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**GARNET MALLEY AND THE RAAF'S CHINESE  
CONNECTION**

**By**

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## **About the Author**

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## INTRODUCTION

In mid-May 1941, just two months after the arrival in Canberra of diplomats from Tokyo to open Japan's first mission to Australia, the news became public that the Australian government had also agreed to an exchange of Ministers with China<sup>1</sup> - the country with which Japan had been at war since 1937. Not until early July was it announced that Sir Frederic Eggleston, a veteran politician from Victoria, would head Australia's Legation in the Chinese wartime capital at Chungking,<sup>2</sup> but almost immediately he received an unexpected and rather unusual approach. A serving officer of the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF), Squadron Leader Garnet Malley, suggested that Eggleston arrange to have him appointed to the new mission's staff as service attaché.

The precise terms in which Malley represented himself to the Minister-designate are unknown, but might be readily surmised from other public claims which he later made about his past experience and knowledge of China. In essence, he asserted that for the ten years prior to 1940 he had filled important posts within the Chinese air force and was thus uniquely qualified for the position which he now sought. For five years, Malley said, he had been the organiser and aviation adviser to the Kwangtung government based in Canton, in southern China; then for the next five years he had been aviation adviser to Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, the leader of the Chinese Nationalist government, operating at Nanking, Hankow, Chungking and Chengtu.<sup>3</sup>

Other elements of the story which Malley probably told Eggleston would have been that he was formerly a member of China's Board of Commission on Aeronautical Affairs (the equivalent of an air ministry), as well as the Purchasing Commission attached to this body; that in this capacity he had been responsible for compiling and editing a Chinese aeronautical text book and supervising the translation of two aeronautical technical dictionaries into Chinese; and that, in company with W.H. Donald (Chaing Kai-Shek's Australian-born political adviser), he had participated in the delicate negotiations which followed Chaing's seizure by pro-Communist troops at Sian, capital of the northern province of Shensi, in December 1936.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps for good measure he might have added the claim that, during the early stages of the war between Japan and China, he was also the 'controller' of contingents of volunteer pilots from the Soviet Union and the United States fighting on the Chinese side.<sup>5</sup>

Whatever Eggleston knew of all this, there was plainly some ambiguity in his reaction to Malley's overture. Presumably in response to an expression of disappointment from Malley - or in anticipation of one - when a listing of the staff of the new legation

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<sup>1</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 May 1941, p 8.

<sup>2</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 July 1941, p 5.

<sup>3</sup> *Who's Who in Australia*, 1950, p 479.

<sup>4</sup> All these claims are included in Malley's *Who's Who* entry, and among particulars of his service career held on his RAAF personal file.

<sup>5</sup> This assertion was attributed to Malley's widow, who subsequently donated some of her husband's papers to the RAAF Museum at Point Cook, Victoria, and is likely to have reflected claims made by Malley himself.

appeared in the press on 8 July,<sup>6</sup> Eggleston dropped him a note straight away stating that:

I do not want you to take it that because the staff for Chungking is announced that this excludes the possibility of your going. The staff named are necessary for the work of the Legation whether you go or not.

Eggleston nonetheless felt bound to mention that there was 'a strong aversion to sending at the moment any service attaché or one who could be construed as such'. This led him to doubt 'whether a position suitable for your rank and prestige at adequate salary could be offered', even though he appreciated how helpful it would be to 'have someone with me so well and favourably known to the Regime as you'.<sup>7</sup>

When Malley responded to this advice two days later, he was not to be put off. While he fully appreciated the difficulties of having a service representative included on Eggleston's staff, he gave it as his own confidential view that this would be found to be 'imperative at this present juncture, both for diplomatic reasons and prestige, unless of course you intend to rely wholly on the staff of the British Embassy on certain matters'. He therefore urged Eggleston to give the matter 'your deep consideration', and suggested that any problem could be easily overcome by appointing him as Eggleston's personal 'adviser' rather than an 'attaché'.<sup>8</sup>

Apparently convinced that his prospects of appointment were stronger than Eggleston had been indicating, Malley went on to conclude his letter by adding that:

In the event of myself being selected in this capacity, it would be necessary for me to resign officially from my present position in the Air Force here. But before doing so, it is essential that my status be raised, with the remuneration equivalent to at least a Group-Captain, plus allowances, on account of the abnormally high cost of living in Chungking - as I have explained to you - on account of the blockade.

Whatever the outcome was, though, Malley assured Eggleston that he would be pleased to assist him personally in any way possible: 'My experience in Chinese affairs is entirely at your disposal.'

Obviously unwilling to discuss the representation he had received as simply those of an ordinary office-seeker, Eggleston did in fact pass on the suggestion for Malley's appointment to the Department of External Affairs in Canberra, where it duly came under the notice of the Minister, Sir Frederick Stewart. Late the next month he was advised that Stewart had decided that such a post on the staff was not warranted in the present circumstances. It was suggested, nonetheless, that he keep the matter in mind, in case a proposal eventuated for an exchange of service attachés, and also that he take the opportunity to make 'appropriate inquiries in Chungking regarding Squadron Leader Malley's status and qualifications'.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> See *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 July 1941, p 4.

<sup>7</sup> Eggleston to Malley, 8 July 1941, Eggleston papers, National Library of Australia (hereafter NLA) MS423/9/5.

<sup>8</sup> Malley to Eggleston, 10 July 1941, NLA MS423/9/10-11.

<sup>9</sup> Department of External Affairs to Eggleston, 27 August 1941, NLA MS423/9/28.

Neither the Australian Legation in China nor the mission staff which accompanied the Chinese Minister, Dr Hsu Mo (a former Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs), on his arrival in Australia in September 1941, initially included any military members. This situation changed, however, after Japan launched its campaign of conquest across Asia and the Pacific the following December. From April 1942 a Chinese Army lieutenant-colonel named Wang Chih was present in Melbourne as a representative of his government, having followed US General Douglas MacArthur from the Philippines where he had been accredited as a military liaison officer on MacArthur's headquarters. The next month the Chinese government announced that, with Australian approval, Wang and two naval officers were appointed as service liaison officers in Australia.<sup>10</sup>

In the face of this change it was not surprising that Australia also looked at making similar appointments. Indeed, as early as 4 February Eggleston had requested the addition of an air attaché to the staff of his legation. Interestingly, though, the person sought for this new post was not Malley but another RAAF officer of Eggleston's long personal acquaintance, Wing Commander Gerald Packer, then serving as chief of air intelligence at Air Force Headquarters in Melbourne. The appointment was approved by the Chiefs of Staff Committee in late February, but then deferred at the request of the then Minister for External Affairs, Dr H.V. Evatt, who had under consideration sending Packer to the important post of Washington instead. In the event, no RAAF officer was sent to Chungking.<sup>11</sup>

The fact that Eggleston knew of Malley's claims for appointment to China in 1942 but chose to pass him over in favour of another RAAF officer raises some intriguing questions. Perhaps Eggleston had found the opportunity to establish that what Malley stated about his time in China was untrue, or was it a case that other factors had arisen which appeared to disqualify him or suggest that he might not be the most suitable person for such a position? To understand which were the important factors at play at this time, it helps to know more about his background.

