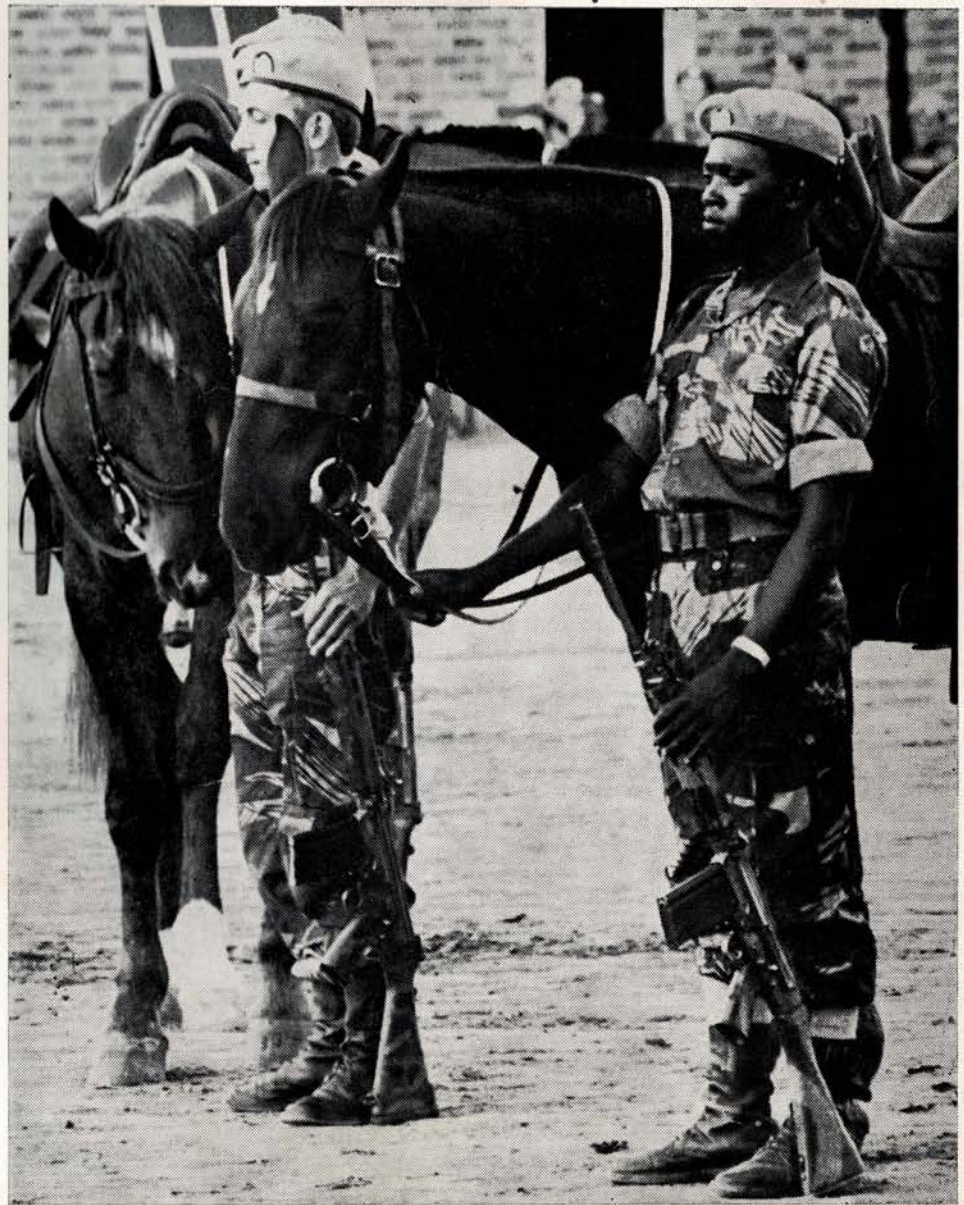


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the magazine of the rhodesian army



Vol. 17, No. 7, 15th November, 1977



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the magazine of the Rhodesian army

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15th November, 1977

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Editor:

Lt Col K. J. Busby
RhAEC
Telephone 709092

Assistant Editors:

Capt D. P. Hobson, RhAEC
Capt P. G. Botham, RhAEC
Rfn W. F. Wilberforce

Business Manager:

Lt Col K. J. Busby
RhAEC
P.B. 7720, Causeway, Rhodesia.
Telephone 709092

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*Trooper Steven Shepherd "passing out" with
Grews Scouts.*

(Photo: R.W.S. Bowker)

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Editorial

The many faces of terrorism plague the peoples of the Western Nations in an ever increasing pattern of violence and hate. This terrorism feeds on the prominence it is given in the Mass Media, a surrogate of the weaknesses of a society which places human rights above moral responsibilities.

The stage is rapidly approaching where legitimate grievances are no longer resolved in a "civilised" manner, where negotiation and arbitration are replaced with ransom and demand. Reason no longer prevails and the lives of innocent people are bartered for an alien philosophy.

Terrorism places an extra burden on the forces of law and order. The terrorist does not occupy a clearly defined area as in conventional war, he remains faceless in a civilian population whom he subverts through terror to his evil ends. The soldier, typically exemplified by the Rhodesian soldier must exert constraints on his emotions to prevent retribution he would as an aggrieved human being exact on his aggressors. Further, he picks up the pieces left behind by the bloody inhumanity of terrorist "liberation" campaigns — the mutilated bodies of the mindless terrorist landmine, the burnt and bayoneted torso of the local "sell-out" — victim of a twisted political philosophy.

The only positive product of a terrorist tyranny is a greater resolve to smash it beyond all recognition.



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Passing out Parade Grey's Scouts

7. 10. 77

The Grey's Scouts have certainly come a long way from the days when they were referred to, affectionately not doubt but still somewhat derogatively, as the "Donkey Wallopers!"

On Friday, 7th October they held a Passing Out Parade at their barracks at Inkomo and

parade square wearing their ordinary camouflage combat caps and as the officer reviewing the parade approaches and meets each man he hand him his hard earned and henceforth proudly worn grey beret. These small, but telling touches of ceremony do help to give



(Photo: RWS Bowker)

this illustrated so clearly just how much they have improved and what a valuable and vital addition they are to the Rhodesian Army. Here we saw, after only six weeks' training, a group of seventeen confident and accomplished horsemen going through their paces, amongst them one Trooper Steven Shepherd, the only African in this particular group, although the Scouts do include quite a fair sprinkling of Africans in their numbers. The Army Commander, Lt Genl J. S. V. Hickman, OLM, MC, reviewed the parade and handed the men their berets. This appears to be one of the main differences between the Grey's Scouts' Passing Out and almost any other unit. The men come on to the

colour to what has now become, in our heavily mobilised times, a fairly regular occurrence.

The award for the best "pupil", which seems a more apt way of describing these men than "recruit" since both they and their horses undergo a great deal of "schooling", went to Corporal George Ziemann, a farmer and polo player. George is a mere slip of a lad, about six foot three in his stocking feet and built to match. It says a great deal for the stamina of the Grey's Scouts' horses that they can happily transport such a burden the fifty or so kilometres which is often required of them in a day's patrol.

After the business side of the parade was



Cpl George Ziemann receiving the "Best Recruit" trophy.

completed, ending in a rousing speech from the Army Commander, the men gave a short display of fancy riding. Even they admit it isn't quite up to the standard of the Police displays of this kind but the Grey's are certainly on their way up and received tremendous applause from the onlookers for their most praiseworthy attempt at this most difficult expression of the equestrian art.

After the parade tea and then on to a short tour of the messes for a most important event. The presentation of "wings" to the man who had accomplished the most "jumps" and still managed to complete the course.

This went to young Trooper "Titch" Harcourt and as fate would have it, it was also his nineteenth birthday . . . what a lovely way to celebrate. He in his turn presented General Hickman with a beer tankard from all the men, and he made a very pleasant little speech to the Army Commander, thanking him for joining in the celebrations. This led to a general air of relaxation and at this stage we discovered that not only are the Grey's men of valour but they also have in their midst something approaching Rhodesia's answer to the Vienna Boys' Choir! The songs may not always express quite the same pure sentiments but the harmony is definitely there . . . it's always good to have a second trade!

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SERVICES CLUB, BULAWAYO

A warm Reception for all—

The Commander of the Army, Lt Genl John Hickman officially opened the "McDonald's Club — Services' Section" in Bulawayo on October 8th, 1977. The function took the form of a Retreat Ceremony, followed by a wine and cheese party for some 250 invited guests and representative National Servicemen from the Army, Police and Internal Affairs. There was a dance to the Band of the Corps of Signals later that night attended by some 100 National Servicemen from all sections of the armed forces who were partnered by young ladies from the Teacher Training College. The verdict at the end of the evening was, "we had a ball."

This "Services Section" is Bulawayo's gesture of gratitude to all our National Servicemen for all they are doing for us, and this now, is an open invitation and WELCOME to all National Servicemen, whenever you are in Bulawayo, either passing through on R & R, or stationed in Bulawayo and its environs, please make use of "McDonald's Club — Services' Section". There is no charge for the accommodation available, six beds at the present time and these will be increased as the demand arises. Meals are being provided at a very nominal cost, and there will be ladies on duty at all times to make you feel at home. There is also a blackboard in the foyer of the club for "lifts wanted" and "offered" and you may find that you will be able to pick up a lift home from this board when you are passing through Bulawayo.

McDonald's Club has been functioning in Bulawayo since 1955. It is situated in Seventh Street, just off the Salisbury Road entrance to the City, and very close to Brady Barracks. The premises are spacious; there is a billiard room, table tennis room, darts and badminton, a bar and a large swimming pool, as well as basketball and tennis courts. There is some sporting equipment available for use by National Servicemen, such as swimming trunks and towels, tennis racquets, badminton bats and a large ball to be used for basketball or water-pool. The ladies on duty or the resident housekeeper and her husband will be happy to see that all the facilities of the Club are made available to you when you get there.

The members of McDonald's Club will be organising various social functions during weekends — a disco, a braai, etc. — and you are welcome to take your partner along providing you sign her in as a guest. As the Executive

Committee of "McDonald's Club — Service Section" is bound by certain legal ties, it is essential that you sign yourself in — there is a register in the foyer — giving your rank, name and serial number. In fact there are two books in the foyer, one for the "Services Section" and the McDonald's Club Visitors' Book, and we would appreciate it if you would sign both books whenever you visit the Club.

All National Servicemen may use the Club under the title "McDonald's Club — Services' Section", and we hope that with the help of the ladies on duty and the members of the Club, you will feel completely at home whenever you go there, either for a relaxing few hours around the pool, for a meal, for a special function, or to spend one or more nights. "McDonald's Club — Services' Section" is there to fulfil a need which we know exists. It's a place you can go anytime for fun and relaxation or a meal, and especially it's there when you can't get home to your families, please use it and we look forward to meeting you there.

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TSANGA TSNIPPETS

Regretfully, this month's contribution must open on a sad note. Mercury, the dove brought to us at the end of September, was unable to survive it's damaged wing and passed away on the day following our submission of October's Tsnippets. Except for this, October has been a very good month all round. The OC and Mrs Paget, with four of our patients, were invited to attend the opening night at a Salisbury theatre of "Doctor in the House" starring Jimmy Edwards. This, of course, improved the OC's medical knowledge considerably and will be of the greatest benefit to all those in his tender, loving care.

