

War in Paradise



After a week of occupation, the American forces were withdrawn leaving the Australian troops to protect the town as ANGAU men came in to re-establish the civil government. At the same time discussions started about the future of the New Guinea Rifles, and wheels were set in motion to dissolve the unit and let its members return to the plantations and businesses that they had left when the war started.

Army Engineers came in and started to rebuild the docks and piers, and supply ships started to arrive carrying in all the supplies that a garrison force would need. Bulldozers and earth-moving equipment were put to work rebuilding bombed out roads, and the town airstrip was soon repaired enough so that cargo planes could come and go. The road that the Japs had started to lead to Lae was being widened and another road leading north past Alexishafen was also being improved.

Word finally came through from Port Moresby that the Volunteers would be demobilised and transportation to Moresby would be provided for those needing it. Eban, after checking out Bundaberg, had enough of Army life, and, as soon as it was available got a ride back to Moresby on one of the Dakota cargo planes.

When Eban arrived in Port Moresby, he was amazed at the changes that had taken place. The port area was now crowded with tin buildings and warehouses filled with all manor of military supplies.

Roads that had been narrow and neglected were now macadamised and widened to accommodate the army trucks that rumbled through day and night.

His father lived in a hotel along Ela Beach Road, as did a number of the displaced planters. The lounge at the hotel provided a meeting place for their nightly discussions about the progress of the war and the uncertain future.

On his first night in Moresby Eban was welcomed by the expatriate group with open arms. The older men pressed him for accounts of the fighting, interspersed with questions about the condition of the plantation properties. Everyone wanted to know about the Americans and how their army compared to the Aussies. Several of the men had worked for ANGAU and a few were still connected with the headquarters in Moresby.

One night the group was joined by one of the administrative heads of ANGAU who was quite taken by Eban and his adventures. He suggested that with the war winding down, there would be many good opportunities for a man like Eban in the post-war administration.

He knew of Eban's education and revealed that school teachers and educators would be urgently needed after the war was over. Where previously the education of the native population was left in most cases to the missionaries, there was a crying need for a non-sectarian school system for the areas not covered by the churches.

Eban talked with the Headquarters people, and ended up accepting a job in the planning section for post-war administration. He was the only mixed-race employee in the Headquarters staff, even though there were several others employed in various field stations. He also found out that he had one disadvantage that must be soon overcome -- his lack of fluency in Hiri Motu, or Police Motu.

While there are thousands of village dialects spoken all over New Guinea, the dialect spoken in the Moresby area, Motu, was adapted by the early government officials and was

widely used by the Kiaps or local administrators. On the north side of the island, however, the German Colonial officials had formalised the sea-farer's Creole into Tok Pisin, which became the lingua franca for their area of influence. Some church groups stayed with local dialects, but soon most of them also adopted Pidgin as the working language.

As Eban had picked up several local dialects on his recruiting trips, it was not an impossible, but only a tiresome task to learn the Motu language. During the war, Pidgin was spoken where most of the fighting had taken place, and Motu was becoming less and less important in official communication. Already the influence of Motu was diminishing in ANGAU HQ, and several of the staff were even asking Eban for help in using Pidgin. However, he thought it would be valuable to know Motu in order to read reports from the past that had been translated into that language.

Because of his excellence in Pidgin, Eban was assigned to the team that was given the task of repatriating the thousands of natives who had been drafted by the Japanese from the northern islands to act as labourers and carriers. A couple of Allied LCI's was assigned to the group to make the move easier. They boarded the craft at Moresby and sailed along the south coast into the Coral Sea headed for Milne Bay.

Compared to some of the coastal steamers, the LCI was larger and more comfortable, and the "tank " deck had been fitted out to house and feed a large number of the returning natives. When they arrived at Milne Bay, while refuelling, they picked up some natives from the Lae and Salamaua area and then set sail along the north coast towards Madang.

On arrival at Lae, they found the wharf area crowded, and decided to beach the LCI a little to the east where ANGAU had set up a receiving area for the refugees. They off-loaded a good number of the passengers, and the next day took on a new group that was destined for the Madang area.

When they arrived at Madang, Eban was amazed at the progress that had been made in the past six months since he had been there. the wharves had been rebuilt and improved by the Army and Navy forces, and the whole waterfront area was filled with warehouses and dumps of equipment.

ANGAU had set up HQ along Modilin Road, and some of the traders had started to rebuild their wrecked buildings. The Madang Hotel, which had been used as a club for Japanese officers, was now operating for the convenience of the Allied Forces.

