

AUSTRALIAN MILITARY FORCES MINUTE PAPER
Subject: The Post War Army - Policy Paper No. 1

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Attached for your personal information and that of such of your subordinates as you deem advisable: is copy of a paper; Post-War Army – Policy No.1, I have today addressed to C.G.S. for a direction as to future planning.

Original signed:
S. F. Rowell

Lieut-General,
Vice Chief of the General-Staff.

6 March 46.

THE POST WAR ARMY – POLICY PAPER NO.1 CGS

INTRODUCTION

1. The appreciation of Australia's strategic position in the world of the future is now in its final form and should come before the Chiefs of Staff in the near future. This appreciation exposes certain well defined commitments. It is on the assumption that the paper will be accepted that I am putting forward to you the following proposals regarding the shape of the Post War Army. You will not need me to tell you that even after you have come to a decision as to the line we are to follow, there will still remain a great amount of work on details of costings and the like.

2. It is to be appreciated that the cost of these proposals has not been regarded as a limiting factor. In the terms of the minute of 19 Nov 45 by the Minister for Defence, I have been guided by "the elements of the strategical situation as they (i.e. the Chiefs of Staff) see it now and in the future. They are aware of the forces that were provided in the pre-war period by a population of seven million people. They have knowledge of the lessons and experience of the war".

3. I have made no attempt here to argue the place of land forces in warfare of the future. Many wild statements have been made since August 1945 that, with the introduction of atomic energy, armies are no longer needed. The same argument can be applied, and with equal absence of logic, to naval and air forces. For the time being, we can only accept the use of the atomic bomb as an intensified form of air attack and plan accordingly. When we reach the stage that an atomic pellet shot from a pea rifle hits a tank with the force of a 2000lb bomb, we will need to revise the whole basis of army organisation, equipment and tactics.

THE LINE OF APPROACH

4. Any logical consideration of our peace-time post war forces must follow a decision as to the probable war requirements. Taking into account our enemy or enemies, the time factor for mobilization and expansion, and other relevant considerations, we can then determine what proportion of our foreseeable needs in war have to be maintained in peace and at what degree of readiness.

THE FACTORS OPERATING AGAINST THE RETENTION OF ADEQUATE FORCES

5. We have just successfully concluded a war which lasted six years. Although our manpower losses were very greatly less than those incurred in the war of 1914-1918, the strain on the country's general economy has been immeasurably greater. In this war our two major enemies have been decisively crushed and, unless the statesmanship of the victorious power is gravely at fault, Germany and Japan will remain impotent for many years. The bogey of two aggressive powers directly threatening our territorial integrity can therefore no longer be raised.

6. Added to this factor is the revulsion of feeling against the armed services which inevitably follows a long and costly war in which the lives of the whole people have been regimented and controlled, and the natural disinclination of our people to insure against aggression until the danger is almost on them. It is one thing to say "Never again will we be caught unprepared", and another to provide the necessary services for preparedness. In times of danger, the burden of the cost of Defence is accepted, but when times are hard or the dangers seems more distant, the temptation to reduce the premium paid for national security, and to accept greater risks of war, becomes pronounced.

7. The above aspects are so well known that they may be held to be the worst form of platitude. But they are the arguments which will be consistently used against us by those who control the finances of the country and we are bound to have the clearest and most forceful case against them if our submission is to succeed.

THE FACTORS IN FAVOUR OF THE RETENTION OF ADEQUATE FORCES

8. While there may be other lesser contributing aspects of the problem, I believe the following factors to be those on which detailed attention should be concentrated:-

- (a) The nature of the potential future threat.
- (b) The fallacy of strategical isolation with its consequent emphasis on the aspect of local defence.
- (c) The time factor.
- (d) Our prestige as a world power of increasing importance.

THE POTENTIAL FUTURE THREAT

9. Although we may have no fears as to resurgence of Germany or Japan, we cannot disregard the attitude of the U.S.S.R. in our future planning. This is true whether she is considered alone, or in association with elements of the previous German and Japanese Empires.

10. Co-operation with the U.S.S.R. has become increasingly difficult since the termination of the war. The bonds of friendship and common ideals which united us with our other Allies are absent, and her tendency to play a lone hand in the game of power politics is daily more pronounced. Her incessant propoganda against the United Kingdom, coupled with her attitude in South-Eastern Europe and the Middle East, is not reassuring.

