

mainland before he moved forward from the beach-head at Zanana on 5th July.

"There were about 36 of us all told in the party that set out up the Munda trail—6 New-Zealanders, 12 Americans, and 18 Fijians, if I remember rightly. Normally we would not travel on a trail, but we had a lot of extra gear to carry, and the Americans had their wireless transmitter. We intended to establish a forward base in the upper reaches of the Bariki River, about three miles from the beach-head. We also wanted to find high ground for the radio transmitter. However, we had hardly covered a mile when we struck the enemy. The Japs had a machine gun set up on the trail and opened fire on the Americans, who were in the lead at that time. The Americans went to ground and threw grenades.

"After the Japs fired their first burst they withdrew along the track to get in a better position to find out the strength of our force. Lieutenant B. Masefield (one of our officers) came back along the track to organize our attack. After a quick whispered conference he took the lead, while Sergeant Jowsey took one flank and I took the other. We then went forward again with the Americans in the middle. We contacted the enemy and Lieutenant Masefield got his first shot in at a few yards' range. All fighting is at close quarters in the bush because you can't see more than about 20 yards. Lieutenant Masefield would be about 15 yards on an average from me, yet I rarely saw him during the three hours' fighting, and we could only tell when the Japs were working around to our side by the direction of the bullets cutting the undergrowth about us.

We held our fire and spread out to advance in a kind of circular formation (depending on cover) and keeping our perimeter intact so we could not be surprised on any side. The aim in this

type of fighting is to outflank the opposition while safeguarding yourselves against ambushes. That is why grenades are used such a lot. When a man dives behind a tree you can't get him with a rifle, but a grenade thrown past the tree will probably get him with the cross-burst.

"We had trained ourselves to shoot only when we had something to shoot at," Sgt. Larsen continued. "Our silence had the Japs bluffed. They could see us creeping round their flanks and they threw everything they had at



**A member of the commando.**

us—grenades, rifle, and machine gun bullets everywhere. It seemed amazing that so much stuff should be flying about and no one hurt, but, of course, there was good cover from fire and view. The Japs. withdrew about 100 yards at a time and set up their machine gun on the trail each time. We fought them for three hours and drove them back nearly two miles. It was getting nearly dark by this time, so we decided to press them no further that day and turned off the trail for the mouth of the Bariki River,