### **First World War Fighter Ace**

Garnet Francis Malley was born on 2 November 1892<sup>12</sup> in the northside Sydney suburb of Mosman, the fifth of six children of Francis Malley (founder of the well-known whitegoods manufacturing firm) and his wife Clara Ellen née Merritt.<sup>13</sup> He was educated at Mosman Church of England School and The School at Mount Victoria, and had also attended the Hawkesbury Agricultural College at Richmond outside Sydney before the First World War began in 1914. Stating his occupation as

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<sup>10</sup> Horner, David, 'The Chinese liaison officer in Australia, 1942-1945', *Journal of the Australian War Memorial*, NO. 25, October 1994, p 12-22.

<sup>11</sup> Coulthard-Clark, Chris, *Edge of Centre: the eventful life of Group Captain Gerald Packer*, RAAF Museum, Point Cook, Victoria, 1992, pp 58-9.

<sup>12</sup> Malley's RAAF records variously show his year of birth as 1893 or 1895, but Birth, Death & Marriage records for New South Wales reveal that he was actually older than usually stated.

<sup>13</sup> When his father died on 26 June 1932, the *Sydney Morning Herald*, carried a death notice the next day which listed Francis Malley's children as Charles, Clyde, Sylvia, Garnet and Roy. This is not mention another daughter Coral (born two years before Garnet), who was presumably already deceased. It also gave his widow's name as Edith, however, although B, D & M records show this as wrong. An obituary appearing in the *Herald* on 29 June 1932, p 15, confirms that Francis was the founder of Malleys Ltd. of Sydney.

mechanic, he enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force during October 1914, and the next month embarked for overseas service as a reinforcement for the 1st Field Artillery Brigade. In Egypt in early 1916 he was posted to the 101st Howitzer Battery,<sup>14</sup> and continued serving in the ranks as a gunner until April 1917 when he transferred to the Australian Flying Corps (AFC) as a second air mechanic.

Accepted for pilot training in England, Malley was subsequently sent to undergo a six-week training course at an aeronautical school set up within Oxford University. Later, he would list 'Queen's Coll., Oxford Univ. 1917 (Aeronautics)' among his educational attainments, but - since the university's normal classes had been suspended for the duration of the war - in no way could he be regarded as an Oxford student in the normal sense. On completing this short-term course, he was commissioned as a second lieutenant on 9 October. Next month he was sent to No. 4 Squadron, AFC, then stationed near Birmingham while preparing to embark on active service.

A week before Christmas of 1917 Malley accompanied his unit when its three flights of six Sopwith Camel scouts were flown across the Channel to take up station at Bruay, 25 kilometres northwest of Arras. His promotion to lieutenant on 9 January 1918 coincided with the unit's first offensive sortie over enemy territory, and the start for him of an intensive eight month tour of duty on the Western Front.

Malley's name appears frequently in official accounts of No. 4 Squadron's doings during this period, beginning with a brush with Baron von Richtofen's famous Red Circus over Annoeullin, near Douai, on the morning of 16 March. In a hard-fought dogfight at 16,000 feet in which the seven machines he was leading were outnumbered two-to-one Malley could claim one of the two enemy planes definitely shot down that day.<sup>15</sup> A few days later, on 20 March, the officer commanding 'B' Flight was admitted to hospital for medical reasons and Malley was appointed to take over.<sup>16</sup> The very next day the Germans launched their last great offensive on the Western Front, and No. 4 Squadron - along with every other available allied air unit - was thrown into a frantic effort to stem and turn back the enemy advance. During one mission on 23 March, Malley shot down two Albatros DV scouts during a low-level clash over the village of Vaulx-Braucourt near Bapaume.<sup>17</sup>

In the context of his quickly-won record of effective leadership and combat success it was no surprise that Malley was promoted to captain on 25 March.<sup>18</sup> Ironically, he almost did not survive this day to enjoy the news of his promotion, since the squadron record-book notes that while bombing north of Bapaume he was attacked by an Albatros and two triplanes which drove him practically on to the ground and damaged his machine.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> *Reveille*, November 1932, p 10.

<sup>15</sup> Cutlack, F.M., 'The Australian Flying Corps in the Western and Eastern Theatres of War', Vol. 8 of *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918*, 12th edn, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1942, pp 224-225.

<sup>16</sup> Richards, E.J., *Australian Airmen: History of the 4th Squadron, Australian Flying Corps*, Bruce & Co., Melbourne, 1919, p 15.

<sup>17</sup> Cutlack, 'The Australian Flying Corps in the Western and Eastern Theatres of War', p 231.

<sup>18</sup> Statement of AIF service dated 9 December 1925, held on Malley's file at the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*.

<sup>19</sup> Cutlack, 'The Australian Flying Corps in the Western and Eastern Theatres of War', p 437.

During later operations over the River Lys district in the northern Flanders sector, Malley continued to display his qualities as an aggressive and able pilot. During an evening clash over the German lines on 10 May, for example, he is credited with shooting to pieces in mid-air one of nine Pfalz scouts which attacked five Camels from No. 4 Squadron near Wytschaete.<sup>20</sup> The next day, 11 May, he had command of one of two flights of fighter escorts for a two-squadron bombing raid on ammunition dumps at Armentières carried out in early evening. The mission culminated in near-disaster after the formation was set upon by about 30 German scouts and forced to join in what was the longest air engagement in which Australian airmen had fought until then. Malley's formation of five aircraft succeeded in driving down one enemy machine before the mêlée began to break up and the raiders turned for home.<sup>21</sup>

Only then was it discovered that fog on the ground now made finding their base an almost impossible task, one made worse by the rapidly-gathering darkness. All the airmen were forced to make blind landings where they could, in the course of which six AFC machines were destroyed - including Malley's, after he hit the top of a tree, somersaulted, and landed upside down but without seriously injuring himself. The accompanying British squadron was not so lucky, and had two pilots killed in this extraordinary situation.