11. The U.S.S.R. is a land power of great significance with an air force capable of rapid expansion, and her industrial potential is tremendous. Should she exercise an undue influence in Europe the danger to the Empire's main base in the United Kingdom would be considerable, whereas the threat to our interests in the Middle East and India can always be exercised irrespective of Russian influence in Europe.

12. The U.S.S.R. cannot exert a major threat on Australia unless she succeeds in her apparent determination to build up her naval strength. If the shipbuilding industry and ports of Japan were to come under her control, the imminence of her becoming a potential aggressor in the Pacific would be advanced; further, if she were to dominate China (and the trend is in that direction) the situation as regards the interests of the British Commonwealth would be grave.

13. From the above considerations it is concluded that the U.S.S.R. must be regarded as the potential aggressor of the future and that our armed forces should be designed to meet that contingency.

14. It is further observed, in relation to this factor, that, to ensure victory against an aggressive U.S.S.R., not only will the united effects of the Empire in a co-ordinated plan be required, but that the assistance of the U.S.A. from the outset will be vitally necessary.

THE FALLACY OF ISOLATION AND ITS EFFECT ON LOCAL DEFENCE

15. The concept of strategical isolation is irreconcilable with the realities of modern war. This dictum demands a much wider outlook than has previously been given to considerations of preserving our territorial integrity.

16. It is clear that, as long as the United Nations Organization remains in being, the problem of local defence is virtually non-existent. Should the United Nations Organization break down, our security will depend on the effectiveness of a plan of Imperial Defence and on co-operation with U.S.A. Provided we have, in peace, a firm plan of Empire defence and arrangements for co-operation with the U.S.A., the possibility of invasion in the foreseeable future can be excluded.

17. Under this concept the role of the armed forces in the next war will be the fulfilment of Australia's obligations in a wide strategical plan, and consequently, any organization on the basis of home defence would necessitate re-organization and inevitable dislocation in the face of an emergency requiring overseas operations.

18. If, on the other hand, the plan of Imperial Defence and the arrangements made for co-operation with the U.S.A. should fail, and Australia be faced with the necessity for the local defence of her territory, the situation would be desperate owing to the inadequacy of her resources and the extent of her territory. Her forces, however, if organized and trained to meet the more likely contingency of overseas service, would be adaptable to the home need without re-organization.

THE TIME FACTOR

19. The international situation can deteriorate more quickly than armed forces can be built up, therefore military preparedness is essential however reassuring the international outlook may be. It is considered that world-wide exhaustion resulting from the recent war will prevent any major aggression before 1950, and this suggests a four or five-year plan in building the post-war forces.

20. The advent of the atomic bomb introduces a new factor into this estimate. It is unlikely that the U.S.S.R. will commit a major aggression before she has redressed the balance which has been upset by America's possession of the atomic bomb. On present information it appears to be unlikely that the U.S.S.R. will be in possession of the new weapon in usable quantities within five years and that there-after her manufacturing capacity will increase. It seems, therefore, that a five year programme should be safe.

PRESTIGE

21. It is of course impossible to state with precision the size of the forces required for our contribution to Imperial Defence until an agreed plan has been approved. Nevertheless, the type of forces can be determined now, and their size, if based on the national prestige and status which it is desired to maintain, should suffice for any commitment for Imperial Defence or under the United Nations Charter.

22. Notwithstanding the United Nations Organization, we are living in an era of power politics in which a nation carries no more weight than can be supported by its armed forces. The prestige enjoyed by Australia at present rests entirely on the achievements of its forces in two world wars. It cannot be carried into the post-war world unless commensurate forces are maintained.

“We both alike know that into the discussion of human affairs the question of justice only enters where the pressure of necessity is equal, and that the powerful exact what they can, and the weak grant what they must.” (Thucydides)

AUSTRALIA'S STRATEGIC INTERESTS

23. Australia's security, like that of other nations of the British Commonwealth, is dependent upon the employment of the forces of the Empire being co-ordinated into an overall plan. The strategic interests of Australia are, therefore, those of the whole British Commonwealth.

