

THE MARCH OF WAR

WAR IN THE PACIFIC

(August 7, 1942, to October 15, 1944)

There is a certain resemblance between the Pacific War and the war in Europe. In both cases there was at first a rapid, gigantic expansion of the sphere of power of the Axis, coupled with comparatively small losses; this was followed by a slow retrogressive development extremely costly for the Allies. We have reported on the early Japanese victories in the Pacific in former issues of this magazine. The following article deals with the Allied counteroffensive, which began on August 7, 1942, and has reached its climax in the battle for the Philippines.—K.M.

THE SOLOMONS

ON August 7, 1942, American marines landed on the Solomon island of Guadalcanal—which the Japanese had occupied in May—and on the neighboring, unoccupied island of Tulagi. This thrust at the Japanese position in the Solomons was quite logical, for this was the southeastern-most point reached by the Japanese, which placed them in the immediate vicinity of the most important American sea lane in the Pacific, leading from California via Hawaii to Australia.

Although violent and sanguinary fighting broke out on Guadalcanal itself at the moment of landing, the real battle for the Solomons took place at sea and in the air. Both opponents had to feed the battle on the island with troops, weapons, and provisions, and the fleets of transports required for this purpose needed strong protection. The Americans especially, being the invaders, had to bring up all their material across the sea, while the Japanese had been able to lay in supplies during the months they had spent on the island. But the Japanese, too, sent additional troops to Guadalcanal during the autumn.

The following battles, a mighty accompaniment to the land battles on Guadalcanal, took place at sea and in the air:

1st Solomon Battle	Aug. 8, 1942
2nd " "	" 24 " "
Wasp Battle	Sept. 15 " "
Savo " "	Oct. 10 " "
Santa Cruz Battle ("Battle of the South Pacific")	" 26 " "
3rd Solomon Battle	Nov. 12-14 " "
Night battle off Lunga Point	Nov. 30 " "
Battle off Rennell	Jan. 29, 1943
" " Ysabel	Feb. 1-7 " "

In these battles the Allies suffered far greater losses than the Japanese. It seems that the Japanese held two trump cards during these encounters: first of all, their air arm, against which the American Fleet was at that time not yet protected to the same extent as was later to be the case; and secondly, the long and careful training of the Japanese Fleet for night fighting.

On February 9, 1943, Guadalcanal was evacuated by the Japanese although, as was later revealed, not entirely. A few small Japanese forces remained on the island and are still carrying on guerrilla warfare.

With the conquest of Guadalcanal began the American process of island-hopping, which was to last for one year. Island after island, from south to north, the Solomon chain was conquered with heavy losses. The landings took place as follows:

Russell	Feb. 21, 1943
Rendova	June 30 " "
New Georgia	July 7 " "
Robiana	" " " "
Vangunu	" 28 " "
Bau	Aug. 1 " "
Gizo	" 12 " "
Vella Lavella	" 15 " "
Kolombangara	" 23 " "
Arundel	Sept. 11, 1943
Ysabel	Oct. 5 " "
Mono	" 26 " "
Bougainville (at Torokina Point)	Nov. 1 " "
" (at Hamon)	" 2 " "
Mori	" 6 " "
Choiseul	" 8 " "
Green Islands	Feb. 14, 1944

The accompaniment to this island-hopping were the air and naval battles:

Battle of San Cristobal	Feb. 17, 1943
Air battle over Russell	Apr. 1 " "
Battle off Florida	" 7 " "

Night battle of Kula Gulf. July 7, 1943
 " " off Kolombangara " 12 "
 Battle off Bougainville Oct. 31-Nov. 4 "

In the air there was hardly a pause between battles. It was less a matter of supporting the troops fighting on the ground than of gaining as many airfields as possible for one's own side and destroying the enemy's. The longer the fight for the Solomons lasted, the more was the accent shifted to air battles between land-based planes. The Japanese air bases were located chiefly on New Georgia, Bougainville, and New Britain; the American ones on the islands occupied by them, in particular on Guadalcanal. The air war reached its climax in the air battles over Bougainville (November 5, 6, 11, 13, 17).