The second LCI arrived a few days later, and plans were being formulated for relocating the labourers. Eban's group would take people going east of Lae, and the Trobriand Islands, and the other group would take the northern islands near Rabaul.

Eban was anxious to visit the Trobriands, because their heritage included a lot of Polynesian blood as well as Melanesian. He had met some of the islanders, and heard about some of their local customs and beliefs.

As they worked their way down the coast, dropping off some passengers and picking up others, eventually they ended up with quite a large group of Trobriand Islanders, the majority coming from the small island of Kiriwina, a bit north of the D'Entrecasteaux group.

The Captain of the ship decided to make the run north to Kiriwina before turning south to Goodenough and Woodlark. When they arrived at the main town of Losuia they found an excellent wharf built by the Allies and a good supply of ship's stores that were easily available. Eban and his group went ashore when they found out that the ship would be staying for several days.

The District Officer was glad for company and told them that they had arrived at a most fortunate time, for the Yam festival was just starting and all of the returned natives were

going to be honoured with dances and a feast. Eban was asked to get the details of the location and time while the rest of the group went on a tour of the headquarters.

According to a Big Man that Eban talked to, the feast and dance would be held at Kabalula village, just 2 km from the town. He suggested that Eban wear a lap lap for the affair, and cautioned Eban to be choosy about the women he talked with. He also said that the rest of the ANGAU group would be welcomed, and in fact, would be given places of honour at the feast which would start at dusk.

Late in the afternoon, after a few gin and quinines, the four men started down the track to Kabalula. Besides the district administrator, Eban was the only one who spoke a fluent pidgin.

When they arrived at the village, they were greeted by the Big Man who brought them over to the Luluai and introduced them and then led them to a log where they were invited to sit. Each was given a tin pannikin and a fork, and invited to join the chief along a sort of buffet line past the women who were serving the food.

There was roast pork, chicken, fish, yams, taro and all kinds of fruit. They carried their plates back to the log, where they were given a bamboo cup filled with a local concoction that tasted faintly like beer. During the meal Eban was given some white cockatoo feathers to place in his hair, and a shell necklace for around his neck. The rest of the white men were given shell necklaces and flowers to place in their hat bands.

As darkness fell, a huge bonfire was lit in the centre of the village and two large garamut drums were placed facing the guests. Each drum was manned by an older man in a purple lap lap and an elaborate wig decorated with bird feathers. A dozen large and small kundu drums were placed at the sides of the large drum, and men and women in elaborate costumes and facial paint were gathering in back of the drums. Dishes and cooking pots were removed, and cups were constantly filled with a new, stronger brew.

Soon the Big Man got up and started a long rambling speech of welcome to the visitors. When he finished, the chief took over and in a chanting voice conveyed much the same message, ending with a plea to the spirits to thank the women who planted and harvested the yams, and declared that they were the true honoured guests of the evening. When he ended, he pointed to the garamuts and signalled that the dances were to begin.

The garamuts pounded out a rhythm in counterpoint and were soon joined in by the kundus and a few pan pipes. Then suddenly, the dancers and singers appeared in the centre of the clearing. An old man sang a solo lament about a lost love, and a group of boys played a flute serenade to the girls they were courting. Then the dancers formed two lines, women on one side and men on the other. They started with slow measured steps in circling each other, and gradually speeded up the beat with foot stomping and whistle blowing.

Then from the women's side, into the centre of the circle stepped the Big Man's daughter. She was a beautiful young woman with features that were more Polynesian than Melanesian and had a figure that was not marred by any elaborate tattoos or scars. Her hair was woven with shells and feathers, and her grass skirt was just thick enough to be sensuous as well as revealing. All the music stopped as she glided to the centre of the circle, and she raised her arms as the large drum started a slow beat.

It was almost a hula that she danced, but ever so slowly and gracefully as she sang the words to a Wahine wewela, a traditional love song of the island. As she moved closer to the honoured guests, she danced in front of each by turn until finally stopping in front of Eban.

She reached out and took his hands and pulled him into the circle with her. Eban responded to the rhythm and matched her footwork as they danced around each other. Finally the other dancers and drummers joined in, and the paced picked up and the sweat started rolling off Eban's body. Laeani got closed and closer to Eban as they danced, and the crowd cheered them on with whistles and calls.

Finally the music and the dancers reached a crescendo and then suddenly stopped. Eban staggered back to his seat to be greeted by a big smile from the Big Man and envious gazes from the others. More dancers gathered in the circle, but Leanani was nowhere to be seen. The crowd was thinning out now, and the honoured guests were showing signs of tiredness. As they were about to leave, Laeani appeared next to Eban and took his arm.