24. The principle of economy of force, however, requires that the initial responsibility for securing Empire interests should be borne, so far as is practicable, by the nation nearest to, or most immediately affected by events in any particular area.

25. A war against the U.S.S.R., which would be confined to any one particular area, cannot be visualized. Moreover, whatever course such a war may take, a major threat to the United Kingdom (our main Empire base), the Middle East, India, and if Russia develops sea power, the South Pacific, will always be present.

26. In applying the principle of economy of force (vide para 24) the strategical interests of most immediate concern to Australia are as follows:

(a) In the Middle East and Indian Ocean –

- (i) the integrity of British territories which border on the Indian Ocean;
- (ii) oil resources;
- (iii) the sea route debouching from the Red Sea;
- (iv) the air route through the Middle East. This constitutes the shortest and best route for air supply and reinforcement from the United Kingdom to East Africa, India, Australia and the Far East;
- (v) the Middle East base for an Imperial Reserve.

(b) In South-East Asia and the Pacific –

- (i) the security of Australia and New Zealand and of their sea and air communications;
- (ii) the defence of possessions and dependencies, viz. – Hong Kong, Malays, North Borneo, New Guinea and the smaller islands of the Pacific. These territories, apart from their political and economic significance, have a role in a strategical plan to ensure the security of the Dominions;
- (iii) supplies of raw materials from the Netherlands East Indies. The supply of oil from this area would be vital in the event of our Persian oil fields being lost.

27. None of the above strategic interests can be safeguarded by the isolated action of any part of the British Commonwealth. An effective joint-plan is essential.

THE SIZE OF THE ARMY REQUIRED FOR WAR

28. Taking the factors in para 8-22 together with the summary of our main strategic interests, I consider that our plan should envisage the mobilization of five divisions with the essential components of non-divisional L or C base troops. Allowing for the other services, for war industry and agriculture, this figure should be well within our capacity to maintain over an extended period. A greater force may unbalance our manpower. It is certain that a lesser force would be incompatible with our national prestige in a further world war. I visualize the above five divisions not as the maximum land effort Australia can raise, but as the maximum to be raised by the end of the first year of war. A decision as to further expansion can only be taken after balancing our total commitments in relation to the development of the strategical situation.

29. At this juncture it is not possible to prescribe the need or otherwise for armoured formations. Our commitments may be varied and it would be unsound to tie ourselves to the raising of armoured divisions. The best that can be done is to accept the need for some armoured element wherever operations are carried out and to make provision for it on the basis of an armoured regt or armoured bde for each Div to be raised.

30. It can be argued with some degree of justification that it is impossible to state what the Army organization will be 10 or 15 years hence, owing to development in weapons with their repercussions on organization factors. But all Army organization is evolutionary and we have to use some given basis for planning. Whatever changes the future may bring, it is certain that there will always be some grouping of arms of which the division today is the main example. The need for the group will remain, while the change will be in the nature and balance of the units making up the group.

THE PEACE TIME ARMY – General considerations

31. The peace time army organization of 1939 and earlier years affords no real basis for consideration of what is needed today. It was based on a conception of local defences against raids on, or invasion of, our own country and carried no commitment, expressed or implied, in a wider strategical sphere. Even for its limited outlook, it was woefully inadequate for its primary task as events were subsequently to prove.

32. We are accordingly forced back to first principles to reach a logical conclusion as to what should be the size and state of readiness of the peace organization capable of expansion to the maximum force noted in paras 28 and 29 above.

SIZE AND STATE OF READINESS

33. The size and state of readiness of the peace army must be directly related to the commitments we have entered into, or expect to meet in war. It is thus essential that it should be capable of taking the field unhampered by the dislocation and inefficiency which result from a major reorganization on the outbreak of war.

34. The period of time available for mobilization and concentration is considered in the next paragraph. The general trend indicates that it will become progressively shorter and, of course, the shorter the period the greater should be the state of readiness. It is thus important that, while realizing that modifications will constantly be dictated by developments in science and weapons, the army should not be subjected to major changes or re-organizations based upon fluctuations in the national income.

35. Modern developments will progressively decrease the time factor. The "blitzkrieg" as we have seen it in the last war will become intensified, with the result that the whole process of mobilization and concentration will be hampered from the outset. This will demand a higher state of readiness in order to shorten the overall period of mobilization and will probably force on belligerents the necessity for a rather more rigid plan of stationing reserves in peace in the near threatened areas. The implications of this on the British Empire, which has usually been able to move reserves relatively freely, will be obvious.

