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**AUSTRALIA AND GREATER  
EAST ASIA**

*By K. TAKASHI ITOH*

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# AUSTRALIA AND GREATER EAST ASIA

*By K. TAKASHI ITOH*

**T**HE Commonwealth of Australia is facing a difficult situation to cope with the increasing hazards of the Pacific war. The Japanese naval successes in the Coral Sea and off the Solomon Islands have exposed the vulnerability of the war machine of Major-General Douglas MacArthur, while bombing operations of the Japanese naval war hawks are hampering the replenishment of the coastal defence. On top of this, the institution of a rigid naval blockade by the Japanese Navy has dislocated the movement of sea-borne traffic, which is essential for gearing up the war preparations of the Commonwealth.

Prior to the outbreak of the war in greater East Asia, the average total volume of goods transported annually to and from the different states within Australia was roughly estimated at 43,000,000 tons, one-fifth of which or approximately 8,000,000 tons were transported by coastal liners. However, with the progress of the war, this sea-borne trade has been seriously interrupted. Moreover, in view of the fact that the railway system which connects all the states was constructed mainly for the purpose of facilitating communications within each state, it is not easy to reorganize promptly the land transportation network to meet the pressing needs of wartime exigencies. This has caused the northern part of Queensland, North Australia, the northern portion of West Australia and Tasmania to become economically separated from the heart of Australia, namely, the southeastern part of the Commonwealth, and as such, they have been more or less left to lead their own independent economic life. In other words, these northern districts on

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mainland of Australia and Tasmania have not only been compelled to depend on their internal supply capacity to meet the demands their daily life, but have also been driven to the necessity of providing their war requirements locally. Furthermore, due to the disruption of the coastal shipping, they are unable to ship their products as freely as in the past to the southeastern of Australia, the main outlets of their export trade. In consequence, they are suffering from an undue accumulation of international products, which, in turn, has increased their economic and military burdens.

With the propagation of the policy of "white Australia" and the adoption of the protective tariff in 1900 for the promotion of domestic industry, the six states in Australia managed to organize themselves into a united Australia, but in so doing they failed to define the relations between the ruler and the ruled, owing to which fact there has always been a lack of inter-state unity. Although more than forty years have elapsed since the formation of the so-called "united Australia," no indivisible unity has yet materialized. The result is that each state, under the impact of the Pacific war, has been forced to organize itself into a separate unit of the Commonwealth war mill.

The doctrine of "white Australia" cannot be regarded as a genuine principle, particularly when ninety per cent. of the present 7,000,000 people of the Commonwealth are of British origin. Therefore, this doctrine should be considered as a monopolistic policy of Britain. However, with such a general conception it would be difficult to understand the virtual abolition of the immigration encouragement agreement between Britain and Australia and the keen economic competition waged by the latter against the cotton industry of Lancashire, by enforcing a protective tariff against the import of cotton goods from Britain. Nevertheless, it is a well-known fact that the compulsory emigration of convicts from Britain to Australia formed the corner-stone of the development of the Commonwealth. In this respect, it is noteworthy that even in the first migration ship to Australia there were over 80 free immigrants,

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In addition to 500 male and 200 female convicts, and also included among them were larcenists and political offenders connected with the Irish independence movement.

The system of immigration of convicts was kept up for a period of approximately fifty years and was only discontinued in 1840. The abolition of it was chiefly brought about by the working people of Sydney and other cities in southeastern parts of Australia, who freely settled in those areas. These settlers wanted to have their wages increased, for the convict working, who were getting nominal payment, were competing with them. Therefore, it was really the selfish desire of these urban workers that formed the nucleus of the doctrine of "white Australia." For this reason, most drastic restrictions were imposed on immigrants from Europe and even from Britain, not to speak of the restriction placed on coloured immigrants. This shows that the principle of "white Australia" is based on the desire of the Australian urban workers to monopolize the Commonwealth as their own nest. Accordingly, the term, "white Australia," has a much narrower meaning, because it is generally identifiable with the aspiration of the urban working class.

Despite the repeated military failures of Britain and the United States, Australia is still placing reliance on them, because the Australian leaders seem to think that their country is a miniature white world situated outside the pale of the contiguous Asiatic sphere. At the same time, being fully conscious of Japan's striking power, they are criticizing Britain for its inadequate military aid and are looking wistfully to the United States for securing sufficient assistance. As a sequel to this wishful longing, American armed forces have been dispatched to Australia to organize a joint defence front against Japan. Be that as it may, the moot point is whether the defence position of Australia can be substantially strengthened by relying on the help of the United States. It is seen that America is only interested in Australia as an outlet for its exportable goods and as an anchorage for its political and military advances into East Asia. So far, America has failed to show any constructive interest in the

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economic adjustment of Australia as desired by the latter. It appears that the United States is more concerned with Canada with which British dominion it shares a common frontier extending over a distance of some 3,000 miles, than Australia, which is located 7,500 miles away from San Francisco.

