

PART II.—MILITARY MOBILIZATION

SECTION I.—STRENGTHS AND CASUALTIES OF THE ARMED FORCES

(i) Total Strengths

56. Until the end of 1941, mobilization was directed to harnessing available manpower resources to enable New Zealand to play its part in distant war zones in the war against Germany. At the end of November, 1941, a total number of over 82,000 men and women were serving full-time in the Armed Forces, more than half (47,000) being overseas. This meant that mobilization had proceeded at an average rate of 2,900 a month from the outbreak of war. In addition, the Army had built up a large Territorial Force of about 35,000 men. The duties of this Territorial Force included three months' intensive training, followed by part-time training.

57. An emergency arose with the entry of Japan into the war on the 7th December, 1941. The need now was to defend New Zealand against the imminent threat of invasion, and the emphasis of mobilization was switched to strengthening this country's capacity to defend her own shores. Within a month more than 25,000 men and women were mobilized. A large part of the Territorial Force was mobilized in a few days. By the end of December the Army strength in New Zealand had more than doubled, and by March had reached a total of 65,000. Peak mobilization for all Forces in New Zealand occurred in October, 1942, when 107,840 men and women were serving full-time with the home-defence Forces. Of this total, 82,150 were in the Army, 20,830 in the Air Force, and 4,860 in the Navy. Peak mobilization for all Forces at home and overseas came in September, 1942, when 157,000 men and women were serving. This meant that mobilization had proceeded at an average rate of over 7,500 a month since the entry of Japan into the war. In addition, over 250,000 men and women were serving part time in such auxiliary services as the Home Guard, the Emergency Precautions Services, the Emergency Fire Service, and the Women's War Service Auxiliary.

58. The third phase of mobilization began towards the end of 1942, when a series of crucial reverses for the enemy again changed the formation and distribution of the New Zealand Armed Forces. The British offensive in Libya (El Alamein) began in October. Two weeks later British and American Forces landed in North West Africa. In mid-November the Japanese suffered heavy naval losses in the Solomons. With the immediate threat of invasion removed by the end of 1942, the basic military policy was to contribute the maximum amount of manpower for overseas battlefronts, pruning the home-defence Forces in order to achieve this objective as well as to man short-staffed essential industries in New Zealand. Less than a year after peak mobilization, the Army Home Defence Forces had been reduced to a total of 33,555 in June, 1943. The peak overseas strength of the Army came in May, 1943, with 56,992 men and women serving overseas, 35,694 being in the European war zone. The Air Force overseas rose to a peak in October, 1944, when 14,675 men and women were on active service. At this time there were 4,086 airmen in the United Kingdom, 7,949 in the Pacific, and 1,676 in Canada. The overseas strength of the Navy rose to a peak of 5,635 in June, 1945, when 3,844 men were serving in the European war zone and 1,791 in the Pacific. The total overseas strength for the three Forces rose to a peak of 71,789 in March, 1944, 54,509 (76 per cent.) being Army personnel, 12,625 (18 per cent.) Air Force, and 4,655 (6 per cent.) Navy.

59. The final collapse of Italy in September, 1943, the invasion of France in June, 1944, and the surrender of Germany in May, 1945, led to a progressive decline in the strength of the New Zealand Armed Forces overseas. The surrender of Japan in August, 1945, was followed by rapid demobilization. These phases of national service are treated more fully in Section VI below. A progressive analysis of the total strengths of the Forces is given in Table 4 of the Appendix, while Table 5 analyses the strength at 31st March, 1946.