36. Taking the above factor into relation with our capacity for expansion and our strategic needs, it is considered that the state of readiness should be of the following order: -

First Echelon One Div Gp At once

Second Echelon Two Div Gps Three months

Third Echelon Two Div Gps Nine to twelve months

Of these, the first and second echelons should be maintained in peace time and the third echelon thrown off from the second on mobilization.

THE NATURE AND METHOD OF RAISING OF THE PEACE ARMY

37. It is essential at this stage to clear our minds on two major aspects, viz.-

- (a) Is there a need for a regular component?
- (b) Can we provide our needs with volunteer service or is some form of conscription necessary?

REGULAR FORCE

38. In the face of the German menace the need for a permanent force of all areas was stated by the Inspector-General AMF in his report of December 1938. All the arguments for this proposal remain valid today. They are reinforced by the following:-

- (a) The changed strategical conception where the emphasis is no longer on local defence.
- (b) Our probable commitments in a scheme of Empire defence and under U.N.O..
- (c) The shortened period of time for mobilization and concentration.
- (d) The need for some formation in which to test out both technically and tactically, the new developments which will inevitably arise.

39. The extent that these commitments can be met by short service personnel, such as conscripts, or by volunteers of relatively long service, is a matter for argument. My view is that the proper answer will only come from a permanent force of long service volunteers. The size of this component is discussed later.

CONSCRIPTION OR VOLUNTARY SERVICE

40. Given favourable economic conditions in Australia, a potentially dangerous international situation abroad, and a long period in which to build up its strength and develop its efficiency, the voluntary system had succeeded in building up the national forces to moderate strength and efficiency at extraordinary low cost to the country. This is illustrated clearly in the period 1930 to 1939, when during the period of depression, 1930-1935, the voluntary forces (which grew to 26,000 in 1935), were so low in both size and efficiency, that they had little potential value for war. With the improvement in economic conditions in the period 1935 to 1939 and the imminent danger of war in 1938 and 1939, the forces rose to 35,000 in 1938, and to 77,000 in 1939. The steady training in the ten year period, particularly of the leaders, gradually improved efficiency so that the forces in 1939 were moderately efficient.

41. The conditions under which a Voluntary System succeeds exist only on rare occasions; they do not exist at the end of a world war when there is a natural revulsion of feeling against military service and general desire to get out of uniform.

42. The Voluntary System is non-selective, and therefore wasteful from the service point of view, in that a large number of the volunteers enlist from reserved occupations and are therefore not available to the Army in time of war. On the other hand, war practice has shown the national advantages which are to be gained from the careful allocation of manpower; a practice which could be followed only under a system of National Service.

43. Although in favourable conditions and over a long period, a force can be built up on a volunteer basis, such a system is quite inadequate to build up the reserves of trained personnel which are essential to any sound system. On the other hand, under a scheme of National Service, the forces of the size decided on can be built up to establishment in a very short time and within one year of the commencement of training a large reserve of trained personnel is automatically built up as each quota completes its training.

44. Whereas in the pre 1939 years Australia was able to plan on a period of 6 months being available for the preparation of her forces after the declaration of war, no such period of grace can be accepted in plans for the future, and therefore here forces must be more readily available for war and therefore trained and organized to a greater degree of readiness than was the case in either 1914 or 1939.

45. In neither 1914 nor 1939 were the AIF formations raised on the basis of the army organization than existing for our peace time forces. There is no doubt that in future the peace time force – whatever its composition – must be the basis on which the raising of the forces for war is effected.

46. By its nature voluntary service is limited both in number and duration to the number who volunteer for training, and to the short annual period of service which can be reasonably asked of personnel under this system. The number likely to volunteer for training at the end of the war and under present world conditions would be so small that it appears certain that the required force could not be raised by voluntary means at present, and it is certain, that such a force if raised would be unable to build up the required reserves of trained personnel.

