

Biography

Jonathon Riley

THE LIFE AND CAMPAIGNS
OF GENERAL HUGHIE STOCKWELL

From Norway through Burma to Suez

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The Suez Crisis of 1956 marked a watershed in British history and brought down, Anthony Eden's government. But for all its political ramifications, it was not a military disaster, and the commander of the land-force component has finally received a biography worthy of his achievements. Hugh Stockwell rose from major to major-general during the Second World War, and commanded no fewer than four different divisions before being whisked from Germany to command at Suez, largely as a result of his experience of amphibious operations during the Second World War.

As a senior officer in the modern army, Jonathon Riley has insight into the qualities necessary to succeed as a professional soldier, and he brings this to his detailed and entertaining narrative, which is largely a telling of battle stories rather than a personality study. The Second World War was the making of Stockwell, who was no great intellectual and never attended the Staff College. But his drive and qualities of personal leadership were clearly suited to the rigours of wartime.

"Having distinguished himself first with the commandos in Norway in 1940, Stockwell went on to command 2nd Royal Welch Fusiliers on Madagascar in 1942, followed by 29th Independent Infantry Brigade, and 82nd (West African) Division in Burma in 1944-5. His pre-war service with the Royal West African Frontier Force lent him a ready understanding of the qualities of West African troops, and the author has redressed a serious historical injustice regarding the 82nd. It is only a pity that the book does not provide endnotes to benefit other researchers.

Following the war, Stockwell served in Palestine and Malaya, where he suppressed the Chinese Communist guerrillas, using helicopters in their effective operational appearance. Later, he became Commandant of Sandhurst, playfully giving a lift to two cadets on his arrival without revealing his identity. Stockwell lived in what the Chinese might call "interesting times", and Jonathon Riley's biography gives an excellent picture of one man's part in shaping them

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