

America At War

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Two years after the Air Force was established as one of the three component forces of the Army, Gen George Marshall, chief of staff, says it is approaching complete air supremacy in practically every theater — and at a much faster pace than had been expected.

With 2,385,000 men in 11 air forces overseas, and four air forces plus many training establishments within US borders, Army aviation is at its peak, accordingly is stopping personnel transfers from the ground forces. Nine weeks have been added to the fighter pilot's training period, five weeks to the schedule of bomber pilots, and important extensions have also been made in other phases.

CAA's War Training Service and the primary and basic schools contracting directly with AAF are all being curtailed and will be eliminated in a matter of months. The Army stopped initial training courses entirely some months ago, leaving it all to civilian schools. From now on, only enough new trainees will be taken in to serve as replacements. The Army may eventually resume schooling them itself.

But as the Air Force reaches the height of its power, inflicting losses of 3.8 on the enemy to 1 of its own, dropping nearly 10,000 tons of bombs on Europe in one week, and devastating large areas of enemy productive and military works, it also meets with some disappointments. The Air Force command says it knew what not to expect from its heavy bombardment of Cassino. But the enemy stayed there and the public didn't understand why.

Though such works as Germany's ball bearing sources were badly wrecked, Nazi fighters keep on coming up — taking 96 Allied planes one day, and 80 American planes another.

Luftwaffe Shifts

Compared with damage inflicted, and with losses of men sustained by the Russian ally, attrition of British and American aviation is not too bad. AEF destroyed 11,042 Axis aircraft in all theaters, in the air and aground, in 1943, at a cost of 2,805 of its own. Though Nazi fighter resistance often is concentrated with deadly effect, just as often allied air missions swarm over Hitler's Europe at will, seeing none or few hostile aircraft.

The *Luftwaffe* shifts its air defense rapidly — from Italy to France to Berlin — to cover its weakness. Allied air commanders still hope that, between hacking away at the invasion coast, supporting the Italian attack, and doing other jobs, they can smash enough of the enemy's aircraft plants so that what remains of Hitler's air power can be knocked down. Even then, if Italy is a true lesson, the walking Army will have no cinch. Presumably German engineers are doing an even better job of fortifying the French coast than they did south of Rome.

Other points to note: AAF heavily attacked Budapest for the first time . . . The British, again put the Nazi battleship "Tirpitz" out of action as she lay in a Norwegian fjord . . . American bombers are filling more than half of their capacity with oil magnesium fire bombs, which often prove more destructive than explosives . . . Along with bombs recently went leaflets showing Germans the comparative size of the B-29s, which will soon be upon them . . . The Army has called for new priority ratings on heavy artillery, to do jobs that airplanes cannot do . . . And dispatches say that naval bombardment will be important when the cross-channel battle starts. Churchill said, in his war summary, that British-American air forces now can send up 1,000 bombers to the enemy's 100, adding that the allies have leadership in radar, both for attack and defense.

Pacific Successes

In the Pacific, the Navy has hit the Palau Islands, only 600 mi east of the Philippines. The Japanese people believe that their navy is backing away to draw the United States into a trap, but everyone else sees that the enemy's sea power is not strong enough to match its opponents at long range. Allied aviation and sub and surface forces are pinching off Jap supply lines, and the island bases are withering. Truk, Jap main base in the Carolines, was recently pounded eleven times in six days, and it was due to be taken or by-passed.

An attack on the Philippines any time now would surprise no one. These islands are too far from Japan to be used immediately by us as a base for heavy air bombardment, but they stand squarely in the way of the direct route which Adm Nimitz says he is taking toward a beachhead in China.

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