

AUSTRALIAN SECURITY

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THE military defeat of Great Britain by Japan early in the Pacific war gave a rude shock to Australians. For more than one hundred and fifty years they had relied almost entirely upon the mother country for protection against foreign aggressors. Their confidence in the ability of the British Navy to give them security was never before disappointed. Australian governments were therefore content to leave the conduct of foreign policy in the hands of the British government. For a long time Australia had lived at the "circumference of western civilization", and was satisfied with such a life. Since Japan's rise into the rank of a great power, the possibility of Japanese attacks on Australia was always present in Australian minds, but trust in the power of British Far Eastern naval bases was deep enough to prevent undue excitement over the eventuality of invasion. At the most, therefore, Australian governments made their views known in London on matters affecting the Pacific, and perhaps also tried to influence the conduct of British Pacific policy to prevent it from seriously interfering with Australian interests; but there hardly existed an Australian foreign policy.

With the loss of Singapore and the arrival of Japanese planes over Darwin, Australia's passivity came to an end. The country was no longer prepared to play the rôle of the "orphan of the Pacific", as the Germans called it. The Australian people realized now that they had to provide for their own protection, and that an indispensable element in a system of protection would be the existence of a foreign policy made in Australia for Australians. The greatest significance of the Australia-New Zealand agreement of January, 1944, in which the two powers agree to consult each other in all matters concerning their policy in the Pacific, lies in the expression which it gives of the determination of these two nations to have a voice of their own in world affairs, and especially in matters affecting the southern and western Pacific. The agreement represents in reality the culmination of a development which had its beginnings before the war, and to which an additional stimulus was given when the necessity for defence was the overriding pre-occupation of the Australian government. It embodies the result of the one great lesson of Australia in the war, namely, that for Australia affairs in the Pacific are a "personal" matter

of life and death. Australia has so unmistakably decided to play an active part in the shaping of a post-war Pacific because its vital interests are involved. This message contained in the agreement is directed to Great Britain as well as to any other power with interests in that region, for the two governments declare that the ultimate disposal of enemy territory there should be effected only with their agreement and as part of a general Pacific settlement.

Australian people believe that they have acquired the right to be heard through the great sacrifices which they have made in the successful prosecution of this world struggle. The war and their war effort, so they argue, have turned Australia into a "great nation" which now has definite Pacific interests and responsibilities. They consider it to be their rôle to act as trustees of the world—together with New Zealand—in their part of the globe, and to apply the principles of freedom from want, fear, and suppression to the countries of the south and southwest Pacific. Indeed, some Australians believe they have achieved in the Southern Hemisphere a position comparable to that of the United States in the world, and they therefore demand an equal voice in the councils which will control the destiny of the nations in the world in general and in the Pacific in particular.

This very definite and outspoken assertion of the right to an independent foreign policy by Australia came as somewhat of a surprise to many people in the British Empire. Fears arose immediately that the Australian attitude might lead to a disruption. These fears were increased by the fact that the new stand was taken by a Labour government. Australian Labour has traditionally been "nationalistic", and hypersensitive to any suspicion that Australia's policy might be conducted from Whitehall. However, possibly as a preparation for the Australia-New Zealand agreement, Prime Minister Curtin had tried to placate both antagonistic groups: the one which was afraid that the Labour government might strain if not sever the ties of Empire, and the other which was afraid that Australia might continue to be led by London. During a Labour party conference at Canberra at the end of 1943, a motion was accepted unanimously supporting Australian collaboration with other nations, and recognizing the advantages of a partnership in the British Commonwealth of Nations, while at the same time reaffirming that such cooperation with the world and the British

Commonwealth would be subject to the sovereign control of policies by the Australian people, the parliament, and the government.

