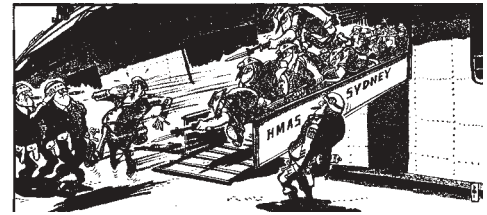


# Diggers arrive in Vietnam

## Step by step instructions

- (i) Tell or remind the students that cartoonists often express opinions about the actions of Australians or important events that affect Australians.
- (ii) If the students have not studied the Vietnam War take them through that information now using the following context points.



## CONTEXT:

- In 1965 the Australian government committed troops to support the non-Communist South Vietnamese government against the Communist supported Vietcong.
- The Prime Minister at this time was Robert Menzies.
- **Make and show the overhead photograph of Menzies on page 65 before introducing the cartoon.**
- War started when North Vietnamese Communist troops, led by Ho Chi Minh, crossed the 17th parallel thereby breaking the Geneva Convention of 1954.
- South Vietnam sought assistance from its non-Communist allies (SEATO) in an effort to maintain control of the south in the light of attacks from local communist groups collectively known as the Vietcong.
- The US sent advisors and aid from 1958, troops arrived 1963 (16,000).
- The Australian Government feared the effects of the 'domino theory' and favoured a policy of 'forward defence'. It had already sent thirty advisors in 1962.
- The first Australian battalion arrived 1965. The US also increased its commitment. In the same year Menzies introduced conscription via a 'birthday ballot'. Conscripted servicemen, National Servicemen, were sent to Vietnam in 1966.
- Some of the Australian soldiers had spent time in Korea. Most had trained in Malaysia.
- Despite public support at this time, these decisions by the Australian government were controversial.

**Teaching point of the cartoon:** The nature of Australia's participation in the Vietnam War.

## Sheet 1: Origin of the Cartoon

**Teaching point:** Context of events occurring in Australia in 1965.

**Tell** the students that the date shown at the bottom of a cartoon is the date the cartoon was first published. This date provides major clues for historians of what events were considered important and worthy of comment by the media (newspapers, magazines and television).

**Tell** the students that the name of the publication (the *West Australian*) informs historians where the cartoon was published (Australia) and provides a clue to an Australian bias.

**Ask** students to think about what Australians were concerned about in 1965. Some leading questions could be:

- What events would be on the front pages of newspapers and on the radio and television?
- What events would Australians be talking about or arguing about at this time?

**The Cartoonist:** Paul Rigby was born in Australia. He moved to Perth in 1949 and joined the West Australian Newspapers as a press artist, with his first daily cartoon appearing in the *Daily News* in 1952. He is one of Australia's best known cartoonists, winning the Walkely Award five times.

## Sheet 2: Soldiers leaving the ship *HMAS Sydney*

**Teaching point:** Symbols depicting Australian soldiers, their arrival at a destination and their attitude on arrival.

- To what country do these soldiers belong? (*Point out to the students the soldiers' hats and the name of the ship- HMAS Sydney.*)
- Where do you think the soldiers are landing after their voyage on the ship?
- What do the soldier's facial expressions and body language indicate about their feelings and attitudes on arrival?

## Sheet 3: US soldier

**Teaching point:** Symbols depicting a US soldier

- To what country does this soldier belong? (*Point out the letters on the soldier's hat.*)
- What is this soldier's response to the landing of the soldiers from the *HMAS Sydney*? (*Point out that his knees are bent and he is leaning backward as if in shock. The cartoonist has also drawn movement lines at the back of the helmet.*)

## Sheet 4: The two generals and the Australian leader

**Teaching point:** The cartoonist's use of lines to depict movement or speed and drops of sweat to show fear or concern.

- Who are the two people on the left in the helmets with stars on them?
- Who is the person saluting in front of the soldiers coming off *HMAS Sydney*?
- What does this person's facial expression indicate: happiness, sadness ...?
- How has the cartoonist shown that he is concerned or fearful?

## Sheet 5: Caption and dialogue

**Teaching point:** The use of a caption to clarify the place (Vietnam) for the actions shown in the cartoon and the use of dialogue to reveal an opinion or bias.

- What information does the caption, 'The Diggers arrive in Vietnam' provide to the reader?
- What does the dialogue 'Tell your fifty thousand to relax, General!! I think their worries are over!!' indicate about the cartoonist's opinion of Australian soldiers (diggers)?
- Do you think Americans would have agreed with Rigby's opinion about Australian soldiers?
- Is this a humorous cartoon for an Australian reader?
- Does this cartoon show bias?

### Questions for students to answer in writing

Candidates' responses to some of the following questions will vary according to their understanding of the symbols and captions of the cartoon. **Teachers should reward valid explanations where students can logically explain and justify their interpretations with details from the cartoon.**

#### Level of difficulty of questions:

LO= Low Order of difficulty    MO=Middle order of difficulty    HO= High order of difficulty

**Question:** What adjectives describe the tone or mood of this cartoon? Find evidence in the cartoon to support your answer. **MO**

#### Example Answer:

- *Excited, frenzied, chaotic, exuberant, overconfident (Australians), surprised, apprehensive (Americans), wary (cartoonist)*
- *Evidence is in body language, facial expressions and cartoonist's depictions of movement.*

