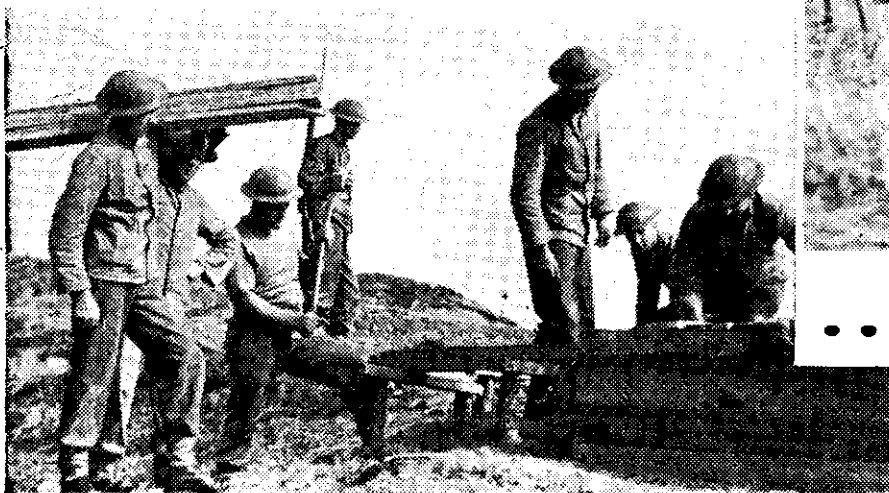


# "WE SHALL FIGHT THEM..."

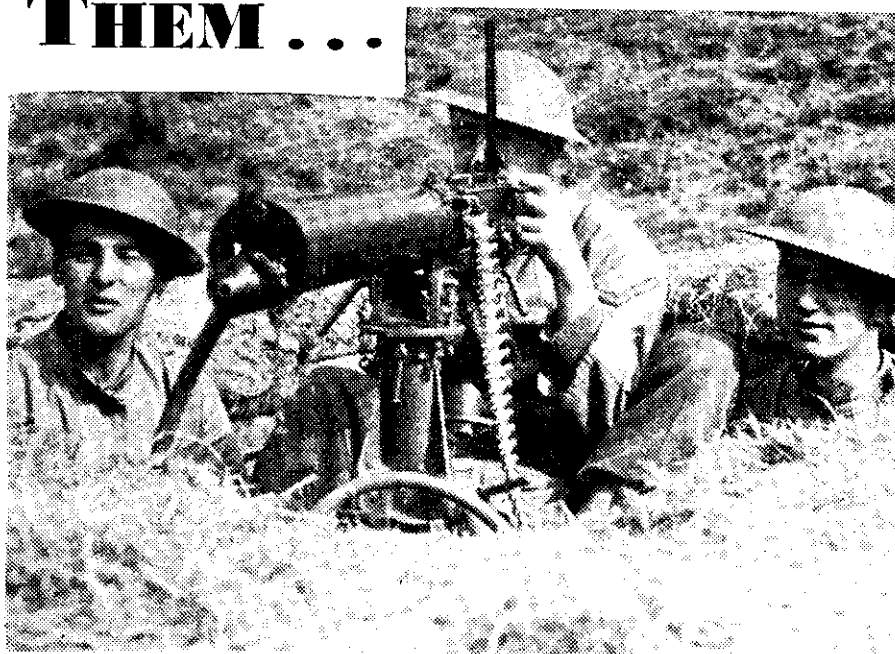
*[I]t is not possible to mention the locality of the beach, which is somewhere in the North Island, but in peace time it was well known to picknickers and holiday-makers.*

To-day, that beach represents New Zealand's front line against an invader, and sand, sun and surf are no longer an invitation to squander a day in idleness. Ugly barbed wire barricades scar the beach; here and there are concrete strong points and sand-bagged fortified posts; at an alarm, peaceful beach cottages would disgorge khaki, steel-helmeted soldiers, the men of New Zealand's front line, standing-to.



*Above: THERE IS NEVER AN END to the work of the men on coastal defence. A platoon party strengthening a strong point*

*Top Right: From its well camouflaged and protected nest this machine gun commands a wide field of fire*



## ... ON THE BEACHES"

ONE day last week, I had an opportunity of visiting this particular beach and spending some time with the men there. I ate with them, talked with them, watched them at work and off duty. To the families and friends of these men, who are probably seeing very little of them these days, I would say this: The troops defending the coast are stuck into a real job. It isn't an easy or a comfortable job by any means, but they are doing it well, and they are standing up well under active service conditions.

Let's take a look at this area, which is a typical one, watched by what I imagine is a pretty typical company of infantry. The area includes beach, rocky coastline, and a stretch of rolling sand dunes and paddocks, and the men are quartered in cottages, in improvised "barracks," and some of them in tents.

### What Happens to Private Munro?

And let's see what happens to Private—shall we call him John Munro?—who has been posted to a platoon in this area. He finds conditions are a good deal different from those in the camp in which he has done all his training so far. From now until an indefinite date in the future his home will be a bare little beach cottage fronting the sea. Furniture, he finds, has been reduced to a few essentials, chairs, table, an old settee, and a few boxes. His bed is a wooden bunk, the middle one of three which have been hastily built against the wall of what was once the bedroom. It has a pretty hard bottom, but after the first day he won't worry about that.

He doesn't find many comforts or "amenities," but there is an old radio which someone has given his outfit, and any amount of magazines and reading matter.

The food, too, he observes, is not served with the frills and extras of a first-class hotel. But there is plenty of it, and it is good and wholesome—two good hot meals at breakfast and dinner, and "dry rations," with extras, at mid-day. He has been lucky, moreover, in his platoon cook, a young man who is bad-tempered and blasphemous early in the morning but has a knack of making up an attractive meal from unattractive scraps.

### Never Off Duty

The life is hard, and for a few days, until he has toughened up and got the measure of it, he wonders how the devil he will last the week out. Here is approximately how he spends his day, or rather his 24 hours, for he is never off duty. He is roused out of bed at 0500 hours, which is five o'clock in the morning to civilians snugly abed at that hour. From then until 0630 he "stands-to," fully dressed and equipped. There is no smoking or lounging around. For an hour before dawn and half an hour after dawn he and his platoon are on the alert, their only luxury a cup of tea or coffee to keep them awake.

At 0630, sentries are posted (double sentries have been on duty all night), and, still yawning, he marches back to his sleeping quarters for a shave and a

*(Continued on next page)*



*BARBED WIRE DEFENCES* scar many a New Zealand beach these days. In true Army tradition, some humorist has added a signpost to the barricade