On another visit to Salisbury the OC spent a very interesting three days at the Paraplegic Games. He was most impressed with every thing he saw and engaged in many valuable discussions with both competitors and officials.

Readers will recall that in September's "Assegai" we made mention of a massive boost to our funds by a gentleman in Holland, Mr P. H. Verseveldt of the Netherland-Rhodesia Society. He has recently made a whirlwind tour of Southern Africa and we were lucky enough to have him make a night stop at Tsanga Lodge. The Centre made a deep impression on him and he appeared to enjoy his all too brief stay with us as much as we enjoyed having him. Before leaving he insisted on handing over another large cheque to assist in improving the facilities here so we are once more very deeply indebted to him.

Other welcome visitors this month included the Commander of Combined Operations and Mrs Walls who popped in for a cup of tea and a chat. The same evening they attended a ball at the local hostelry and danced away the evening to music provided by the talented dance band of the Rhodesian Corps of Signals. Tsanga Lodge patients, and staff, less the OC who was absent on duty, were also there en bloc and had a whale of a time.

Involuntary entertainment by two of the patients gave us our biggest laugh for ages recently. Billy Fitzpatrick, who has now rejoined 3 Indep Coy, took advantage of the superb weather to indulge in a spot of skinny dipping in our dam and, while so engaged, failed to spot "Slippery Sam" making off with his clothes. Fortunately, modesty was not outraged thanks to a kindly(?) comrade who conjured up a small cardboard box which, with top and bottom removed, provided almost adequate cover for Billy's dash to shelter. Sgt Spud Mur-

phy was less fortunate a couple of weeks later. This refugee from the trials and tribulations of Llewellyn Barracks was displaying his prowess in performing "chin ups" when his shorts descended to his ankles. Being thus deprived would not have been catastrophic had he been wearing underpants but poor Spud was left covered only in confusion. At his court martial that evening, presided over by WO I Steve van Blerk, no mercy was shown and the sentence was "Drinks all round". Steve has now returned to his family and Llewellyn Barracks and their gain is very much our loss. You must bring the family along here Steve — but on a social visit this time.

Until next month, cheers every one.

Notice To Contributors

To ensure a punctual "Assegai", articles must reach the Editor no later than the 30th of the month. Articles submitted later will be held over.

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CAN WE AFFORD TO FORGET?

GERMAN RESISTANCE TO HITLER
BETWEEN 1933 and 1945

by
LT COL K. J. BUSBY



The last of the series dealing with the two extremes of Hitler's Germany; past issues have dealt with the support for Hitler — but what about the opposition?

There could have been little doubt for the German people of the future which lay in store for them when Hitler assumed power in 1933. In his book "Mein Kampf" Hitler, despite muddled thinking, clearly indicated that life was not to be based upon Christian ethics. Hitler already had a record of violence behind him when he became Chancellor and he stated quite bluntly "heads will roll". Despite this record many Germans were naive enough to hope that once in power Hitler would moderate his intentions. This hope was rudely shattered by the events of 1933 in which Hitler came to power virtually by default of the Weimar politicians and the blood bath of 30th June, 1934 and, indeed, it set the tone for Hitler's rule. It ushered in a criminal dictatorship which was accepted, albeit in some cases tacitly, by German society. There followed ten years of repression, aggression, violence, murder and war with few visible conspiracies or revolts to threaten it. The only overt act was the plot of 20th July, 1944 and that failed.

In any consideration of resistance to Hitler it is necessary to understand his power vis-a-vis the German people. Hitler came to power through a combination of factors which included the defeat of 1918, Versailles and Weimar, the inflation of 1923, the depression of 1929 and the lack of a positive democratic tradition in Germany. Thus there was considerable support for Hitler, particularly in the middle class, as he appeared to offer stability and progress. However, once in power the Nazis seized the instruments of authority and bent them to their own use. The courts and the police came under Nazi control and superimposed upon them was the Gestapo — the Prussian secret police, a part of Himmler's notorious SS (not to be confused with the Waffen SS). The systematic organisation of the Gestapo was such that its spies and informers existed at all levels of German society, Germany of this period was truly a police state. The thoroughness of this security net made the

task of resistance extremely difficult. The one possible source of resistance, the German Army, was cajoled into impotency through the medium of the personal oath to Hitler. Any attempt to overthrow Hitler would depend upon the armed might of the military. The task thus presented to any resistance movement was therefore handicapped from the outset. Even had the military managed to avoid involvement in the Nazi web the task would have remained monumental for the requirement was not merely for a change of government but a new morality and for this reason it had to start from the individual.

The difficulty of the situation was aptly summed up by Dr. George Bell, Bishop of Chichester, when he wrote, "There was opposition to Hitler, of one kind and another, from 1933 onwards. But there is little scope for an armed revolution in a police state."

A natural source of resistance was found in German Conservative elements but this opposition lacked co-ordination and was largely right wing and divorced from the bulk of the population. The ideal of the Conservatives was the re-establishment of Germany as a leading power in Europe and to this end thought in terms of the restoration, strength and expansion of Germany. Goerdeler, Hassell and Beck recognised that war would not achieve Germany's place in Europe. The Conservative opposition was centred in condemnation of Hitler's foreign policy which they saw as leading to war; a war which Germany could not win. However, there is also a strong tradition running through the Conservative elements which sought the expansion of Germany to the borders which existed prior to 1918. This accepted in part Hitlerian foreign policy. Attempts were planned by the Conservatives to resist Hitler. A coup d'etat was planned during the Sudetan crisis but in part the coup looked to Britain for support but Britain's concern with the policy of appeasement precluded such involvement. The fact that much of the resistance was of a personal nature is

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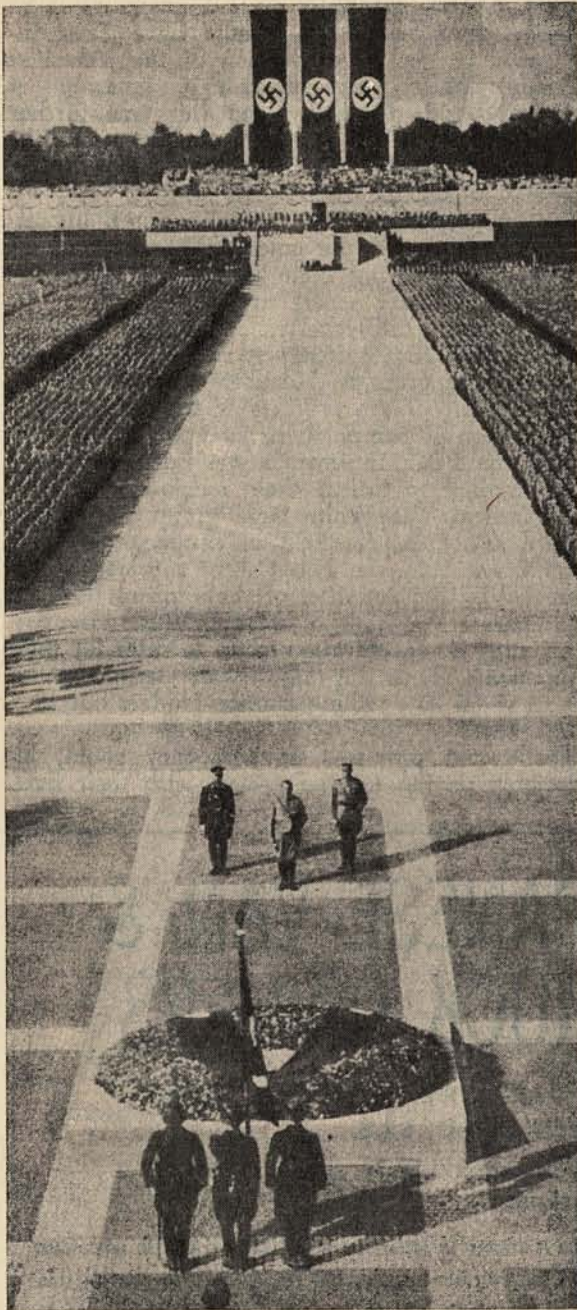
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exemplified in the case of Beck W who in 1938 (July) resigned over the intention to overrun Czechoslovakia although he did attempt to get the generals to resign en bloc. Wheeler-Bennett suggests that Beck's resignation was to prevent the destruction of the German Army rather than to defy Hitler and further suggests that had he succeeded, World War II could have been averted. This is speculative and probably incorrect as the Nazis had already seized the opportunity to infiltrate the High Command. Goerdeler initially served the Nazis but went into opposition in 1936. In 1938 Goerdeler associated with Beck to build a solid opposition in the form of the Wednesday Club. Members of the Army became associated in this "club" and included Oster and Canaris, although the former had been active against the Nazis since 1934. A further form of resistance which resulted in contacts in 1938 in which Churchill, Chamberlain and Sir R. Vassittart were involved was originated by Von Kleist and Bohm Tettelbach among others. In the main those contacts were nullified by the policy of appeasement although Hitler's influence within the command of the Wehrmacht in February 1938 should have provided a warning of future events, although the Munich Agreement of 29th September, 1938 undoubtedly decided the issues.

The Kreisau Circle, which formed in 1940, became the centre for inspiration to soldiers and conservatives. The members of the Kreisau Circle were the younger aristocracy and the intelligentsia. Prittie, in his book "Germans Against Hitler", writes of the Circle as "one of the most formative groups of thinkers in the history of Germany during the last hundred years." In this assessment he is probably correct in that before this event Germany had experienced oligarchic rule. The character of the Kreisau Circle's resistance was essentially that they planned for the Germany which was envisaged after Hitler had been removed. Moltke was opposed to any attempt to assassinate Hitler and accepted that Nazism would have to run its course. That they were enlightened is shown in their rejection of traditional German nationalism. The Kreisau Circle undoubtedly had an influence far greater than the number of its members (probably no more than forty at any one time) and served as a source of inspiration to the more active opponents to Hitler. The attitude of the Kreisau Circle did not preclude the membership of Germans who believed that Hitler should be assassinated and it was a natural action that they should gravitate towards such a centre of resistance.

The obvious centre for opposition to Hitler should have been politics but because of the hatred and distrust of Weimar, any legitimate



political opposition was immediately at a disadvantage. The Social Democrats should have served as a centre of political resistance. They had been the strongest single party in the first twelve years of Weimar and had thus acquired the stigma of association. Shirer saw their inability as a result of "continually seeking political alliances which sapped their zeal and enthusiasm"; the party was tired and defeated, dominated by old well-meaning but mediocre

men. It has been suggested that the Social Democrats could have responded to von Papen's proclamation of military law in July, 1932 with a general strike. This is questionable in view of the Nazi strength on the streets which would probably have received Communist backing. The Social Democrats were alone in their opposition to the Enabling Act and realised its significance; Otto Wels certainly realized its significance and stated "No Enabling Act can give you the power to destroy ideas which are eternal and indestructible." In 1933 the effective power of the Social Democrats was reduced as a result of Hitler's closure of the Trade Unions Headquarters and dissolving of the Unions on 2nd May. The Social Democrats were dissolved six days later. Having been virtually eliminated in Germany, some Social Democrats went into exile and from there they operated a courier service and newspapers which gave news of conditions in Germany.