This motion was apparently not sufficient to convince some who doubted the loyalty of labour to the Empire. Premier Curtin repeated many times that there was no reason to suspect Australia's adherence to the British Empire. Indeed, he repeated this assurance so frequently that it may be taken as an indication of the existence of the feeling in many circles that Australia overstepped the bounds of good behavior within the British Commonwealth. In justification for his action Mr. Curtin pointed out that Australia had merely made use of the power of full self-government in external affairs which was granted in the Imperial Conference of 1937, and which is an "indispensable adjunct to Dominion status". The innovation was, though, that Australia actually made use of this right. Quite apart from the legal situation, rather than interpret the agreement as a danger to the existence of the British Commonwealth, the Australian Premier praised it as a means by which autonomous member nations can collaborate on local issues and at the same time continue as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations. "This practical handling of their own affairs does not conflict in any way with, but strengthens, the general conception of the British Commonwealth." But even the most favorable interpretation of the agreement from a British Empire standpoint cannot prevent the impression, gained from the perusal of British press reactions, that the new Australian initiative had not full sympathy in England.

The Australian "unprecedented departure" in Empire affairs, as the London *Observer* called it, is also of considerable interest to nations outside the British Commonwealth of Nations. For whereas foreign nations could conduct their relations with members of the Empire largely through London, Empire policy in the future may no longer be so centralized and therefore so unified. The thought that the innovation in Australia's foreign affairs is due to and may again disappear with the Pacific war must be discarded. Obviously the danger of invasion was effective as a catalyst in bringing about Australia's determination to have a larger share in the shaping of its foreign relations. It is true that the threat to Australia's security brought forth the general realization that a satisfactory arrangement for Imperial Defence was absent and that some of

Australia's problems were local and suitable for local solution. But there are good reasons why in the future Australia will most likely continue on the newly trodden path.

The lessons of this war were very impressive ones. Fear of attack by Japan, or perhaps by the non-white races generally, which had come periodically in waves over Australian minds, has now become more real and persistent than ever before. Danger from the peoples in the north can be expected to develop into the foremost topic in any discussion of Australia's security. Furthermore, decentralization of the conduct of foreign policy in the Empire away from London is a process which is not germane to Australia alone. The same endeavor for autonomy can be found in Canada and in South Africa. A pattern becomes discernible which points toward the creation of a regional Empire. In Australia the trend toward self-determination in international affairs, which found its climax in the Australian-New Zealand agreement, could be observed before the outbreak of this war. In the first speech he made as Premier, Mr. Menzies, after having duly professed loyalty to the Empire, pointed out that Australia has a primary responsibility in the Pacific. In the Pacific, Australia must be guided by its own knowledge and affected by its own decisions. He then coined the well known slogan of Britain's Far East being Australia's Near North, and he continued by stating that Australia considered itself a principal in the Pacific which must provide itself with its own information and its own diplomatic contacts with Pacific powers.

A few days later, Sir Henry Gullett, the Foreign Minister, elaborated on the Premier's speech. He said that Great Britain's involvement in a war would not automatically lead Australia into war, or *vice versa*. "It was conceivable that either Government might adopt a policy which would be strongly disapproved by the other", and he then expressed his hope for a more auspicious relationship with the great Japanese people than was prevailing at that moment. Within a brief period after this declaration on foreign policy, diplomatic representatives were appointed to the United States, Japan, Russia, the Dutch East Indies and China, that is to say, to all nations with interests in the Pacific. And at the San Francisco Conference the Australian delegates did not only act with considerable independence, but specifically emphasized this independence in speeches.

In the light of these pronouncements and activities of recent Australian governments, Conservative as well as Labour, there can hardly be any doubt that Australia will continue to remain independent in the pursuit of its foreign policies. As yet, Empire feeling is very strong in Australia, and Australians will continue to consider membership in the British Commonwealth as a fundamental principle of their foreign policy—for sentimental and material reasons. But within these limits, policy concerning Pacific affairs can no longer be determined without reference to Canberra.

