

Air Power Spearheads Invasion

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Germany's war machine took three staggering blows in one week: (1) When the USAAF completed its over-Europe shuttle terminus in Russia; (2) when Allied forces knocked Rome out from under Nazi Italy; and (3) when — finally and most emphatically — Anglo-American invaders poured into Europe paced by the power of 11,000 planes.

Heavy tactical support of Allied troops by bombing and attack aviation still left thousands of heavies and fighters to continue strategic operations against Germany's production and communications. Just before the invasion, the biggest air fleet ever mobilized, totaling 7,500 of the massed 11,000 planes, hammered rail, stations, highways, bridges, and transport centers all along the invasion coast of Europe — a 24-hr 9,000-ton punch of fire and explosives.

To what extent the bombing of Nazi industry and transport has weakened the German powers of resistance, and how effectively air attack can support ground forces on a big scale, will be observed conclusively as the war in Europe develops. Several Allied weapons not publicly known, some of them in aviation, are being employed.

Both parachute and glider troops dropped behind the Germans with successful results. Allied aviation and airborne troops took many airfields, and it was further demonstrated that bombing of sufficient weight can churn up runways faster than the greatest effort can return them to usability. Air bombs were put down to make shell holes for the protection of troops on exposed terrain.

The sparse initial air resistance to the Allied attack seemed to reveal that Goering has not been able to accumulate a strong fighter plane reserve to meet the assault. He had lost fighters heavily through the "birth control" attacks on his plants, and at least 1,200 by ground strafing, plus shot-down losses in the air, 50 and sometimes 100 in a day.

His production rate of not more than 2,000 planes, all types, per month, cannot support such attrition.

The *Luftwaffe's* high command called an emergency meeting, according to a clandestine radio report, when the Russian-based AAF bomber shuttle started. Although B-17s and B-24s formerly could reach all far-eastern Nazi installations, they had to limit their bomb loads to do so. With the Russian bases, they can now hit much harder, hence the Germans will have to redistribute their fighters. Via the shuttle, B-29 striking power would also be greater.

Preparation for the shuttle involved shipment to Soviet bases of 12,000 tons of runway steel matting, 10,000 tons of gasoline, and masses of other goods. The work was started last February.

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