

EPILOGUE

AUSTRALIA had been at war for nearly six years, over two years longer than the United States of America, a year and a half longer than the Soviet Union. At a time when those who stood firm were few in number, she had shared in the successive crises of the fall of France, the Battle for Britain, the over-running of the Balkans, and the threat in North Africa. Then, after attack on them by the enemy had brought two powerful Allies into the war, the Soviet Union against Germany and the United States against both Japan and Germany, Australia had seen the rapid Japanese southward advance, the fall of Singapore, the total loss in the Battle of the Java Sea, the occupation of the Netherlands Indies, the surrender of the Philippines, the invasion of New Guinea, and the bombing of the Australian mainland and (for a time) had awaited invasion with no Allied strength left within thousands of miles.

Before reinforcements came, Australians in New Guinea stood alone as Australia mobilised her resources for a total war effort. Then came the Battle of the Coral Sea, which turned back Japan's attempt to invade Port Moresby. The coming of reinforcements (A.I.F. divisions from the Middle East and American ground and air forces) then turned the tide. Australian troops at Milne Bay inflicted on the Japanese the first defeat they had suffered on land. For 18 months the brunt of the fighting on the New Guinea mainland continued to be borne by Australians. Then the war drew away as the American effort gained in strength and impetus.

While fighting had intensified near to Australia and in Australian territory and the prospect of invasion was still present, other Australians were helping to win the victory at Alamein; her airmen were taking part in the strikes against Germany, her sailors were serving in the Mediterranean.

Some understanding of the extent of the contribution made by Australia to the winning of the war may be gained from the fact that about 550,000 service men and women—one in twelve of her population of approximately 7,000,000—served outside Australia in one or other of the forces during the war. Casualties in operational areas were 30,508 killed and 58,351 wounded. Mainly as a result of the defeats in Greece and Crete and the fall of Singapore 30,560 Australian men and women were taken prisoner. The killed and wounded among this group are included in the figures given above. The graves of the Australian fallen were in Europe, the Middle East, in southern Asia and in New Guinea. Australians had served in Arctic seas bringing supplies to Russia through Archangel, in keeping the sea lanes free in the North Atlantic, in supplying beleaguered Malta. Australia had been a fighting ally.

Towards the end of the war the Australian role had developed into that of a major supplier of foodstuffs, materials and manufactured products in the Pacific region in support of the growing Allied forces, chiefly American, which were being assembled for the defeat of Japan. The rising demand for supplies and the maintenance of her own armed forces stretched

national resources to the point where manpower allocation became the major problem of the Australian Government in making those decisions which were left for it to make on the conduct of the war. There was growing uneasiness and some vehement objection in some quarters lest Australia should end the war not as a fighting ally but as a general providore. To some—particularly those in combat divisions—it was objectionable that Australian men should be pulled out of the forces into industry in order to produce the supplies for other Allied forces. Were the finest fighting men in the war, for so their pride stood, to accept the idea of becoming “wood and water joeys” for foreigners in their own land? For a brief time Australia regained an active role in combat but, as she faced the prospect of a steady and perhaps costly northward advance to victory and the prospect, too, of finding ways of producing more thousands of tons of food for the Americans in the South and South-West Pacific, the war was ended by cataclysmic bombs launched by decisions in which Australia had no part and about which she knew nothing beforehand. The terms of surrender were imposed on Japan by decisions made by others and without the name of Australia being mentioned as a belligerent.

The end of the war came as a relief. The old pictures of victory with a fanfare had already been lost. The military effort was already being unwound. The certainty of winning the war because of weight of power had been growing clearer for some time. There was no field of Waterloo nor even the launching of a final massive offensive as in Europe as a prelude to surrender. In August 1945 people did not celebrate a great and final victory. There was no crowning feat of glory. They rejoiced because the war was over.

During the last year or more of hostilities the actions and speeches of the Australian Government had been devoted as much to what would happen after the war was over as to what remained to be done while it was still being waged. The withdrawal of men and women from the forces to re-allocate manpower to meet new demands had also tended to turn thoughts towards a return to civil occupations. Hostilities ended with strong persuasions on the people to look forward to what was going to happen next rather than to look backward over the sacrifices and the effort by which victory had been reached.

