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THE WAR ALONG OUR COASTLINE

Frustrated in the attempt to approach Australian territory in force by her loss of the Coral Sea battle, Japan is resorting to harrying tactics against our ports and shipping. Sunday night's raid on Sydney Harbour, which ended disastrously for the four small submarines concerned, has been followed by news of attacks on three vessels at sea, two of them only 35 miles east of Sydney and the other 225 miles south. Thus the war moves down from the north and north-east, right to our great centres of population and among our coastwise trade. These forays underline afresh the daring and resourcefulness of the Japanese as fighters. It was no mean feat to get a group of midget submarines, unseen, into position to enter Sydney Heads, and the sacrificial courage of their crews, whose chances of survival were tenuous, compels admiration. Failure will not deter so persistent an enemy from trying again, and henceforth we must be unsleepingly on guard against surprise attacks, both from the air and by surface or underwater raiders. We, however, can give as well as take submarine blows. Against her slight success in our waters Japan must set to-day the staggering loss of three large steamers, including a laden transport, and the severe damage done to a fourth vessel—a crippling stroke to her shipping resources in the island region.

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The final remedy for the Japanese raider menace is the destruction or capture of the bases from which these sorties are being organised. The building up of the forces necessary for such operations takes time, and we must count ourselves fortunate that, if the day for turning to the offensive is still distant, Japan's own aggressive advance has been roughly halted. General Tojo boasted last week that, as a result of the Coral Sea battle, nothing now stood between Australia and the onslaught of the Japanese. If this were so, the "onslaught" would not have been confined to minor submarine thrusts. The truth is that, as the Prime Minister told Parliament yesterday, the Allies scored a signal success against the enemy fleet, which retreated northwards and has made no attempt to resume its mission. To this severe repulse has been added the failure of the Japanese to regain the aerial ascendancy which they enjoyed until they reached New Britain and eastern New Guinea. Mr. Curtin reported that the air fighting in the north had shown "a definite balance in our favour" but he was careful to insist that the maintenance of offensive action demanded a continuous supply of aircraft.

The Prime Minister's review of Australia's defensive position was soberly encouraging. If the enemy is still in formidable strength, and is thrusting exploratory fingers southwards along our mainland coast, we now have strong forces with which to meet any attempt at invasion. For the support which the United States has sent, and is sending, Australians can never be sufficiently grateful, and Mr. Curtin's tribute to the bearing of the American forces in our midst was richly deserved. No passage

was richly deserved. No passage of his speech was more welcome than that in which he announced that, in conformity with Mr. Churchill's earlier assurances, promises of material British aid to Australia had been made following Dr. Evatt's mission to London. Mr. Curtin described this assistance as "a practical gesture of great significance to the Australian people." What is no less gratifying is that the last vestiges of misunderstanding between London and Canberra, arising from the period of disaster in the Pacific, have disappeared. That period itself may not entirely have ended, but we can face the future with a resolute confidence based on our own expanding war preparations and the backing of powerful friends.