

Death By Mustard Gas

By Geoff Plunkett

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IN the desperate days of World War II, after the fall of Singapore when it looked like Australia

might be overrun by the Japanese, the Australian government's Defence Committee sought out a secret weapon to use in the event of an invasion. The Japanese had been known to use poison gas against the Chinese, so there didn't seem to be any problem with using chemical weapons as a defensive measure (Australia was signatory to an international treaty that banned offensive use of chemical warfare). In 1943 a shipment of phosgene and mustard gas made its way to Australia aboard the *Idomeneus*. When it arrived the waterside workers unloading it were overcome by fumes, resulting in severe injuries to dozens of wharfies and the death of one. Plunkett's concise, chilling book is a tale of the bungling that led to that tragedy and attempts to keep our chemical weapons stores a secret.

TROY LENNON

Death

BY MUSTARD GAS

How Deadly Mustard Gas
Saw Mustard Gas