The only other politically motivated opposition was from the German Communist Party (KPD) but this was after the Nazi assumption of power. Propaganda was the KPD weapon and Moscow viewed National Socialism as a passing phase which would be eliminated by their revolution. This was rather surprising as existing economic and military links between Russia and Germany continued up to 1941. The KPD frequently called for united opposition to the Nazis but they were not regarded as trustworthy. Their long standing feud with the Social Democrats, despite contacts in 1932, was reason enough. To other Germans National Socialism was preferable to Communism. There is no doubt that after 1933 the KPD were active against Hitler but their efforts were undermined by a series of arrests which brought internal struggle to the party. Their efforts to capitalise on the banning of the Unions in 1933 failed and the organisation went underground for two years. In 1935 the Politburo ordered an increase in revolutionary activity. Attempts were made to unite with the Social Democrats but the heavy losses suffered by both parties at the hands of the Gestapo destroyed any possible basis of a mass movement. Similarly the liquidations following the Moscow trials of 1936 and the signing of the non-aggression pact sealed the fate of any political alignment. A significant factor which aided KPD resistance was the Communist cell structure, larger groups such as Saefkow — NKFD were invariably infiltrated and destroyed. In contrast the smaller Neu Beginnen which originated in 1929 fared better until 1935 when an alliance was attempted with Volksfront-Gruppe which although possibly increasing the group's viability also weakened the security which resulted in arrests. The

larger group remained active until 1938 producing a number of clandestine papers condemning National Socialism but further arrests, particularly of leading officials, ended the coalition. Neu Beginnenn now drastically curtailed its activities of organised illegal activities. Such was the record of the German labour movement. The movement suffered from internal disunity and ideological problems. Separate struggles were to no avail and a revolutionary popular movement was not possible in a totalitarian state. The Social Democrats viewed the possible increase in the number of victims as a result of resistance as not acceptable. In this they differed from the Communists but although the Communists were more determined the end result was the same.

The reaction to Hitler's authoritarian rule by some of Germany's youth in no way brought any pressure to bear upon the Nazi regime and when compared with the German youth as a whole it can only be regarded as a gallant but futile effort on the part of a microscopic minority. The regimentation of German Youth into the Hitler Youth movement effectively prevented any form of mass reaction. But here it should be remembered that the youth of that period were probably closer to the ideals of their country, however misguided they were, and the temptation to compare them to today's youth

must be resisted. The youth had grown-up in the Weimar period and must have been influenced by the condemnation of the Versailles Treaty. They were surprisingly ignorant of affairs outside Germany and this was further compounded by the fact that shortly after Hitler's assumption of power the German teaching profession became subservient to Nazi dictates. The suppression of the Catholic Youth organisation effectively prevented any external influences tempering their attitudes. Despite this however, a very small minority opposed the Nazi creed. Individually, a number rebelled against the Nazi system: Stark refused to fight on religious grounds; Huebner attempted to inform people of the progress of the war through production of pamphlets based upon information from the BBC. In Bavaria the Edelweiss group met mainly to affirm their religious objections to Nazism. The White Rose group was rather more active in the field of propaganda. It is significant that the Nazis were sufficiently impressed by the activities of these groups to open a separate youth department in State Security, including a concentration camp to cater for their opponents. Thus the majority of German youth became Hitler's willing cannon-fodder; but here and there a very few did look beyond the facade and protested as best they could, invariably paying for the protest with their lives.

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THE UNIVERSAL SOLDIER

With the Labour Government seemingly hell bent on destroying the British Army, Navy and Airforce in the shortest possible time, cuts and mergers are inevitable. Many regiments have already disappeared and tentative suggestions have already been made that the army should link up with the RAF, a thought that was coldly received to put it mildly. But if the trend of "economising" continues as it is doing at the moment, there can only be one result.

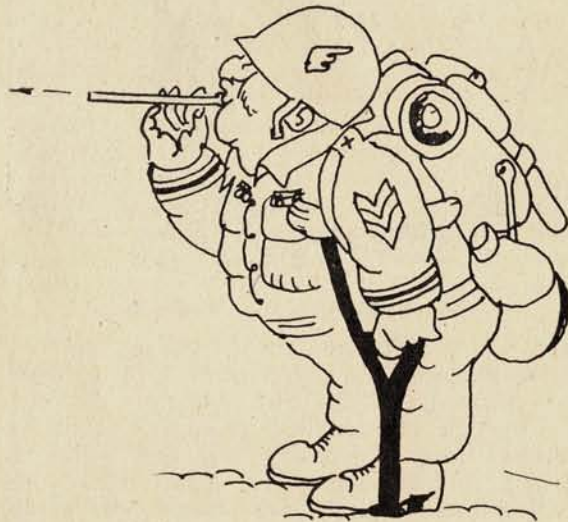
Wing Commander Maurice (Bonzo) Fitzpatrick Hamilton stepped out of his armoured car with a sigh. This was the third time in twenty miles that the fan belt had given out. They didn't make elastic bands like they used to. He fondly kicked the ancient chassis, a rebuilt Mr. Softee ice-cream van with double-ply hull. Under the scant coating of battleship grey, doing its best to blend in with the surrounding jungle, the words "giant cones" could still be made out. He looked at the engine; there was no need to lift the bonnet; that had rotted off three years back. Yes, the fan belt had gone. He looked wearily around for a substitute. There wasn't one, he'd have to send back to headquarters for recovery.

He reached into the space where the glove compartment should have been and pulled out a message pad and wrote carefully. He faltered once when a speeding civilian motorist screeched past him, but carried on grimly. Got to show the natives the stiff upper lip. He reached into the cab again for the message transmitter, to discover that the bow string was rotted through, and remembered anyway that he'd used the last of the arrows to cook his supper the night before. He sighed again, grabbed a sparrow from the emergency kit, tied the message to its leg and sent it on its way without much hope. He wasn't surprised when it went to ground fifty yards away and started preening itself. He settled down for a long wait.

Shortly after midday he heard the distant roar of a plane and dashed out into a clearing to attract its attention. The pilot of the Tiger Moth waved back cheerfully, but the action seemed to upset the equilibrium of his machine. It fell to earth, quite near to Hamilton, in a tangle of bent cardboard and trailing wires. Hamilton found the pilot sadly regarding the wreckage.

"Plessington, Rear Admiral," responded the pilot in response to Hamilton's greeting. "I've really torn it now. I was supposed to be on intercept, and the other bloke's plane is in for rewinding. I suppose this'll mean a posting back to the helium balloon," he finished gloomily.

Hamilton tried to cheer him up, but without much success. He'd had his own stint on the bikes of the Twenty-eighth Lancers and knew what demotion meant. The twosome stayed



sunken in companionable misery until they were roused by a salutation. They looked round and discovered a Marines Colonel on the back of an amiable looking cow.

"Can I give you chaps a lift in my staff car?"

The others climbed wearily, but thankfully, aboard.

"Have to motor though, got to rejoin my ship in an hour."

"Who's the Captain now?" asked Hamilton.

"Old Grundy. Came to us when they amalgamated the ski corps with the artillery. Grand old chap, but a stickler for discipline."

"How's the ship?" queried the pilot, not wanting to be impolite.

The Marine positively blushed with pleasure.

"Fine — only another two years and we should be able to afford another oar — the last First Officer broke the other one. I'm due for promotion too," he added conspiratorially.

The others leaned forward eagerly. Promotion was rare in the twenty-three strong defence force.

"Yes, they were particularly impressed with my show of strength when we sorted out the pigeons in Trafalgar Square."

His eyes gleamed with remembered carnage. "War is hell in London."

If size was the yardstick of age in the rat world, then Ralph was a very old rat indeed. He certainly made his fellows look like mice, and



"He ruled the rat kingdom."

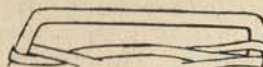
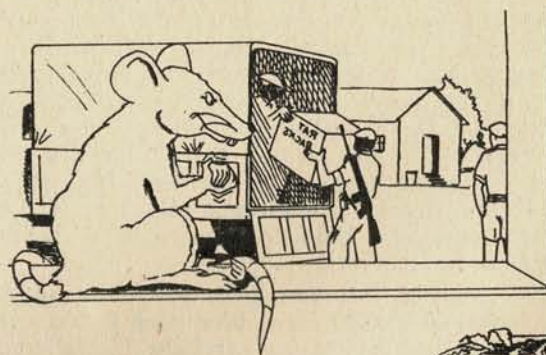
there was little doubt he ruled the rat kingdom at the Pungwe Field Quarters. Perhaps it should be explained that the Field Quarters comprise a collection of individual buildings which, in normal times, gave refuge, for odd nights to visiting civil servants whose duties made such visits necessary. Each civil servant, or groups of them, would take up occupancy when duties in the Honde Valley so required and the fact that the visits were for such short periods possibly contributed, more than any other factor, to Ralph's size and age. It was seldom that these short term guests did not remark afterwards of the presence there of a gi-normous rat. It is possibly understandable that no one would wish to tangle with him because enduring his presence was no real hardship for just a few days. It was felt that at some stage or other so if left alone he would become somebody else's problem. Ralph had it all his own way for years and survived well on the oddments of food left behind.

When the cottage of the Projects Manager, Rumbizi was built in 1971, the reputation of this legendary rat was so well established that certain construction techniques had to be taken to ensure that such a rat would gain access to the ceilings only with great difficulty. In any event it was some distance from Ralph's normal habitat and it was believed that Ralph had so much going for him in the main complex that he would not seriously consider emigrating to new and unfamiliar fields. Strangely enough in circumstances when no rat, nor human being for that matter, expected to change so dramatically, Ralph did experience a very lean time. The cadres of civil servants who frequented the Field Quarters chose to give it a miss when

RALPH THE RAT:

BY Mr. J. G. BOXTER

terrorist activity suddenly escalated in the valley, so it must have been with some considerable relief to Ralph that the quarters were taken over completely by Major Nick Fawcett's C Company, 2 RAR in April 1976.



"Quarters were taken over by C Coy 2 RAR."

Alas, if only Ralph had thought to mind his own business, help himself to only small portions of fodd, leave humans alone, and generally keep out of the way, he would quite definitely have been alive today. Doubtlessly he felt he had never had it so good and, as it might not last for ever, he made the very best of things while they lasted. It was this very careless attitude which brought about his eventual demise.

Ralph's 'business', it was learnt one moonlit night, was the expansion of the resident rat population in the shortest possible time. In fact he demonstrated, in no uncertain way, that he was more than quite a ram. It happened one evening soon after Nick's men took over. A loud clatter occurred on the tin roof of the building selected by them for the officers mess. It sounded like spent bullets landing and the officer occupants below held their breaths wondering what was happening and where. When the initial shock had subsided it was realised that the dreaded noise actually emanated from Ralph who was chasing his harem of minnies around atop the tin roof. Who then was a group of RAR officers to object to or obstruct a rat's fun. In these circumstances, jealousy got one now-

An Obituary

Illustrations

Geoffrey Higgs and C. Hicks

here. In fact there was a lot of admiration expressed for Ralph who seemed to be able to cope with so many on the same night and on the same roof top. The encouragement Ralph received from his audience below seemed to spur him on to greater efforts. So there is little doubt that Ralph would have survived had he kept to sport which in fact he did for Nick's initial tour of service in the Valley, which ended in July 1976.