"Come with me" she said, as she gave a sly smile to her father, and a polite bow to the other honoured guests. The other ANGAU men made a few ribald remarks to Eban, but soon left at the Big Man's urging.

Eban could see other girls and women talking to other men and then realised that the stories he had heard were true -- during the Yam festival women became the aggressors and regardless of marital status could choose the man they wanted with no social stigma.

She led him to a hut and ushered him in to the light of a candle flickering in the far corner. She reached up into her hair and plucked a bright red feather from it and placed it in with the white cockatoo feathers on Eban's head.

At the same time she loosened up her clothing and took Eban's hands and placed them on her bare breasts. Eban could feel her excitement matching his as he unfastened his lap lap and kicked off his shoes.

As Eban kissed her, she clung to him and pulled him down to the mat on the floor beside her. Still kissing, she pulled him on top of her and then took charge of their love making. She was in complete control and led him along gently but firmly to her own desires - speeding up or slowing down as she wanted. At one time he felt that he was going to climax, and she squeezed him in such a way that he delayed.

Finally, in a frenzy of passion, she grabbed him tight around the back and wouldn't let him go until both had a violent climax. Eban was drained both literally and physically and laid back on the mat in a euphoric daze.

Leanani propped herself up on one elbow and watched as his breathing slowly came back to normal. He wanted to get up and walk around a bit, but Leanani held him again and started stroking his body till he was again fully aroused.

The second time the lovemaking was more relaxed, with Leanani allowing Eban to lead the way. Eventually the two of them slept in the flickering light of the almost burned down candle.

When Eban woke he disentangled himself and got up and walked around the hut. Leanani stirred and then turned on her side and promptly went to sleep again. Eban dropped down beside her and held her in his arms till the crowing of a rooster signalled the approach of dawn.

By now the candle had burned out, but the faint light of day was beginning to enter the darkness of the hut, and Leanani woke up and again embraced Eban and started love-making all over again. This time the love making was mutual with neither one making demands of the other.

The other huts in the area were stirring as well, and children and dogs soon broke the idyllic mood and brought both Eban and Leanani to their feet in a search for their clothes.

As they left the hut to go to a small stream to wash up it was obvious that no one was watching them, and not the slightest interest was paid to them. When Eban returned to the hut, Leanani had a small fire going, and from God-knows-where had produced a jar of instant coffee.

Over coffee, Eban asked her about the yam festival and she filled him in on other aspects of the cultural event other than what had transpired last night. After she finished her coffee, They left to go to her father's house and see how he had enjoyed the previous evening.

It was with some apprehension that Eban greeted her father and was asked if Eban enjoyed the dinner and dances. The Big Man turned to some papers he was reading, and with a casual wave of his hand acknowledged Eban's thank you and Good-bye.

By this time Leanani was busy cooking some food for her father, and thanked Eban for a nice evening and said she hoped to see him if ever he came back to Kiriwina again for another Yam Festival.

As Eban walked back to Losuia in the cool morning air, he breathed deeply of the odor of the frangipani blossoms in the trees overhead. He felt wonderful, and was already beginning to regret he had left Leanani and her wonderful body. He knew that there were no romantic feelings on her part, but couldn't help feeling that he had surprised her with his virility.

ANGAU HQ was not awake yet when he returned as the District Officer had broken out a bottle of overproof rum that was practically empty by the time the three ANGAU men stumbled into bed. Eban went out in the bath house for a long soaking shower, and then got back into his army kit for the day's work. The others woke up one by one, and soon Eban was being quizzed about last night's adventure, of which he discretely told them very little.

That afternoon the captain of the LCI told them to prepare to set sail at high tide the next day for the run to Goodenough and Woodlark Islands. A few stragglers joined the rest of the passengers and without much fuss they left the dock the next morning at high tide.

The standard routine of exchanging passengers was followed at Goodenough and Woodlark, and they then set sail for their last destination, Milne Bay.

At Milne Bay they picked up a few passengers for Moresby and then started the journey back to the home port. On arrival at Moresby, Eban reported back to HQ and then went to the Ela Apartment for a rest. A few days later, news was received that the Americans had dropped a super bomb on Hiroshima, and shortly after another one on Nagasaki. A month later General Adake of the Japanese Imperial Forces surrendered his army at Wewak.

In the months following, peace terms were firmed up, and the United Nations turned over all of the Japanese controlled islands of the South Pacific to various Allied nations.

The War was over.