

BATTLE OF THE PACIFIC

Beginning

It had been more than two and a half years since Jimmy Doolittle's small carrier-borne group of B-25s had bombed Tokyo. Since then Japanese authorities had drilled their docile populace in air-raid defenses, warning them incessantly that it might happen again. Last week the warning was justified: the sirens shrilled and the bombs began to fall.

This time it was no hit-&-run attack by lightly loaded medium bombers. The attackers were U.S. B-29 Superfortresses. They cruised in over Tokyo at noontime and kept coming; the attack went on for two hours. Japan later said that 70 planes carried out the operation; the U.S. said only that it was a "sizable task force."

Japanese cities and industries had taken B-29 attacks before, but they had come at infrequent intervals, from the remote, gasoline-starved U.S. air bases at Chengtu in China. This time Tokyo was struck from a new and formidable base on Saipan in the Marianas, 1,500 miles from the Japanese capital. At Saipan the high-octane gas comes in by the tankerload. Tokyo could be sure that more and bigger attacks would be made—and on a frequent schedule. If the Japs had any lingering doubt, that was dispelled three days later when a B-29 group roared northward to hit Tokyo again, while an India-based mission of Superforts carried out a simultaneous attack on railway yards in Thailand's capital, Bangkok.

In the Driver's Seat. First B-29 off the ground for the first Tokyo strike was

WORLD BATTLEFRONTS

Dauntless Dottie, piloted by Major Robert K. Morgan, onetime skipper of the famed B-17 *Memphis Belle*. Riding with him was the task-force commander, 38-year-old Brigadier General Emmett ("Rosie") O'Donnell Jr., a veteran of the long, bitter delaying action early in the war when a handful of U.S. airmen fought and fell back from the Philippines to Java to Australia.

The boss of Saipan's newly announced 21st Bomber Command, 41-year-old Brigadier General Haywood Shephard ("Possum") Hansell Jr., had to sweat out the mission on the ground. He was not alone; ground crews had all preparations made for the homecoming and were out strolling uneasily around the runways hours before the big silvery planes were due back. But the returning airmen brought less blood-

Tokyo show with sober calm. In Washington General "Hap" Arnold reported the operation to President Roosevelt as soon as the "bombs away" signal had been flashed to him. In a press statement tactful Hap recalled that the blow had been made possible by the troops who died to win the U.S. base in the Marianas.

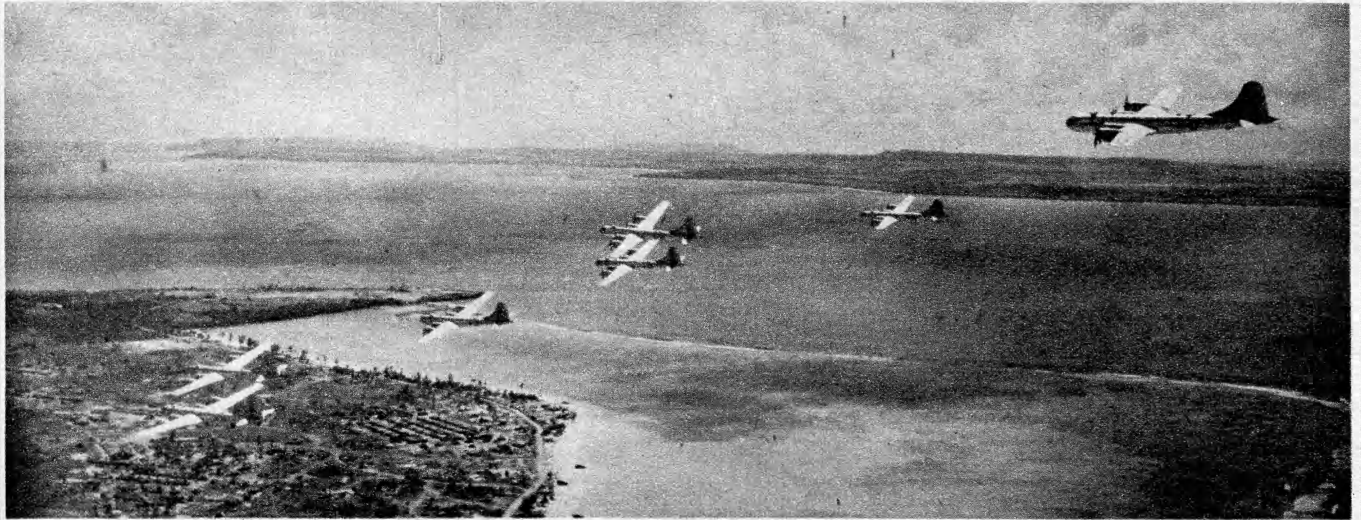
Possum Hansell, one of Arnold's keenest young strategists, might have been pardoned a little excess enthusiasm. Instead he waited a day, until reports and reconnaissance photographs were in, then coolly summed up: a good job, but not exactly up to expectations. Cloud cover had lessened the bombing accuracy of the later waves, Hansell explained. Nevertheless, all but four B-29s were able to bomb worthwhile targets.