It was a pleasant surprise to all of us when Nick's Company returned for yet another tour of service in the valley in December 1976. Unfortunately the Field Quarters were no longer available as they had been occupied by an enlarged force of Internal Affairs national servicemen. Perhaps these were not as kind to Ralph as the former occupants. However Nick encamped his men around the Project Managers cottage and used the cottage itself as an officers mess. It was certainly not long before Ralph realised that his former friends and admirers had returned because, despite the elaborate constructional measures previously taken to ensure his exclusion, he made his presence known one



"He made his presence known . . ."

evening soon afterwards by galloping across the ceiling boards in pursuit of his harem of minnies. There could be no mistaking Ralph. In contrast to the gentle patter of his minnies feet, Ralph's

resembled more closely that of donkey's hooves, and, as was the case during Nick's earlier visit, the urging he received from the rooms below seemed to go to his head and his performance improved accordingly. This was not the only way he demonstrated his swollen head because he started to venture into the cottage at night and help himself to a comprehensive range of goodies, all of which were grudgingly missed. Perhaps it was expecting too much of a mere rat to expect him to differentiate between the sounds of encouragement in his courting and outraged threats to the effect that unless he refrained from helping himself to John Penford's cake, or the best apple in the fruit basket, he would be slayed. A feeling of near loathing replaced the earlier one of admiration and Ralph became known as Ralph the Gandanga.

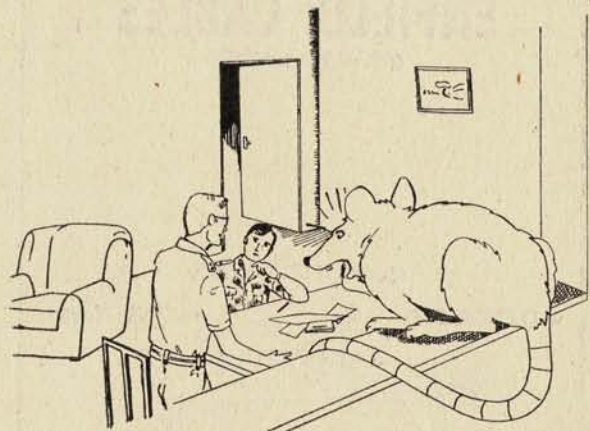
There were occasions when Ralph's discredited name was used in vain. This was usually done in reference to an unwelcome guest or one who overstayed his welcome.

"When do you think Ralph will finally bugger off?" would be typical of the sort of remark. "I suppose only when he has eaten us out of house and home and made himself thoroughly unpopular" would be a typical reply.

"Who is Ralph?" would be the guest's innocent enquiry and "Just a bloody rat" the reply. More often than not it worked, with the un- and not feeling to sure whether to feel offended or not.

The fateful decision to eliminate Ralph was taken one night by Nick as the officers sat down to their evening meal. Attention was focused on Nick because he remained standing at his place at the head of the table in an attitude which suggested he might be about to say grace.

'Right you meatballs' he started, 'I'm afraid Ralph must die. So from now the war in the



"Ralph must die"

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valley will incorporate the hunt for and the destruction of Ralph." he then sat down to his meal.

There was an incredulous look on every face and all would have liked to enquire why, but they knew that when addressed in this manner by their Major, they would be told that 'their's was to do and die, their's not to reason why', so they saved their breaths and accepted the situation. It was Paul Hopcroft who later broke the stunned and prolonged silence.

"How do you plan to do this, Sir?" and followed immediately with the suggestion. "Do you plan to poison him?"

Nick Fawcett choked on his food. "Lootenant, how dare you. How very un-British of you to suggest such a thing. Ralph is, as you all know a gandanga and we as professional soldiers, we will deal with him in the normal manner, in other words, as a gandanga".

"By that, Sir, do you suggest we shoot him?" asked Second Lieutenant John Penford with his eyes transfixed on the food in front of him as was his habit.

Suddenly realising that this might just conceivably be Nick's plan of action I swallowed quickly and blurted out "No ways. I want a house and not a colander when you guys finally move out and Ralph is dead. So forget that one".

"Exactly so, Jeff. We would never dream of such a thing". I postponed my sigh of relief until I felt certain Nick was not having me on.

"Who is Ralph?" enquired a highly confused Cyrille Fournier, a recently commissioned second lieutenant of French origin, who had been with the company only a short while.

"Dont worry 'Sereel', no doubt there might still be time for him to make your acquaintance before he dies. He is a rat".

"A rat Sir, I have never known any one call a rat Ralph". Cyrille's sentences had a habit of fading out at the end and were hardly audible as was his manner of speech.

"Yes a rat, Second lieutenant Fournier", Nick assured him his way, mimicking Cyrille's propensity for sub sonic speech.

Feeling that the atmosphere had eased sufficiently for him to make such an enquiry Paul asked why the Major had arrived at such a decision. "After all, Sir, Ralph had been with us for ages and has almost become one of us. It seems a little harsh on the bugger to slay him now".

"Why 'lootenant?' I'll tell you why. I dont mind his fromping and gonking with his crows at night in the ceiling. I don't even begrudge him the odd bit of graze, although I doubt if this view is shared by John S. Penford, I'll go even further and say that I dont mind his moving

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the furniture to suit himself, as he has ventured to do on occasions, but I do take the greatest exception to his entering my bed when I am asleep and jangling my b . . . 's, which he has taken to doing of late". There was little doubt that Nick was in deadly earnest, and not even amused. "When it comes to that I am afraid I must draw the line. Sorry men".

The seriousness inherent in Nick's statement went unperceived by Paul who could not contain his myrth. "Really Sir. Do you mean to say that in addition to everything else, Ralph is also a nutcracker". Paul let out a loud roar of laughter which was shortlived as he caught Nick's stare.

"That will be enough of that lootenant. In fact lootenant tomorrow you will arrange for a gi-normous rat trap to come up with the ration truck. Is that clear?"

"Shall I indent for it as a weapon of war along with the mortar bombs and ammunition Sir?". Paul was really chancing his luck, which was readily apparent to all but Paul.

"Hopcroft, you have been in the army long enough to know how such things are acquired. So I will leave it in your not always so able hands". Nick's message got through.

In due course the trap arrived. It was certainly a man-sized one. The degree of guile inherant in Ralph soon became apparent. The normal spring setting proved inadequate to catch him. Placed as it was on the high beam over the verandah which served as an access route for Ralph, and his minnies, to the ceiling, he would merely remove the bait by a means



LITTLE WARS

by W. F. WILBERFORCE

The battle of Janowski was, in Napoleonic terms, a trifling affair, distinguished only by the presence of Napoleon and his Russian counterpart and a somewhat unusual display of tactics. The battle opened a little slowly, the Russian heavy infantry advancing diffidently against the protecting swarms of French voltigeurs. Napoleon watched in grim satisfaction as the white-coated figures dropped, until only one man remained. Undaunted, it seemed, he pressed on and began to carve a path through the Imperial Guard. "Oi!" said Napoleon, "That's not on."

The above is a fair example of the kind of incident that used to plague the noble art of wargaming before the advent of rules. Wargaming, or Little Wars (the indefatigable H. G. Wells wrote the first book on the subject so we pinched the title) is an up and coming hobby—and woe betide the callous soul who describes it as "mucking about with toy soldiers." The hobby caught on in the early Sixties and can now boast many thousands of devotees and a multi-million pound back-up industry. But for the uninitiated (for whom this article is intended) how does one get started?

First requirement is a large room, free of wives, children and dogs. (I once lost a whole platoon to an over eager dachshund) and adequately provided with table tops, ashtrays and beer. This optimum is seldom achieved, so get used to the idea of nipping down to the garage on a Sunday afternoon.

Next its advisable to build up an army (or two if you can't find another idiot who's prepared to join in the fun and games). In Rhodesia this requires a good deal of low cunning and snivelling around toy shops on the pretence of looking for kids birthday presents, but a search could well reveal the basic tool of the trade — a neat packet, priced around 50 cents, containing 50 or so unpainted, three-quarter inch figures in unbreakable plastic.

Now comes the big decision, to paint or not to paint; for the beginner, don't. Each figure takes around half an hour and a lot of research. Instead, take the gap and decide to re-fight the American Civil War — the models come very conveniently in grey and blue plastic.

Having spent a few hours marching these warriors up and down your improvised table, it will probably occur that some scenery might add a little realism. Anything will do, you don't

need a perfectly to scale model of Gettysburg to kick off with — half a dozen personal files and a few odds and ends from the garden can end up looking reasonable (if you've got any imagination!).

We'll generously assume that you've now reached the stage of having two miniscule plastic armies facing each other across a three foot expanse of exercise books, telephone directories, bits of twig and pen tops. So, let battle commence.

Let's get one thing straight; little plastic men on foot don't move nearly as fast as little plastic men on little plastic horses, so work out a practical scale and work in proportion (one inch = ten yards and one move represents an hour's actual "time" is the usual yard stick). Also bear in mind that things like woods (those bits of twig), hills (the telephone directory), and the like do tend to slow people down. So if rifleman Higgins suddenly shunts up hill and down dale at a steady forty miles an hour, have a word with him.

Having marched the lads up and down a bit, a la grand old Duke of York, muttering martial music as you do, it will perhaps cross your mind that it's all very well making pretty patterns, but nobody's getting killed, which after all, is the object of the exercise. (By this time you'll also have discovered that our plastic friends take a lot of moving and keeping upright; solve this by sticking them to card in convenient groups). So, to the nitty gritty, the wreaking of your actual carnage.

Before reaching for the Dinky toy howitzer and box of matches, remember that this is supposed to be scientific. Casualties must be worked out by rule of book, not thumb. These rules are too complicated to repeat — let it suffice that artillery tend to have a slightly greater range than infantry and that they can miss; a set of dice and a ruler are of great assistance. Incidentally beware unscrupulous opponents at this stage, they tend to announce that they've killed your general, despite the fact that the lad is lurking somewhere in the undergrowth. Remember too, that if Rifleman Bloggs has got any sense he won't be standing up waving when somebody's throwing lead at him.

At this point, let us return to the heroic Russian Guardsman. All credit to the noble Cossack, but no ways is he going to keep going if all his mates have gone to the big toy room in the sky. Still, it's easy enough to work out

a sliding scale to determine at what point he stops advancing with gay abandon and departs at the high port.

With the bodies removed (don't leave them on for artistic effect, they only get in the way—and if you're clever enough you can slip them in later as reinforcements) it's now about time for a bit of hand to hand. Best rule here is not



“ . . . if Rifleman Bloggs has got any sense he won't be standing up waving . . . ”

to get too many involved at once, or it only gets confusing. A few rules are needed here too, or we find Ivan the Terrible pelting Polish Lancers out of the saddle with his musket butt. Very commendable, but unlikely. Anyway, if you end up with an army of one man per side, something's gone wrong somewhere.

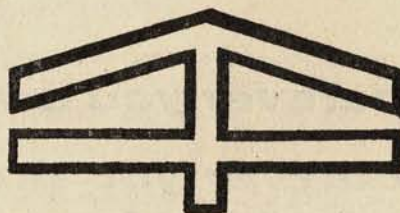
It's as well to establish victory conditions before you kick off — something on the lines of “Napoleon can claim the day if the First Foot and Mouth can hold the telephone directory for two moves.” It's as well too to insist on your opponent writing down his orders — nothing is more frustrating than to commit an all out onslaught and watch your opposite number deftly whisk his threatened troops out of the way with a “Ah, I was just expecting that” when you know full well he wasn't. (If your opponent demands to see your orders, endeavour to keep a set of “alternatives” handy.