In 1940, when a shortage of shipping bottoms occurred on Australia-Britain run owing to the swift progress of the European war, the United States agreed to purchase wool from the commonwealth to alleviate its abrupt loss of trade. Now that the situation in the Pacific littoral has become unfavourable to Washington, the Australian authorities must be cognisant of the fact that such an emergency measure cannot continue for a long time. On the other hand, the obvious shortage of transports must have substantially curtailed the operation of shipping services between Australia and America. It is conceivable that so long as the present method of collaboration continues between Australia and America, not only will the former be made to pay great economic sacrifices, but there is no guarantee that it might not be reduced to the status of a protectorate of Washington in the future.

Having a small population of 7,000,000, Australia is not in a position to construct a powerful military set-up. For the same reason, the consumption of its domestic products is limited. In normal times, it used to depend on overseas markets for its industrial products, with the result that its economy was greatly regulated by its foreign trade. Quite apart from the wartime conditions, it would be meaningful to observe that all important commercial transactions of Australia with the British Empire, European countries and the United States have already reached a saturating point. As against this, the purchasing power of the peoples inhabiting the Oriental countries bordering the western Pacific and the East Indies has greatly increased of late. Especially, in the case of India a tremendous increase was witnessed during the past ten years, though the standard of living "the peoples in these countries has been climbing at a slow pace. This means that if Australia wishes to recover its economy per -

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manently, it must increase its commercial contacts with Oriental markets, attaching secondary importance to the British, European and American markets. As a matter of fact, Oriental countries are most likely to act as its economic safety valve in the long run.

Up to 1936, the different markets in East Asia imported as much as twenty-six per cent of the entire exports of Australia but in the following year the amount was reduced to eighteen per cent. of the total exports of Australia due solely to its policy of bringing pressure to bear on Japan's foreign trade. In spite of that the exports from the East Asiatic markets to Australia maintained the level of twenty-two per cent. of the total imports of Australia without in any way being affected by the political influence of the Commonwealth Government. This fact serves to indicate that the commodities imported by it from the East Asiatic markets are absolutely essential, and that the importation of them cannot be increased or decreased by political considerations, nor can they be easily substituted by products from other markets.

In the days when Australia was conducting brisk foreign trade with the different markets in East Asia, it always maintained a favourable trade balance with its exports amounting to 109 or 116 as against its imports of 100. However, no sooner it deliberately restrained its trade with East Asia than its foreign trade balance became pronouncedly reversed, with its imports registering 114 or 124 as against its exports of 100. This again clearly points out the value of the East Asiatic markets to Australia and the reason why it must realize the future potentiality of them. Even if Australia's economy had been dependent on the European and American markets in the past, insofar as the

present and future are concerned, it is apparent that its economy is linked to that of the Orient.

Irrespective of the current war, the promotion of the international position of Australia can only be sought in closer economic intercourse with the various countries of East Asia. If Australia realizes this concrete fact, it needs no argument to

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say that all the countries in East Asia will also recognize and respect its economic potentiality. Such a reciprocity will not only lead to a powerful economic tie-up between Japan and Australia, but will also bring about a closer economic relationship among all the countries in East Asia and India ; and should this be accomplished, it is not either Japan or China or India, but Australia, which enjoys a very high percentage of productive power, that will secure the most advantageous position in that mutually beneficial economic accord.

It is unfortunate that the present tendencies in Australia, at least the tendencies in political circles, are wholly in favour of complete reliance on the United States and Britain. The Australian statesmen in their efforts to continue their hostile attitude toward Japan seem to have shelved the question of "free" Australia. They have purposely made their country the cannon fodder of the Roosevelt administration to persist in their irrational standpoint in regard to the new harmony in greater East Asia. Nonetheless, the fact remains that economic co-operation between Australia and the East Asiatic nations will facilitate the emergence of a new, harmonious understanding among all the countries bordering the western Pacific and the eastern Indian Ocean. The longer Australia delays to acknowledge the inevitability of the creation of an Asiatic-Australian solidarity sphere, lesser will be its gain. The time has, indeed, come for Australia to ponder over the question of participating in the greater East Asia co-prosperity sphere.

In a desperate attempt to put up resistance against Japan, the Commonwealth has made common cause with the United States, which is now utilizing it as its southwestern Pacific military base against this country. To a certain extent, this policy of submission to the United States is attributable to the fact that Australia has always been raising a portion of necessary funds in America, and that a great bulk of its foreign trade has been dependent on the purchasing activity of the latter. When the Australian Labour Party had not acquired power, it was the most forceful exponent of constructing

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Australia for the Australians, but when it came into power it changed its policy and urged collaboration with the United States. Although the Australians are supporting the Americans being confronted with similar wartime difficulties, it is certain that they do not desire that Washington should dominate them either now or after, for they are eager to propagate their own way of life in a free and independent manner—a life which is not least affected by the participation of their country in the greater East Asia co-prosperity sphere.

The geographical position of Australia clearly reveals that it is situated between the western Pacific and the eastern Indian Ocean and not in any part of the Atlantic or the eastern Pacific. Therefore,

neither it can deny its closer affinity with greater East Asia, nor it can afford to remain isolated from that region. Its association with Britain and the United States is unnatural, because both these two nations belong to different distant spheres. The Anglo-American hold over it would only precipitate frictions in the harmonious development of a new order in greater East Asia, particularly when it is located within the orbit of the Orient. Hence, it is more than obvious that Australia must recast its policy in order to fit in with the new conditions in this part of the world as an independent partner.