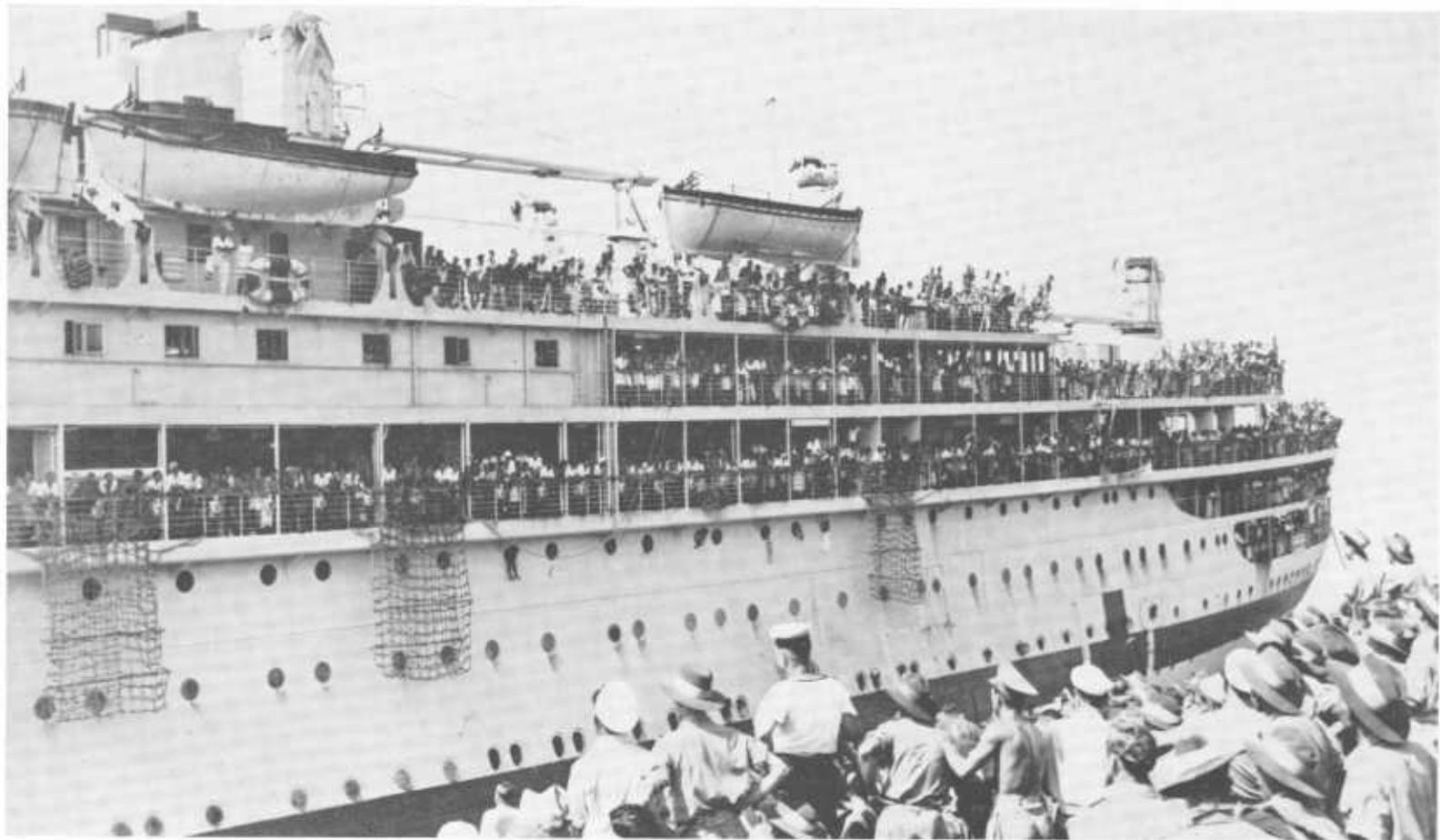
To the people the war had brought sorrow. It had also brought pride. The consolation of those who mourned lies in the privacy of their minds. When it was expressed in public it would seem to have been the consolation of knowing that a husband, son or brother had acted worthily. He had done his best, had stuck by his mates, had come through the testing time, had given his life for something greater than himself, had defended what was right. No one should reject or mock the well-worn phrases for behind them is the sadness and the pride of a noble people, and each word hides the grief at the loss of what one human being had loved more than anything else on this earth.