By this time you'll probably find that you've got an irate family demanding attention, back-ache, and somebody screaming for the telephone directory. You hastily pack away and resolve to have a more realistic battle next time, an improvement here and there, perhaps the kids' farmhouse could be brought into use, and another packet of artillery would make all the difference.

Word of warning though — great elms (or oaks) from little acorns grow — and when the wargaming bug bites it bites deep. Don't be put off though, it's worth it. One nice variant is to attach the names of working acquaintances to your plastic warriors (an improvement in some cases no doubt), then work a quick Uriah the Hittite and shove 'em in the front rank. Win or lose, there's a certain satisfaction in watching them labour over the phone book, only to fall to a plastic bullet.

Next issue:

Waterloo Action Replay



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HOOTERVILLE HERALD

This month's notes comprise, in the main, a collection of hellos, goodbyes and congratulations.

FAREWELLS

We start by saying farewell to our erstwhile Seagull. The departure of Frank Hill from the School is almost like the passage of an era. Frank, who has left for RSA on leave pending discharge, has left his mark at the School in more ways than one. In a thousand years' time as some frustrated archaeologist scratches his cranium and puzzles over his find of a second "Zimbabwe Ruins" — incorporating a parade square, a sprinkling of red and white pointers and the odd viewfoil machine — he will never believe that it was only an even more frustrated white headed old stone-wall builder who was responsible (and not PWD whom we all suspect as being responsible for the first set of ruins!) To Frank and Caroline we extend our thanks and best wishes for the future.

A second farewell goes to Maj Tony Wells who has also left on leave pending discharge. Holding the distinction of being the only member

of staff who could comb his hair with a handkerchief, Maj Wells, alias LZ, alias Kenny Cantor, was responsible for and in overall command of that iniquitous establishment near the QM stores called Regimental Wing. Nigel Galvin has assumed command in succession and a reliable source has confirmed that he has already begun tearing his hair out. We're not awfully certain if it's the Wing in question which brings about this unusual behaviour or if he's simply trying to cut the same image! Either way we extend our best wishes to Tony, Maria and family for their future.

A third goodbye goes to Csgt Newton who leaves us to take up an appointment with Guard Force. Rumour has it that it was the Nazi caps that really attracted him and not the money. To him also we wish all the very best in his new career.

WELCOMES

Capt Dave Padbury joins the staff from 1 RAR and at present is getting the feel of the "receiving end" as a student on a Platoon Commanders Course.

WO 2s' Fraser and Miller come to us from the "ou'ns". The latter maintains he had to come to keep his ex-boss in check but Maj Dawson was not available to comment. They assume the WSM posts of Tac and Cadet Wings respectively.

To you all, a hearty welcome to Hooters, may your stay be a rewarding and enjoyable one.

CONGRATULATIONS

First of all to John MacDonald on attaining his majority and assuming an air of respectability which even he hasn't quite fathomed out yet.

Next to Csgt Turner and Cpl Van Rooyen (RWS) on their recent engagement. We're not quite certain if it was his red sash by which she was impressed or whether he just pulled rank, but as the Hooters Hatchery Military Mix 'n Match Club's second all army partnership, we wish you both all the very best.

Sgt Perkins and his wife, Sue, are third on the list for a pat on the back with the production of a bouncing baby boy.

At this juncture we were hoping to include the Pearces for their recent change in grouping but somehow Az has baffled the boffins and managed to add another 14 days to H hour. (As the Platoon Commanders' Course will tell you the Pink's not always right, anyway!).

Fourth on the list must, therefore, be Capt Ronny Barker on his selection to the Midlands

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Cricket side. Ron is a natural cricketer who attributes his success to his ability to hide behind a cricket bat completely (if he stands sideways and isn't wearing his specs.). Friday prayer meetings have now become an occupational hazard as members are forced to take evasive action from the flailing arms and twisting steps that re-tell his last success at the crease.

On the social side this month we are able to

That there is a waiting list for unmarried RWS who want a posting to Hooters.

That the main entrance boom collapsed the other day through metal fatigue in the hinges brought about by over use and not because someone intentionally smashed it.

That certain majors try to drown other majors whilst on a diving exercise — only because they (the certain majors) are bored!



report the enormous success of the Beer Festival held in the Officers' Mess. The success was due in part to the PMC's hard work but mostly to the presence of the bawdy members of Inf./6 (19), /4(17) and /7(20). It was really just a matter of getting them to wear something vaguely Bavarian and to change the accent of their songs and, hey presto, instant Beer Festival (The truth is of course that it's been going on all the time — only the decor changes).

The Regular Cadets' Messette was officially opened on Friday, 7th October, with the honours being undertaken by Maj Arthur Geddes who had a great deal to do with its design and construction. The occasion was suitably marked with a pub wetting season (somebody said it was easier to get on' Geddes to build it than it was to keep him from coming to the opening!).

HEARD AROUND AND ABOUT

That the Officers' Mess PMC has a remarkable sense of timing in breaking down the pub for renovation just as the Platoon Commanders' Course arrives.

That Portland Cement shares have plumeted since Frank Hill left the country.

STOP PRESS:

VISIT OF MINDEFF

The Minister of Defence, The Hon. R. T. R. Hawkins, GLM, ICD, MP and the Secretary for Defence, Mr. B. A. Page, MLM, visited Hooters on the afternoon of 28th October, 1977. It was a great pleasure to welcome the Minister and Secretary and in a short time they were able to meet many of the staff, and students on course.

After a short introductory briefing on the Aims of S Inf and the different courses run here, the visitors saw three worried/relieved courses writing Progress Tests, the African Regular Cadets firing the SMG, visited Mick Hardy's Course doing helicopter drills (without a helicopter!) and witnessed the weapons squad of Inf/39 carrying out a mutual on the "monkey run".

Having worked up a suitable thirst the Minister and Secretary were entertained to tea in the E/WOs' and Sgts' Mess. Before departing, the visitors had a drink in the Officers' Mess where a number of TA Officers on course were able to chat informally to the Minister.

The mercenary, by definition and reputation, is a two-edged weapon. He'll fight when the money is good, but he'll go where the money is better. Yet since 1831 France has employed mercenaries in strength, though French officered, in the form of the Foreign Legion. As a unit, few can compare in either battle honours or in reputation with the Legion, which for more than a century has been the executor of France's dirty work, and within the Legion it would be difficult to surpass the record of 1 REP. In a lifespan of only 13 years 1 REP carved itself a name to be remembered; then it was disbanded in disgrace; why?

1 BEP (Battalion Etrangere Parachutiste) was formed — or, rather, custom built, — in 1948 to act as a mobile striking force in Indo-China, a role which had previously been allocated to footslogging infantry or amphibious armoured vehicles. They were a long way from "home", the North African desert and Sidi Bel Abbes, but quickly adapted and their combination of aggressiveness and mobility gave the Vietminh pause for thought.

But all the aggression in the world could only have a limited affect; however good the man in the field, the men at the top seemed unable to exploit their achievements or take positive action. French army intelligence was abysmal, at best days behind the Vietminh; in their turn the Vietminh had their spies everywhere and successfully mingled with the local population by day, only to appear and wreak havoc by night.

The war, in the early stages at least, was fought over the communications system of Indo-China. To protect the vital roads, the lifelines, the French deployed their forces in hundreds of tiny garrisons; in response the Vietminh mined, ambushed and besieged, and only too often columns summoned to the relief of the besieged arrived only in time to bury the dead and rebuild the defences. When the garrisons controlled effectively only their own buildings, and the first they knew of an impending attack was when firing started, this outcome was hardly surprising.

BEP did what they could and learned their lessons well. A para presence was enough to stiffen resistance in the French colonial battalions and the paras themselves, by trying to anticipate Vietminh moves or, failing that, by mounting aggressive pursuit did much to curb guerrilla activity: especially effective was the

1 REP



The rise and fall of a regiment

use of guerrilla tactics against the guerrillas — until the powers that be protested about "Brutality" and "political implications". Robbed of the initiative, BEP could only contain the problems, not eliminate, but they did what they could.

In 1950 the pattern of events changed. In September, General Giap, confident in his troops' training, in his Communist supplied weapons and in his unlimited manpower, took the offensive and launched six battalions against two French companies at Dong Khe, the key to RC 4 one of the major highways. The 250 Legion Infantry held out for two days. Giap lost 800 men in his assault, but Dong Khe fell; five survivors bayoneted their way to safety to tell the tale.

1 BEP at this stage was under the command of Captain Pierre Jeanpierre who, despite two wartime years spent in a concentration camp, fully appreciated the ex-Wehrmacht troops who made up the bulk of his command. With Dong Khe fallen they were ordered to the Dong Khe area to stiffen local forces, a hotchpotch of 3 North African battalions, led by an inexperienced gunner colonel. Link up was effected on September 19 but for ten days Giap avoided contact. Then on September 30 the order came to recapture Dong Khe — with four battalions against thirty.

1 BEP headed the column and set off for the fort; they were detected several miles away. For success, the only solution was all out attack before the enemy reorganised; instead Lepage, the gunner colonel, ordered withdrawal, and the following day compounded the error by dividing his force and commencing a pincer attack; both columns hit heavy opposition and only extricated themselves with difficulty. To gild the lily, at this point headquarters ordered the Lepage group to relieve and escort Colonel Charton's column evacuating Cao Range, north of Dong Khe. The only trouble was that a Vietminh army, now fully alerted, lay between Lepage and the RV.

Charton, already angry at pulling out from an impregnable position, travelled heavy and slowly. He arrived at the RV a day late, and only then discovered that Lepage was still battling farther to the south and that there was no hope of retaking Dong Khe. He promptly jettisoned his vehicles and stores and set off on foot to aid Lepage; on the 6th he came within sight of the other group, but an army still lay between them. Charton threw in ten attacks and the Vietminhs retired, but the block remained. On the other side, Lepage too was having problems. Of the two columns the one, with 1 BEP and a Moroccan battalion, was surrounded and decimated despite having inflicted appalling losses on the Vietminhs. Almost out of ammunition the BEP clawed their way back to Lepage's position after a nightmare two-day trip over jungled mountains, stiff with Vietminh, on October 6th.

On the 7th Lepage ordered an attack to link up with Charton, further ordering the BEP to head the assault. Reluctantly, they accepted the order — to charge uphill against odds of twenty to one. Incredibly, they did it — but the battalion was reduced to less than 100 men, mostly mounded. The crowning irony was that the Moroccans, following behind, broke and fled and their panic spread to Charton's irregulars. The bungled retreat cost BEP 90 per cent of its men and all but one of its officers.

Dong Khe was the turning point in the war, and led eventually to Dien Bien Phu, the attempt by the over-optimistic, ill informed French to bring Giap to a decisive battle. This was 1953, November, and a reformed 1 BEP took part in the jump that secured the initial site and henceforth acted as mobile reserve. On May 8th the fortress fell, with 1 BEP still fighting; the survivors were marched into captivity.

