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# Australia's Enemies.

By A. G. COLLEY.

There is one item in the Federal Budget which grows lustily year by year without provoking protest. We might well expect some public-spirited body, such as the Taxpayers' Association, to cry halt. Yet even the unfortunate taxpayer bears his defence burden uncomplainingly. Everyone knows that world affairs are in a very inflammable state, while the newspapers are half-filled with news of actual or potential wars, and pictures of the latest and most efficient lethal machinery.

We have, too, the warnings of our war-time Prime Minister, Mr. W. M. Hughes, and of our Minister for Defence, Sir Archdale Parkhill. Mr. Hughes, in his book, "Australia and War To-day," tells us that "War and peace are but phases of a struggle that goes on incessantly." He warns us of the reality of the dangers which surround us, and concludes that war will remain a "danger against which we ought to insure." Sir Archdale tells us that "The nation which refuses to provide for its security lays itself open to attack from hostile and predatory elements of which, unfortunately, the world has no lack."\*

Though we may agree with these authorities that the law of the jungle applies to international relations, it must be conceded that, even in the jungle, the animals are not all equally eager to attack one another. In other words, it is important to know just which nation is likely to attack us first, so that we may make preparations accordingly.

From the outset it is evident that many nations, such as Nicaragua, Switzerland and China, are incapable of attacking us. We may eliminate all nations which cannot overcome our naval forces, or which, even if they are capable of defeating us on the sea, have neither the military nor the economic resources necessary for a successful invasion. Under this head all the smaller and weaker nations can be excluded, leaving only the great Powers, i.e., Germany, Italy, France, Russia, U.S.A. and Japan.

\*Statement of the Government's policy regarding the Defence of Australia by the Hon. Archdale Parkhill, M.P., Minister for Defence.

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Should Germany, Italy, France, or Russia attack us they would be confronted with almost identical difficulties. None of these nations has naval forces sufficiently powerful to do more than attempt to defend their own coasts. Should they employ a large section of these forces in supporting a blockade and invasion of Australia, their coasts would be dangerously exposed. A large part of their navy would be 10,000 miles from the homeland, a great proportion of their merchant marine would be employed in the carriage of troops, and their home defence forces would be seriously reduced. For these reasons alone it is almost certain that no European nation would, in the present tense conditions, be prepared to place itself in so vulnerable a position. Supposing, however, that one of these nations by means of inspired diplomacy, were able to attack us without fear of its own security, there would still be almost insuperable difficulties to overcome. Firstly, there would be the problem of establishing a naval base, either on the Australian coast, or on some neighbouring island, as the ships of war could not be provisioned, refuelled, equipped and repaired 10,000 miles away from the scene of operations. It takes years to construct such a base, and during this period it is not likely that Australia would be standing still in her defence equipment. An attack by one of these nations would take very lengthy and obvious preparation. Unless these preparations were on a gigantic scale, our enemy could not hope for a quick victory, for this would probably require, firstly, an almost complete blockade; and, secondly, transport and provisioning of a preponderant military force. An almost complete blockade would be necessary to prevent us from importing large quantities of war material from abroad. Australia is not a poor undeveloped country like Abyssinia or Manchuria. It is a well-organised modern state, capable in such a crisis of borrowing sufficient to equip a formidable force. Our own industry, too, is sufficiently developed to produce a considerable quantity of war material. The longer our European aggressor prepared, the greater the effort he would have to make, and the more doubtful his ultimate victory. The expense of such a campaign would reach astronomical figures. It is true that expense often seems to be of little consequence in the waging of war, but in this case the war-maker would have time and cause to calculate his probable outlay before wilfully embarking upon it.

For these reasons it is extremely unlikely that any European nation will attack us. The nations are not so consistently aggress-

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sive as we might infer from Mr. Hughes' book. But there are yet two more to account for. And at first sight they look promising enemies.

One of these is the United States. It differs from the European countries in that it is nearer, is a great naval power, and is well placed strategically so far as its own defence is concerned. The U.S.A. could attack and probably defeat us should it be prepared to waste enough of its men and treasure in doing so. But it would indeed be a strange policy for a nation controlled by men accustomed to weigh costs against returns. Further, she has just renounced her claim to the Philippine Islands, largely because the raw materials produced there were successfully competing with the home product, and probably, also, because she was not prepared to assume responsibility for their defence. Is it likely that she will now annex a primary producing country exporting raw materials which she already has in abundance?

In the light of these facts it appears most improbable that the U.S.A. covets our territory. We now come to the sole remaining nation—Japan—the only nation that is ever mentioned specifically as a possible enemy.