That personal grief and pride were shared by many more when the



Australian War Memorial

General Sir Thomas Blamey, Commander-in-Chief, Australian Military Forces, about to sign the surrender document at the ceremony on board the U.S.S. *Missouri* in Tokyo Bay on 2nd September 1945.



Australian War Memorial

Patients and nurses line the rails of the hospital ship *Oranje* on her arrival at Darwin from Singapore with 760 former prisoners of war. The end of the war brought the release from Japanese hands of more than 14,500 Australians after three and a half years of captivity.

troops marched. Anyone who stood in wartime in an Australian city, immersed in the crowd, and watched the troops go by knew the strong and binding comradeship that a shared grief and pride can bring to men and women. It was not at the moment when the crowd cheered, but at the moment when emotion quietened them and the tears came unbidden while the men who had fought, strong, sun-tanned, tight-jawed and fit, swung past with that loose and confident stride that only Australian soldiers have; and, as rank succeeded rank, thoughts turned to those who had not come back and hearts were deeply moved by the patriotism which brings the dedication of men and women to causes that lift them out of themselves.

Among the deeply emotional experiences of war was also fear. Some Australians had talked for many years about the peril of invasion from Asia. Now all Australians had seen that it might really take place. More of them than ever before had learnt how precarious is the life of a nation. Many of them glimpsed for the first time in the history of their land the possibility of occupation by an enemy and subjection to alien rule and they learnt that the independence and the inviolability of an island continent cannot be taken for granted.

Only experience will show how long the influence of wartime emotion will last. The war itself, the deeds of Australians and the behaviour of the Australian nation under challenge of survival will pass into history and parts of it will become legend. The way the history is read and the legend told will be in the keeping of future generations of Australians, but whatever they do let them not forget that one undoubted outcome of the effort and the struggle was that there is still an Australian people and an Australian nation to make what it can, of its own will and serving its own ideals, of the freedom that was preserved for it by men who served and men who died.

Some of the other experiences of the war are more clearly observable. The war meant that during six years, to an increasing extent, the people were called upon to think and act as one nation and they were virtually under the leadership and control of one Australian government, with the State governments being used as its agents on most of the big matters and carrying on the local routine on other matters with reduced resources. Strictly speaking, the Federation still functioned as a federation because the Federal Constitution, as interpreted, allowed to the Federal Government this very great extension of authority by virtue of its powers in respect of defence. But the people had the unusual experience of acting in many more matters as a nation instead of as six separate parts of a nation. Again it is only the subsequent years that will tell how deep was the effect of wartime experience. When the war ended it was plain that centralised financial control and uniform taxation had been reinforced by the war.

The processes of demobilisation pointed to a growing need for Federal participation in education. The State Governments had grown to depend more on the decisions of the Federal Government.

An attempt at the referendum of 1944 to obtain additional powers for the Commonwealth by reference by the States for a brief period, possibly as a prelude to a request for permanent constitutional change, failed to gain a popular majority. It is doubtful, however, if the vote was one on the sole question of Federal powers. A popular objection to a continuation of controls, which was an avowed objective of seeking the powers, would appear to have been a very powerful influence on the voters. Another element in the voting was resentment to what was called "bureaucracy"—too many functionaries, not directly elected by the people, giving orders and directions and refusing or granting permission for this or that. Among a section of the voters, the question was also confused by an identification in their minds of unification and socialism and the fact that the government that sought extra powers was a socialist one. It is indeed questionable whether the vote at the referendum really meant a vote for the maintenance of States' rights without variation of any kind. Apart from the referendum, the discussions during and immediately after the war around this subject leave an impression that the contest for the maintenance of States' rights was keener among those who would exercise authority in the States than among the populace and that the habit of thinking nationally had grown and that there was readiness to recognise a need for national action on behalf of the whole nation. Certainly the superior position of the Australian Government and Parliament was accepted by the populace as a result of wartime practice. Certainly the Federal public servants and the State public servants had become more accustomed to working together on a wide variety of shared responsibilities. The procedures of cooperation between national and local governments through conferences, committees and commissions had been much more firmly established.