In 1955 the Regiment was formed a third time, now as REP with Jean Pierre, now Colonel at its head. After the political betrayals

in Indo-China, involvement in Suez was an anti-climax. From Suez the battalion moved to Algeria, and came into its own.

In six months the REP forced the FLN terrorists from the hills and into the towns and were universally recognised as elite troops, even for the Legion. In January, 1957, they too, switched their attention to the towns, under command of General Massu and the 10th para division, fought fire with fire and cleared up urban terrorism in a matter of weeks. In two years 1 REP accounted for 2 000 rebels for the loss of 123 Legionnaires.

With the end in sight Jeanpierre was killed in action, one of the last of those who had been fighting more or less continuously since 1948. His loss was a severe blow to his men, and confirmed many in their resolution that terrorism should never succeed in overthrowing the French presence in Algeria, the Legion's home; when, in 1961, with military victory won, De Gaulle handed over Algeria, the decision was regarded as a personal affront and the ultimate betrayal by the REP. The officers, followed by the bulk of the men and several other units, revolted, and seized control of the major cities in Algeria in an all but bloodless coup. But the old ties died hard, the leaders vacillated, opportunities were not taken and the French government had time to recover. As punishment 1 REP was disbanded, its officers heavily penalised, and for some time the whole future of the Legion hung in doubt.

Could it happen again? Evidently the French think not, as the Legion continues, and indeed a repetition of such a chain of events is unlikely. That it happened at all is understandable; to the Legionnaire the regiment is family and home, all other loyalties lie in a poor second. That 1 REP should be the focal point is natural — to have the thin end of the wedge for 13 years and in that period to be annihilated twice and betrayed twice is a pretty rough record.

The rights and wrongs are clear cut — an army should follow orders, not emotions, it should be loyal whatever, it should not intervene in affairs of state even when the state seems incompetent to do so. In the one extreme we result in another Nuremberg, "I was only following orders" situation. But right or wrong, it's comports to think that now and again someone raises enough guts to turn round on the complacent political puppet masters and say "we've had enough." If ever anyone earned that right it was 1 REP — and if they were wrong, at least they had the guts to be honest.

**And when will you French begin to understand
That war is tooth for tooth and eye for eye
And these dead heroes from another land
Spare you a warning when they die?**

The 1 RAR Subby

The 1 RAR Subby is a strange and unusual creature. A person of fixed habits and intense emotions, coupled with notable human qualities. Probably the most admirable of these qualities is his devotion, firstly to his men and secondly to the Battalion. His loyalty is unquestionable, and his practise of the art of war, if inexperienced, is always enthusiastic.

He loves parties in the Mess, especially impromptu sessions, and enjoys nothing more than a spin on the fan, even if he does fall off, and break up the bar. Alcohol is his friend, without which he would be lost. However, the morning after the night before, he always wishes he had not over indulged, particularly when he has to first visit the hospital and then the PMC with his cheque book at the high port. From the PMC he immediately disappears into his "G" 10 store where his trusty batman has laid out a stretcher and blankets with a large mug of coffee for his daily kit check! The greatest single influence in his life, apart from alcohol, is the female of the species. He will accept them in all shapes and sizes, and is always the perfect gentleman in their presence. Receipt of a letter in the bush from his "CROW" will boost his morale and enhance his operational efficiency by 100 per cent.

When he is back in town for a bit of R and R, he immediately becomes extremely wary of the Adjutant, RSM and his Bank Manager, not necessarily in that order.

He loathes receiving a Convening Order for a Board of Inquiry, unless it means a trip to Salisbury to take statements, although that is only a sugar coating to a bitter pill. When his Mess Bill arrives he always takes on a furtive, hunted look as he consults his cheque book and makes an appointment to plead his case with his Bank Manager.

He hates ration packs intensely, but loves eating Kudu steaks with his men. He is usually willing to try any strange and exotic delicacies produced for his approval by the members of his platoon.

Long patrols, and clandestine night patrols induce visions of blistered feet, aching backs and Dhobi's Itch, but a successful contact at the end prove his fears of getting lost, or of compromising his deployment groundless.

Any form of parade produces a vast number of excuses as to why it would be inadvisable for him to participate. This applies particularly



to a Pay Parade because he can never get the cash paid to balance with the cash left over. Consequently, acquittance rolls are like a summons to the Adjutant's office.

Orderly Officer duties are the bane of his life, especially as he knows that at some stage in his career his name will appear with monotonous regularity on the Duty Roster.

His lack of punctuality for things he doesn't enjoy is notorious. He cannot see the necessity of starting work at 0730 in the morning when his OC can see his eyes are open but he is not looking through them. Stores checks at this time always reveal deficiencies in items on charge to the platoon store and he instantly becomes the epitome of an Arab merchant and embarks upon a recovery mission with much weeding, whining and covert flattery to make good the losses, before the 2ic demands payment for the said stores.

Senior Officers are treated warily, and every effort is made not to attract attention when in their presence. A reprimand is met by much shuffling of feet and a sheepish smile.

The subaltern lives life to the full, working hard when he has to and playing hard the rest of the time. The best qualities of an officer are always to the fore even if he does get carried away and over indulge at times.

He is not perfect, although he likes to think he is, contrary to what everybody else thinks. Finally, his men will follow him anywhere, even if it is only out of mild curiosity.

ALAMEIN: THE TURN OF THE TIDE

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In the autumn of 1940 Britain was purely on the defensive; with the advent of Italy into the war her holdings in Egypt were imperilled — and if Egypt fell all of North Africa would pass into Axis hands and set in motion an unavoidable chain of events; Spain would be forced into the war, Middle Eastern oil would pass into German hands and the way would be open to a southern assault on Russia. With Suez in Axis hands German and Italian fleets could reach the Indian Ocean, threaten the lifeline from South Africa and even, not impossibly, effect a link-up with the Japanese. Given such a situation, England could only sue for peace.

At this time England stood alone, having only just managed to extricate her armies from the iron jaws that closed around Dunkirk. Hitler's armies ranged at will across blitzkrieged Europe; but as long as Britannia ruled the waves the Wehrmacht would be an angry lion contained within the cage of Europe. German victory was entirely conditional on British defeat; Hitler should have directed his war effort to that end, not have pushed through to the Channel and wondered what to do next.

Hitler saw direct assault as the only means of reducing England; both he and the German High Command failed to appreciate that the island could far more easily be brought to her knees if her empire were taken before the rest of the Anglo-Saxon world could rally round to its defence. Hitler convinced himself that Britain's continued defiance in the face of overwhelming odds must stem from a secret treaty with Russia and so decided to take out the Soviets first. His advisers were accustomed to land and not sea strategy and with the exception of Goering, failed to appreciate the possibilities of indirect assault.

By October, Germany had lost the Battle of Britain and Hitler decided that direct assault on Britain could not succeed; his decision cost Germany the war. For all his European successes, Hitler failed to take out the one country that really mattered and he launched his attack on Russia with a potentially dangerous enemy in his rear. Ultimate success was still at hand, but even with Italy poised in the ideal position to conquer British North Africa, Hitler failed to grasp the strategic potential.

For nine months Wavell's tiny British army would battle huge Italian armies for possession of Egypt and East Africa — in murderous and new terrain;

The desert has been described, acidly, but with no little justice, as miles and bloody miles of absolutely damn all. There was a seeming eternity of barren, inhospitable nothingness . . . Although you were permanently coated with dust when driving or when the wind blew up, baths were impossible and you grew accustomed to being dirty, to washing seldom. Water was short in the desert, scarcer by far than petrol. On a gallon a day for all purposes it became an art to wash, shave, clean your teeth, wash your feet, all in a mug of water, with the resultant glutinous fluid being poured into the radiator."

Had a German spine of only one or two divisions been sent to stiffen the Italian body there could only have been one outcome, an outcome which would have crushed Britain and made success of operation Barbarossa a certainty. Instead the Italians were left to battle on in what to Hitler was an unimportant theatre.

The campaigns ranged from Tunisia to Alamein, 200 miles west of Alexandria in Egypt, a total distance of some 1 500 miles, and it was the question of supply and communication over this great distance that won and lost battles. The North African coast bears few ports and one road; control of these dictated tactics.

In the south stretching desert there was only one notable geographical feature, the impassable Qattara Depression south of Alamein. Elsewhere, in varying degrees, the desert was navigable and would-be combatants, following the twists of the coastal road had to be careful of their flanks, or face enforced withdrawal until their attacker ran out of steam. The crucial point of the coastal strip lies in Cyrenacia, the eastern part of Libya, containing several of the most important ports and encompassing a great bend in the coast which makes tenure difficult because of the vast area which needs to be held to prevent outflanking.

Numerically inferior at all times Wavell was to defeat two Italian armies opposing him, and proved what audacity and mobility can do to a static and passive army, no matter how large.

He destroyed the enemy in East Africa — so that future desert commanders would have only one front to contend with — and also smashed the Italians in Libya. The destruction of this latter army opened the way to Tripoli and Hitler was at last compelled to bolster up his ally; accordingly German reinforcements under what British intelligence described as an obscure general — Rommel — arrived in Tripolitania, Western Libya.

At this stage the British army was already overstretched — by what was to become a traditional nightmare, the impossibility of supply keeping pace with advance. As one irate driver was heard to say,

"If the whole *** desert's like this, it's going to be a bloody long war."**

The British army now lay at Agheila, the southern-most point of the bend of Cyrenacia; from there the coast swung north for some 200 miles before swinging south-east towards Egypt. For supply, Wavell had to rely on Tobruk, 400 miles away — and at this stage in the war no supply came by air. There was an intermediate supply port at Benghazi, but German air attack rendered it untenable. Appreciating his situation Wavell was prepared to fall back on Benghazi, or even further if necessary, and when Rommel attacked in April, Benghazi was abandoned and the defenders fell back to Tobruk itself which, considering its importance as a port and the vast stores it contained, was vital to Wavell. Despite the situation its Commander was firm;

"There'll be no Dunkirk here. If we should have to get out, we shall fight our way out. There is to be no surrender and no retreat."

A brief lull followed this campaign as both sides discovered that they had the same problems — both needed to reinforce before they could attack. — Rommel especially, for while Tobruk held it tied down a disproportionate amount of his forces Rommel tried to reduce Tobruk but his efforts were hampered by the German High Command which refused to attempt to eliminate Malta, the only allied possession between Egypt and Gibraltar, which was sinking up to 63 % of Rommel's re-supply. On the other hand, Auchinleck, Wavell's successor, despite 12 000 miles between himself and his base, was receiving his supply from the sea unscathed.

By November both sides were ready to attack — Rommel at Tobruk, Auchinleck in Cyrenacia. The allies' attack was scheduled first and went in on the 18th, despite heavy sandstorms which grounded all aircraft. Churchill, feeling in heroic mood, was delighted.

"The desert army may gain a page in history

which may well rank with Blenheim and Waterloo."

If we are to judge from the results he was speaking of French history. Auchinleck launched his attack against the Italians, who made up two thirds of the Axis forces, presuming them to be the weakest part of the Axis line; but for once the Italians held. Losses were heavy and the allies were unable to concentrate. The battle swayed back and forth until on the 22nd and 23rd one of the largest tank battles of the war was joined, which culminated in the disintegration of the 5th South African tank brigade. German losses were also heavy, but they had immeasurably better supply—their recovery services went into battle with the tanks and repaired in the field, and the Germans were left in possession of the field; armour is seldom completely destroyed and if the victor can gain the actual battlefield a large proportion of the vehicles involved can be repaired.

