

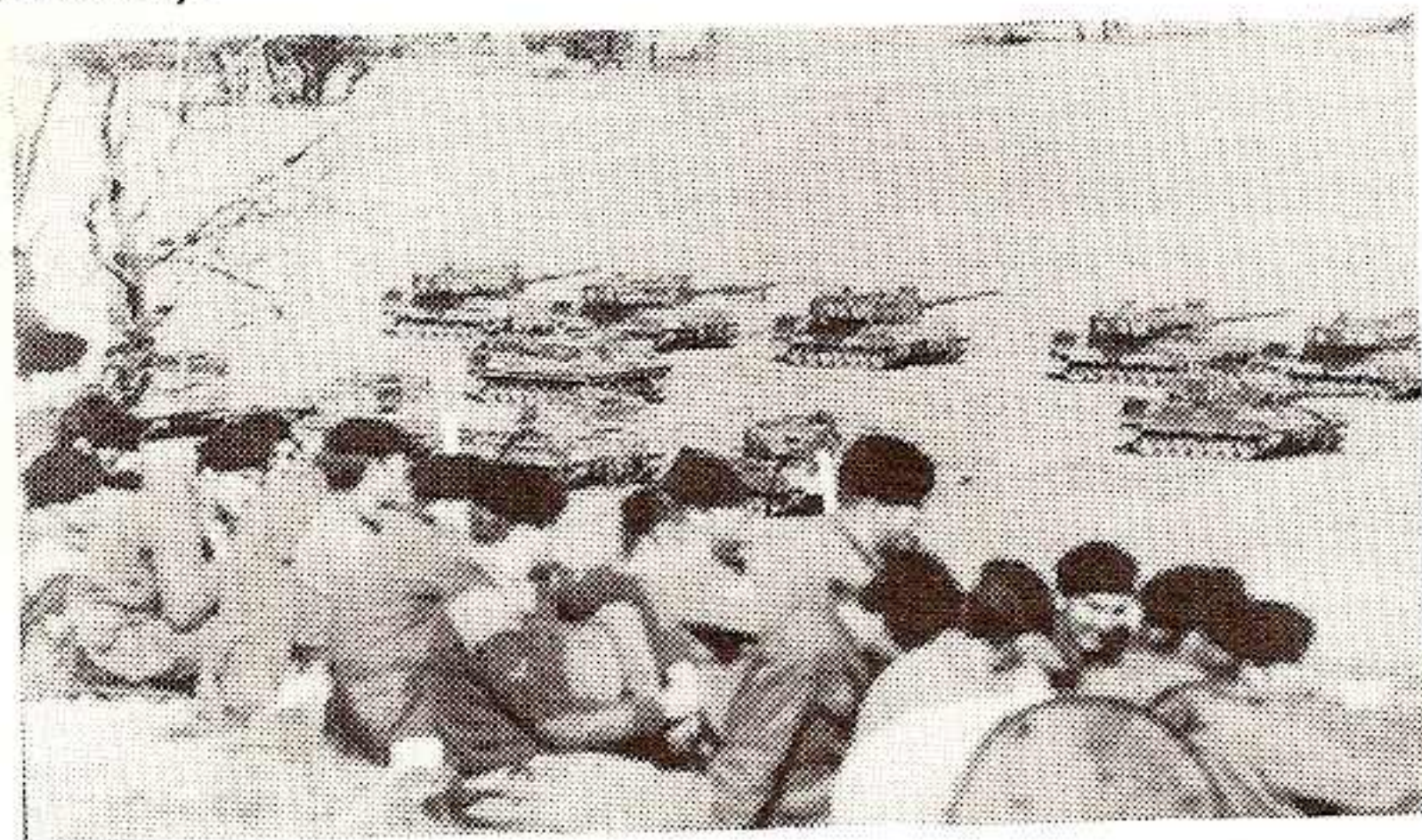
EX SABRE FOOT

by CAPT. T.W. McMULLEN

Prior to going on Ex Sabre Foot OC A Coy published an impressive list of objectives for the exercise: They included a number of range practices, a visit and a meal to the Army School of Catering, a visit to a local vineyard, sports, a visit to the Army School of Transport, participation in Arduous Challenge and of course Infantry tank-co-operation exercise. On top of all these objectives we managed to include a live firing company attack.

The range shoots and familiarisation with the armoured elements took place in the first few days at 'Pucka'. The range shoots were not without incident, as during one of the 84 mm shoots a low flying LOH flew over the hill directly in front of the range and well within the danger area. The incident held up the practice until the conducting officer was convinced that he was in no further danger of shooting down an aircraft.