Younger Australians had been made conscious of the nation in a way that they had not known before. The population mingled. There was an old tradition that military units were raised in the States and kept a State identity. Such and such a battalion would be known as a Queensland battalion, or a Western Australian battalion. This tradition continued but, as the war progressed and the call-up was applied, the problems of manpower meant that new recruits were distributed where needed and men from several States might find themselves in the same unit. In the Air Force and Navy the mingling was even greater. Munitions work and construction work called for considerable movements of labour. Besides mingling with other Australians, the young man might be posted to parts of the Australian continent he had never seen before and the Sydney city dweller discovered the sand plains of Western Australia or the Tableland of Queensland. The full mobilisation of manpower meant that a very large proportion of the adult population shared this sort of experience. Australians went through a mixing-up process for which there had been no earlier parallel except perhaps in the gold rushes. Furthermore exhortation as well as duty had been national in its appeal for the whole six years. Australia had served as a nation and survived as a nation. In

those parts of the continent where foreign troops were present in large numbers, the identity of Australians was also established as Australians rather than as a number of local varieties of Australian. At the end of the war there was a stronger national consciousness than before the war.

Other wartime experiences of the population included changes of occupation and place of abode. For a number there was a change of opportunity. Leaving aside the opportunists who "did well out of the war"—and there were undoubtedly some post-war fortunes founded on wartime profits—the war brought opportunity to many people to take heavier responsibilities, to discover undeveloped talents, and to enter on duties that led them to a higher and a more active part in the nation's affairs. For a wider number of people it was a period of constant employment at standard wages in contrast with pre-war uncertainties about employment. During and after the war there was training in skills not previously attainable. Generally—and there were exceptions—one result of the war was a raising of the earnings of the family and of the productive capacity of the nation. There had been sacrifices of many kinds during the war both of life and of amenities, but most of those who survived it came out with better prospects than they had when they went in, and because they had been employed steadily while wages and prices were both held down and spending was curtailed by rationing many families came out financially stronger. Savings bank deposits and Government securities on issue in Australia more than doubled in five years.

There were disadvantages. There was often disruption of family life. For the very young there was sometimes a grave disturbance of their routine progress from school to training for an occupation or profession. There were many distractions for them and some slackening of the good influences that can be exerted by a stable and protective community. There were constant housing difficulties for those who transferred in civilian occupations from one place to another and makeshift and sub-standard housing were blamed by social workers for juvenile delinquency and the breaking-up of families.

There were many grisly stories current in wartime of the social evils. On this the historian encounters more opinions than facts. Perhaps some other writer studying the post-war development of Australia on the social side will be able to trace the origin of trends both good and bad to the happenings of the war years. The *Commonwealth Year Book* shows that during the war the marriage rate was maintained and was higher than it was to be in any five-year period after the war. The birth-rate fell slightly but not dramatically as it had done during the economic depression of the thirties. The rate of ex-nuptial births was a little higher than the figure immediately before the war but a good deal lower than the pre-war and post-war average. The infant mortality rate improved. The number of convicted prisoners showed no significant variation.

Limitation of liquor supplies kept total consumption of alcohol down but confirmed an Australian tendency to guzzle when it was got. Either

as part of the right employment of leisure, on which so much was written by pre-war social reformers, or as an abstraction from the war effort, countless hours were spent by men and women lining up to get beer when trading hours were restricted or in doing the necessary ground work to make certain of having more than their share when supplies were short. There were allegations of much black-marketing.

