 264–5.

Williams, G., 233.

Williams, Gen Sir G. C., 36–7, 293.

Williams, Maj R. E., 139.

Williams, Fg Off W. N., 256.

Wills, Lt K. A., 131.

Wilson, Capt J. F. B., 131, 178.

Wilson, Maj J. M., 311.

Wilson, Maj K. H., 81, 179.

Wilson, Lt-Col S. L., 124.

Wimsett, Capt E. R., 297.

Withers, Telegraphist T., 238.

Wood, Lt-Col J. H. H., 111.

Wooller, Lt-Col H. G., 21.

Workman, Col J. E., 21, 29.

Wright, Rear Admiral C. H., 220.

Wybourne, Sgt R. H. W., 56.

Wylde-Brown, Maj R. V. M., 81.

YAMAMOTO, Admiral I., 209, 223, 225.

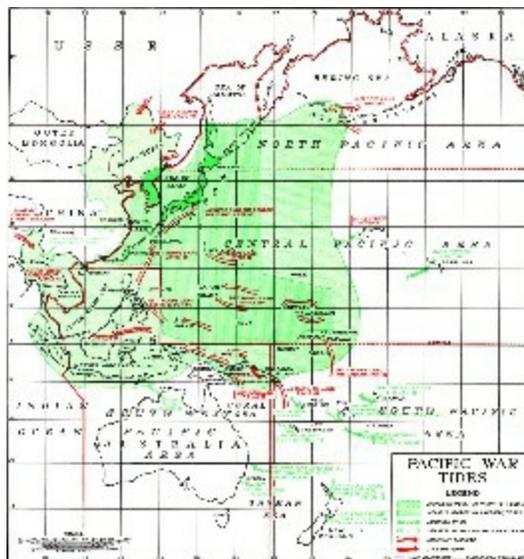
Yazawa, Col K., 207.

Yendell, Lt-Col F. M., 81, 112.

Young, Capt D. M., 174.

Young, Maj R. A., 116.

Young, Col V. A., 78.



Pacific War Tides