The Australian-New Zealand agreement outlines in broad terms what Australian policy in the Pacific may be in the post-war era. As was to be expected under the circumstances, military security dominates all other considerations. The Australian plan calls for the creation of a regional defence zone within a general system of world security. For obvious reasons Australia made no attempt to devise a system for world security, but it did sketch an outline of their regional defence system which is proposed in the agreement. The security zone should be based on Australia and New Zealand, and extend through the arc of islands north and northeast of Australia to Western Samoa and the Cook Islands. The Australian government also declares itself prepared to share in the policing of such areas in the south and southwest Pacific as may be assigned to it within the framework of a world security system. At San Francisco, Australia continued to be a strong supporter of regional agreements.

This method of providing for Australia's security takes into account the disappointment of the country with British military support and international collective security. While the Australian government is looking forward to the establishment of world security, it is nevertheless resolved to establish a regional system of defence and security on which Australia can rely even if a broader plan should fail. This may very well be a precedent which will be followed by many other small nations which were dissatisfied with the working of the collective security system in the pre-war period.

The question then arises how much authority Australia's voice will carry in international councils when military problems are discussed? The splendid contribution of the Australians to the war effort is a well established fact. But in absolute figures such contribution must necessarily be small. With seven million people, Australia's share in supplying man-power must

be restricted. Her supply of industrial war materials will be equally limited. Australians are hopeful that their participation in providing for Pacific security will increase in the very near future, and that consequently their political and military influence will be greater. The government and large groups of the population alike are eager to increase the number of inhabitants and to strengthen the development of their industry so successfully begun during the war. Some estimates of population increase in the future have reached fantastic figures. A more realistic government idea has lately been thirty million people within thirty years. This is to be brought about by a stimulation of the birth rate and a liberalizing of the immigration policy—although the question of what groups constitute desirable immigrants is hotly debated. Great hopes also exist for the evolution of Australian industry. Official and private bodies are making ambitious plans for the post-war period. But all these projects can be realized only in the future, and in the meantime Australia is from a military standpoint still of only limited significance. Even as a strategic area for the location of military bases, Australia is restricted. This is shown by the fact that the American armed forces have given up their Australian stations and moved further north, even though the war was only in the "island hopping" phase.

Government and people in Australia are realistic about the scope of their war potential, and the part their country can play in the policing of the Pacific. The limitations imposed by natural conditions were one of the reasons why Australia and New Zealand cooperated in the conclusion of their agreement of January, 1944. They hoped that unison would enhance the voice and authority with which they could speak in the world. Furthermore, Australia freed itself of all sentimental ties, looked around for the most effective help to improve its status, and found the United States. The desire to be on the friendliest terms with America and to have American assistance in defence was naturally strongest when the threat of Japanese invasion was closest. At that time many Australians advocated the conclusion of an alliance with the United States. Some even desired "permanent identification" of Australian interests with those of the United States. But, with the receding danger of a Japanese invasion, enthusiasm for such close ties cooled off somewhat, although it did not die down by any means. Torn between spiritual loyalty to Great Britain and the dictates of an experi-

ence which clearly points toward reliance upon the United States in times of distress, many Australians believe that the best solution of the problem would be the closest possible cooperation of the United States, Great Britain, and themselves. This attitude was confirmed again at the conference of Australia and New Zealand at Wellington in November, 1944.