Although the advance of the Americans into the western Pacific has robbed the fighting in the Solomons of some of its actuality, taking place as it does far behind the new main front, this fighting has by no means ceased. According to American statements, there are still some 22,000 Japanese soldiers in the Solomons, principally on Bougainville, constantly endeavoring to interfere with the American operations. Up to and including the last air battle over Bougainville, the Americans, according to official Japanese statements, suffered the following losses :

<i>Sunk</i>	<i>Damaged</i>
10 aircraft carriers	5 aircraft carriers
12 battleships	4 battleships
56 cruisers	26 cruisers
54 destroyers	21 destroyers
57 transports	13 transports
72 other units	20 other units

NEW GUINEA

Parallel to the spectacular battle for the chain of the Solomon Islands, the outwardly less exciting but no less grim battle for New Guinea took place. In the course of their victories during the first half of 1942, the Japanese had occupied the island of New Guinea, with the exception of its southeastern part. They had crossed the Owen Stanley range, which runs through the length of Papua, and approached Port Moresby, and had also landed troops in Buna when, four weeks after the American landing on Guadalcanal, the Allied counter-offensive on New Guinea began on September 2, 1942. Its first phase consisted of a bitter struggle for Papua, conducted mainly by Australian troops. In the course of this, the Japanese, while inflicting serious losses on the Australians, slowly withdrew through

the mountains and jungles of Papua northward to the Huon Gulf. Not until seven months after the beginning of the offensive did the Allies cross the border of Papua, on March 29, 1943.

The almost impenetrable territory, part of which had never been trodden by others than natives, the unhealthy climate and, above all, the stubbornness of the Japanese resistance, which bore witness to the Japanese ability in jungle fighting, caused the Allied Command to change its tactics. The original land offensive was supported in the summer and autumn of 1943 by four landings. The first of these took place in Nassau Bay on June 30 (i.e., simultaneously with the landing on Rendova) and led to concerted action with the Australians advancing from Wau. The second landing took place on July 20 at Boishi, the third on September 4 at Hopai, 35 kilometers east of Lae, and the fourth on September 22 northeast of Finschhafen. These landings cost the Americans considerable losses in ships, most of which were inflicted upon them by land-based Japanese planes. However, they put up with these losses, being intent upon destroying the Japanese positions in Salamaua, Lae, and on the Finschhafen peninsula, in order to get the strait between New Guinea and New Britain under their control. In New Guinea, too, the air arm of both opponents gained in importance as time went on. In the late autumn of 1943 the Japanese were faced by so large a material superiority on the part of their enemies that they had to withdraw their troops from the Salamaua-Lae-Finschhafen sector northward toward Madang. The rivers in that pathless terrain representing important routes of communication, the valleys of the Busu and Ramu Rivers were the scenes of fierce fighting.

Toward the end of 1943 the local superiority of the Allies had increased to such an extent that they were able to progress from the first phase of slow, step-by-step advance to the second phase, which was characterized by large landings and attempted landings in the rear of the Japanese forces. It is, so to speak, the employment of the leapfrog principle—which began simultaneously in the other parts of the Pacific—on the north coast of New Guinea. On January 2, 1944, a landing was made at Cape Gumbi; on April 22, protected by a strong air fleet, at Aitape and Hollandia; at the end of April at Ulau; in the middle of May at the mouth

of the Tor River; and on May 27 on Biak, an island off the north coast of New Guinea. In the carrying out of these landings, the Allies—for the most part American troops—encountered stiff Japanese resistance and in some cases suffered very considerable losses in men and ships. The Americans had to bring up and supply every single soldier by sea, with the result that they lost numerous transports and warships.

The Allies have still not succeeded in breaking the Japanese resistance. The fighting in New Guinea is continuing and, according to US estimates, the Japanese forces are still some 95,000 strong. In that vast and difficult territory—the island is about two and a half times bigger than Italy—the Japanese will continue, in spite of being cut off from fresh supplies and material, to give trouble to the Americans, thereby preventing the Allies from consolidating their position on New Guinea. This will not be without a certain influence on the fighting in other theaters, the island having now gained particular significance as a supply base in the battle for the Philippines.

On the southwest coast of New Guinea the Allies—in this case a combined Australian-Dutch force—have, as far as has become known, made only a single large landing attempt: at the mouths of the Lawrence and Eilanden Rivers in January 1944, probably with the intention of starting a guerrilla war in the interior of the island. However, the Japanese succeeded in annihilating this force within a month.

BISMARCK ARCHIPELAGO ADMIRALTY IS.

During 1943 there were frequent American utterances to the effect that the goal of their Solomons as well as New Guinea campaigns was the capture of the principal Japanese base in this part of the Pacific, Rabaul on New Britain; and the Solomons and New Guinea campaigns were called the two jaws of the pincer closing in upon Rabaul. Hence, when the Americans had achieved their purpose in that part of New Guinea which lies closest to New Britain by the late autumn of 1943, they crossed over to New Britain. On December 15 they landed at Cape Merkus and on December 26 at Cape Gloucester. At first the Japanese resistance limited the landed troops to comparatively small beachheads. Not until February 1944 did they succeed in effecting a junction of the two forces. Nevertheless, the Japanese resistance remained so effective

that the Americans have refrained from an overland attack on Rabaul and contented themselves with heavy bombardments of that town from the air as well as now and again from the sea.

