



[R.N.Z.A.F. Official Photograph.

**Photographed as they neared their Pacific Island base, this flight of new Warhawk fighters were flown from New Zealand to the forward area. The Hudson bomber leading in the apex of the V navigated this air convoy.**

in crediting the Fijian unit with the first "real" Pacific operations.

But to get back to the hurricane: the two aircraft destroyed by the wind were replaced by another two machines taken over from a civil air-line. These two aircraft, with their fresh war-paint, were harbingers. In less than twelve months a bomber reconnaissance squadron, equipped with Lockheed Hudson bomber aircraft, was operating from Fiji, in addition to an army co-operation squadron and a flight of multi-engined flying-boats. The primary role of these squadrons was to carry out reconnaissance patrols in the Fijian area. They also provided escorts for merchant shipping trading in Fijian waters, and flew searches as deep as 400 miles seaward from their bases.

To the realist student of geopolitics, however, this R.N.Z.A.F. expansion was too small to be noticed beneath the shadow of a greater and more devastating

expansion—that which Japan initiated with Pearl Harbour in December, 1941.

The events which followed Pearl Harbour are already history . . . New Zealand prepared to meet dire eventualities.

By the middle of 1942, however, the strategical position in the South Pacific area had altered. The Midway and Coral Sea Battles, the United States landings in the Solomons, and the halting of the Japanese drive in New Guinea, had all contributed to remove the immediate threat from New Zealand. This improvement made it possible to revise earlier plans, which were mainly defensive. The time was ripe "to let the boys have a crack at the Japs," to quote the term of a New Zealand journalist writing of a New-Zealand-based reconnaissance squadron just after Pearl Harbour.

Consequent on the United States' activity in the South Pacific, the pioneer