

where an American battalion had set up a perimeter defence in the swamp. Here we had security for the night. During the engagement one of the Fijians was wounded in the shoulder. That was the only casualty that day.

"That is how the fight for Munda began," said Larsen, "for the next day the Americans went out with some of our men to guide them to the enemy, but when they got to the hill we had passed over the previous night, the Japs had dug in and it subsequently took three days to shift them.

"From then on we had patrols behind the enemy lines day and night. When I was evacuated we were running relays to the longest one every day to relieve half a patrol at a time. The casualties amongst the New Zealand personnel imposed a tremendous strain on the remaining N.C.O.s, but I have since learned that some reinforcements arrived from Guadalcanal after I left.

"This does not give a complete picture of our activities, as it was just a mild beginning. I knew all that was going on around me, but I was not an actual 'eye-witness' to every event as our patrols were everywhere at once. Some exploits will never be told as the leaders of these raids were killed."

Some of Sergeant Larsen's most interesting observations were his comments on the Japanese soldier, based on his experiences and those of other members of his unit. "The Japs have got guts," he said. "That is their greatest weapon. But they can be pushed back, as we have proved; and now that we have started to push them back they are beginning to lose their confidence. Up till recently they had not been beaten and they thought they were supermen. They will fight to the death now because their minds are conditioned to it, but once we can get a section of them to collapse I'm sure the rot will set in quickly. Externally the Jap prisoner maintains a stoic calm, but underneath he is emotional and very sentimental—this was evidenced in the personal diaries so many of them carried. They have not the initiative we have. They can carry out anything they are taught to the letter, but cannot change their

plans in the middle of an awkward situation. Their camouflage of prepared positions is very good. Not that they are any more clever than we are, but they do go to a great deal of trouble; in that respect they are most energetic.

"Their sniping from tree-tops is not accurate, but it certainly produces the desired effect on morale. The Americans found that a burst from a shotgun up each tree was the best way to find them.

"Their main tactics are frontal attack, although they do try to work round you in little groups in the bush. They have been known at times to cut off the tips of their bullets to shorten their flight; the idea being that if they should surround an enemy party there is less danger of hitting their own men. It is not done very much, but we did find some bullets with the noses cut off. Their ammunition is mostly .25 calibre so there is a high percentage wounded to killed. However, the Japs are constantly improving their equipment and should be in a position to issue their front-line soldiers at least with 7.7 mm. weapons soon. This is about the same size as our own. The Japanese grenade makes a big bang, but has not got the fragmentation of ours. Sergeant Williams, of the Special Party, had one explode at his feet during a hand-to-hand fight on Guadalcanal and only received minor splinters in the posterior. The Japs used grenades even more than we do, apparently to demoralize their opponents; they also yell out at times to scare their enemies—it is quite effective for the first encounter.

"In the jungle there is no 'front line.' Infiltration makes it a mix-up of little fights everywhere. It is really guerrilla warfare all the way; we found that the most suitable fighting unit was about fifteen men, although every situation is different so I don't want to be dogmatic about it."

Asked if fighting in the jungle was not an eerie, terrifying experience, Sergeant Larsen said that it was; but it was a lot worse for those who had not trained properly in the bush. His unit had trained for many months in Fiji and had increased their experience on Guadalcanal. The New-Zealanders had lived in the bush and it was like 'second