The second most important Japanese base in the Bismarck Archipelago, Kavieng on the northern tip of New Ireland, has hitherto also been exposed to American attacks from the air or from the sea. Finally, the Americans decided to pass by Rabaul and Kavieng and to attack the islands further north and northwest. On February 29, 1944, they began to occupy the Admiralty Islands, and on March 22 the St. Matthias group. The Japanese troops in the Bismarck Archipelago are estimated by the Americans to number 50,000. All in all, the Americans reckon on some 167,000 Japanese soldiers continuing to fight bravely in the Solomons, New Guinea, and the Bismarck Archipelago.

GILBERT ISLANDS

During their rapid advance in the first half of 1942, the Japanese had also seized the Gilbert Islands. As this brought them into dangerous proximity to the sea lane between Hawaii and Australia, the Americans were desirous of forcing them out of these islands again. On August 17, 1942, the Americans attempted a landing on Makin Island which, however, ended with the annihilation of all landing troops. Thereafter they contented themselves with frequent bombardments of the Japanese positions on the Gilbert Islands, at first probably from the Phoenix Islands and later from their newly acquired airfields on the Solomons. Not until late in the autumn of 1943 did they stage a large-scale offensive.

On November 19 a powerful American naval unit began to bombard the islands of Tarawa and Makin. After an intensive preparatory barrage, and supported by numerous carrier-based planes, American marines landed and were immediately involved in heavy fighting with the numerically weak Japanese garrison. On November 25 the remnants of the Japanese defenders made their last attack and, after having inflicted severe losses on the enemy, were wiped out to the last man, like the men on Attu. As in the case of the Solomons, the battle for the Gilbert Islands was accompanied by air battles (November 22, 26, 27, 29). According to Japanese figures, the capture of the Gilberts cost the Americans 20,000 men and 145 planes, as well as:

<i>Sunk</i>	<i>Damaged</i>
8 aircraft carriers	7 aircraft carriers
4 cruisers	1 battleship
1 destroyer	1 cruiser

MARSHALL ISLANDS

Two months later the Americans got set for the blow against the Marshall Islands. Before that, they had carried out numerous heavy air attacks on the largest islands of the group, and in this way prepared the ground for the landings which began on February 1, 1944. In pursuance of their new leapfrog tactics, the Americans did not land on the eastern but on the westernmost islands of the group, viz., first on Kwajalein and ten days later on Eniwetok, passing by the other Japanese island positions, in particular Jaluit and Wotje. The small number of Japanese defenders on both the former islands offered heroic resistance until they were wiped out after one week's fighting. In the ensuing eleven months there were frequent bombardments but no further landings in the Marshalls, so that here, too, there are considerable numbers of Japanese still fighting in the rear of the Americans.

THE MARIANAS

Immediately after the conclusion of fighting on Kwajalein and Eniwetok, the Americans started large-scale bombardments of the Japanese island positions adjoining to the west and northwest, especially of Ponape and Truk in the Carolines, of Saipan in the Marianas, of Marcus (Minamitori) and the Bonin group (Ogasawara). The actual attack on the Marianas began on June 11, 1944. This marked the first appearance of Task Force 58, an American naval unit commanded by Vice-Admiral Mitcher and belonging to the Fifth Fleet under Admiral Spruance. According to the US Navy Department, Task Force 58 is "the mightiest and most destructive naval unit in the history of naval warfare, capable of carrying its own fuel, provisions, and plane replacements everywhere." It began its operations with air attacks on Saipan, Guam, and Tinian, lasting for three days. On June 15 the first landing attempt was made on Saipan. This as well as the second one were frustrated; the third one was successful and led to a series of heavy battles. The airfield of Oreai was the main battle center.

While Task Force 58 was occupied with landing American troops on Saipan, with supplying them and supporting them by

planes and naval guns, part of the Japanese Fleet under the command of Admiral Soemu Toyoda made the first large-scale thrust against the American fleet after a long interval. On June 19, planes based on Japanese aircraft carriers attacked American fleet units stationed in the waters between the Philippines and the Marianas to cover the landing on Saipan. According to Japanese statements, five American aircraft carriers were sunk or damaged, one battleship sunk, and 100 planes shot down, while Japanese losses amounted to one carrier, two tankers, and 50 planes. During the next five days the Americans lost many more units, but no actual naval battle took place.