47. What the influence of the Atomic Age on war or what the final form of our armies in years to come will be, cannot be forecasted. But what is certain is that whatever form of war may take, our national strength will, as ever, be largely dependent on the strength of the national spirit and the physical fitness and discipline of the nation. These characteristics can be most rapidly developed by some system of National Service and with these characteristics strongly developed the nation should be well placed to mould its forces to whatever the needs of the future may be.

BASIS OF CHARACTERISTICS

48. The conclusions reached in para 36 indicate that it will be necessary to maintain the First Echelon divisional group as Permanent Forces. The formations in the Second Echelon should comprise a permanent cadre with the bulk of the personnel called up for a continuous period of national service, the duration of which is yet to be decided; on first examination this period will not be less than 6 months.

49. If you agree in principle with the foregoing, work on the detailed order of battle and its costing can be proceeded with and a formal submission prepared.

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSION

50. (i) The only logical basis upon which our peace time army can be built is the strategical pattern within which our forces may be expected to operate in war.

(ii) An appreciation of the world situation discloses that the U.S.S.R. must be regarded as the potential aggressor of the future, and, therefore, our forces should be designed to meet that contingency.

(iii) The united efforts of the Empire in a co-ordinated plan, and the assistance of the U.S.A. from the outset, will be required to ensure victory against an aggressive U.S.S.R.

(iv) The concept of strategical isolation is irreconcilable with the realities of modern way.

(v) The strategical interests of most immediate concern to Australia are as follows:-

(a) In the Middle East and Indian Ocean –

- (i) the integrity of British territories which border on the Indian Ocean;
- (ii) oil resources;
- (iii) the sea route debouching from the Red Sea;
- (iv) the air route through the Middle East. This constitutes the shortest and best route for air supply and reinforcement from the United Kingdom to East Africa, India, Australia and the Far East;
- (v) the Middle East base for an Imperial Reserve

(b) In South-East Asia and the Pacific –

- (i) the security of Australia and New Zealand, and of their sea and air communications;
- (ii) the defence of possessions and dependents, viz – Hong Kong, Malaya, North Borneo, New Guinea and the smaller islands of the Pacific. These territories, apart from their political and economic significance, have a role in a strategical plan to ensure the security of the Dominions;
- (iii) supplies of raw materials from the Netherlands, East Indies. The supply of oil from this area would be vital in the event of our Persian oil fields being lost;

(vi) none of the above strategical interests can be Safeguarded by the isolated action of any part of the British Commonwealth. An effective joint plan is essential.

(vii) the role of the armed forces in the next war may be expected to be the fulfilment of Australia's obligations in a wide strategical plan, and consequently any organization on the basis of home defence would necessitate re-organization and inevitable dislocation in the face of an emergency requiring overseas operations;

(viii) the prestige enjoyed by Australia at present rests entirely on the achievements of its forces in two world wars. It can not be carried into the post-war world unless commensurate forces are maintained.

(ix) Our plan should envisage the mobilization of five Divisions with the essential components of non-divisional L of C and base troops.

(x) The state of readiness should be of the following order:-

First Echelon One div gp At once
Second Echelon Two div gps Three months
Third Echelon Two div gps Nine to Twelve months.

Of these, the first and second echelons should be maintained in peace-time, and the third echelon thrown off from the second on mobilization.

(xi) Modern developments will progressively decrease the period of time available for mobilization and concentration.

(xii) To enable it to succeed the Voluntary System of training requires a set of favourable conditions and a long period of years in which to grow; these favourable conditions do not exist at the present nor can we count on the years required for its growth to a reasonable degree of efficiency, being available. It appears certain that the required force could not be raised by voluntary means at present and it is certain that such a force if raised would be unable to build up the essential reserves of trained personnel required for its mobilization.

(xiii) National training would enable the force to be raised and built up to efficiency by the time the force may be required. In addition, the reserves of trained personnel required for mobilization and for the planned expansion of the force on mobilization would be automatically provided.

(xiv) Sound organization is impossible unless continuity of effort is ensured by adherence to a long term plan. It is considered that the international situation will permit of a maximum safe period of five years in which to build up the first and second echelons set out in sub-para (x) and, therefore, that an initial five year plan should be approved on that basis.

(xv) The first echelon should be maintained as Permanent Forces and the second echelon on non-permanent basis.

Original signed

S.F. Rowell

Lieutenant-General
6 Mar 46. Vice Chief of the General Staff