Rommel exploited the situation and broke through the allied line intending to smash rear elements and isolate Tobruk, a bold move which precipitated rout. Only the personal intervention of Auchinleck prevented disaster as he forbade retreat and held the situation. Cunningham, the local commander responsible, had failed to consider Rommel's problems when appreciating his own; he was relieved of his command but the rout had hit morale.

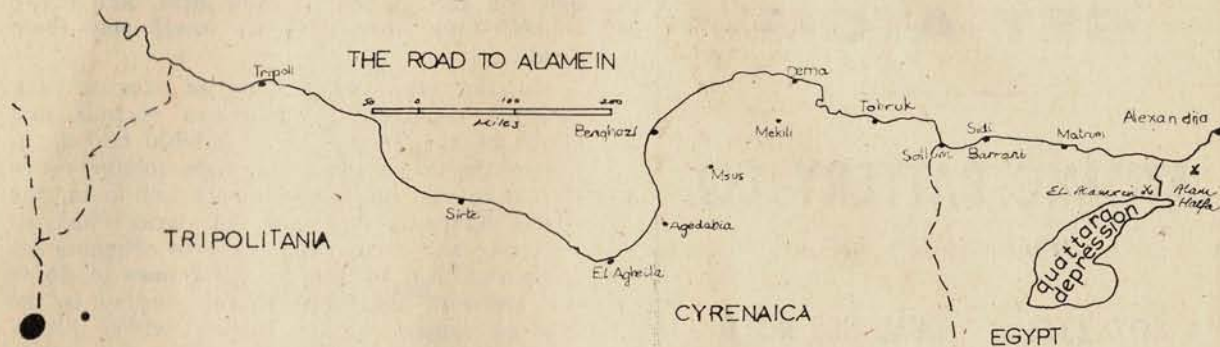
Rommel's breakthrough in fact came dangerously near to encirclement — though had his gamble paid off the gains would have been immense. As it was he drew back to his original positions with heavy losses—80% of his aircraft, 95% of his armour. Incredibly enough he was able to refit and counter attack within two weeks, so that the Fifth Libyan campaign all but merged with the fourth. But this time the Germans were the aggressors and for the first time Axis had control of the Mediterranean. In late October, as Rommel's supply losses reached 75% the German High Command finally realised the gravity of the situation and detached 25 U-boats to the Mediterranean, whilst aircraft harried shipping and Malta; a month later the allied presence had been decimated and German supply could flow untouched. Naturally the British suffered in reverse proportion but an increasing amount of their supply was coming via the Cape and eventually overland.

Auchinleck was, naturally perhaps, not expecting attack, and was pre-occupied in building his army up for the final drive through to Tripoli. Accordingly he was spread over a wide area. The local commander, General Ritchie, should have retired to consolidate, but was over-confident — his forward troops didn't even

dig in. On January 30th Rommel struck with three armoured columns, seized the vital coastal road and pressed rapidly forward some 350 miles, this despite allied air supremacy. Within a week he'd taken Benghazi — again — and the British were thrown out of hard won Cryenacia before they rallied; from the edge of defeat at the end of 1941, in early 1942 Rommel had repeated the successes of a year before.

of fighting rendered the position at Bir Hakeim untenable. Fearing total encirclement, Ritchie withdrew to the Egyptian frontier, leaving a garrison at Tobruk, an illogical decision now that the port could no longer be supplied by sea.

The withdrawal was costly, especially in terms of morale, but accomplished. Rommel chased the ragged army until the 26th, then turned on Tobruk. By midday he had cleared



The British line, now just west of Tobruk, ran south for some forty miles to Bir Hakeim. There were no real features to the land and the allied front consisted of so-called boxes capable of all round defence, in three rough lines, protected by a mine field belt, rather like the hedgehogs the Germans were to employ in Russia when they too, found the need to hold large areas with small forces. Each was strong enough to defend itself — and too strong to be left in the rear of any German advance.

The British position was steadily improving; by now they had armoured parity, and the air force was beginning to co-operate with the army and learn how to tackle ground troops as opposed to other aircraft; then Rommel attacked. Holding his front with the Italians with his armour in order to wreck havoc in the rear areas then strike at Tobruk itself.

Rommel achieved surprise and in a day's heavy fighting his forward elements not only breached the allied line, but reached the coast road as well, despite the efforts of the RAF; but Bir Hakeim still held. After four days of continuous battle the two sides fell apart, exhausted — but Rommel pulled back only to refit and resumed his attacks a day later, falling on the 150th Brigade box in the centre of the allied line. Success was complete and Ritchie worsened the situation by launching an ill considered counter attack. Rommel smashed the counter move by concentration of his forces and after a week

the approach minefields, destroyed the defender's armour and was well within the fortress. On the following day the disorganised garrison collapsed yielding 30 000 prisoners and immense booty to the elated Germans. Rommel was promptly promoted to Field Marshall.

Not pausing, despite the exhaustion of his troops, Rommel pressed on, and on the 23rd crossed into Egypt itself, aiming for Alexandria. Auchinleck fell back with his demoralised troops, eventually to El Alamein, where he finally stood on a front of 36 miles between the Mediterranean and the Qattara Depression. For the first time he had two unturnable flanks, but even so he was expecting to have to retreat to Alexandria itself, some 75 miles away. But by the end of July Rommel's forces were so exhausted and his armour so depleted as to be outnumbered, that he halted. His sole remaining asset was his generalship — his insistence on personal direction in battle meant that the Afrika Corps could act while the 8th Army was still trying to find out what was going on.

Once more the old problem reasserted itself — which side could refit itself the faster so as to be able to strike a decisive blow; 8th Army, now under personal command of Lt General Montgomery, or the Axis forces. Rommel decided, correctly, that this was one race he could only lose and decided to attack before the odds against him got any greater, frontal assault though it would have to be. As it was,

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his inferiority in both armour and especially in aircraft was already marked.

Not having sufficient forces to hold the entire line in strength, Montgomery deployed his bulk to his northern sector, his whole line taking on an L shape pointing towards Alexandria so as to exploit the two main land features available, Ruweisat Ridge and Alam el Halfa Ridge. Montgomery brought with him a new determination.

"I issued orders that in the event of enemy attack there would be no withdrawal; we would fight on the ground we now held, and if we couldn't stay there alive we would stay there dead."

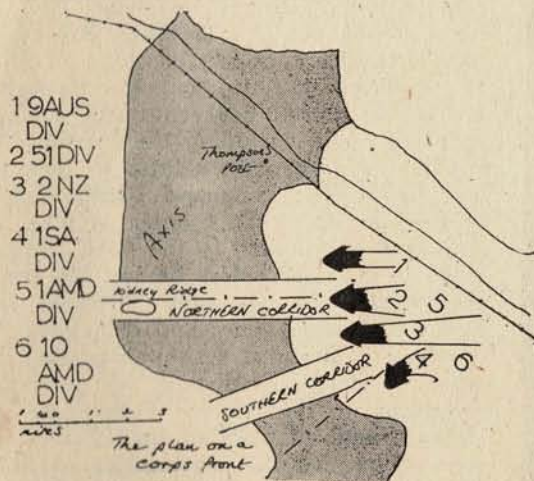
In the very early hours of August 31st, Rommel did attack, aiming to encircle and eliminate the enemy and establish himself in Egypt. He thrust east with three columns—two Italian in the north to distract and hold, the Afrika Korps in the south, the weak flank, to penetrate and then sweep north to complete encirclement. But by the 3rd his failure to do so was apparent and he began to withdraw in the face of heavy counter attacks which Montgomery wisely didn't allow to go too far, calling a halt on the 7th. Monty could now afford to build up his army, with its newly regained confidence, until he felt sure that he could smash the desert Fox; Monty always did like certainties. The first and strategically the most important battle of Alamein was over.

The second, and more famous, began on October 9th. The sides were uneven; the Germans and Italian, now in fifty-fifty ratio could muster 96 000 weary men and 550 tanks against the allies' newly confident 150 000 men and 1 114 tanks, which included 128 of the superlative Grants and 267 of the latest Shermans. The initiative was also with the allies. Rommel's supply lines were greatly overstretched and Axis control of the Mediterranean was slipping. The Axis forces, though in the same ground as the allies, had held successfully, were in fact in a much weaker position — and forced to spread more thinly. Although their flanks were secure they had within their line negligible features, and had to use mines instead — some 500 000 of them. These were deadly enough — but minefields are useless without men to cover them. However, the substitution was quite successful.

"They had been laid with cunning and imagination. One night a truck load of Middlesex hit an anti-tank mine at a point in the road where there was a deep crater. The survivors, jumping clear, found themselves in an "S" minefield and were killed. During the night some Camerons sent out a patrol to bring in the bodies, and three more lives were lost. That particular spot is said to have cost 36 lives

before it was finally cleared."

Further, in the unsuccessful assault on Alamein Rommel had used up most of the stores won at Tobruk, and the commanders of both the crack 21st Panzer division and the Afrika Korps itself had become casualties. Worst of all, from the German point of view, illness recalled Rommel to Berlin and his place was filled by General Stumme, who was less than happy with the knowledge that he was merely filling a temporary vacancy. Stumme made the classic mistake of distributing his forces evenly along his front, instead of holding his line lightly and



having a large central reserve ready for counter attack at endangered points. For ultimate success it was essential that Montgomery seize the coast road, the sole Axis line of supply and communication. The ideal way would be to turn the Axis' left flank with an amphibious assault, but Monty didn't have the means at his disposal — although he tried to bluff Stumme that he did; accordingly he settled for a punch through the line a few miles south of the coast which would split the enemy in two. To distract attention from his real aim he built up a dummy assault group in the south, with great success.

Monty had three corps at his disposal, the 10th, 13th and 30th, all under competent commanders, all briefed "to hit Rommel for six right out of Africa." The 13th, backed up by one armoured division was tasked with the southern feint, the 30th was to cut two swathes through the enemy mines in the north and the 10th, modelled on Afrika Korps lines under Monty's direction, were to go through these breaches and destroy the enemy armour with the whole of bomber command in close support. The Axis mines were thickest in the north, some 5-9000 yards deep, this being the most logical place to expect attack; in the south there were less mines, but they were so laid as

to canalise any attack. The battle opened with a massive bombardment, from the 9th to the 23rd October. England based aircraft, hit supply bases and ports in Italy, while planes from Egypt hit transport, supply and defences in Africa. 700 bombers were employed and the Axis air force was knocked out of the air. On the 23rd Montgomery added 1000 pieces of artillery to the barrage and to the skirling of Highland pipes the infantry went in that night.

By the following morning the infantry had cleared paths through the mines, clearing defenders out with the bayonet as they went, but these paths were cul de sacs blocked by fire. But Montgomery was determined to gain victory, sticking to the letter of his pre-battle message;

"We are ready NOW. The battle which is about to begin will be one of the decisive battles of history. It will be the turning point of the war. The eyes of the whole world will be on us, watching anxiously which way the battle will swing.