Undeterred by this narrow escape with death, three days later Malley was involved in another air fight after he and another pilot were sent up to intercept German reconnaissance aircraft registering targets for their guns between Ypres and Bailleul. Both Australian aircraft engaged enemy two-seater machines and shot them down out of control, although low cloud obscured whether these victims were destroyed.<sup>22</sup> Operations against enemy spotting aircraft and balloons continued for some time. On 30 May, Malley led one of two eight-machine flights on a sweep of the Lys district above Armentières, the second flight being under the command of Harry Cobby - destined to become the leading AFC ace of the war. Over Estaires, Malley and Cobby destroyed an enemy balloon each within five minutes.<sup>23</sup>

Over Bac St. Maur two days later, on 1 June, Malley added another 'kill' to his credit when he went to the rescue of a straggler from the formation he was leading who had been pounced on by two Pfalz DIII scouts. Malley dived on one of the German attackers, and succeeded in sending down his opponent minus one wing. Unfortunately, the Australian pilot who was the original target of the attack was also forced down and became a prisoner of war.<sup>24</sup> Later in June Malley had the satisfaction

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<sup>20</sup> Cutlack, 'The Australian Flying Corps in the Western and Eastern Theatres of War', p 278. Interestingly, this 'kill' is not among those listed in Malley's official tally; see Christopher Shores, Normal Franks & Russell Guest, *Above the Trenches: a complete record of the fighter aces and units of the British Empire air forces 1915-1920*, Grub Street, London, 1990, p 253.

<sup>21</sup> Cutlack, 'The Australian Flying Corps in Western and Eastern Theatres of War', pp 278.80.

<sup>22</sup> Cutlack, 'The Australian Flying Corps in Western and Eastern Theatres of War', p 282, gives the date of this action as 14 May, but Shores *et al.*, p 253, states it as 15 May.

<sup>23</sup> Cutlack, 'The Australian Flying Corps in Western and Eastern Theatres of War', p 285. In his autobiography *High Adventure* (originally published by Robertson & Mullens, Melbourne, in 1942, but republished by Kookaburra Technical publications, Dandenong, Victoria, 1981), Cobby gives a very different account of this action on 30 May, but confirms that Malley was responsible for shooting down an enemy balloon; see p 63 of the 1981 edition, which is used throughout hereafter.

<sup>24</sup> Cutlack, 'The Australian Flying Corps in Western and Eastern Theatres of War', p 286.

of learning that he had been awarded the Military Cross, apparently for his conspicuous work during the previous March.<sup>25</sup> By this stage he was credited with a total of five enemy machines and one balloon destroyed and another aircraft sent down out of control, a tally which qualified him as an air 'ace'.

According to some accounts, Malley was pursuing a personal contest with Cobby for the record of highest number of aircraft destroyed.<sup>26</sup> Cobby's autobiography gives no sense of any such rivalry, and indeed the two men seem to have been great friends who regularly flew with each other on specially dangerous missions. On 27 June, for example, Cobby, Malley and another pilot took off with the idea of working off 'surplus exuberance'. This entailed shooting up an enemy airfield on the outskirts of Lille in bizarre fashion, as Cobby recounted:

There were two Albatross scouts on the tarmac, both painted black and white so we commenced by setting them on fire. We then chased everybody away that put their noses in sight, and finished up by flying across the aerodrome with our wheels on the ground and firing into the open doors of hangars, hoping that we would burn up a few more machines... We then crossed Lille at some twenty feet above the roof-tops, waving our hands to the people in the streets... We were fired at by the forts around the town, but we kept right down on the ground all the way back, twisting this way and that so that enterprising field gunners and people with machine guns could not get much of a shot at us. It was amusing to see odd batches of troops come out of billets and hutments and start to wave to us, and then go to ground like startled rabbits when they realised that our machines belonged to the enemy. We may have hit some of them with our wheels here and there. We usually zoomed up after passing them and looked down over our tails as they lay on the ground, and facetiously blew kisses to them. They thought us quite mad I expect, but it must have had a demoralizing effect on them to see us sporting around their territory without hindrance.<sup>27</sup>

By the end of July Malley was among the last three pilots with continuous service in No. 4 Squadron since the unit's arrival in France. He had not passed totally unscathed, as Cobby records that his friend had suffered a bullet wound to his leg during March but 'had kept on going'.<sup>28</sup> Later, on 18 May, he was also hit by shrapnel from an anti-aircraft round,<sup>29</sup> but so far he had escaped serious injury or harm. He only narrowly preserved that distinction after an incident half-way through the month, when he went to Boulogne in a squadron car to collect Cobby on his return from a fortnight's leave in England. During the night the town was subjected to an air-raid, in which the house next door to that in which Malley was staying with friends received a direct bomb hit. Cobby recounts with glee their arrival back at the unit's base, now at Reclinghem,

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<sup>25</sup> Malley's MC was announced in the *London Gazette* on 22 June 1918. Richards (see pp 16, 76) claims the award was in recognition of his work during late March, but the citation itself (reproduced in the *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette*, No. 185, 27 November 1918) simply mentions three undated actions in which he shot down enemy aircraft - none of which is directly recognisable from other accounts as from that period.

<sup>26</sup> Cutlack, 'The Australian Flying Corps in the Western and Eastern Theatres of War', p 290.

<sup>27</sup> Cobby, *High Adventure*, p 69.

<sup>28</sup> Cobby, *High Adventure*, p 86.

<sup>29</sup> Henshaw, Trevor, *The Sky Their Battlefield: Air Fighting and the Complete List of Allied Air Casualties from Enemy Action in the First World War*, Grub Street, London, 1995, p 327.

with Malley still in the state of undress from which he was awoken by the bomb blast and in a befuddled state, probably as a result of delayed shock.<sup>30</sup>

As an authentic minor war hero, Malley as well as Cobby and others about this time found themselves the object of some unwanted public relations attention from Australian war correspondents. According to Cobby:

Garney Malley had been covered as the 'Mosman Air Marvel' and in long articles, episodes of his early life were referred to, how he used to intrepidly breast the surf at Manly at an early age, as he was now breasting the heavens, kind of thing.

When items of this extremely embarrassing nature began reaching the units in mails from home, Cobby and Malley decided to make an example of a journalist named Keith Murdoch (later Sir Keith) who happened to be visiting Reclingham. The two of them in single seater fighters accompanied the two-seater carrying Murdoch in a flight behind enemy lines, during which the visitor was given a lively introduction to 'archie' (enemy anti-aircraft artillery fire), and finished off by closely buzzing the correspondent's aircraft. All of which Murdoch took in remarkably good spirit.<sup>31</sup>

Early in August Malley was posted back to England to take up an instructional post with the AFC's No. 5 Training Squadron at Minchinhampton in Gloucestershire. As a member of 'C' Flight, responsible for imparting advanced training, he was chiefly remembered for flying a Camel trainer painted in distinctive white except for its Royal Air Force roundels and rudder stripes.<sup>32</sup> His work here also earned him another decoration, this time the Air Force Cross - awarded for acts of gallantry or devotion to duty when flying, but not in the face of an enemy.<sup>33</sup>