Newspapers were also very prolific in stories of many dodges and smart tricks being practised by unworthy persons and of fortunes being accumulated by the wicked to the most bitter envy of the righteous. The constantly-repeated governmental appeals for a total war effort and condemnation of those who were not responding gives official credence to these stories. They probably concerned the few rather than the many but they gained wide currency and the discouraging thought of inequality of sacrifice probably did as much damage to the total war effort as the actual diversion of resources or withholding of services that was alleged to have taken place. There was also a readily discernible limit on the sacrifice that could be imposed in respect of horse-racing and beer.

The Australian newspapers generally give a poor impression of Australia at war. The newspaper reader in wartime could scarcely have avoided receiving an impression that there was an incompetent government, much bungling in administration, grave errors in the conduct of the war, and constant suppression of what was called "the truth". There was so much of what was wrong and so little about what was right that anyone who eventually recognised the fact that, in spite of faults, the nation did achieve a major war effort would also tend to give a very low value to the evidence presented by newspaper columns in wartime. Yet, strangely, some of these stories in the newspapers were echoes or reports of what the country's leaders themselves were saying when exhorting the people to do more. Possibly the stories were true of the particular instances on which they were founded. The basic shortcoming of newspapers is to make the exceptional happening the principal event of each day.

The belief that there was exaggeration both by the political leaders and by the newspapers of these matters is linked with a suggestion that such exaggeration tended to make worse two weaknesses in the Australian character that were discernible in wartime conduct on the home front. The first is the lack of confidence that wartime leaders had in their people. They often complained, cajoled and even threatened, and they constantly exhorted the people to do more, but seldom did they appear to trust them. Seldom did they make the confident demand of leaders who are sure that their people are good, sound at heart and resolute. It may be, of course, that this was an accurate judgment by pragmatic politicians on the mind of the electorate. In the writer's own view it was a misjudgment of the people as a whole and it was a political error to let the behaviour of a recalcitrant or defective minority give shape to a speech. Whatever it was, it seems to reveal a weakness in the link between governed and governors.

The second weakness was revealed in the constant concern shown by some sections of the Australian people about uniformity of sacrifice. There were those whose judgment on what they themselves should do seemed to be related to their concern lest they might find themselves doing more than the next man. This is chain gang philosophy, the same attitude that is popularly expressed in such common phrases as "Don't stick your neck out", "That's not my worry" and "You'll get no thanks for it". It is a sentiment that is often associated with envy (or even resentment) against the more fortunate and with a tendency to put all blame on someone else.

Both these weaknesses throw into high relief that constant problem of democratic government—the communication between the governors and the governed. The newspapers tended to aggravate the difficulties and did nothing to resolve them. The Government failed to overcome them. The failure would appear to have been not one of intention but of technique. In this respect the Department of Information seems to have been singularly useless.

Over-riding all such impressions, however, is the awareness of the total effort that was actually made. The national effort was not easy to evoke or to organise but it was made. In proportion to population and resources there were probably no Allies save Britain who gave more than Australia did.

Australia was a good ally but it was one with an independent mind and a practice not merely of speaking its mind but of shouting to make sure it was heard. Sometimes the two Great Powers, Britain and America—there was virtually no direct contact with the Soviet Union before the San Francisco Conference and until a few days before the end they were not an enemy of Japan—found Australia somewhat troublesome. The only thing that an Australian need regret, however, is not that Australia insisted on its point of view, but that sometimes it thought it necessary to kick a man in the shins in order to impress his mind—a mistake in advocacy rather than an error of policy.

One task that Australia performed unremittingly from 1942 onwards was keeping the Pacific under notice and bringing others to a truer understanding of the situation there. This was not only a service to Australia but also one to the Allied cause. It expressed, not regionalism, but a view, established when Australia first fought in Europe, that, in the modern world, war, peace and security are global.

Any alliance has difficulties of leadership, command subordination, allotment of resources and generally of working together. Allies may share a common objective of winning the war but each of them will have distinctive needs and interests of its own on nearly every other subject.