Meanwhile, the Japanese garrison of Saipan fought on undaunted. On July 7 it carried out a large-scale attack on the American positions. Not until July 16, when the last Japanese defenders had fallen, did the fighting come to an end.

Five days later, on July 21, the Americans landed on Guam (Omiya), which island had been subjected to frequent bombardments in the preceding weeks. On July 23 followed a landing on Tinian, from whose airfields the Japanese had successfully interfered in the fighting for Saipan. On both islands the Americans met with stiff resistance on the part of the Japanese garrison troops. There are no exact data on the final battles on both islands; the last Japanese defenders probably fell on September 27.

PALAU ISLANDS

Before the battle for the Marianas was ended, fighting started for possession of the Palau Islands, located on the route to the Philippines. On September 15, 1944, the Americans landed on Peleliu; on the 17th on Angaur; and a little later on Koror. As we go to press, the fighting on the Palau Islands is still going on.

THE TWO WINGS

Compared to the fighting on the main Pacific war theater, that at the extreme wings in the far north and in the south was of much smaller proportions. In the North Pacific the Japanese had, during the first period of the Pacific War, extended their sway to the American islands of Attu and Kiska. The Americans prepared their counterattack by building air bases step by step from Alaska westward through the Aleutian Islands, and in January 1943 they

included the island of Amchitka, 200 kilometers southeast of Kiska, in their chain of air bases. As a result, the military activities in this area up to the spring of 1943 were mainly confined to fighting in the air with occasional engagements at sea. Finally, on May 11, 1943, the Americans landed on Attu, and the ensuing battle has gone down in history as the first of a number of to-the-last-man-defenses of Japanese island garrisons in the Pacific. Descriptions of the Attu battle published by American eyewitnesses show the deep impression the behavior of the Japanese defenders made on the American troops.

On August 14, 1943, an American landing took place on Kiska. However, unnoticed by the Americans, this island had been quietly evacuated by the Japanese.

Since then, no large engagements have taken place in the stormy and fog-bound North Pacific. However, the American Air Force has carried out frequent attacks on the chain of the Chishima Islands (Kurils), particularly on the island of Paramushiro.

In the extreme southwest of the Pacific war theater, in the labyrinth of the Indonesian islands to the west of New Guinea, developments took a similar turn. Here, too, the fighting was confined primarily to the air, characterized at first by frequent Japanese attacks on northern Australia and later by increasing Allied air raids on Indonesia, designed partly to tie up Japanese forces at a considerable distance from the main war theater and partly to prevent Japanese reconstruction work in these areas. The Moluccas, including Halmahera (Gilolo) and Morotai, Ceram, Celebes, Flores, Java, and Borneo (Balikpapan), have been favorite targets. The first landing operation in this area occurred on September 15, 1944, on Morotai, where fighting is still going on.

BATTLE OFF TAIWAN

Whatever the American plans in the Pacific may have been, there can be no doubt that the strategical considerations in Washington and Pearl Harbor were decisively influenced by Japan's victories in China, i.e., the great successes in South China with their destruction of numerous American air bases, their advance on Kweilin and occupation of Foochow. The anxiety of losing Chungking as an ally as the result of further neglect contributed toward a conference of American naval commanders being held in San Francisco on October 4. Among those

taking part were Admiral King, Commander in Chief of the entire US Fleet; Admiral Nimitz, the Commander in Chief of the Pacific Fleet; Admiral Spruance, Commander of the Fifth (Central Pacific) Fleet, and Admiral Halsey, in command of the Third (Southwest Pacific) Fleet.

To judge by the events that have taken place since then, an advance toward the west was decided upon at this conference. It was to be preceded by attacks on points further north in order to divert the Japanese and interrupt their routes of communication. (This is the same strategy employed in the attack on the Marianas, which was preceded by attacks on the Marcus and Bonin Islands further north.) Consequently, on October 9 a brief attack was made on Marcus Island; on October 10 an air attack from carriers on the Ryukyu Islands; and on October 12 on Taiwan (Formosa).