### **Peacetime Air Force Career**

Returning to Australia in May 1919, Malley joined the large number of repatriated servicemen awaiting demobilisation. In the meantime he was among a group of wartime pilots selected to fly Defence Department aircraft on tours of country areas, to promote government efforts to raise funds for the post-war economy by public subscription in what was called a 'Peace Loan'. On 24 August, while on his way north from Melbourne to start his program of flights around New South Wales, Malley crashed his Avro 504K on take-off from the Victorian country town of Benalla. Captain Les Holden, accompanying him in another Avro, recorded that Malley 'had the misfortune to strike a pepper tree and then a fowlhouse; this mishap placed his machine temporarily *hors de combat*, and deprived me of his society for the remainder of the tour'.<sup>34</sup> Fortunately, Malley escaped unhurt and resumed his mission,

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<sup>30</sup> Cobby coyly avoids mentioning Malley by name in recounting this 'amusing' incident, referring only to a 'flight commander, whom I shall call George' (p 81). There were, however, only three flight commanders to the squadron, and Cobby earlier states (p 78) that Malley had promised to collect him on his return from leave. Cobby also introduced Malley in this book by the nickname of George (p 36), so it can be safely assumed that the whole of the events described on pp 81-2 refers to him.

<sup>31</sup> Cobby, *High Adventure*, pp 84-85.

<sup>32</sup> Isaacs, Keith, *Military Aircraft of Australia 1909-1918*, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1971, p 130.

<sup>33</sup> *London Gazette*, 3 June 1919.

<sup>34</sup> Holden, Leslie H., 'Peace Loan Flying', *Sea, Land and Air*, September 1919, pp 353-354.

flying a route which took in the western outskirts of Sydney (Blacktown, Rooty Hill, Mount Druitt, St Mary's and Penrith) as well as Wollongong.<sup>35</sup>

Finally discharged from the AIF in October 1919, Malley now joined his father's business as a warehouse manager and began settling down to civilian life. At Mosman on 25 January 1922 he was married to Phyllis Kathleen Dare,<sup>36</sup> and 5 April 1925 his wife gave birth to a son they named Maldon. Throughout this period, however, he retained his interest in aviation, and remained prominent in ex-AFC circles. When Lieutenant-Colonel Oswald Watt, a leading figure from the war years, drowned at Bilgola Beach at Newport in May 1921, Malley was one of the eight pall bearers during the funeral service at St. Jude's Church, Randwick.<sup>37</sup> On 19 June 1925 - little more than two months after he became a father - he was appointed to a commission in the RAAF, as the senior flight lieutenant in the General Duties Branch of the Civilian Air Force component.<sup>38</sup>

Malley's continued involvement in service flying had been made possible by a belated expansion in Australia's tiny air force, which saw a unit (No. 3 Squadron) finally based at Richmond. In fact, he was one of the pilots who flew the new squadron's machines up from Point Cook to open the Richmond station on 30 June 1925.<sup>39</sup> The proximity of this new RAAF base to Sydney meant he could now undertake the regular weekend training required, in conjunction with his civil occupation. He retained his connection for the next five years, taking part in such memorable occasions as the visit to Australia by the Duke and Duchess of York in 1927. During the initial Sydney leg of the royal visit, Malley had command of the air force guard mounted at Government House on 28 March for a ceremony at which representative public organisations presented addresses of welcome;<sup>40</sup> later, in early May, he was part of the large air contingent sent to Canberra for the official opening of the first federal Parliament House building.<sup>41</sup>

In January 1928 Malley was granted honorary rank of squadron leader, and several times during 1928-29 he had temporary command of No. 3 Squadron.<sup>42</sup> It was presumably his senior position within the unit which accounts for his presence at a notable occasion on 3 June 1929, when the Governor-General (Lord Stonehaven) held an investiture at Admiralty House, Sydney. Among those being honoured were two of Australia's best-known aviation pioneers, Charles Kingsford-Smith and Charles Ulm, who in June 1928 had accomplished an historic crossing of the Pacific from Oakland, California, via Hawaii and Fiji, to Brisbane. In recognition of their achievement, both men were granted honorary rank in the RAAF and awarded the Air Force Cross -

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<sup>35</sup> *Sea, Land and Air*, November 1919, p 522.

<sup>36</sup> Again for some reason, Malley later misstated the details of his marriage - usually giving the year as 1925. His wife was the English-born daughter of a deceased journalist, William Dare, whose widow appears to have subsequently gone by the name of Catherine Hutton-Dare.

<sup>37</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 May 1921, p 8.

<sup>38</sup> *RAAF List*, August 1925, p 10.

<sup>39</sup> *Daily Telegraph* (Sydney), 1 July 1925, pp 1, 14.

<sup>40</sup> See the photographs of Malley with the Duke which appeared in the *Argus* (Melbourne), 30 March 1927, p 21, and *Sydney Mail*, 6 April 1927, p 8.

<sup>41</sup> *Canberra Times*, 3 May 1927, p 1.

<sup>42</sup> RAAF personal file.

which they now received from the Governor-General. Malley was apparently on hand to witness the ceremony as a representative of the air force.<sup>43</sup>

A further recollection of his active interest and prominence in service aviation circles was his holding of the office of vice-president of the Australian Flying Corps Association from 1925 until 1928. Another was his appointment as an honorary aide-de-camp to the Governor of New South Wales, Air Vice-Marshal Sir Philip Game, from January 1931, although in the event - as we shall see - he was soon unavailable to fulfil the duties of such a role.

During 1928 Malley left his manager's position with Malley's Ltd. to become involved with the new airline company set up by Kingsford-Smith and Ulm, who - after the successful Pacific crossing earlier that year - were endeavouring to establish regular inter-capital passenger, freight and mail services in Australia. Malley's name appeared on the prospectus for Australian National Airways Ltd. as alternate director for Ulm, and also consulting specialist for flying operations.<sup>44</sup>

### **Departure for China**

By 1931 ANA was in serious financial difficulties, due to the deepening crisis of the Depression and an unlucky series of aircraft accidents. Malley and his wife, however, seem to have already left Australia before the company finally collapsed in February 1933, having gone to China as early as 1931 although - again - details regarding the particular circumstances which led to them here are now unknown. One possible clue which may be relevant exists in a newspaper item from September 1930, reporting that China's Consul-General in Sydney, F.T. Sung had recently been approached with an offer from 'Australians with war service records to aid the Nationalist party in the civil war in China':

Mr Sung said that about six weeks ago certain individuals had waited on him and claimed to represent some 300 men who were eager to go to China an a band and fight for the Nationalist party... The Consul said he informed the men that his Government could not enlist aid of this nature, because it might cause misunderstandings. He was then asked if he could find posts for some of the men in the Shanghai police; but he advised them to communicate direct with Shanghai.<sup>45</sup>

Whatever it was that originally took Malley to southern China, his activities over the next five years remain submerged within the murky events of a highly confused period in the history of that country. Since 1929 the Nationalist regime of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek had been immersed in fighting civil wars with China's northern warlords and the activities of a rising communist party. The Japanese - who in 1930 had invaded Manchuria, China's rich industrial north-eastern province - took advantage of these unstable conditions to launch a take-over at

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<sup>43</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 June 1929, p 10, mentions that the CO of No. 3 Squadron, Squadron Leader F.W.F. Lukis was present as RAAF representative, but photographs of the occasion (see p 14) show no sign of Lukis but include Malley, who otherwise had no known reason for attending.