It must be conceded that many of the difficulties which would confront other nations are of much less consequence in the case of Japan. In the first place, she is a great naval power, practically impregnable in her home waters, and could therefore despatch a large squadron from her shores without endangering them. Secondly, she is nearer, being within 4000 miles of the New Guinea Mandated Territory, and has mandated islands within 1000 miles, which might be converted into bases. Thirdly, she could attack much more rapidly than any other nation—perhaps even before we had sufficient warning to do more than partly mobilise our present defences. Fourthly, she might eventually establish a complete blockade, thus greatly adding to the difficulties of our forces.

On the score of expense she would also be at an advantage, though it would still be an immensely expensive campaign. But, to a greater extent than even European nations, her own security would be threatened if she embarked on such a venture. She is at present engaged in a major war against China, and is expected to win. What victory will mean is uncertain except in two respects. Firstly, it will

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mean a tremendous depletion of her financial resources, both in carrying on the war and in holding her conquests. Secondly, it will not mean the complete subjugation of the vast mass of China; and the Chinese dragon may well prove to be a hydra.

If Japan "wins" she will be in possession of a large territory, wedged between two unfriendly Powers. To the south, China, smarting under her defeat, will be arming as fast as her resources will allow, and awaiting the day when she can drive the intruder from her lands. To the north there will still be a great Russian army, and a fleet of bombing 'planes ready at a few hours' notice to launch an attack upon her inflammable industrial cities. The retention of Manchukuo and Northern China is the keystone of her policy. It is not likely that, as a diversion, she will attack Australia.

Apart from the question of whether she *could* attack Australia, the more real consideration is whether, given ideal conditions, she would want to. The answer is more significant when we are considering the more distant future. Sooner or later she may, perhaps, come to an agreement with Russia and a satisfactory compromise with China, leaving her free to expand southwards. Supposing this should occur, what would she gain by a successful conquest of Australia?

There is a fairly widespread belief that the teeming millions of Japan would be only too eager to seize any opportunity to emigrate from their crowded lands to our "broad open spaces." Some would even go so far as to say that the pressure of an expanding population on Japan's slender natural resources will sooner or later compel her peoples to emigrate. But, in fact, Japanese are as loth to leave their native land as most Australians would be to leave theirs. They are an intensely loyal race with distinctive culture, tradition and habits of life which they cannot hope to maintain in foreign lands. Nor are they being forced to emigrate by the poverty of their country. There is considerable evidence that the standard of living has been rising, on the whole, during the past 20 years, and one of the effects has been to encourage immigration into Japan. In fact, from 1917 to 1929 there was "a net increase of 388,000 Koreans, such increase far outnumbering any gain from emigration to other countries." The Japanese have never shown any desire to come here. Although the Government has protested against the 'White Australia' policy, her

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protest has been motivated by racial pride rather than any real desire to send large numbers of her people to settle here.”<sup>1</sup>

Another, and perhaps the most popularly-accepted, reason for fearing Japanese conquest, is based on her imperialistic outlook. It is stated that Japan has ambitions for the domination of Asia and Australasia, and some statesmen and writers are quoted to support these views. “Albatross,” in his pamphlet *Japan and Australia*, quotes a “Japanese named Kayahara” as having written the following in the publication *The Third Empire*—

“We must make the people realise that their great mission is to establish a World Empire. Our national policy should be a southward one, but by south is not meant tiny islands in the South Seas. Japan’s sphere of extension lies beyond the equator—in Australia, New Zealand and Tasmania . . .”

This statement is typical of the scare type of propaganda often heard in discussions on defence, though “Albatross” has not used it for this purpose. More evidence than a few, possibly isolated, statements of opinion, is necessary to prove that Japan’s rulers have any real designs on Australia.

The most likely reason for Japanese aggression is the need for markets and raw materials. This is an argument given little prominence by those who express fear of attack, yet it is the one which most vitally affects her welfare and interests. Further, it is acknowledged as one of the chief reasons of Japanese expansion in Northern China.

At present the chief commodities which Japan imports from Australia are wool and wheat. In 1934-5 these accounted for £A10,954,021 out of a total of £A12,095,514. Both of these can be obtained from other sources, and neither can be described as sinews of war. If we supplied her with coal, iron and oil her interest in our trade would be much more vital. However, of these three it is only iron that we are capable of supplying, and that only for a limited time.

But there is a broader aspect of the question. Although she may obtain her essential raw materials from alternative sources, she must have the means to pay for them, and, to obtain the necessary foreign credits, she must be able to market her goods. Australia could buy a lot more than she does at present from Japan. A policy of freer trade would be good business, for, after all, it would only

<sup>1</sup>Article by Dr. Clunies Ross in *Australia and the Far East*, p. 159.

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amount to buying in the cheapest market. It would be even better politics, for by encouraging mutual trade we would remove the only possible reason for attack.\* If Japan can obtain a fair proportion of our trade by peaceful means she will not be disposed to attack us. Apart from the expense of the campaign is the fact that she would then gain nothing by doing so. Even in primitive Manchukuo she obtains her raw materials by trade, and if she annexed Australia she would still have to trade with us to obtain our products. The alternative would be to force us to pay tribute or indemnity, and the experience of post-war years teaches nothing if not the economic futility of trying to collect the "spoils of victory."

