



By GAVIN LONG, in the *U.S. Infantry Journal*

Training and organization—and more training—make the Aussie what he is—a grand fighting man.

THE LEGEND that the Australian soldier is a wild, undisciplined fighting man who owes his success to some innate instinct for war dies hard. "Australians are grand fighting men," a veteran British officer said to me when I was in a British transport steaming out from London to Egypt in 1940. "I saw them in the last war. Pity they can't be disciplined."

"Our idea of an Aussie," said *Yank*, the U.S. Army weekly, last June, "is a six-footer, standing in a torn and dirty uniform, a rifle in one hand and a bottle of beer in the other, cussing a blue streak and beating hell out of anything that comes along."

It is a picturesque legend, but, as a matter of fact, saluting and other compliments, parade-ground drill, dress, and bearing in the veteran Australian units to-day is smarter than I have seen in any British regiments except the Guards, and I spent a good part of 1939 and 1940 as an Australian correspondent with the British Army. The system of recruit training which Australia introduced in the Middle East was made the standard system for all troops in the Middle East. From the time Australians assaulted the miniature Hindenburg Line that ringed the Italian fortress of Bardia, through two almost unbroken years of fighting, up to the campaign in the heat and gloom

of the Papuan jungles, "training and organization" has been the simple and useful doctrine of the Australian Army in general. In the few particular cases where this doctrine has not been the first and greatest commandment, Australian troops have not done so well.

The law that the Australian citizen soldier has been taught in three years of tiresome schools and exciting campaigning is that training does not kill initiative, but strengthens it by adding confidence and skill. It was not because training standards were low that the Australian soldier taught himself how to fire Italian field guns and machine guns, and used them in the defence of Tobruk; or that, in Greece and Crete, after brigades and battalions had been surrounded or fragmented, companies, platoons, and even squads went on fighting as organized units. To-day the emphasis is still on training and more training, even in veteran units with four campaigns behind them, where officers and sergeants who have fought in four continents are taken out of battalions in the front line at Buna or Gona and beyond, to go to school again in Australia.

The power-house of Australian army training, whose current circulates right through the Army from headquarters away to the front line, is the Royal Military College and Staff School, situated