<sup>44</sup> Rogers, Ellen, *Faith in Australia: Charles Ulm and Australian Aviation*, Child & Associates, Frenchs Forest, NSW, 1987, p 125.

<sup>45</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 September 1930, p 15.

Mukden in September 1931, and after quickly overcoming resistance installed a puppet regime in what they renamed Manchukuo; in 1932 they attacked Shanghai, and the next year took control of Jehol (the next province on Manchuria's western border), so that thereafter they were able to thoroughly infiltrate northern China proper.

Faced with this situation, the seat of government was removed from Peking to Nanking, although Chiang Kai-shek went to Nanchang. Foreign diplomats thus found themselves in an awkward situation, with the editor of the memoirs of the British minister at this time (Sir Alexander Cadogan) describing the situation in 1934 in the following terms:

Only a bare majority of the diplomatic corps still lived in Peking. Some had gone to Shanghai; the rest travelled about, with occasional visits to Nanking and Shanghai, searching, as Cadogan put it wryly, for the Government to which they were supposed to be accredited.<sup>46</sup>

What is certain is that in 1936 Malley and his wife returned to their homeland for a holiday. During this visit, they presumably met up with a great many family members and friends, as well as some of Garnet's former air force colleagues. Among the latter was undoubtedly Air Vice-Marshal Richard Williams, then in his fifteenth year at the head of the RAAF. This renewal of contact was, in a sense, fortuitous, since it prompted an exchange of letters between Malley and Williams which today forms the main source of information concerning Malley's supposed role and involvement in subsequent events.

In May 1938 Malley wrote - out of the blue, as it were - from Hankow, to offer Williams some insight into the developments taking place in China:

To tell you of all that has taken place since our arrival back in China, after seeing you in Australia, would be a very long story, which I will reserve for some time in the future, but to give you a very brief outline of events - we actually arrived back in the midst of a revolution between North and South China, which no doubt you read something about in the papers at the time. Fortunately, my position in China at that period played more than a prominent part in the favourable settlement of hostilities, and through the prompt action of the Air Force was quelled in a very short time. The aftermath being that I was sent up North to Nanking, at the request of Chiang Kai-Shek, as Aeronautical Adviser to the National Government.

The principal tasks confronting him were the amalgamation of the northern and southern air forces - an undertaking which, he explained, 'required someone who understood both factions' - and the reorganisation of the Air Council, to be carried out in cooperation with an Italian general.<sup>47</sup> In an attempt to acquire technical skills in the field of aviation, China had been receiving since 1936 the assistance of military missions from Germany and Italy; as well, it had a Central Aviation School at

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<sup>46</sup> Dilks, David (ed.), *The Diaries of Sir Alexander Cadogan 1938-1945*, Cassel & Co., London, 1971, p 9.

<sup>47</sup> Malley to Williams, 19 May 1938, Williams papers held at the RAAF Museum, Point Cook, Victoria. This letter is, unless otherwise indicated, the source of material subsequently quoted as emanating from Malley.

Hanchow run by American experts. Of these competing foreign influences, that of the Italians was strongest, with orders having been placed for Fiat fighters and Savoia bombers - all obsolescent types - which were assembled at a factory established at Nanchang.<sup>48</sup> The proposed replacement of China's Air Council by an Aeronautical Commission at Nanking consisting of five full generals (including Malley's Italian colleague), chaired by Madame Chiang Kai-shek in the post of Secretary-General, only promised to see the influence of the Italians further strengthened.

According to Malley, it was essentially in an effort to counter this situation that the British Ambassador, Sir Hughe Knatchbull-Hugessen, initiated moves early in 1937 to have Malley's status raised by asking for him to be promoted to the honorary rank of wing commander on the RAAF Reserve. As Malley explained to Williams a year later:

It appears that all liaison work between the Air Attaché and Foreign Office and the Chinese Air Force depended on me. Therefore the Ambassador was anxious that my rank was raised to be in keeping with my associates on this Commission ... [and] approached the Foreign Office in reference to this. I can assure you that it has been just as important to Australia as well as England that there has been at least one British Representative on this Commission... you can rest assured that I have upheld the prestige and dignity of the Service ... and have fully realised the responsibility I have accepted on behalf of Britain. It has been fully justified - more so than we ever dreamed of at the time - owing to all that has happened since.

Another version of the events which may have prompted Malley's elevation in the Aeronautical Commission comes from the biography of William Donald, who was describe by the British Ambassador as Chiang's 'Australian friend and unofficial adviser'.<sup>49</sup> This states categorically that the impetus for reform of the previous corrupt organisation came directly from Donald, who, after effecting a clean-up at the Aviation School in October 1936, returned to Nanking to provoke a reorganisation of the Commission which saw Madame Chiang installed as chairwoman.<sup>50</sup> From this account, too, it can reasonably be inferred that the attempt to elevate Malley's status and authority within the Commission formed part of a definite program to improve its efficiency and effectiveness.

The step in rank sought was granted and made effective on 1 February, the news being formally conveyed to Malley by the British Embassy in Nanking three weeks later, after a signal was received from London.<sup>51</sup> Such was Malley's standing with the regime that Madame Chiang wrote to express her gladness at the news. 'The Generalissimo and I join in sending you warmest congratulations', she said, and added that the promotion was 'well deserved'.<sup>52</sup>

On the basis of all this evidence that Malley was plainly well regarded within the senior levels of the Nationalist administration, it is difficult to be entirely dismissive

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<sup>48</sup> Gillison, Douglas, *Royal Australian Air Force 1939-1942*, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1962, pp 147-148.

<sup>49</sup> Knatchbull-Hugessen, Sir Huges, *Diplomat in Peace and War*, John Murray, London, 1949, p 105.

<sup>50</sup> Selle, Earl Albert, *Donald of China*, Invincible Press, Sydney, 1948, pp 317-318.

<sup>51</sup> Letter from A.D. Blackburn to Malley, dated 22 February 1937, Malley papers, RAAF Museum.

<sup>52</sup> Madame Chiang Kai-shek to Malley, 21 February 1937, Malley papers, RAAF Museum.

of other of his claims - even though there is very little evidence extant to substantiate them. For instance, there is no mention of him having played a significant role during the drama of Chiang's virtual kidnapping at Sian, north-west of Nanking, the previous December by troops loyal to the Young Marshal, Chang Hsueh-liang. There was certainly an Australian involvement in the negotiations which secured Chiang's release on 25 December, 13 days after he was detained. This came, however, from Donald, who flew to Sian on 22 December with Madame Chiang and her brother.<sup>53</sup> This event has been described as 'the high point of his [Donald's] career in China',<sup>54</sup> but the contribution from Malley - if any - was plainly less than decisive.