This was the first direct experience an Australian Government had of being an ally in its own independent right with a number of foreign nations, both great and small. The experience of the First World War had given Australia some knowledge of the need for any contributor to

a common war effort to retain some control over the terms on which the contribution was used. It had little experience of the situation when great allies are joined with smaller and less powerful allies and when the nature and scale of modern warfare require not only single generalship in the field but also supreme command of combined operations and when many of the decisions on the conduct of the war concern not only the employment of forces but control of shipping, production of munitions, the allocation of aircraft and the supply of foodstuffs for industrial populations. Unified command necessarily brings some subordination to those who submit to it. The Great Power leadership in the waging of global war meant not only that they made decisions on the overall strategy of the war but on the most effective use of manifold resources. The concerting of the major decisions calls for the formation of higher councils of political leaders and there is not room in these councils for all; nor do the leaders of the great powers, making great commitments, willingly submit their decisions to debate among small powers who are making lesser commitments. The conduct of the war came into the hands of Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin and, under them, of Supreme Commanders in those theatres where the troops of more than one nation were engaged.

The Australian Government tried to force an entrance into the higher councils of war but had limited success. In addition to the basic realities that attend any alliance there were two obstacles. The "Big Three" had themselves the perpetual problem of reaching agreement among themselves and especially the problem of working with the Soviet Union. It was a strange and difficult alliance. On the Australian side, it is doubtful if Ministers realised fully how strange and difficult it was and Evatt for one was inclined to blame Britain and America for not knowing how to work with the Soviet Union and to believe rather fondly that if Australia, in his own person, were more active in the higher councils it would be easier to find rapport with Moscow. Another obstacle was in the large number of allies. The Australian Government might rightly claim that the contribution it was making to the war effort entitled it to a stronger voice and, less publicly, it might make comparisons with other allies who had done little fighting or, having been over-run, had ceased to fight. But, for the leaders of the Great Powers, to let one smaller ally into the Councils meant an inability to keep all the others out. In cases when Australia thought it had achieved a place in the inner circle, as in the case of the Pacific War Council in Washington, the eventual outcome was that the membership was enlarged, the significance of proceedings was lessened and the instrumentality was in the inner circle no longer.

An example of the effect of these two obstacles is seen in what was the most successful bid by Australia to enter the higher councils—the membership of the British War Cabinet arranged in the time of Menzies. At the height of the war Bruce, the Australian representative, was actually sitting alongside one of the Big Three and in its innermost councils. Nowhere else was the same entrance to a point so close to the higher direction

of the war achieved, and probably the Australian Government shared in the top secrets of the higher direction of the war more consistently as a result of this arrangement and had a more immediate influence in what was done than by any other way. In part this was due to the exceptional qualities of Bruce and the high standing he had in London but largely it was the consequence of an unorthodox step, rather out of keeping with assertions of Australian national independence, which Menzies took in getting a place for his Government in the War Cabinet of another nation. Yet, as the war progressed, and Churchill became one among three great war leaders instead of being indomitably the only one, the importance of the British War Cabinet suffered a trichotomy.

Australia never achieved the same entrance to decision-making in Washington as it had in London. The Government made a great deal of the closeness of the relationship between Curtin and MacArthur and some contemporary commentators tended to see it as giving Australia unusual strength. The strength on certain sections of American public opinion was undoubtedly great but in practice MacArthur was one of many trying to influence the decisions of Washington in favour of his own ideas and to the advantage of his own command and was not one of those who made the decisions. The close association with him by the Prime Minister of Australia strengthened MacArthur's case and when the two were identical thereby strengthened Australia's case, but the method tended to put Australia in the role of one who was backing one side in an American debate rather than in the role of an ally stating its views as one nation to another nation. So much of the early Australian relationship with the United States after America became a combatant was one of a claimant for reinforcements and supplies. In the crises of 1942 any interest in the higher strategy was predominantly an interest in getting more reinforcements and more aeroplanes actually on their way into the Pacific.

