

## Tarawa Revisited

Dedicated to Memory of Gallant Dead,  
Island Symbolizes Grim Pacific War

William Hipple, NEWSWEEK war correspondent, landed with the Marines during the bloody attack on Tarawa last November. Last week he revisited Tarawa and sent the following cable describing the famous island as it is now.

Tarawa is already a back base. Yet instead of being slowly forgotten, it is gathering such interest among Pacific servicemen that it has already become an American shrine. Soldiers, sailors, and Marines who come through here on ships or planes tour the little island of Betio, shake their heads at the remaining Jap fortifications, poke through ruins, and stand reverently before white crosses marking American graves. From Honolulu to Kwajalein and Eniwetok, on land bases and ships, they talk about Tarawa and want to know what it is like.

And when, after the war, big commercial planes en route to the Orient pause at Tarawa after a nonstop flight of 2,200 miles from Honolulu, civilians undoubtedly will make it a mecca—a symbol of our bitter but victorious war with the Japanese. No other Pacific battleground, with the exception of Guadalcanal, has so caught the imagination as Tarawa.

**Lifted Face:** Today Tarawa (the name for the atoll is always loosely applied to the island of Betio where the fighting occurred) is like a lady with her face lifted. It looks pretty good at first glance but close examination reveals the ravages of the past.

The interior of the 2½-mile-long island, the working area around Hawkins Field, has been swept clean as your mother's kitchen floor. The shell and bomb holes have been smoothed over and the ground combed of all debris. The coral surface is hard and smooth as cement among the tents, wooden buildings, and Quonset huts which serve as living, eating, and working quarters.

Many undamaged Jap dugouts and shelters still clutter this area. They are being used for telephone exchanges, operations offices, and storage spots. They are also ideal for air-raid shelters, but Tarawa hasn't had a raid since just before the invasion of the Marshalls and isn't likely to have many more.

Hawkins Field, lengthened and resurfaced with crushed coral, is as busy as La Guardia Field in New York, with bombers taking off on regular milk runs to Jap-held Eastern Marshall Islands bases and transport planes coming in and out from Pearl Harbor and Kwajalein. Several open-air movies are shown every night, divine services are held regularly, and there are baseball and softball league competitions between different units.

This is only the face-lifted side of the



U. S. Signal Corps photo from Associated Press

MacArthur surveys a dead Jap on the road back to the Philippines—in this case the Admiralty Islands

Ramu Valley some 30 miles behind it. On *New Britain*: In support of troops which took Talasea air strip on Willaumez Peninsula the week before, Marines landed at Linga Linga on Eleanora Bay, killing 55 Japs who opposed them. In the *Admiralties*: the dismounted First Cavalry Division from Los Negros accomplished what the Japs had failed to do on Bougainville—they broke the enemy perimeter on Manus Island and seized Lorengau airfield.

On March 11, American forces hopped from Los Negros to two islands in Seeadler Harbor—Hauwei, 7 miles north of Lorengau, and Butjo Luo, 5 miles to the east. After mopping up the Japs, they emplaced divisional artillery. March 15 the invasion of Manus, whose capture will insure final control of the Admiralties, began.

Under cover of the island-based artillery, destroyer bombardment, sea-borne rocket guns, and waves of Mitchells and Warhawks from Momote, the cavalrymen disembarked from assault boats near Lugos Mission, about 2 miles west of Lorengau airfield, where the main Japanese forces were concentrated. Though the invaders met strong opposition from mine fields, mortars, and machine guns, they captured the airfield within 24 hours. Mortars and tanks provided the close-in punch.

**Savior:** As his forces held the upper hand on the Admiralties, New Britain, New Guinea, and Bougainville, Gen. Douglas MacArthur was feted at a state banquet in Canberra on the second anniversary of his arrival in Australia. Governor General Lord Gowrie decorated

him with the Knight Grand Cross of the British Order of the Bath. Prime Minister Curtin hailed him as the savior of Australia. In reply the general harked back to the Philippines: "Two years ago when I landed on your soil I said to the people of the Philippines, whence I came: 'I shall return.' Tonight I repeat those words: 'I shall return.' Nothing is more certain than our ultimate reconquest and liberation from the enemy of those and adjacent lands."

## Lucky Seven and Eleven

The Seventh Air Force in the Central Pacific has been working for more than two years to get its bombsights over Truk. Last week some of its Liberators finally reached there. In a pre-dawn attack, they bombed airdrome installations, fuel dumps, and ammunition storage areas on Eten and Dublon Islands inside the great lagoon, starting fires and explosions.

Despite heavy anti-aircraft, all planes returned to their base, which presumably was Eniwetok, 650 miles from Truk. Though the size of the Liberator force was not announced, it probably consisted of only a few planes. Neither the Americans nor the Japs favor large-scale nighttime attacks on pinpoint islands in the ocean wastes.

While the Seventh made its deepest penetration into the Central Pacific, the Eleventh Air Force, based on the Aleutians, came closer to Japan proper than ever before. A lone Liberator bombed Matsuwa Island, only 500 miles from Hokkaido, the northernmost of the main Jap Islands.

## WAR TIDES

### The Limitations of Air Power

by Maj. Gen. J. F. C. FULLER, British Army, Retired

The British War Secretary recently said that "one feature of the Russian fighting was the enormous German air inferiority," an inferiority due, as the Air Secretary all but simultaneously explained, to the concentration of four-fifths of the German fighter strength in the west in order to protect industrial and other areas.