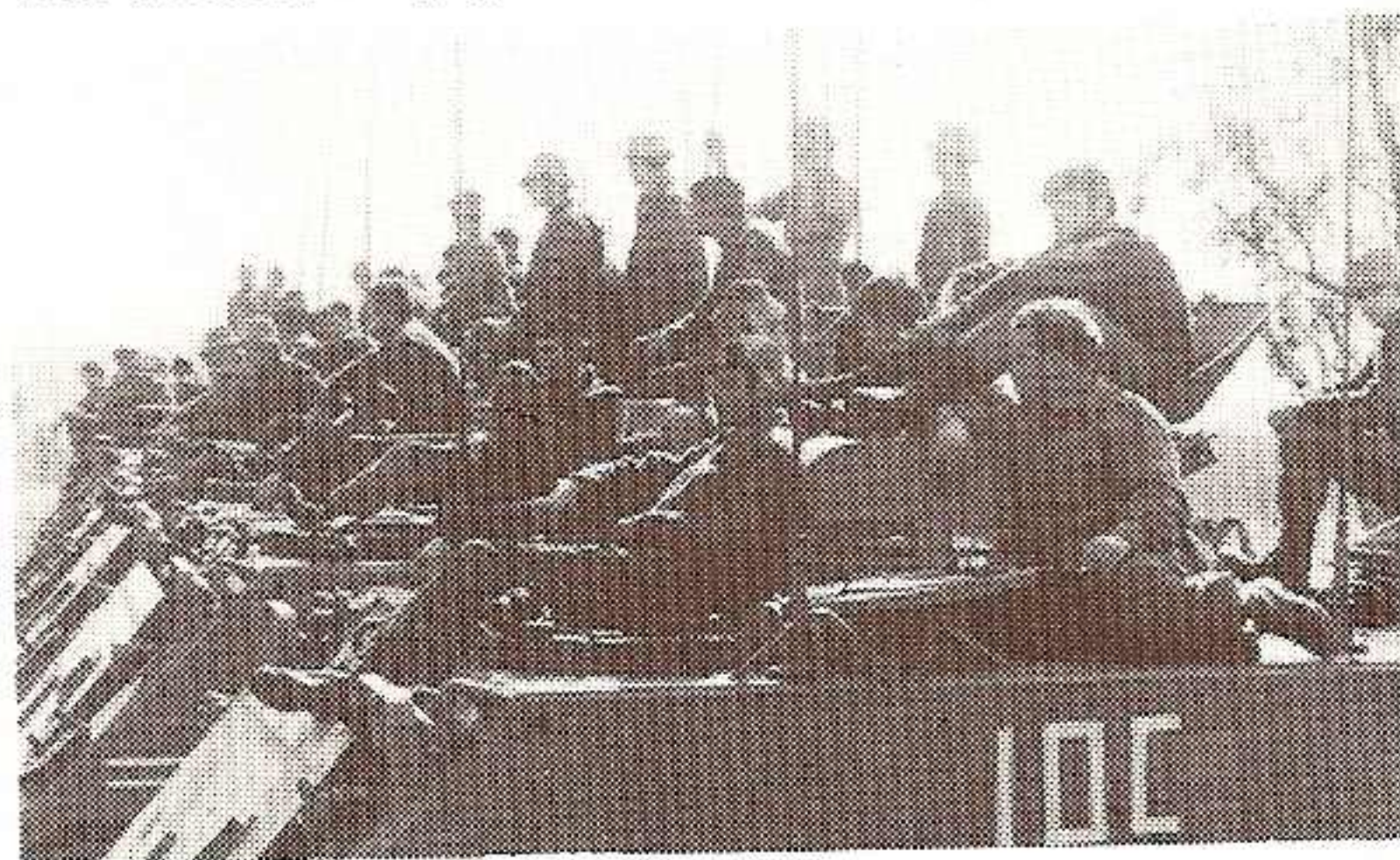
Throughout our time at Puckapunyal we were fed endless propaganda about the wonders of the Leopard tank by numbers of A Sqn 1 AR, our hosts. They were able to show their skills during a fire power demonstration which was impressive. However impressive as the performance of the Leopard tank was the Anti armour members who accompanied the company were obviously out to better the Leopard. During the main exercise they were able to knock out a number of tanks, which pointed out just how vulnerable they are in close country.



The live fire company attack using mortars, APC and 30 cal MG as fire support was interesting. Due to countless safety restrictions on the Puckapunyal range the attack resembled an advance in the days of the Napolianic wars. This included the company advancing with the accompaniment of a drummer and a piper. CPL Bartrom the piper played very well during the attack considering we were attacking a hill which by the time we reached the top was more like a mountain.

The build up to the main exercise involved the company sending out patrols at night to try and locate and destroy tanks in hide positions. Certain members of the company had the unnerving experience of

finding themselves looking down the barrel of a tank. The closest they got to a tank during the night.



The main exercise with a squadron of tanks and the company was a great success. All the normal problems of working with armour were encountered, such as missing objectives on an attack and everyone trying to debus from an APC at the same time, with obvious results. The advance culminated in an attack on a well prepared position. Although the latter stages of the attack appeared confusing with many of the APCs and tanks bottlenecking and churning the ground into mud. The exercise was worthwhile and the company learnt a lot from the experience.

Following the final attack the company said farewell to the armoured elements, which went back to barracks to clean some of the mud off the vehicles. We adopted a more familiar role of infantry with only our boots to transport us. We marched ten miles followed by a shoot, thus bringing the total distance marched by the company at the end of the exercise to over 100 km.

On return to barracks, we spent two days cleaning vehicles and handing in stores. During this period the company was invited down to the Army School of Catering to admire the food display by an IET end of course cook up. Having made suitable comments on the arrangement, such as 'who gets food like this' we were allowed to taste the food.

Two days in Melbourne followed by a trip to a vineyard gave everyone enough time to recover prior to returning to the warmth of Townsville on the 30th May.

