

THE JAP WAR

YANK begins a series of articles on the Big Picture in the Far East and our last remaining enemy with a discussion of the \$64 question: How long will we have to fight the Japanese?

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WASHINGTON—The \$64 question now is: "How long will we have to fight the Japanese?"

The War Department has no official answer to it, other than that neither the Army nor the Navy is basing future plans on the idea that the complete defeat of Japan will be a pushover.

Unofficially, however, a lot of guesses are being made. The predictions most often heard in the handsomely tiled latrines of the Pentagon, the War Department's giant doughnut-shaped headquarters, run from 1 to 2 years—and up.

"We can possibly get it over in 2 years, but nobody in the world can guess that," says the high-ranking officer who is frequently quoted in newspaper stories from Washington as "a military expert." He refuses to be overoptimistic.

"I don't think it will come any sooner than that unless there is a sudden collapse," he adds. "Two years would be the minimum. Once our air gets to operate on them, it's going to have a big effect. We can't deduce how much."

THE Jap strategy at the start of the war was to strike fast on a tremendous front—a front several times the width of all Europe. At first this strategy was a brilliant success. The Japs were able to capture vast areas before a defense could be prepared.

On the same day they hit Pearl Harbor, the Japs struck at the American possessions of Guam, Wake, Midway and the Philippines. They also hit Hong Kong, the rich British colony on the China coast, and the British protectorate of Malaya far to the south. Within a few months the Japs held almost everything of value south of Alaska and west of the Hawaiian Islands.

In addition to their other conquests, they had Burma, the Dutch East Indies, most of New Guinea, half the Solomons, most of the Gilberts and Marshalls and bases for an assault on New Zealand and Australia, the two big white countries of the South Pacific.

The turning point came in April when American troops were rushed to the Free French island of New Caledonia off eastern Australia. In August, Marines staged the first American offensive action of this war by landing on Jap-held Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands northwest of Australia.

Our strategy since then has been to leap-frog toward Japan. We capture a base, build an airfield and from it launch planes to cover the seizure of the next base. The process has brought us across thousands of miles of the Pacific to within a few hundred miles of the Jap homeland.

One of our forces hopped along the coast of New Guinea from Woodlark Island to Lae to Saidor to Hollandia to Biak to Morotai. Another force came from Guadalcanal to New Georgia to Vella Lavella to Bougainville until it merged with the New Guinea troops. A third, starting from the Hawaiian Islands, fought through the atoll route from Tarawa to Makin to Kwajalein to Guam to Saipan to Palau. A fourth, composed of British forces, drove out of India into Burma and is just finishing the work of expelling the Japs there.

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THE JAP WAR

The Philippines, retaken 3 years after the Jap conquest, are evidently to play the role in the Pacific that the United Kingdom played in the invasion of Fortress Europe. The winning of Okinawa, where fighting is still under way, will cut the Jap supply lines to Formosa, Pentagon experts say, and make it possible for us to neutralize that island or invade it.

Military doctrine is that a battlefield must be isolated as a prelude to victory. That was the theory behind AAF and RAF bombings of German railroads. From Okinawa, our planes will be able to attack any ships or planes that attempt to run down to the help of Formosa. The enemy will be cut off from his reinforcements.

With the Philippines taken and Formosa occupied or at least neutralized, the way will be clear for an American invasion of the China coast. Then, air and navy bases at spots like Shanghai and Nanking would pave the way for an attack on the Japanese homeland.

Some such plan, according to various military commentators, is obvious from a study of the present war map in the Pacific, though whether and how soon there will be an American invasion of Formosa, China and the Japanese homeland are matters for the top-secret files.

In weighing the strengths and weaknesses of the Japs, an officer in the Pentagon who knows the enemy particularly well says that "one of the Japs' main strengths is that they're Japanese."

"They have a fanatical belief in their way of living," he points out. "They have a saying that death is lighter than a feather and duty is heavier than a mountain. That's why a Jap, if he's told to do something, does it, by gosh, even if he dies doing it."

The Japs have said that they are ready to lose 10,000,000 men, if necessary, and have talked seriously about this war lasting 100 years.

"One more point in the psychological favor of the Jap is that he has been taught that he can take privations longer than we," says another colonel whose business it is to study the Japs. "He says that we are soft and decadent, that if he can hold out long enough and cause us enough casualties, we'll give in. He says we like our holidays and easy living. He says he doesn't bother with such things—everything goes for Japan and the emperor. The Jap relies a great deal on 'spiritual superiority,' which is his phrase for tenacity."