Roosevelt took the view that it was the job of Churchill to clear the ground with other members of the British Commonwealth and to speak for the Commonwealth. This followed the lines of the formal arrangements for the conduct of the war made in early 1942. There was perhaps a tendency on the part of Churchill in performing this task either to assume too readily that the Dominions would let him speak for them or to expect them to allow a great deal of room for him to reach agreement with the Americans. He tended at times to think it was a sufficient answer to an Australian request to say that it would be difficult to get the Americans to accept it. On the occasions when the Australian Government chose to go direct to Washington they usually found Roosevelt less resistant to their views than Churchill. Although this was sometimes represented as a greater understanding or a higher consideration for Australia by Roosevelt, it might be fairer to see it as a more realistic view of the practical disadvantage of resisting Australia at the cost of time and temper. "Well, if that's the way they want it," Roosevelt shrugged off one demand. Australia was well represented in Washington in turn by

Casey, Dixon and Eggleston and Australia was well regarded but, in the nature of things, neither they nor visiting Ministers came as close to the heart of government in Washington as Australia did in London. There was some exaggeration in the claims that the Australian Government sometimes made to exceptional intimacy with the United States leaders.

In matters relating to the higher command in those theatres in which Australian troops were principally engaged the Government had been more successful. Under Menzies, when Australian troops were committed to the Middle East, while they were placed under the operational control of the Commander-in-Chief in the theatre, they were kept intact and Blamey as G.O.C., A.I.F. had a direct responsibility to the Australian Government and a right to communicate with that Government. Questions of policy regarding the employment of the force were to be decided by the United Kingdom Government and the Australian Government in consultation. When MacArthur became Supreme Commander in the South-West Pacific, Australian forces were allotted to him but Blamey became Commander of Allied Land Forces and the liaison worked out between MacArthur and Curtin, with direct communication, put the Australian Government in a position to join in decisions about the employment of its forces.

Towards the end of the war the conduct of the Australian war effort was only partly in the hands of the Australian Government. Events and the decisions of others had taken control to the extent that it was not left open to Curtin to choose a role. In theory he could have refused to do what Australia was expected to do but in practice he could only modify or adjust the decisions made by others or forced on him by situations created by others.

The wartime leadership of Australia is hard to evaluate largely because Australians do not seem to take kindly to leaders. "Let us now praise famous men" is heard on the lips of the citizenry much less often than "Who the hell does he think he is?" Men who come before the public gaze can be popular or unpopular, usually for reasons that have little to do with their merit. They can gain respect. Some will be listened to and even admired. But not even the captain of a Test cricket team can hope to get from the crowd that constant trust that brings men to say: "Tell us what is the right thing to do and we will support you when you do it." In national affairs there may be indifference or inattention to politics but there is no surrender of political judgment to another or unquestioning acceptance of the leadership of the exceptional man.

Neither the public at large nor their own parties and parliamentary supporters gave to Menzies or to Curtin a devoted loyalty. Neither man awakened in Australian hearts the fire that Churchill kindled in his people. It is not only a question of the leader's personality. The Australian Department of Information, possibly thinking that Curtin was lacking in appeal or for some other reason, persistently used the name and image of Churchill in its propaganda directed to the Australian public rather than the name of their own Prime Minister but it is extremely doubtful whether Churchill was accepted as a leader in Australia.

While facing the fact that neither Menzies nor Curtin became the dynamic, inspiring and fully-trusted leader of a nation at war, proper tribute should be paid to what both of them did in the organising and direction of the Australian war effort. Any comparison between them would be out of place for they faced different tasks in widely different circumstances, the one before Japan attacked and the other after, the one when combat was chiefly in Europe and the Middle East and the other when it was global; the one when Australia was still waking up and the other when the nation was fully aroused.

The contribution of Menzies was considerable. He laid down principles which were observed for the whole war. He made the basic organisation for munitions and construction which lasted throughout the war and he brought into that organisation from outside governmental circles those men who under Curtin were largely responsible for its success. The 6th, 7th, 8th and 9th Divisions of the A.I.F. were raised under Menzies and many of the notable Australian commanders, including Blamey, were appointed. The Empire Air Training Scheme was started. The years 1940 and 1941 were years of substantial achievement and the response to crisis in the early months of 1942 owed a great deal to what had been done already.

