

Many of Australians' troubles are due to the woes of Empire.

I asked a well-informed Australian correspondent why the Australians didn't start building Spitfires back in 1939--by now they'd have something to fight with. He was intensely bitter. "We tried to get the English to let us do just that. The answer came back: 'the patents couldn't be obtained.' The English were simply afraid to let this pastoral country start manufacturing anything. They were afraid of the consequences after the war." Permission was finally obtained to manufacture Wirraways, which are nothing more than trainer planes outfitted as bombers and fighters, with a speed of about 140 mph. A grand total of 500 Wirraways have now been manufactured in Australia. They were shot down like flies the first time they went into battle. Incidentally, Brett says the new Australian Beaufort Bomber, highly vaunted in the Department of Information newsreels, isn't worth a damn.

NEGROES:

One of the biggest stories of the war which can't be written--and which shouldn't be written, of course--is the mutiny among American Negro troops which took place near Townsville on May 22. A company of Negroes got their rifles and determined that they would kill their commanding officer, a Captain Francis Williams of Columbus, Ga. They fired several hundred rounds of ammunition at his tent (he was in a slit trench, later escaped without facing the almost certain death which it was his duty to face as an officer.) When other officers tried to escape the camp to obtain help, they were fired upon (in a half track) with a fifty-caliber machine gun. A complete report on this affair is enclosed. No better illustration of the barrier between the races could be found than this: investigating officers must depend upon a private investigation by a Negro Sergeant (whose pipe was shot out of his mouth) named Rufus James, if they ever hope to uncover the culprits. Several members of the

company and the captain are under court martial, but the company (including all possible witnesses) is being sent to New Guinea and it is possible that nothing more will ever be heard of it. "Those Negroes got away with something," said Major General Ralph Royce yesterday.

Opinion over here is almost unanimous: Those Negroes--there are probably 10,000 Of them now--should never have been sent to Australia. There are no women here for them, and some ugly situations have resulted. In Townsville Sunday a Negro's leg was amputated. The records list him as having accidentally discharged his gun. But he was shot by a white man who caught him in bed with his wife. On the night of the mutiny there was another big rumpus, when it was reported that a Negro had raped a white woman. Investigation proved that she had made a date to meet him, and a possible riot or lynching was avoided. The only answer that distracted officers have been able to find is the opening of whore houses for Negroes, such as has been done in Brisbane, where some white women were found who would accept them. In Townsville whites and Negroes line up all together in front of whore houses where Negroes are accepted, and thus far I haven't heard of any riots (a Negro struck a white officer up there a couple of months ago but was never apprehended.) Everybody here feels that some black women would solve the problem. Neither the aborigine women nor the New Guinea women (there are about four companies of black engineers in New Guinea) will have anything to do with American Negroes. Incidentally, many Negroes have been able to get away with the story-told to lower class white women--that they are American Indians.

I have never seen the racial problem brought home so forcibly as it is over here. Sometimes I think we have been as lax in teaching the lessons of democracy as the British have been in India--and look where the British in India and Burma are now!

These American Negroes, by and large, have no idea what they are fighting for. Oddly, the better educated Negroes are the most rebellious--the mutiny of that company of Southern Negroes was led by two or three Chicagoans. A letter from my wife quotes my maid's husband as saying he'll never be taken into the Army, because so far as he knows the Japanese are just as good as anybody else. It's a problem that we won't solve tomorrow or next day.

MacARTHUR:

I can sincerely say that I don't know one damned thing about MacArthur. I saw him today for the first time since he was in Canberra more than two months ago--the left side of his chest was covered by ribbons. If he has done anything since he has been in Australia it is well-covered. He rarely sees anyone except his chief of staff, General Sutherland. He sits in his office and dreams or broods or reminisces, and nobody knows what he is thinking unless it is Sutherland. I've talked to every ranking officer in Australia except MacArthur, I believe. They are as much in the dark as I am. General Brett doesn't know anything. Wasserman knew very little about the life and habits of MacArthur--he used to take suggestions to MacArthur but he never seemed to get any answers. There are grounds for supposing that MacArthur resents that the war is being fought on other fronts--I know that two or three of his staff officers have spoken bitterly against Roosevelt because they felt Roosevelt was trying to dampen the MacArthur political boom; I do not know that MacArthur himself thinks that. I do know this: Officers who escaped from Bataan hated MacArthur almost beyond description. General George was probably the bitterest about "that posing son-of-a-bitch." The stories we hear about MacArthur's overwhelming heroic elevation in the U.S. are amazing--they prove only that the U.S. is hungry for a hero, I suppose. "Well, we put him there, knowing better," says one correspondent who managed to get out of Bataan.