**Question:** What is it that makes this cartoon funny? **MO**

#### Example Answer:

- *The comparison of the 'weak at the knees' American generals and the 'gung ho' Australians.*
- *The facial expressions of both groups.*
- *The cavalier attitude of the Australians with bayonets drawn.*
- *The caption implies that an unrealistically small number of Australians can make all the difference to the outcome of the war.*

**Question:** What is Rigby's message in this cartoon? **HO**

#### Example Answer:

- *That the Australian government has committed troops to the Vietnam war.*
- *The Australians are going to support the Americans in their fight against Communism in South East Asia.*

- *That Australians are overconfident about their likely success in the Vietnam conflict through their endeavours to support both the South Vietnamese and the American forces.*

**Question:** Explain the cartoonist's purpose and comment on any evidence of bias. HO

**Example Answer:**

- *Rigby is questioning the anticipated effectiveness of the Australian commitment (bias in favour of his own opinion).*
- *He could be warning that trouble might lie ahead if the Australians rush in so fearlessly.*
- *This is shown through the behaviour of the Australian troops, the expression on the Americans' faces and the caption.*

## Extension Questions

What was the contribution of the Australian forces to the Vietnam War effort?

How, and in what ways, did public support by Australians for the Vietnam War change between 1965 and 1975?

Investigate the way conscription was introduced and how soldiers were selected for service during the Vietnam War?

What was the Battle of Long Tan?

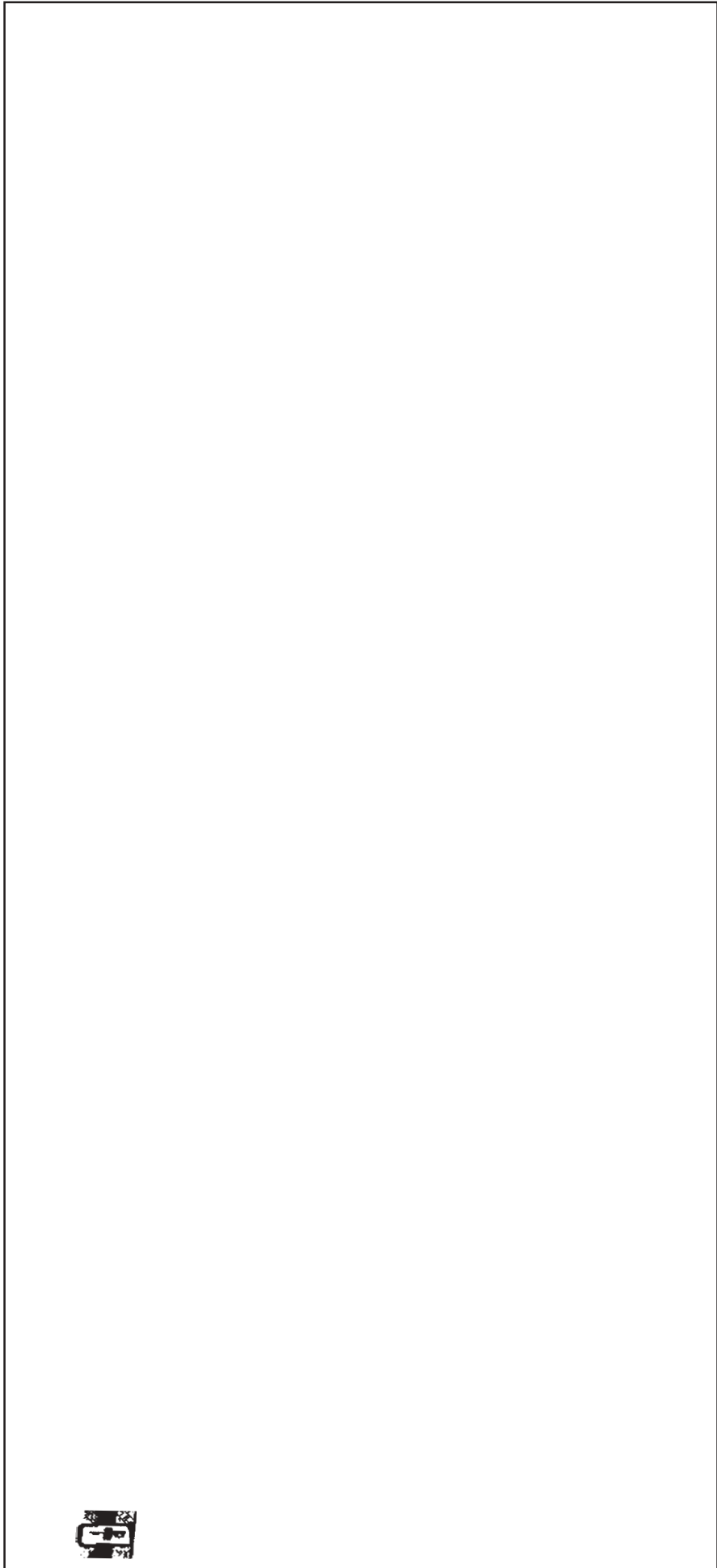
Sir Robert Gordon Menzies  
Prime Minister of Australia  
(1939-1941 and 1949-1966)



Prime Minister Robert Menzies, c. 1960. JCPML00036/11

Sheet 1

Published in the *West Australian*, 1965



Published in the West Australian, 1965



Published in the *West Australian*, 1965



Published in the West Australian, 1965





Published in the *West Australian*, 1965

The Diggers arrive in Vietnam

'T all your fifty thousand to relax, Generall! I think their worries are over!'