Even over two years after the fall of Singapore a public opinion poll showed that the vast majority was in favor of giving the United States the use of leased bases in Australia, and the use by American forces of island bases there was also favored. In accordance with this popular feeling, the Australian government repeatedly welcomed a firmer establishment of American might in the Pacific. Prime Minister Curtin, and even more enthusiastically Premier Fraser of New Zealand, advocated the transfer of former Japanese mandated islands to the United States. The Australian government would naturally prefer to see American bases advanced as far into the western Pacific as possible, since that would strengthen the Australian-New Zealand defence zone. However, Mr. Curtin was very carefully restricting himself to mentioning the mandated islands only. Most likely, the Australian government is opposed to the United States obtaining at least outright possession of islands now under the sovereignty of one of the allies. The clause in the Australian-New Zealand agreement which declares that the establishment of military installations by a power in any territory belonging to another power does not establish a claim to such territory, is generally understood to be directed against those persons in the United States who have clamored for the retention of areas in which the American armed forces have constructed operating bases. Australians were greatly relieved when Premier Curtin assured them of complete agreement between him and President Roosevelt, and especially when the President in his Bremerton speech in August, 1944, announced that the United States would not seek to acquire territories now in the possession of the United Nations. This appears to have been the main concern of the Australian government, which disapproves of possible demands by the United States as a matter of right, but is quite willing to discuss such problems on the basis of reciprocity at the peace table. Mr. Evatt, at San Francisco, restated this Australian policy when he affirmed that his country had no differences with the United States about any islands wrested from the Japanese north of the

equator, even if these island were taken unilaterally by America. But other islands, he maintained, should not be annexed on the basis of conquest alone.

Some American congressmen interpret this Australian attitude as derogatory to American interests. They resent the restriction upon American freedom of action which would result from the Australian policy. The Australian-New Zealand agreement was characterized as an unkind and most disturbing act, which permits the conclusion that Australia and New Zealand plan to dominate the southern and western Pacific after the war. It was considered as a move affecting the legitimate post-war aims and aspirations of the United States, its security, and its share in air and sea trade routes in the Pacific area.

The agreement was regarded as sufficiently important to provoke action in Congress. A number of senators and representatives saw the urgent need for devising a definite American policy in the post-war Pacific. On the basis of the Wadsworth bill which created a "Select Committee on Post-War Military Policy" in the House, a twenty-one men committee was formed to chart a United States post-war programme in the Pacific. The main task assigned to this committee is the disposal of Pacific island bases.

So far, no detailed plans for the future American position in the Pacific have been announced. President Roosevelt, in his Bremerton speech, was generally believed to have implied that the United States will demand possession of the islands under Japanese mandate. Persons in somewhat less responsible positions have been more outspoken about possible future American policy. Mr. Welles, as acting Secretary of State in the spring of 1943, pointed out that international security was needed to make the Pacific safe for everybody; the United States would not claim the Pacific as a lake under American jurisdiction. Mr. Knox however, as Secretary of the Navy, appeared a little less confident in the success of collective security. For in several speeches he argued in favor of American possession of a number of islands. The United States, he maintained, would have a big share in the policing of the Pacific, and would therefore need adequate bases. He indicated that construction of a system of bases had already been begun, with a large operating base established on a mandated island. Since the United States had spent much money on these bases, he believed the country would have a strong base at the peace table. Several

other officials in the Navy Department share this view. A number of senators and representatives also have given their ideas on what they consider a desirable American Pacific policy. They all agree upon the need for American possession of new island bases. They disagree only on the mode of acquisition and the number of islands to be obtained. While, for instance, Representative Magnusen recommended that the United States should "just take" the Japanese bases in the Gilbert and Marshall Islands, and Senator McKellar is convinced that the islands retaken from the Japanese by American armed forces belong to the United States by the rule of war, Representative Luce advocated retention of only the Japanese mandated islands outright, and possession of other bases on a cooperative basis together with other nations. All of these congressmen agree that the United States should obtain possession of the Japanese mandated islands. Some would not go further than this, others would demand many more. Senator McKellar would want the United States to take permanent possession of all Japanese owned and mandated islands between the equator and the 30' parallel of latitude north, including Formosa and the Ryukyu Islands. A number of his colleagues agreed with him, and Senator Reynolds thought that this demand is not going far enough. The public discussions on the future of Pacific bases for the United States during the San Francisco Conference certainly made it appear as if the annexation of some islands by America was a foregone conclusion.

