

AUSTRALIA AT BATTLE STATIONS.

For the first time in her history the grim tide of war flows to Australia's shores. The threat of a Japanese attack on the Commonwealth, which Australians had long spoken about, has now become reality. For the first time in one hundred-and-fifty years, the great Island Continent is under direct threat of invasion. In the event of sea attack, her coastal guns would be among the first in action. Australia has an enormous defensive problem to cope with. Seven thousand miles of Coast line; far too long to defend at every point. Wire cannot stop an enemy, but it can impede his progress and allow defenders to slash his ranks with concentrated fire.

In Victoria, large bodies of troops go to man specified defences. The advance party is comprised entirely of diggers of the last war - The "re-treads" as they call themselves, of this. Typical types - the old and bold - the Gallipoli breed.

The sweethearts who saw them off long ago do it again as wives and the mothers of their children. The new army - Militiamen - embark with those who helped to give the Australian fighters a name. When Japanese bombs first fell at Darwin, tens of thousands of Aussies were far away fighting on distant fields. Conscription was immediately imposed and the Commonwealth set about the task of defending her cities from Air Attack. In Melbourne, the stately spires of St. Pauls look down on air raid trenches dug in the lovely gardens bordering the river.

Closer to immediate danger Brisbane builds surface shelters in her main thoroughfares.

Famous Sydney buildings wear a new battledress. A familiar sight in a new setting.

A vital new organisation now assumes new importance. The Volunteer Defence Corps (Australia's "Home Guard") has come into its own. Every man in the Commonwealth must be prepared to bear arms for the defence of his country. Parade ground routine has been largely discarded in order to give the men practical training. Clerks and Managing Directors serve side by side as privates in the V. D. C.

At any time Australians may have to come to grips with the Japanese on their own soil. The question of defending their own homes now stands starkly before them.

Australian-made Anti-Aircraft guns may, even at this moment, be engaging Jap raiders over Darwin, Broome, Wyndham or elsewhere in that sparsely inhabited Northern Territory. Men born to the Bush, sons of a great pioneering race and possessing a tradition of courage and endurance - these men know how to fight. This nation of little over seven million people is standing to its guns. And they are not alone. Her sister nations, and America, are with her all the way.

In the event of an invasion, Australia has an excellent coast guard. If and when the time comes, the Diggers under General Blaxell will prove in undeniable terms that their country can give as well as take. Australia stands to arms.

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