So we come to the end of our search for enemies without having found a single nation which wants to attack us. It might be suggested that two or more nations may combine. But the foregoing reasoning does not depend on the adequacy of the forces which might eventually be arrayed against us, so much as on the risks to be incurred by any nation doing so, and the tremendous wastage of resources which would be involved. Nor does it appear likely that, in the present state of international mistrust, such a combination is practicable.

So far Australia has been treated as an isolated nation. The support of Great Britain has not been inferred in any of the foregoing. This may seem to some a very unreal assumption, but in actual fact it is not. The case for our immunity from attack has depended on the strategic difficulties which would face the attacker. Only in the case of Japan was there any possibility that these difficulties might easily be overcome. Should Japan attack us Great Britain could defend us only in one set of circumstances. These circumstances are that she would be prepared to leave her own shores almost undefended, that she could send the main body of her fleet to the Pacific rapidly enough to defend us before we were forced to surrender, and that her fleet, having arrived, could continue for a period of time to operate as an effective defence. Even if Great Britain were at peace with the rest of the world she would be unlikely to risk sending the main body of her fleet to the other side

\*This is put forward as a long-term policy. The writer would be wholly in favour of participation in a world-wide trade boycott against Japan for the purpose of ending the present conflict. Unilateral action, however, might mean permanent loss to our own trade and would achieve nothing. Even the most ardent supporter of a boycott would hardly suggest that we should not resume normal trade relations at the conclusion of the war.



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of the world. If she were prepared to do so it would be nearly a month after the outbreak of war when it arrived, and it is questionable whether the Singapore base and the other naval stations in these waters would provide sufficient facilities for the operation of so large a fleet. The essential condition of Great Britain being at peace with the rest of the world is most unlikely.<sup>1</sup>

Australia has no quarrel of any magnitude with any other nation. The same cannot be said of Great Britain, whose interests clash with or obstruct those of other Powers in every continent. It is generally assumed that Australia, as a member of the Empire, enjoys the privilege and safety of British protection, and should therefore be prepared to support Great Britain should she ever be the victim of aggression. British protection was more real in pre-war days when she maintained a two-power navy, but, in 1937, it is neither necessary nor effective. It is not necessary because no nation is likely to attack us, and it is not effective because her navy could not operate in sufficient force to protect us. If Australia fights for Great Britain she will be sacrificing her own interests, and, if Japan is against the Empire, she will also be faced with invasion and conquest.

“The Great Illusion” does not exist for Australia. For the fact is quite clear that Australia must lose if she participates in any war at all. If we were victorious it would be at the cost of tens of thousands of killed and wounded, and hundreds of millions more debt. We cannot expect the acquisition of valuable territories or rich indemnities. If we were defeated we would have even greater losses to face.

It may be argued that, even if it is not to our present advantage to fight for Great Britain, the position may be different in 10 or 20 years' time, and that if we are not prepared to support her now, we cannot expect her to support us then. This would mean that we would be prepared to incur a heavy loss in the near future in return for the possibility of protection in the more distant future. The necessity for, and the effectiveness of, this protection, may be as unreal then as now. It is impossible to predict what may happen in international affairs in the next 20 years. We would, in effect, be paying a very heavy premium for a very doubtful benefit.

<sup>1</sup>See *Possible Peace*, by MacMahon Ball, Ch. V, re Great Britain's part in Australia's defence.



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From the standpoint of Australian self-interest it is evident that she must lose in a war fought on behalf of Great Britain. But the Australian people are not concerned only with their own advantage. There is a strong sentimental attachment binding us to the "home country." We are justly proud of British political institutions, British traditions of fair play, British justice, and the like, and we speak and think the same language. Were Great Britain the victim of unprovoked aggression most Australians would wish to assist her. Many of her young men would be prepared to give their lives in her defence, families would once more sacrifice sons, husbands or fathers, and many taxpayers, both rich and poor, might willingly endure great increases in the burden of their contributions.

On the other hand, there are many who, although they would support the homeland in the case of unprovoked aggression, would not be prepared to make these sacrifices for the sake of defending her colonial possessions and interests. Suppose, for instance, a dispute should arise with Germany over the possession of Tanganyika, how many would be prepared to fight for the retention of this mandate by Great Britain?

So far as can be gleaned from public statements, the Australian Government is likely to support Great Britain in whatever policy she adopts. We are led to believe that our whole security depends on Empire co-operation. It has been the purpose of this article to examine the truth of this belief, and the conclusion reached is that we have no enemies that are not of our own choosing. Let us be sure that, if Australia goes to war, it is for a worthy cause.