Whatever eventually the official policy of the United States will be, it may be expected that on grounds of security the American government will claim the possession of some islands in the Pacific. If the United States should choose to proceed on the principles of power politics, no nation could prevent it from taking as many islands as it wanted to. America could simply ignore the wishes of Australia or of any other nation. There is, however, no indication that the American government will follow such a crude policy, nor is there any necessity to do so. Some of the ideas expressed by some congressmen will not find much favor in Australia. But Australians are perfectly aware that for some decades to come their security will largely depend on American strength in the Pacific. They have themselves agreed that America has a "watertight" case for demanding a strong barrier of bases. The prediction can therefore be made with some confidence that by negotiation the United States will

be able to obtain all bases considered necessary for its security, and that very little friction may be expected to develop between America and Australia over the disposal of Pacific islands.

If the United States should experience any difficulty in the attempt to acquire new island bases, it is more likely to be created by Great Britain than by Australia. Conceivably Great Britain might not welcome an overwhelmingly powerful America in the Pacific. The British government was clearly disturbed by the growing American influence in Australia, and at the earliest opportunity proceeded to counteract it and to reestablish fully British prestige. The two outstanding indications of this endeavor on the part of Great Britain—in addition to some less conspicuous ones—are the creation of the British Pacific Fleet with its base in Australia and the appointment of the Duke of Gloucester as Governor-General.

There are, of course, several reasons for the creation of the Pacific Fleet. One of the main reasons is, according to Sir Bruce Fraser, Admiral of the Fleet, to "make contact between the British and the Australians". If we may judge by the reaction of Australian newspapers, the British plan succeeded. Although Australia's debt to the American navy is not forgotten, Australians are jubilant over the creation of the British Pacific Fleet. The revival of British naval power is contrasted with the defeats three years ago. The presence of strong and numerous British warships in Australian harbors will no doubt help to eradicate Australian memories of disappointment with British naval protection. The important gesture of appointing a member of the Royal Family as Governor is designed to strengthen the ties between Great Britain and the Dominion. Australian newspapers took the opportunity of offering gratitude for American help, but of pointing out at the same time that no Australian wanted to make his country a forty-ninth State of the Union. The tone was distinctly different from that of the days when "identification" of Australian interests with those of the United States was desired.

Besides strengthening the ties of Empire by stimulating loyalty and offering effective protection, Great Britain can also exercise considerable influence upon Australian foreign policy if the British market continues to be as important to Australian commerce as it was before the war. However, in spite of these military and economic considerations, Great Britain will hardly be able to restore entirely the *status quo ante bellum*. Great

Britain too learned lessons in this war. One of them was that the time has passed when the British navy could control the seven seas and carry British predominance into the remotest corners of the globe. Very early in this war, Great Britain was forced to renounce ambitions all over the world and to concentrate on the defence of the homeland. Even now Sir Bruce Fraser's Pacific Fleet will operate under the American fleet of Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, and it is recognized in England that the Pacific continues to be the American responsibility. It was also stated by Sir Bruce Fraser that British contributions to the Pacific war would have to be restricted to naval and air forces, and that supply problems prevent Great Britain from sending troops, which would therefore have to come from the United States.

Very little information has been published in England about future plans in the Pacific. Perhaps the most significant statement came from the London *Times* in August, 1944, and developments in Europe show that the contents of that statement were perhaps not entirely the product of the editor's fantasy. In a leading article the creation of three spheres of interest in the world was suggested within a general security system. One Eastern European sphere would be under Russian leadership, one Western European sphere would be under British leadership, and one Pacific sphere would be under American leadership. If this idea is representative of influential British opinion, then the conclusion may be drawn that Great Britain is resigned to accepting regional predominance rather than attempting maintenance of at least equal influence with other powers all over the world. This would be *Realpolitik*. As far as the Pacific is concerned within such a framework, the United States would meet with little resistance from Great Britain in the acquisition of new island base. Australia would have every reason to rejoice over such a development. It would be spared the dilemma of having to decide whether to side with Great Britain or with the United States. Australia could be friends with both.