

America At War

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ANGLO - AMERICAN - CHINESE FORCES have taken in the slack and the squeeze is on Japan. Premier Tojo recently told his people that everything depends on airpower, that while Jap production of planes had increased 100 percent the past year, more aircraft are necessary. He got down to cases and said that a hair's breadth of power on one side or the other might be the difference between defeat and victory.

Tojo is wrong of course. The margin of superiority is wide on the Allied side. Japan has the population and materials plus the advantage of fighting on her home field, but technology, especially in aircraft and productive facilities, is far inferior to that of the United States and Britain. The Jap cannot keep even in aviation because he has to copy.

If Jap airplane production has doubled, as Tojo said, it is possible they are now getting 2,000 or more per month of all types. Recent Washington reports, however, put Nipponese output at about 1,200 a month. The time will come, if it has not already, when Japan's airplane output will pass Germany's, where production is being decimated by bombing and disruption of services. But whatever building rate the Japanese may have or achieve will be of little avail against the myriad planes which the Allies will fly against them.

Liquidation of the Marshalls looks like a drive on the "direct" island skipping run to Japan. The Solomons and Gilberts are already in Allied hands, and Rabaul should be finished early.

Push Into the Carolines

Next hard job would seem to be the Caroline Islands, centered by the great Jap naval base at Truk. That bastion has already taken a blasting which, into the bargain, blew two leading Nip war lords out of their jobs. Meantime, we've taken Eniwetok, and likely other islands are falling as we write.

Eleven or twelve hundred miles north of Truk is Marcus Island, owned and occupied by Japan — about 1,200 mi from Tokyo, a feasible distance for unescorted bombers. That probably puts Marcus out of effective range of Japanese land-based aviation, while it would allow long-range Allied equipment to deliver fairly large loads of explosives on the land in which "soldiers die like flowers." But Marcus is only a square mile or two in area, and it cannot base an effective force of land planes.

Closer to the Jap mainland are the islands of Ogasawara Shoto, only 800 mi distant, a nice run to give Tokyo the "Hamburg" treatment. But these islands

also appear to be too small; and Jap aviation could make it hot for Ogasawara, or any islands of like distance from their home bases.

Also about 800 miles from Japan is big Formosa island, just off the coast of China — probably not as easy to capture as a piece of the China coast itself. Luzon, in the Philippines is big too, and at 1,200 mi from Japan, is a practical distance, especially for B-29s.

Decimation of shipping comes nearer than any other to being a one-way method to put the kill on Japan. Already the Allies have laid more than 1,025 ships on the bottom, about one-third of all the Japs had. It is clear they are unable to replace these losses because they are resorting to barges, which are slow and costly in troops.

The Press on Germany

In Europe, still the big show, the main event is complete liquidation of the *Luftwaffe*, which Lt Gen Carl Spaatz says may be expected some time this summer if the weather is good.

The German air force is showing increasing weakness; only over vital points do Nazi airmen come up and fight with a will. Despite bombings the Germans have managed, according to British reports, to add about 1,000 fighters to their defensive air force.

The time when the *Luftwaffe* can be run out of the air will partly answer an important question. On invasion day, the generals will have to decide how much allied airpower to leave on strategic operations against German productive works, and how much to divert to tactical support of the landing forces. If there is no German air force left at the time of the invasion, much less aviation will have to be diverted to tactical work.

There is no reason to suppose, however, that absence of German air support for ground forces resisting on the beaches will make the task easy for the Anglo-Americans. The latter have air superiority in Italy, but the job certainly is not easy.

One should add, though, that aviation *can* make ground operations easy to the point of negligibility, as in the case of the landing just below Rome. The Germans not only failed to offer resistance; they didn't even know about the landing till hours after it was accomplished. The reason was that their air observation had been completely excluded from that region for a time before the Americans drove for the shore.

Allied bombers recently have been feinting at one city and then hitting another one, to throw the defense off balance. Another trick, developed recently, is to hit one city twice the same night, as was done first to Berlin.

Air Marshal Sir Richard Hallem-Peck of the RAF says about 20 of Germany's industrial cities have been badly crippled for a long repair period, and about 50 others are well on the way to destruction. Gen Spaatz says the aerial assault knocked out about 40 percent of Germany's planned fighter strength during 1943.

These estimates of destruction seem to be borne out by the weakness of the German air force and by the chastened mutters from the Reich masters, but power of Nazi arms in Russia and Italy seems to indicate no lack of essential materials, men and fighting spirit. There are still plenty of airmen and laymen who believe military aviation has been oversold, that war leaders have been taken in by the thrilling noise and glamour of combat flight.

When you think of the sinking of a destroyer by one little airplane, of the wrecking of a harbor by a dive bomber squadron, the billions of dollars in damage to German cities, you seem to have a solid answer to any such doubts. Military aviation seems to be saving Allied lives in hundreds of thousands. If so, its value is well clinched. Nevertheless, when the doubters say that airplanes don't sink ships and burn cities often enough to justify the great cost, they should be listened to. Those who claim that aviation saves large numbers of soldiers' lives will have to wait and see how the wars are finally won before they can prove it.

New equipment in Europe recently featured the North American P-51B, in the long range class with the Republic P-47 and the Lockheed P-38. Apparently the P-51 retains high performance, for dispatches say it takes over the escort job as the bombers arrive over the target. All of the fighters are now doubling as bombers when the job requires it.

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