A similar problem arises with claims regarding Malley's authority over the American and, from late 1937, Soviet pilots who operated with the Chinese Air Force after the outbreak of hostilities with Japan. By most accounts the predominant foreign voice advising Chiang's government on aviation matters was actually retired officer of the US Army Air Corps, Captain C.L. Chennault, who had arrived in China in late May 1937 - barely a month before the war began. Chennault's published memoirs contain what appears to be a reference to Malley, but this certainly does not indicate that he was working to Malley, or under his direction. Mentioning that during the last weeks of July he initiated steps to organise an air-raid warning net in the Shanghai-Hangchow-Nanking triangle to protect the capital, he goes on to simply state that:

An Australian communications engineer, Commodore Austin Malley, helped me put an old Maxwell Field plan into action by utilising telephone and telegraph facilities.<sup>55</sup>

The various errors in describing Malley's technical qualifications, his rank, and his first name, all suggest that no close or memorable association existed between the men.

A final aspect of interest which emerges from Malley's correspondence with Williams concerns the fact that Malley evidently believed he was in a position to pass on lessons of air warfare derived from his experiences in China which were of major importance to Australia. In his letter of May 1938, he said as much, remarking that 'there is a first-class war [going] on here, which must eventually affect Australia and its defence schemes'. Having heard that Williams had travelled to Singapore in February that year to represent Australia at the opening of the new dry dock at Singapore, he expressed amazement at the short-sightedness of the Minister for Defence for not asking the CAS to continue on to China, to 'investigate the situation and advise the Australian government'.

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<sup>53</sup> Knatchbull-Hugessen, *Diplomat in Peace and War*, p 105.

<sup>54</sup> Entry on Donald in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vo.8, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, Victoria, 1981, p 318.

<sup>55</sup> Hotz, Robert (ed.), *War of a Fighter: The Memoirs of Claire Lee Chennault*, G.P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1949, p 48.

The missing of such an opportunity was so regrettable, Malley indicated, because he himself had so much of value to impart:

Of course, as I have not written [before], it is difficult for you to understand the position that I occupy in this country, but I feel confident that I could have revealed to you much information of vast importance which I feel would be of great assistance to the Australian Government... From my observations of the present war conditions, I have observed many points of *vital importance* in future aerial warfare, and would very much like to have discussed these matters with you. Of course you will understand that I am in a position to see many things happen around me daily, as being Air Force Adviser to the Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek I am in closest touch with all zones of operations. I am also very well informed of the disposition of the opposing forces.

Perhaps it was the tone of sections of Malley's comments such as these that dissuaded Williams from taking too much notice of the letter as a whole. The fact that Malley clearly sounded like a 'blow-hard', as someone full of their own importance and out to impress others. Confirming such a view would have been Malley's recounting of a trip by air which he had made 'all over China' some time ago:

I went on an inspection tour, and can just imagine how much you would have enjoyed it - landing on aerodromes that were all polished up for inspection. Being met by provincial dignitaries and lavishly entertained. I had to drink every conceivable Chinese wine that was ever made, and to eat foods unheard of in Australia! When landing on most large Airports, it was most impressive seeing hundreds of Officers and personnel lined up in parade formation, and smartly turned out in white. Bands were playing, and then one was whisked away by motor-car to some sumptuous [sic] banquet.

It would have been understandable if Williams had been impressed with this apparent preoccupation with status and its trappings, but did it mean that CAS was too ready to pass up the opportunity to gain tactical insights of genuine worth to the RAAF? Malley had, after all, indicated that the Chinese Air Force (CAF) was enjoying some success in combat against the Japanese, so plainly was doing some things right. In his estimation, the CAF was 'a Service to be reckoned with these days':

It has developed enormously even since I saw you last, and the Japanese have by no means wiped it out the many times they would have the world believe. As a matter of fact, they had a very bitter lesson right over our heads last week, when they lost over 30 machines in one of the most spectacular battle I have ever seen.

Malley was certainly right in pointing out that the Japanese Army and Navy air arms did not have matters entirely their own way in mounting attacks during the early part of the Sino-Japanese War, but this was not a situation which lasted beyond the autumn of 1938. In reality the Japanese had gained immensely from their campaign in China by using this experience to test and improve both their aircraft and tactics, in much the same way that the Germans, Italians and Russians had used their involvement in the Spanish Civil War from 1936 to 1938 as a proving ground. The irony was, as one

historian has noted, that ‘In fact Chennault had helped to teach them lessons that were to be immensely valuable to them a few years later’.<sup>56</sup>

Perhaps the RAAF was a little too quick to discount what Malley was offering to tell them, or at least was tardy in taking advantage of the window which he was offering to provide into the conflict in China. When Williams eventually replied to this letter - eight months later - he showed a level of interest which was so meagre as to be almost insulting:

We find the information reaching us from China most interesting, but still most confusing, and we really don't know what's happening there... Who is really winning your war?<sup>57</sup>

To an extent, this was not a completely fair reflection of the attitude of either Williams or the RAAF, since there is other evidence that when disturbing information coming out of China occasionally reached Air Force Headquarters in Melbourne, Williams' first reaction was to order these stories checked out with Malley.<sup>58</sup> But the low opinion evidently held of Malley within the corridors of the RAAF's headquarters did not inspire much confidence in what might be gained from such consultation - which in the eventual circumstances was unfortunate indeed.

Because of this situation it seems highly likely that Australia's senior air force levels were quick to discard ideas coming from China which might have been useful. For instance, in his 1938 letter Malley provided details of a scheme which he had instituted of using specially constructed straight stretches of sealed road as improvised aircraft runways. The need for such measures had, he claimed, been clearly demonstrated by the way in which China's main airfields were subjected to ceaseless harassment by bombing, this having left him convinced that ‘the days of well-established aerodromes for military purposes are numbered’. He urged on Williams the idea that:

In Australia the road engineers could be preparing these runways [sic] while they are on road construction work, which could be used as emergency landing grounds until such time as they were required for service use.

Williams' response to the proposal at the time was to declare himself ‘most interested’ in its possibilities, but adding the more guarded observation that he would ‘be glad to know how the idea works in practice’.<sup>59</sup> In his later autobiography Williams

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<sup>56</sup> Gillison, *Royal Australian Air Force 1939-1945*, p 149. Equally ironic is the fact that Chennault evidently considered that the precedent of foreign use made of the Spanish Civil War justified his efforts to obtain valuable experience for Americans in China; see Wesley Frank Craven & James Lea Cate, *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, Vol. 1: *Plans and Early Operations, January 1939 to August 1942*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1948, p 487.

