

America At War

Aviation's Communique No 40

Two outstanding events of the air war in the period covered by this report were renunciation by the Russians of their non-aggression pact with Japan, and the winning by the Americans of Okinawa, only 325 mi from the Jap mainland.

The Russo-Jap pact does not actually expire till this time next year, but that might not prevent hostilities beginning any time. Repudiation by Russia puts the Japs in the position of having to attack soon, or wait for the Soviets to strike when they are ready. Either way is bad for Nippon.

Most authorities agree that the Russians will fight the Japs. Probably very few, if any, persons know whether Russia will offer naval and air bases to the United States in the meantime. But this becomes less important as new bases like Okinawa are taken,

By bagging this 50-mi-long island, the Army and Navy have got plenty of land on which to operate and maintain almost any amount of aviation within a range permitting heavy bomb loads and operation of escort fighters which can load up with bombs in addition to necessary fuel. Other nearer bases will be taken and, eventually, beachheads established on the Jap mainland. Gen Arnold, Chief of AAF, recently said that every usable airplane now in Europe will be thrown against Japan. Combined air forces of British and American armies and navies may put up 10,000 to 20,000 planes against the small Empire islands on any given day.

Lt Gen George C Kenney, commander of the Far East Air Force, says Japan is short of planes, pilots are poor, and best mechanics are stranded on by-passed islands. Her force has lost 10,000 planes; it is no longer a serious threat.

Rear Adm De Witt C Ramsey, chief of the Navy's Bureau of Aeronautics, says air war in the Pacific is in its final phase. Naval aviation, he says, has won its duel with enemy carriers, and has helped win the island-jumping campaign. Adm Ramsey admits our carrier losses have been heavy, but carrier warfare has been justified.

Gen Arnold said at a recent press conference that the number of B-29s now attacking Japan will be doubled or tripled by the end of summer. He also said B-29 performance is constantly improving, and that the

Superfortresses can cover 8,000,000 sq mi, an area three times the size of the US. He revealed that formerly about 50 B-29s went on three missions every ten days; now, about 300 go out every four days.

This article was originally published in the May, 1945, issue of *Aviation* magazine, vol 44, no 5, pp 208, 211.