Curtin had the longer, the more difficult and the greater wartime task to face. He had to impose on the nation controls, restrictions of freedom, direction of manpower, requisition of resources and prohibitions which would have been inconceivable at an earlier period. He had to conduct a total war effort and steer the nation through the days of great anxiety when an isolated Australia seemed to be in danger of invasion, and then through the many difficult problems set by the presence in great numbers in Australian territory of Allied forces. He had difficulties, complex in themselves and vital in their consequences, in matters related to inter-Allied cooperation and later in the war his government was drawn more and more into international activities.

Parliamentary politics presented him with fewer difficulties than Menzies had encountered. Talk at various times of a national government, as in Britain, had come to nothing and the party structure of politics continued but the contest between parties moderated. After the change of government in 1941 the new Opposition was left in a weakened state by the circumstances in which it had lost office while in 1942 the urgency of the national peril restrained criticism. After the 1943 election the Opposition had little capacity to cause any difficulty for the Government even if it had wished to do so. The chief parliamentary attack on Curtin's Ministry came from individuals, some on the Government side and some on the Opposition side, and the party political contest only sharpened when two post-war issues of socialism and increased Federal powers came to the front.

Curtin's chief political problems at home were in his own party, both in his parliamentary caucus and in the Australian Labour Party. One of his greatest achievements was the way he carried his party with him. Both

he and the party grew in stature and responsibility as higher demands were made on them. Some of his speeches that reveal most brightly the spark of greatness in him were speeches made to the Labour Party and, by repute and hearsay, some of the most dramatic and critical scenes of his wartime leadership were in the sessions of the party. The writer has been told by one who was present of a breath-stopping moment in the critical debate on conscription. Curtin had described the dangers to Australia, the threat of Japanese conquest and occupation, the things that Australians would suffer. Then he paused: "But they are not going to do that. We won't let them!"

Curtin would have regarded what he did for the Labour Party and with the Labour Party as his triumph. He had endured much but he had led it. But though he triumphed, the Labour Party helped to break him. The Labour Party had been his life. He believed in it as a great power, perhaps the greatest power, for the good of Australian men and women. Where Menzies could face striking coal miners and argue with them, Curtin felt their failure to respond to their own government's decisions as a betrayal of a Labour leader. Any report of absenteeism or slackness in a workshop was not just a human failing; it was a rebuff to his faith in the working class. The criticism, sometimes bitter, by his own parliamentary caucus was not just a political fight but a family wound. The shortcomings of some members of the Labour Party distressed him and the distress began to wear him down.

Another disappointment of a much less considerable kind was with the press. He had edited a party newspaper and had been an office holder in the Australian Journalists' Association. Whatever he might have thought about the proprietors of newspapers he had a noble picture of the working journalist. He became sadly disillusioned about the press and what he saw as their misrepresentation and unfairness. He tortured himself by paying too much attention to what they wrote.

A Prime Minister is necessarily a lonely man, in need of much reinforcement and of trusted support. He cannot fret or he will collapse or die. These two things did make Curtin fret. For a politician he was an unusually vulnerable man.

Let it be remembered that Curtin did not fight hard to become Prime Minister and showed some reticence about assuming office. Having come to the heavy responsibilities and finding them greatly increased by a new turn in a war that was already being waged, he grew in wisdom, character and strength with the added burdens that were laid on him. His own dedication was complete. He held back nothing from his service to the nation. For the first two years of office he overcame obstacle after obstacle and accomplished task after task with great resolution. But at the time when very properly he could have gained in confidence still further by looking at what he and his colleagues had done and when he could have fairly reasoned that the crisis had passed and eventual victory was certain, a change became perceptible. He began to question whether

he had done enough. Whether he could have done more. He moved towards an austerity of personal life and showed some intolerance to those whose self-indulgence showed that their dedication was incomplete. He worried more about criticism. He worked harder and harder and spared himself less. He felt the criticisms and the denigration both by the newspapers and by his own party members more keenly. Then physical tiredness and sickness came. A wholly committed man who had given everything he could and who had done much good for the nation became one of the most tragic casualties of the war.

The Prime Minister did not live to see victory, although victory was on its way. He had lived out his own text: "We have a heavy responsibility. I ask every Australian, man and woman, to go about their allotted task with full vigour and courage. . . . We shall hold this country and keep it as a citadel for the British-speaking race and as a place where civilisation will persist."