With this in mind Montgomery threw his armour into the deadly corridors, despite the protests of his tank commander. Demonstrating his unhappy touch with subordinates he virtually accused Gatehouse, four times decorated commander of 10th armoured, of cowardice. Under protest Gatehouse committed a battalion to the attack, of 49 tanks only '3 limped back having achieved nothing.

By October 25th the allied armour had only pushed 2000 yards into the minefields with the loss of 200 tanks and many infantry. The only bright spot was that a counter attack led by Rommel himself was thrown back on the 27th—Stumme had been killed on the 25th and Rommel had flown back the next day to make desperate attempts to retrieve the situation.

After five days the infantry were still locked in combat and Montgomery's original plan had failed with heavy losses, and the feint attack in the south had also been blunted. Montgomery drew breath and launched a new attack — operation supercharge—aimed at a point slightly north of the original corridors. A worried Rommel had concentrated his armour in the north to protect the road and had thus broken the alternate German-Italian line set up to stiffen Axis' weaker partner; Monty accordingly aimed his attack at the new junction between German and Italian.

On the last day of October, the 9th Australian Brigade, the original Rats of Tobruk, and the elite of the 8th Army who had earned the respect even of the Afrika Korps, launched a diversionary attack along the road itself and surrounded a German division, forcing Rommel, already short of petrol, to commit his armour

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to its relief in the belief that this was the real allied thrust. With the enemy so distracted, Supercharge went in on November 2nd and the infantry carved a new corridor through the mines. Behind them came the armoured spearhead, 9th Armoured brigade, ordered to breach the Axis line completely, accepting 100% casualties if necessary. Realising the real threat too late, Rommel rushed to plug the gap with what was left of his armour and crashed head on into the fresh allies' 1st and 10th armoured; 9th armoured had sealed the battle by obtaining and holding their objective while the rest of the armour fought through to them. The cost was high — 104 out of 123 tanks, 234 out of 400 men, but the back up of three divisions and two armoured car regiments got through. Battle Royal was joined between tanks, artillery and anti-tank guns, including the fearsome German 88. But the allies were assisted by their numbers and by bomber command which had already broken up Rommel's counter attacks, and the Axis had no answer to the RAF. Rommel decided to pull out before he lost his army; after Supercharge he had only 35 tanks left. But Hitler had other views and demanded "Victory or death". Rommel was unimpressed but did what he could, extricating his forces without appearing to disobey the Fuhrer; he certainly showed more adaptability than Paulus who was soon to receive the same order at Stalingrad. However, only enough transport was left for the Germans and the Italians, rather than face retreat on foot, would soon surrender. Rommel conducted a masterly withdrawal but to all intents and purposes the war in the desert was over, won by more efficient supply as much as strategy. Rommel had lost two thirds of his men and the greater part of his armour; the allies had lost 1'000 men and 432 tanks — which could be replaced soon enough. As ever, the loser's casualties are the greater, for he leaves his prisoners and wounded to the enemy. The cost for the victors was high enough;

"Below them stretched nothing but death and destruction to the very horizon. Shattered trucks, burnt and contorted tanks, blackened and tangled heaps of wreckage not be recognised; they scattered the landscape as thickly as stars in the sky. Like dead stalks in the sand, rifles thrust unright — a denuded forest. And each one meant a man who had been maimed or killed. Inside each wrecked tank a putrid, blackening paste on the walls was what an armour piercing shell had left of the men who had manned it. Over the miles of wire hung at intervals the bodies of men, like a ghastly and infinite tableau. In dugouts, pits and trenches the dead lay tangled and piled. Here and there from a heap of dead a hand reached out as

if in supplication, or a pair of eyes stared up accusingly — and would so stare until they rotted in the skull. These were the details of the scene repeated again and again in every corner of the desert landscape; a great rubbish heap of metal and human flesh. So the victors sat, gazing across the gigantic desolation."

After Alamein it was to be a long plodding campaign before Axis was ousted from Africa, mainly because the seaborne landing in Tunisia, operation Troch should tactically have preceded the battle to hem Rommel in. As it was he reorganised and was still dangerous as the bloody defeat of the Americans at Kasserine Pass showed. But after Alamein defeat was inevitable. As Churchill said:

"It may almost be said, 'Before Alamein we never had a victory. After Alamein we never had a defeat.'"

Alamein freed Russia from the threat of southern invasion and secured Britain's safety: Hitler had missed his chance. But the battle should have been the culmination of the campaign, not the turning point. Indeed, with defeat impending in both Africa and Russia in 1942, the German people might well have forced peace on Hitler after Alamein had reasonable terms been offered by the allies. But the allied policy of demanding unconditional surrender, understandable in some ways though it is, forced

total war; after Alamein the allies were fighting, not for the defeat of Germany but for her obliteration; all that Germany could do was fight for her survival. Ironically, the only result that this allied bitterness achieved was the replacement of Nazism with a worse evil, the dismemberment of a nation and the obliteration of freedom in much of Europe.

The second war was fought in many theatres, all but one marked by unprecedented brutality. In North Africa the war, though ferocious enough in itself, leaves none of the bitter taste that the other campaigns do — no murdered civilians, no extermination camps, no gutted cities and no fleeing refugees. In Africa chivalry in war was not dead and yet these stakes were as high as elsewhere. Strip away national bias and there is nothing to choose between the Afrika Korps and the Desert Rats. It was a soldier's war and John Pudney wrote them a fitting epitaph:

Live and let live,
No matter how it ended,
These lose and, under the sky,
Lie befriended,
For foes forgive,
No matter how they hated,
By life so sold
And by death mated.

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The 10 most asked questions about the Army



And haircuts?

Over the past two or three years, the rules have relaxed to the point that you don't stick out like a sore thumb when you're wearing civvies but you still look smart in uniform.

How strict is the Army?

There is discipline, there is drill. But it's all designed to help you work as an efficient member of a team. When you're relying on your friends, and they're relying on you, there's no room for slackness or sloppiness. Funny thing about Army discipline, we haven't come across a single individual who can say that it hasn't stood him in good stead later on in life.



What's it like in the operational area?

Tough, tiring and often dangerous. But the training you get beforehand is so thorough that you're capable of dealing with any situation that might arise.

How tough is basic training?

Again, very tough, especially the first six weeks. But if you're reasonably fit, you shouldn't have too much trouble keeping-up. If you're not, the training will get you into shape. You'll probably feel better than you've ever felt before and have an appetite like a horse.

What about bull?

There is now no unnecessary spit and polish. Of course, outside the operational area, we expect you to look smart and presentable. However it's nothing you can't handle. Once you get into the swing of things, kit cleaning takes only a few minutes each day.

What about the time off?

There's plenty of free time, except when you're on ops. Usually, evenings and weekends are your own. And there's 49 days paid leave a year.

Why is the Army still recruiting when there is such a wide-spread call-up?

The Army is an organisation that needs a nucleus of trained men to keep it at peak efficiency. The Army can't afford any gaps, so recruitment is an ongoing process to maintain the force the country needs. A team of professionals.

Can I choose any Army job?

Yes, if you're good enough and if there's a vacancy. What we like to do is show you all our careers at a Recruitment Centre. This is a thorough process that helps us see where your talent lies. Together we'll spend some time in pinpointing the job you'll be a natural for.

Do I commit myself by going to an Army Recruitment Office?

Far from it. The office is there as a recruitment point. It's also there to supply you with all the information you need to help you decide if the Army's for you.

And just because you might want to join, doesn't mean to say that the Army will take you on automatically. The standards are high because the demands of soldiering are tough.

Is there much travel?

It's possible that your role could call for you to be in Bulawayo one day and the north-east or Kariba the next. Variety is the keynote and you'll travel to remote parts of the country where it's quite an event to see a European. Any other questions?

Your nearest Army Recruitment

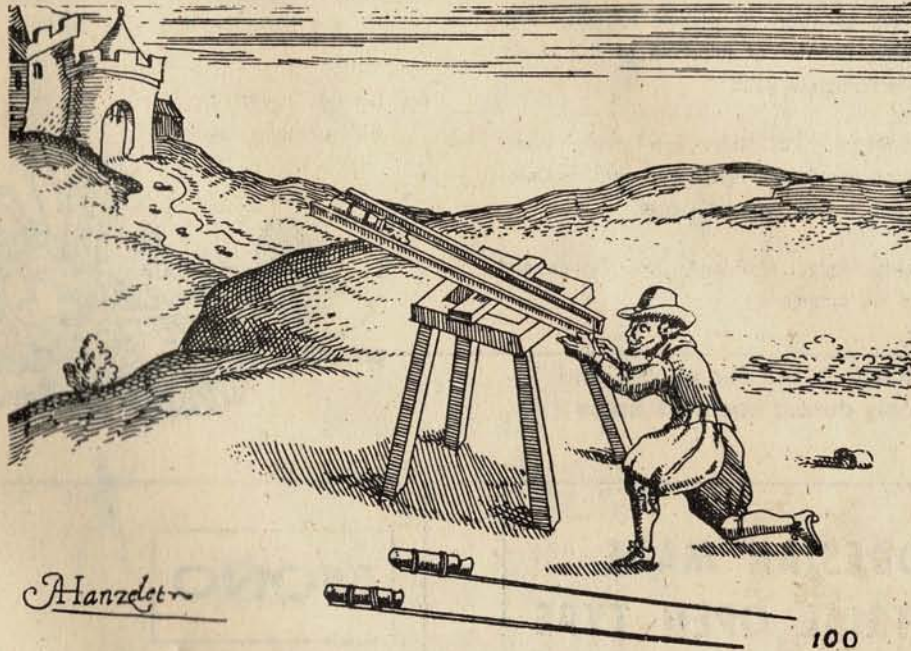
Centre can give you the answers.

Look in today. Write:
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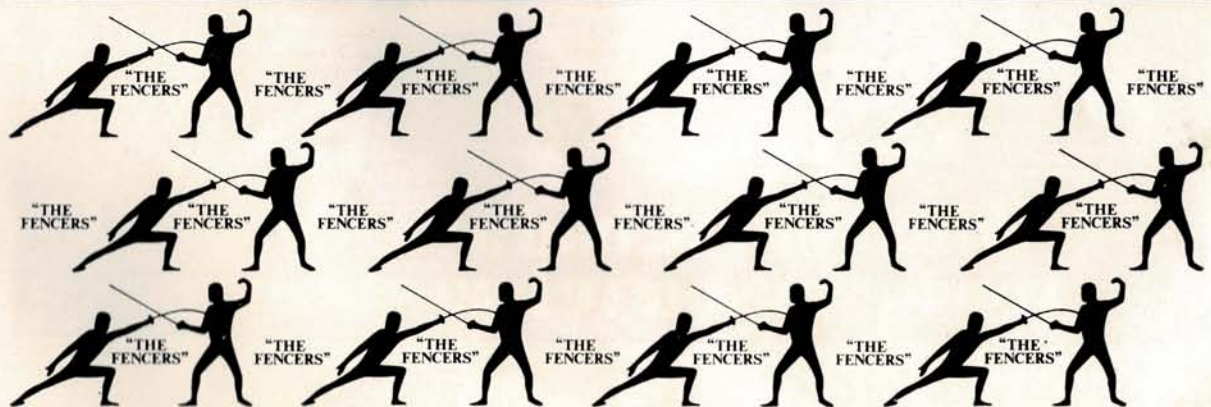
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