<sup>57</sup> Williams to Malley, 27 February 1939, Williams papers, RAAF Museum.

<sup>58</sup> Information of Group Captain W.G. Compagnoni (RAAF Director of Signals in 1938), cited in C.D. Coulthard-Clark, *The Third Brother: The Royal Australian Air Force 1921-39*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1991, p 449.

<sup>59</sup> Williams to Malley, 27 February 1939.

acknowledged that a suggestion of this nature had been made to him by Malley, but dismissed it with the observation that:

My attention was, I believe, first drawn to the idea of landing on strips of ground by Garnet Malley... The Chinese Air Force was cutting strips in bush country using them for landing purposes, and using the adjacent bush for cover for the aircraft on the ground. They were also barricading off sections of highways and roads suitable for aircraft operation and using them for that purpose. However the advent of the larger aircraft with heavier wheel loadings resulted in natural surface being often unusable and prepared runways had to be provided.<sup>60</sup>

All that can be said of this is to observe the extent to which Williams had failed to grasp what Malley had actually been saying in his original outline of this scheme. The problem which Williams raised had not only been fully appreciated by Malley, but in fact had prompted the solution he was urging:

In future, every landing-field from which military aircraft are expected to operate will have a runway. *I am fully convinced on this point.* The tendency is for all future aircraft to become heavier and heavier. No ordinary landing-field can stand up to the wear and tear caused by these machines continually using it. In wet weather, practically all aerodromes are nothing but quagmires... As all aeroplanes in the future will have to land on runways, why not use the roads which are being constructed. It is unnecessary to have large fields which in these days are practically never all used. I suggest that roads in certain localities be widened to the width of the average runway. The cost of doing this is infinitely less than the construction of runways on airfields, therefore many more of these widened road-landing places could be made. They would be much more difficult to locate, more convenient for mechanical transport, and can be constructed in localities where airfields are impossible.

The preparation of these runways (I will call them 'runaways' for convenience) can be carried out in peace time with considerably more secrecy than the laying out of airfields. They can be well-drained, camouflaged and placed in strategical positions. Practically any Macadamised road can be treated and made suitable.

In essence, it seems there was a too ready disposition in Melbourne to misapprehend whatever Malley had to say.

### **Recall to Australia**

Malley remained in China until July 1940, when he was recalled to Australia for service in the RAAF. Marking his departure with his wife for Hong Kong was a letter received from Madam Chiang Kai-shek in Chungking, wishing him 'every success' for his future work and stating:

I take this occasion to express my appreciation for your loyal service in the Chinese Air Force, and to thank you for what you did in helping me during my tenure of office as Secretary-General. The day before yesterday, on the third anniversary of the Women's Relief Association, I personally led a group of our members to pay a visit to the flying personnel. They are a fine looking set of

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<sup>60</sup> Sir Richard Williams, *These are facts*, Australian War Memorial & Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1977, p 353.

youths, but I could not help feeling exceedingly unhappy that so many of the old boys were missing, never to be seen any more.<sup>61</sup>

Following his return to Australia, he was brought back into the RAAF's active list from October as a squadron leader and assigned to intelligence work in Melbourne.<sup>62</sup> As it happened, his duties were not with Air Force headquarters but a new joint service organisation - the Combined Operational Intelligence Centre (COIC) - which had been formed under the Director of Naval Intelligence, Commander R.M. Long, with the role of pooling, assessing and distributing operational intelligence, particularly on Japanese activities.<sup>63</sup> One task which reportedly fell to him at this time was to undertake a tour of the principal air stations in northern and eastern Australia to lecture on measures for protecting airfields successfully adopted against the Japanese in China; only after the Japanese bombing raid on Darwin in February 1942 did it emerge, however, that 'not a single station commander had attempted to incorporate any of the lessons that he had been given'.<sup>64</sup>

In October 1941 Malley was granted honorary rank of wing commander, probably to go with his having been designated as Deputy Director of the COIC. Early the next month he travelled to Singapore to attend - with Long, the DNI - a top secret conference due to begin about 14 November. Attending this meeting were British intelligence and secret service representatives from Hong Kong and Manila, as well as Singapore, and a range of matters including crypt-analysis were evidently discussed.<sup>65</sup> Despite suggestions that Malley stayed on in Singapore, only making his way back to Australia after the fall of the British fortress in February 1942,<sup>66</sup> it seems more likely that he accompanied Long back to Australia at the conclusion of the conference and arrived in Sydney on 27 November - more than a week before Japan's entry into the war. By 19 December Malley was signing COIC reports as Director, having taken over this post from Long in the meantime.<sup>67</sup>

When General MacArthur arrived from the Philippines in March, he was reportedly greatly impressed by the COIC. The result was that the organisation was retained and used by the General Headquarters (GHQ) created in late April to support MacArthur in his role as Supreme Commander, South West Pacific Area - even though Major-General C.A. Willoughby, Assistant chief of Staff, G2 (more concisely described as Chief of Intelligence) at GHQ, considered that it merely duplicated the work of his own section.<sup>68</sup> While still serving in the capacity as Director of COIC, Malley was granted acting rank as group captain on 1 July; on 3 October, however, he became ill and was classed as permanently medically unfit on 9 June 1943.<sup>69</sup> On relinquishing

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<sup>61</sup> Madame Chiang to Malley, 3 August 1940, Malley papers held by RAAF Museum.

<sup>62</sup> RAAF personal file.

<sup>63</sup> Barbara Winter, *The Intrigue Master: Commander Long and Naval Intelligence in Australia, 1913-1945*, Boolarong Press, Moorooka, Qld, 1995, pp 70-71.

<sup>64</sup> Hall, Timothy, *Darwin 1942: Australia's Darkest Hour*, Methuen, Sydney, 1980, p 108.

<sup>65</sup> Winter, *The Intrigue Master: Commander Long and Naval Intelligence in Australia, 1913-1945*, pp 114-115.

<sup>66</sup> See Malley's obituary in the *Fiji Times* (Suva), 22 May 1961.

<sup>67</sup> Winter, *The Intrigue Master: Commander Long and Naval Intelligence in Australia, 1913-1945*, p 125.

<sup>68</sup> Horner, D.M., *High Command: Australia and Allied Strategy 1939-1945*, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1982, p 238.

<sup>69</sup> RAAF personal file.

his rank and post at headquarters, MacArthur wrote to personally compliment him on the 'efficient functioning of this section [which] is directly attributable to your foresight, planning and organisational ability'.<sup>70</sup>

In January 1944 Malley was appointed to the Security Service as staff officer in charge of the Chinese section at Canberra and the next month was given honorary air force rank of Group Captain. He later stated that he continued these duties until the 'cessation of hostilities' in the Pacific,<sup>71</sup> but in fact his honorary appointment with the RAAF did not end until 5 March 1947,<sup>72</sup> so it is likely that this connection with Security Service continued until well beyond August 1945. During these years Malley and his wife lived in the Hotel Canberra, but little is known about his work activities at this time.