Of the three attacks preceding the landing on the Philippines, that on Taiwan was the most important. Apparently it was intended to decoy the greater part of the Japanese forces to Taiwan in order to free the way to the Philippines. On October 12, 1,000 planes from Task Force 58 appeared over Taiwan. Further heavy attacks took place on October 13 and 14. These were synchronized with attacks of American heavy bombers stationed in China; on October 14 there were a hundred "Super Fortresses" B 29 among the attacking planes. From the evening of October 12, the Japanese replied with ceaseless counterattacks against the Task Force. Their aircraft stationed on Taiwan, the Ryukyu Islands, and the Philippines, among them many torpedo planes of the Army which were employed for the first time, hurled themselves against the carriers, regardless of the violent American defense.

Up to this point, the reports from Tokyo and Washington agree. But then they part company. While Admiral Nimitz only admits damage to two medium-sized American vessels and claims fantastic figures of Japanese planes and ships destroyed at Taiwan, Tokyo reports the following US losses in what has been termed the "Air Battle off Taiwan":

<i>Sunk</i>	<i>Damaged</i>
11 aircraft carriers	8 aircraft carriers
2 battleships	2 battleships
4 cruisers	5 cruisers
	13 other vessels

while Japanese losses amounted to only 312 planes and an undefined number of small ships.

Out of consideration for popular opinion, Washington has already on several occasions either not admitted US losses at all or only admitted them bit by bit many months later. Hence one may assume that, in view of the proximity of the presidential election, Washington could not make up its mind to announce gigantic losses, preferring instead to ignore the battle entirely.

There can be no doubt that Japanese planes had the lion's share in the battle off Taiwan, among them especially the torpedo planes. The estimation of the role of the Japanese Air Force in naval warfare has undergone great fluctuations. After the sinking of the *Repulse* and *Prince of Wales*, there were people who predicted the end of the battleship. During the last year, on the other hand, there were opinions to the effect that the American anti-aircraft defense had been perfected to such a degree that the Japanese air arm was done for. The Taiwan battle has rehabilitated the Japanese Air Force. To judge by its latest successes, it spent the last year training to conquer the American anti-aircraft defense and has produced new tactics which came as a surprise to the Americans. While the Americans were capturing one island after another last year, political and military observers were wondering what would happen when the US Fleet came close enough to large Japanese air units operating from land bases. The battle off Taiwan has supplied the answer.

THE PROSPECTS—AMERICAN VERSION

How the Americans themselves judge the future prospects in the war against Japan was strikingly formulated by a report issued prior to the battle off Taiwan by the Office of War Information in Washington. It is based on official data of the US Navy, War, and State Departments. This report, designed to counteract American overoptimism and published throughout the USA, enumerates the main difficulties facing the Americans in their war against Japan. The following is the condensation:

(1) Japan is capable of increasing her production of almost every kind of war equipment.

(2) Before the Allies can strike against Japan, they must have bases close to Japan proper. In the Marianas they are still 1,500 miles from Japan.

(3) The present course of the war in China is all in Japan's favor, and the Allies have lost valuable air bases there.

(4) Japan's army has not yet been mustered to full strength.

(5) Japan has stored large strategic supplies in Japan proper, Korea, and Manchuria.

(6) Japan has been conserving air power which she can now use in greater concentration on the narrowing theater of action, and her planes have an increased firing power, range, and speed.

(7) Japan has a powerful fleet.

(8) Japan operates on interior lines of supply, while the Allied supply lines are becoming increasingly extended. It took more than two years to accumulate the quantities of war material now based in Britain. The distances involved in the Pacific are three times as great.

(9) Japan's full production is sufficient to maintain the population.

(10) Japan still holds her major conquests, and the Allies still cannot attack her supply routes along the China coast except with long-range submarines.

(11) Logistics, viz., the system of bringing the right number of men to the right place with the right equipment at the right time, is the chief problem of the Allies in Pacific warfare. The invasion of Northern France, the plans for which were completely laid out ten months in advance of actual operations, only involved a crossing of less than 100 miles. In the Pacific, thousands of miles must be crossed. For this, problems concerning transports, convoys, and loading capacity of American ports must be solved. Landings must be made in the face of stiff enemy opposition, often on shallow beaches across coral reefs, where there are no ports of any kind, where supplies must be carried by hand, and where bad weather proves very destructive to military supplies.

While the US Government is warning its people that the war ahead is long and costly, the leaders of the Japanese nation are also appealing to the people to gird themselves for the great battles of the immediate future. Japan has been preparing for these battles with years of moral and material armament and, during the last two years particularly, by a vast expansion of her air force. Both sides realize that the decisive period of the war is approaching. The battle for the Philippines which began on October 17 may prove to be a curtain raiser for the decision.

Parapush

An American paratrooper on leave was asked how often he had jumped. "Not once," was the answer, "but I was pushed out 17 times!"