

# THE PATROL BATTLES AT KOKODA

## Eyewitness Tells Of Jap Advance

**I**N an eyewitness account of patrol skirmishes during the Japanese advance inland from Buna a sergeant who participated said that the small Australian force which contested the well-defined track was heavily outnumbered, but inflicted relatively heavy casualties. Miniature battles were fought in the jungle or heavy forest, mainly at night in misty moonlight. At Oivi the Australians had insufficient men to fully protect their flanks.

When the Japanese were frontally resisted they cut a semi-circle through the jungle with surprising speed and attacked from the rear. The Australians were forced to retire off the track and force their way through dense undergrowth to regain the track and prevent complete encirclement.

The engagement lasted five hours. Again hopeless numerical inferiority prevented the effective defence of the little tableland on which Kokoda stands.

Again the Australians took up positions commanding the approaches to the track. The Japanese launched a mortar bombardment and determinedly charged positions from the front, the Australians blasting the clamouring Japanese with Mills grenades.

### Colonel Owen Killed

In this fight Colonel Owen, who fought in the forefront of the defenders, was fatally wounded while leading troops who were throwing hand grenades against the climbing Japanese. The Japs again found the going too hot and spread to the flanks to climb the sheer slope and envelop the Australian position. Most of our forces escaped through the scrub and retired to the main body in the mountains. The Japanese used the usual simple tricks to try and deceive the Australians, calling the natives: "We help, taubada, We help." They shouted to give the impression they were a larger force and invited surrender.

### Cyclists Lead

On the level trails the patrols were preceded by three cyclists, who appeared conspicuous in their white hats, to try and draw fire so the Australians would reveal their positions. Their uniforms were green overalls. They certainly were skillful and incredibly speedy in cutting through the dense undergrowth. The sergeant praised the behaviour of the native troops who were steady and excellently disciplined under fire.

The statement that the Japanese hold New Guinea north of the mountains has caused amazement. The truth is that the Japanese hold only precarious footholds at Lae and Salamaua as our recent raids showed, and now have stretched a thin line of patrols across a single jungle track from Gona and Buna to Kokoda. Our advanced fighters and other forces are still mas-

Buna to Kokoda. Our advanced fighters and other forces are still masters of the vast bushland thousands of times greater than the area occupied by the Japanese. The Japanese all know that we hold 90 per cent. of New Guinea.

### Berlin Claims

The Berlin radio says that the Japanese are approaching closer to Port Moresby which the Australians are reported to have begun to evacuate.