

## Chapter Six:

# The Regiment Reborn, 1949-1978

*Though, like other infantry units, they have to some degree lost their identity with the amalgamation of all units into the Royal New Zealand Infantry Regiment, soldiers of the 6th Battalion are still fiercely proud to be known as the "Haurakis".*

WAIHI GAZETTE, 2 March 1978.

In the years immediately following the German and Japanese surrender few New Zealanders wanted to join the Territorials. Most Kiwis wanted to forget wars and uniforms. The Hauraki Regiment had limped on from 1945 to 1949, reduced to a headquarters company at Tauranga, the Regiment's headquarters since 1944 when the first battalion of the Regiment had been posted to garrison duty in that Bay of Plenty town.

However, the new peace was not without its tensions, and in 1948 the Fraser government conducted a referendum to decide whether compulsory military training should be resumed in New Zealand. The 'Cold War', with the seeming menace of Russian expansion into Europe, Egypt and beyond, made the government reassess the state of the Dominion's war readiness. A large majority in a small poll decided in favour of conscription and New Zealand's eighteen year olds were required to present themselves for basic in-camp military training, and thereafter were attached to Territorial regiments for weekly parades, training weekends and annual camps.

For the Hauraki Regiment the inauguration of compulsory military training brought a challenge, and many problems. While it was three years before the supply of conscripts peaked to 1300 all ranks, with 1100 attending annual camp, from 1949 the Regiment found that it had too few officers, inexperienced subalterns, and cookhouse and shower facilities at annual camps insufficient for the new recruit influx.

From 1949 to 1956, under the command of Lieut.-Col. R. W. Aked, OBE; MC; ED; the Regiment, reinforced by large numbers of ex-servicemen N.C.O.'s saw as its primary task the passing

on to compulsory trainees of basic military skills. Lieut.-Col. Aked had supported the introduction of the CMT system. Before the referendum, he had informed readers of the *BAY OF PLENTY TIMES* that:

*The efficient use of the many modern weapons of war is not learned in a few days or weeks; many weeks of training under capable instructors is necessary before men learn to use their weapons under varied conditions. Speed in and the capable use of weapons saves lives; this all takes time to learn.<sup>1</sup>*

Officers and N.C.O.s of the Regiment realised that with the limited time allotted by the Compulsory Military Training Act to their task they could provide only a bare minimum of weapon and procedure familiarisation for their recruits. The real accomplishment of the years 1949-1959 was not the creation of a 'super battalion' but the preparation of a highly trained officer and N.C.O. cadre within the Regiment.

This emphasis paid dividends when the Regiment was called upon to provide officers and N.C.O.s for the United Nations Force in Korea, in 1950, and for the Commonwealth Brigade formed to counter Communist insurgency in Malaysia, and to face Indonesia in the 'Confrontation' between Indonesia and Malaysia. Major A. J. Denby, Captain M. Tebbutt (now Brigadier Tebbutt), Lieut. T. B. Hatherly and WO II R. H. Jones, were amongst those who served in Korea. While Captain A. T. Mataira (now Colonel Mataira), Captain B. Poananga (now Brigadier B. Poananga and Deputy-Chief of the General Staff) were amongst those who had served as adjutants with the Regiment and then proceeded to Malaysia.<sup>2</sup>

Both Lieut.-Col. Aked, and Lieut.-Col. R. E. Smith, OBE, ED, who succeeded him in 1956, found the Tihoi training area useful for their tasks. While some territorials complained that annual camps were like 'holiday centres' the staff correspondent of the *New Zealand Herald* was at pains to point out that those who trained in Tihoi were well satisfied:

*One trainee puts it this way. . . Some units go to backblock areas such as Tihoi and work hard. Leave is almost non-existent, but at least the blokes do something most of the time.<sup>3</sup>*

Fifteen hours unbroken simulated battle between the Haurakis and an invading 'fantasian' force had made Hauraki other-ranks thankful for a chance for a few hours sleep. They had temporarily forgotten that beds and picture theatres existed. Dressed in battledress, wearing Afrika Corps style caps, for a time the New Zealand Army's headdress, Hauraki