START OF TAPE ONE - SIDE A

GENERAL THOMAS BLAMEY - CHRISTMAS MESSAGE 23 DECEMBER 1941

Fellow members of the AIF: I've just had the privilege of visiting home for a very short period. I was called home by the Australian Government to discuss with them all the affairs connected with you, and all that pertains to you over here. And while I was there I met so many of your friends, and so many of your relatives, and I got so many personal messages for so many of you that I haven't been able to pass them all along; and so I'm happy to have the occasion of talking to you all and I hope there are a great many listening in.

The messages that I bring back are messages of love from home, of the love in Christmas time, and of the hope that you will soon be back amongst them all to enjoy a Christmas with them. Flying down the coast of Australia, watching the seas break on the sands along Southport, all the people of Queensland enjoying themselves; all down the coast of New South Wales, the beaches full of people, all enjoying the summertime that is just coming in; and down into Victoria, and in South Australian, the fields all so delightfully green and fresh. It was just a late spring in Australia and everything was at its best. And it all seemed all so very light-hearted, but in the homes of the people from which so many of you have come, there is a much deeper feeling. And while the war effort is so great and so heavy, they are ready to take it, and they are putting the whole of their weight, and the whole of their energy, and the whole of their thought and time, into it. Taxation has been made tremendously heavy, but nobody is growling, it's all their effort to win the war.

And so they have let you come away, quite readily and quite happily, because they feel that you are putting all that there is in life, for you, into your effort to do it too; and I'm quite happy to know that you are training and preparing, and working in every way that you possibly can, to fit yourselves for next year's struggle.

It is strange that is just a year ago since our 6th Division was so very busily occupied in Libya, diving the Italians out of it and securing the great booty, and the great bag of prisoners that they've sent back. And now, again, both Italian and Germans are well on the run. So it is in Russia, the Germans are on the run before the Russians. What an extraordinary change it is in the last twelve months. It was only a little over twelve months ago since we thought our lines with Australia were cut, that there was no possibility of getting our ships up the Red Sea - there was difficulty everywhere. And now a change comes over the picture and we are on the up-grade.

It is true that the Japs, the Barbarians of the East, have taken a part and have now come into the picture; but what has been the effect of this? The sudden attack - the treacherously sudden attack - on Hawaii was like a slap in the face to a noble people and it brought unified America into the war. And

now the whole of the civilised nations of the Pacific Littoral have joined together and there will be an immense unity of effort, and an immense unity of achievement, in the Pacific within the next few months. There is a unity of spirit there that bodes ill for the Jap, and while he will probably score a few victories, and obtain a few achievements in the next few months before the full weight of our power is thrown upon him, don't have any fear for the result. The unity of America, of Canada, of Australia, and the Netherlands Indies, with the British Fleet joining in, will be more than the Japanese can stomach before the next twelve months are out.

And as for our homeland, an effort to invade that and to conquer it is beyond his power. He is certainly attacking the Philippines and attacking Singapore area now, but it is an immense effort to go to the coast of Australia with a sufficient force to enable him to accomplish anything. So you need have no fears for your homeland, it is quite safe. The only thing that can bring it danger would be the power of the Japanese to sweep the British and American navies from the sea, and that is far beyond his powers.

I have no misgivings; I think that the entry of the Japs, bringing unity as it does into all our English speaking effort, will be something that will definitely shorten the war, and I hope it may be so. But my message to you from home is this: they are thinking of you, they are dreaming of you, and they are sending you all their loving thoughts over this Christmas tide, and wherever you may be, wherever your home may be in Australia, the hearts of all those at home are with you hear in the Middle East.

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