Accepting this as correct, the fact remains that in spite of this enormous air inferiority, for over a year now the Germans have successfully carried out a methodical retreat across a large part of Russia. Much the same thing happened in North Africa, where from the Battle of Alamein to the final collapse outside Tunis, the German air inferiority was complete. Therefore it may be asked: "Is air power at a discount in retreats?"

Besides retreats, there have also been both in Russia and North Africa advances in battle made and won by armies inferior in air power. The most spectacular was Rommel's 1942 summer offensive. In spite of his enormous inferiority in aircraft, he defeated the British at Gazala, stormed Tobruk, and advanced to within 60 miles of Alexandria!

Well may it be asked: Is then air superiority vital to success? The surest way of answering this question is to examine the tactical use of aircraft. There are two air theories—Anglo-American and Russo-German.

In brief the first may be set down as follows: Never launch a major land attack until air supremacy is won. And don't attempt to gain this supremacy until numerical superiority in machines is established. The leading exponent of this theory is General Montgomery. Churchill has called him "a Cromwell-

ian figure." I prefer to call him a Ulysses S. Grantian figure. Anyhow, this is what an observant war correspondent has said of his tactics: "By the Montgomery method the whole art of war is reducible to the pattern and series of numbers; it is all based on units of manpower and fire power and so forth." In short, on weight of metal.

This theory is in fact all but identical to the one held in the last war which pivoted on the principle—"artillery conquers, infantry occupies." Yet with this distinction: The airplane in the form of flying artillery as much as the gun is considered essential in preparing the battle. Therefore the sole major difference between 1917 and 1944 is that cannon can now fly.

We saw this at Alamein, a battle prepared by bombing and bombardment. We saw it in the storming of the Mareth Line in Tunisia, in Sicily, at Salerno, on the beachhead below Rome. There, in order to render the invasion less costly, 5,000 tons of bombs were unloaded prior to the landing. These vast preparatory bombardments are patent to every Anglo-American attack. They have been repeated in the destruction of Cassino.

Now let us turn to the Russo-German theory. What do we find? First, whereas the victors of 1914-18 never abandoned the old doctrine of battle, the vanquished did. Adversity had taught them much. They saw in the airplane a cooperative rather than a preparatory weapon. Though when time and means allowed they did not despise the Montgomery method. They never became slaves to it because they realized that *velocity of attack* is more important than methodical preparation.

In short, they are war-minded rather than air-minded. That is, they fit air power into the scheme of war and don't let it dominate it. Why? Because air power has intrinsic limitations—lack of accuracy in aim and lack of volume of fire. To hit a small target on the battlefield with a bomb is a fluke, and on the battlefield there are a few large targets. To unload on an enemy in position 5,000 tons of bombs a day for a month on end is not as yet a practical proposition. Nevertheless in 1916 during the Battle of the Somme 148,000 tons of shells were fired in 30 days into a comparatively small area and the following year at Ypres 170,000 tons of shells were fired in thirteen days.

It is because of these limitations that the Russo-German theory varies from the Anglo-American. Also there is another and deeper reason. Whereas the Russians and Germans are professional soldiers, the American and British are amateurs. They are not less brave but less war-saturated. And not so much in this war as throughout the whole course of their respective histories. As professionals the Germans and Russians believe with Clausewitz—"Let us not hear of generals who conquer without bloodshed." As amateurs, the Americans and British believe in "safety first." They seek to avoid high casualties. Therefore it so often happens that they cramp not only the elan of their men but also the impulse of their own imagination.

In facing risks the Montgomery school hasn't yet caught up with Ulysses S. Grant. And when it does I suggest that its adherents then set out to catch up with that past master at accepting risks—Robert E. Lee.

picture, however. You can still see in places why Tarawa was terrible. Most coconut trees are thin high stumps. All around the coastline except for boat entrances, concrete anti-boat blocks, interlaced with barbed wire still protrude ominously.

On the northern lagoon side, where the first landings were made, the reef holds rusting hulks of amphibious tractors and other landing craft which either didn't make the beach or were knocked out just as they made the goal. For great distances along the beach, demolished Jap trucks, broken tanks, field-pieces, boilers, pipes, steel rods, concrete, and coconut logs are all mixed up into

the wildest sort of rubbish dump. In the thin, tapering eastern end and the blunt western side, men are living in tents amidst the ruins of Jap positions. It is clean now and there is no smell, but it is not exactly pleasant. Many dead Japs probably are still sealed in the dugouts.

The men say they are proud to care for the American cemeteries. And the work shows it. The cemeteries are rimmed with coconut-log fences and the grounds are kept scrupulously clean. The grave of each hero who went forward unflinching and made victory possible is marked by a shining white marker. At one cemetery I saw the grave of Lt. Col.

Herbert R. Amey Jr. of San Diego, Calif., who was shot down a few yards ahead of me as we waded across the reef on the first morning of the invasion. At a coconut-log gate there is a sign which reads:

HERE LIE OFFICERS AND MEN OF THE SECOND UNITED STATES MARINE DIVISION WHO FELL IN ACTION ON THIS ATOLL, NOV. 20, 1943—SO THERE LET THEM REST ON THEIR SUN-SCORCHED ATOLL.

*The wind for their watcher, the waves for their shroud  
Where palm and pandanus shall whisper forever  
A requiem fitting for heroes so proud.*