To the industrialists and working peo-

pected anything easy to begin with—but it seemed improbable that they had expected to go into December involved in any such uninspired dogfight on Leyte.

Over the Ground. Normal mischances of war could account for some delay. The Philippine roads had deteriorated under Jap occupation; they went from poor to bad under the pounding of U.S. equipment. Surprisingly, many U.S. maps of Leyte turned out to be incomplete or wrong on ground details. But beyond that there was the dogged, slow defense of the Japanese, who fought as though they never hoped to win—or to stop fighting.

One way or another, the enemy had managed to scrape up a surprising amount of air power for the Philippines. That, in turn, may well have slowed down U.S. Navy plans by forcing the fleet to keep



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SUPERFORTS OVER THE MARIANAS

Now thirsty giants get gas by the tanker-load.

and-thunder narrative than an hour's mission in Europe might produce.

The first Superforts had arrived over Tokyo flying high and riding tail winds that boosted their speed to around 400 m.p.h. The Japs were surprised, their defenses were weak. The big Forts laid a pattern of bombs across the main target, sprawling Nakajima Aircraft plant, eleven miles from Tokyo's center. They saw heart-warming fires spring up, then high-tailed for their island home.

By the time later waves got over the target, the Japs had come to and begun to fight. But only one Superfort went down; a Jap Tony (single-engined fighter) crashed into its tail and fell with it. Another B-29 crash-landed at sea with engine trouble, but the crew got out in rubber rafts and was picked up by Navy rescuers within 24 hours. Said Rosie O'Donnell: "One of the easiest missions I've been on."

Cool & Calm. The Air Forces, sometimes criticized for a too-sanguine view of air power's potency, took the whole TIME, DECEMBER 4, 1944

ple of Japan the attack was perhaps a useful hint on how the war is going. To the men on Saipan and their bosses at the top of the U.S. command, it was the beginning of a new phase in the war, comparable to the first thrusts at German war industry two years ago. Said Possum Hansell: "From now on Japan will bleed internally."

Mud and Clear Skies

As an invasion, the U.S. descent upon the Philippines was still a sensational success. But as a continuing military operation it gave every sign last week of being definitely behind schedule. The battle for Leyte, now wallowing along in the tropical rainy season (which will last for at least two more months), had settled down to a dogged slugging match in the mud.

With Leyte still unconquered, Luzon seemed farther away than it had in the first steamroller phases of the Leyte invasion. Manila was only 330 miles to the north, but any rosy dreams of New Year's Eve parties in Manila had gone glimmering. MacArthur's top men had not ex-

tra carrier-based planes in the area; last week a carrier task force was back at the old job of beating up airfields around Manila, smashing shipping in the harbor. In one operation around Luzon, Admiral Halsey's flyers sank 20 Jap ships, shot down 72 planes.

Off schedule they might be, but MacArthur's troops were still on the track, still rolling in the right direction. Last week on Leyte fresh infantrymen of the 32nd ("Red Arrow") Division (*see ARMY & NAVY*) cracked the Japanese strong point at Limon, took the town and neatly pulled the plug at the top of the north-south road along which last-ditch Japanese defenders are strung all the way down to Ormoc.

Over the River. Plunging on with the momentum of their winning drive, the men of the 32nd pushed 1,000 yards south of Limon, took the enemy by surprise and forced the crossing of the Leyte River, seizing a bridge on the road. But the Japanese were not panicked. The Imperial 26th Division struck back in a vicious