Wartime Canberra was not a large community, numbering less than 20,000 people, so it appears that the Malleys - as a couple - moved and mixed in important social circles. One evidence of this is a letter written in February 1945 by Phyllis Malley to Sir John Latham (Chief Justice of the High Court and first Australian Minister to Japan 1940-41).<sup>73</sup> Another is a letter Malley himself received the next month from the Chinese Minister, as the latter was preparing to leave Canberra after more than three years in Australia. Dr Hsu said that he had made a number of friends during his stay, and did not feel he could leave without saying goodbye to both Malley and his wife:

You are certainly one of those whose friendship I consider to be rather of an enduring nature. In my contacts with you, I have found that you are always sympathetic with the Chinese people and fully cognizant of Chinese problems. You are among the growing number of Australians who are able to see momentous changes taking place in China and who realise the necessity of furthering the relations of your country and mine.<sup>74</sup>

In 1948, not long after his employment with the Security Service ended, Malley received further recognition of his war services when he was made an Officer in the US Legion of Merit. A final acknowledgment came early the next year, in a letter he received from Major-General Willoughby which recalled their association at MacArthur's GHQ during the war. The general referred to the connection with affectionate pleasure while sending him a copy of the preface of a recent US Army publication entitled 'A Brief History of the G-2 Section, GHQ, SWPA, and Affiliated Units':

You may be interested to know that these volumes are being used by the Department of the Army and U.S. Service Schools to outline the lessons learned and show the vital part played by intelligence in the operations in this theatre. You will note that your name appears in the credit list of the preface as an

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<sup>70</sup> General MacArthur to Malley, 24 February 1943, RAAF personal file.

<sup>71</sup> See his *Who's Who* entry.

<sup>72</sup> RAAF personal file.

<sup>73</sup> Mrs P.K. Malley to Latham, 8 February 1945, Latham papers, NLA MS1009/1/5746. This letter accompanied a book an autobiography of the wife of Dr Wellington Koo (China's Ambassador in London), which had been sent to the Malleys by US Vice Admiral Thomas C. Kinkaid. In sending it on to Latham, Mrs Malley recalled that he had mentioned the Koo's in discussion with 'Garnie & myself' one evening while he was visiting Canberra.

<sup>74</sup> Hsu to Malley, 16 March 1945, Malley papers, RAAF Museum.

outstanding figure in our joint enterprise. You are also mentioned in appropriate places within the text of the volume itself with entire credit for a fine performance. We hope that you will add the inclosure to your souvenirs of the war and to recall your war time service as Director, Combined Operational Intelligence Centre and valued colleague.<sup>75</sup>

By this stage Malley and his wife had bought a yacht, called the *Royal Flight*, and taken themselves off to Fiji to begin cruising the islands of the Pacific. Their boat was, in fact, hired by the Rank Organisation for the making of the 1949 motion picture 'The Blue Lagoon', which was filmed on location in Fiji. In 1950 they bought Nabavatu coconut plantation on Turquoise Harbour at Vanua Balavu. The next year Malley went to America for treatment at the Johns Hopkins hospital, but returned to Fiji in 1952 to live on his estate. Enjoying a relaxed lifestyle, he listed his recreations as flying, yachting, golf, tennis, cricket, swimming and badminton. On 20 May 1961 he suffered a heart attack and died, his remains being conveyed to Suva on a RNZAF flying-boat and buried at sea on 22 May in accordance with his wishes.<sup>76</sup>

While much of what Malley had claimed about his role and the importance of what he was doing in China often seemed to be exaggerated or overstated, it was nonetheless singular that on his death the air force commander-in-chief of Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist regime (now expelled from mainland China by victorious communist forces and occupying only the island of Taiwan), General Chen Chia-shang, wrote to his widow to offer condolences. Malley would always be missed by his friends and associates, the general said, and the 'invaluable assistances he rendered to CAF [Chinese Air Force] will be long remembered'.<sup>77</sup>

In many ways this tribute to Malley epitomises the problem facing historians in attempting to evaluate his role and importance - both within the Australian aviation scene but more particularly the decade he spent in China. Presented with acknowledgements such as these, it is plainly inappropriate to dismiss or discount his contribution; yet equally it is not possible to verify all that he claimed, and therefore to attach the same weight or significance as he did in assessing his impact and influence. Malley's evident talent for self-promotion sounds its own warning about taking what he said at face value.

At the time of Malley's death, however, Chennault had already passed on four years earlier. The latter's high reputation stood in marked contrast to Malley's, in part because of his continued involvement in the Chinese theatre throughout the war - beginning with the American Volunteer Group (the famed 'Flying Tigers'), then the China Air Task Force, and finally the Fourteenth Air Force. In further part, one suspects, Chennault's standing also gained by having a band of dedicated supporters - not least his second wife Anna, a Chinese journalist - who continually publicised his achievements even after his death. Malley's career is a reminder, though, that in the early stages of the Sino-Japanese conflict Chennault was clearly not the singular western voice behind the Chinese which he, and others, succeeded in portraying. In

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<sup>75</sup> Willoughby to Malley, 7 January 1949, Malley papers, RAAF Museum.

<sup>76</sup> *Fiji Times*, 22, 23 May 1961. Malley was survived by his wife, who subsequently went to live in Honolulu, Hawaii, and his son, Maldon, who was last heard of living in the Melbourne suburb of Armadale in 1984.

<sup>77</sup> General Chen to Mrs P.K. Malley, 31 July 1961, Malley papers, RAAF Museum.

that sense, the case of Malley's eclipse from this historical picture has more to do with the nature of popular myth-making.

There is, nonetheless, little doubt that Malley was one of the more notable and colourful figures of both the Australian Flying Corps and the early Royal Australian Air Force. The highly unusual elements of his career provide a legitimate reason for seeking to document his record, and preserving it for posterity. As a general rule, Australia has been slow to recognise the worth of many of the achievements of its early airmen.

In terms of Malley's impact on the shape and direction of the RAAF, it could be argued that it should have been more than it plainly was. It certainly cannot be said that his presence in China was evidence of a growing inter-nationalisation of Australian thinking about the military application of air power. The reality was that, regardless of any contacts which existed, the RAAF remained a small and insular service uninterested in much beyond itself virtually until the eve of the Second World War. To the extent that events and trends overseas were thought about, the focus was nearly always Europe; only rarely was the threat from Japan and the evidence of growing Japanese capabilities in the Pacific given the same emphasis. It is this aspect that essentially gives the story of Garnet Malley a final ironic twist, both encompassing and transcending the man.