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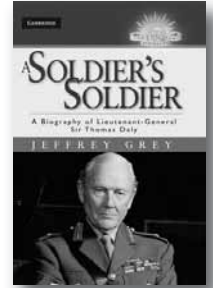
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BOOK REVIEW

A soldier's soldier: a biography of Lieutenant-General Sir Thomas Daly

by Jeffrey Grey

Cambridge University Press (in association with the Army History Unit): Melbourne; 2013; 249 pp.; ISBN 978-1-107-03127-2; RRP \$59.95 (hardback)



A Soldier's Soldier is a sympathetic, yet mostly balanced, biography of an Australian professional soldier, Lieutenant-General Sir Thomas Daly, KBE, CB, DSO, who served his nation with distinction in war and peace.

The author, Jeffrey Grey, is Professor of History at the University of New South Wales, Canberra. An eminent military historian, he is author or editor of numerous books and articles. This volume is part of the Australian Army History series.

Thomas Joseph Daly was born on 19 March 1913 in Ballarat and graduated from the Royal Military College, Sydney, in 1933. He served as adjutant of militia light horse units in Victoria and South Australia, before a posting to a British light cavalry regiment in India in 1938–39.

Following the outbreak of war, Daly became adjutant of the 2/10th Australian Infantry Battalion and served with it in Tobruk in 1941. Staff postings followed and he attended the Middle East Staff College in Palestine. In mid-1942, he became GOS1¹ of the 5th (Militia) Division, which was charged with the defence of North Queensland and then, in 1943, of Milne Bay, Papua. Next, the Division undertook operations to capture Salamaua. In October 1944, he assumed command of 2/10th Battalion in North Queensland and commanded it during the 18th Brigade's amphibious assault at Balikpapan, Borneo, in July 1945. Grey says: "Daly was an outstanding success as a battalion commander, and made a critical contribution to the success of the [Balikpapan] assault". He was awarded the Distinguished Service Order.

After the War, Daly declined an appointment to the British Commonwealth Occupation Force in Japan; instead, he married Heather Fitzgerald in 1946. Further staff and training appointments followed in Australia and England. In June 1952, he was appointed to command the 28th Commonwealth Brigade in Korea where the war had entered its static phase. As an Australian brigadier in a multinational Commonwealth Division within an American Corps, Daly's duties were more diplomatic and administrative than tactical, although he made strong representations on the poor cost-effectiveness of company raids to gain intelligence. For his Korean service, he was appointed a Commander of the Order of the British Empire and was awarded the American Legion of Merit.

He returned to Australia in 1953 and to a series of senior staff appointments. Following promotion to major-general, he commanded Northern Command, was

Adjutant-General and then General Officer Commanding Eastern Command, before becoming Chief of the General Staff (CGS) in 1966. He was made a Companion of the Bath that year and a Knight Commander of the British Empire in 1967.

Two chapters are devoted to his tenure as professional head of the Army, a period that coincided with Australia's peak commitment to the Vietnam War. The first deals with the general issues that he had to address and the second with those specific to the war. The principal strategic decisions relating to the war had been made before he became CGS, mostly during the tenure of his predecessor, Sir John Wilton. But he had a war to oversee; a national service scheme to administer; and a home army to reorganise from Pentropic to Tropical Establishment and functionally rather than geographically. There were also numerous policy issues to be resolved in the Military Board and the Chiefs of Staff Committee, such as the role to be played by the Citizen Military Forces during the war, and how and by whom close air support² was to be provided to forward troops. Policy conflicts – e.g. over the development of army aviation; and investment in weapons systems – with the Chief of the Air Staff, Air Marshal Sir Alister Murdoch, were bitter; as was a conflict in early 1971 with the Minister for Defence, Malcolm Fraser, over the winding down of military civil-action programmes in Vietnam. [In reality, Daly was 'the meat in the sandwich' in rivalry between Fraser and the Army Minister, Andrew Peacock.] These stresses impacted adversely on his health and he decided to retire, aged 58 in 1971, rather than seek chairmanship of the Chiefs of Staff Committee.

Following retirement, his health slowly improved. He became a company director and he chaired the Council of the Australian War Memorial during a decade of modernisation. He died in Sydney on 5 January 2004 aged 90. He is remembered as a staunch defender of 'his army'.

Grey refrains from making an overall assessment of his subject's contribution. Rather, he presents the evidence from his extensive archival research in a readable and interesting manner and then leaves it to his readers to make their own judgements. I did detect minor factual errors in a few places and information that would aid ready understanding is omitted from the text and maps in a few others, but these minor blemishes detract little from the biography. I recommend it to all who would wish to know more of the life and times of this renowned Australian soldier.

David Leece

¹General Staff Officer Grade 1 (lieutenant-colonel), the senior operations/training staff officer on the divisional headquarters.

²'ground attack' in Air Force parlance.