Geography, nearly everybody agrees, is a trump card in the Japs' hand. They are not only far from the Continental United States, but the terrain of their homeland is much like the rugged mountain country of Italy. There is not much of a road net over these mountains, which will hinder the use of armor just as in Italy, and the terrain will provide the defenders with good hide-outs from air attacks.

Economically, however, the homeland is no fortress. The food supply is anything but generous, and the islands lack some 80 important raw materials, including such vital items as nickel, chrome and manganese.

In normal times Japan depends heavily on China, Korea and Manchuria for essential imports. Without these imports, it's said, she cannot keep her war production going indefinitely. The Japs, however, have had foresight enough to build up big stockpiles of such necessities as scrap iron, which she began to import from America

THE JAP WAR

long before Pearl Harbor. Strategists figure that Japan can carry on for many months after planes and warships have cut her last lines of communication with the outside world.

Japan's population is estimated at from 80,000,000 to 100,000,000—some 30,000,000 to 50,000,000 fewer than the United States. But the Japanese population is less productive than ours. The Japanese do far more of their work by hand than we do, with the result that it takes many more man-hours to build a battleship in Japan than in the United States.

The average Japanese farm is only 2.5 acres compared with 155 acres for the typical American farm, so that in agriculture as well as industry the potential output of the people is limited by inadequate use of machines. Plane production is placed at only one-eighth of ours.

The Jap airforce suffered a major defeat in the Philippines, and the often vanquished Jap navy is now far inferior to the American fleets. Jap artillery is not as good as that the Germans had, but in small arms the Japs rate in several ways with the best armies.

THE major Allied weaknesses are the distance to Japan and the current lack of facilities for the men who must be shipped from the ETO during the next 12 months.

Whereas the United Kingdom is only 3,000 miles from New York, Manila is 6,200 miles from Frisco and 13,000 to 14,000 miles from Europe, where the bulk of American combat troops still are. And Manila is 1,700 miles from Tokyo, 50 times as far as Normandy is from England.

Manila, which looks like the staging area for the rest of the war, must be almost entirely rebuilt. Our forces reentered Manila to find 500 ships sunk in the harbor, every dock and crane damaged, only a handful of houses standing and no electric power except that from a small plant in a shattered brewery. To accommodate the forces that will be shipped out to fight Japan, the Army will have to carry out "the biggest dwelling-construction program ever undertaken by man."

Despite these handicaps, the War Department has officially estimated that the 6,968,000 soldiers to be left in the Army after the current discharges will be enough to defeat Japan "quickly and completely."

Allied forces will be in the fight with us. The Chinese Army has been estimated at from 2,000,000 to 3,500,000 men, though lack of training and adequate equipment, together with the absence of a military tradition, has meant the Chinese have been unable to make war on modern terms.

Prime Minister Winston Churchill has pledged that Britain will go "hand in hand" with the United States and the British Dominions in the fight on Japan. The Australians and New Zealanders, whose national survival hinges on the defeat of Japan, continue in the fight to the extent that their comparatively small populations permit. The Aussies are currently fighting Japs in Borneo, outside the strong New Britain base of Rabaul, on Bougainville and in New Guinea.

Russia, which has had periodic trouble with Japan for half a century, this spring notified Tokyo that the Soviet Union would not renew the non-aggression pact that expires next April. Both Russia and Japan have had large armies facing one another on the Manchurian border for

THE JAP WAR

several years. In 1938 and 1939 the two forces clashed in "skirmishes" that were really full-scale battles. All responsible American officials, however, have warned repeatedly against speculating about future Russo-Jap relations.

It all balances up like this: Jap tenacity, manpower and geographical remoteness against Allied tenacity, manpower, greater productive capacity, better artillery, bigger navies and bigger air forces.

Just now, the Pacific war is considerably ahead of schedule. At both Peleliu and Leyte, natives and prisoners said that the Japs knew that the Americans were coming but did not expect them for another two months. In both places coast defense guns lay unassembled; work crews had still to put them in operating position.

The War Department plan calls for redeploying men from the ETO and the States so fast that the Japs will not have time to build up defenses or assemble reinforcements at spots where the Japs may figure the next invasions will come.

"Speed is essential," the WD says, "for it is vitally important that we do not give the enemy time either to rest or reorganize his defenses."

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