

when we did have an admitted superiority in the air the matter was really all over bar the cheering.

The disappointment felt at the length of the pauses during the early phases of the battle is really due to the propagandists who have made the public believe that the air is everything in war. *Flight* has always preached that the aircraft with an army are but one arm, quite as essential as tanks, artillery, and all the other arms, but not by themselves magic makers of victory. An army can no more win without help from the air than it can win without help from tanks, but one cannot safely say much more than that.

There is every reason to believe that in this Libyan battle the air squadrons of the Empire have been used with excellent judgment. They have not attempted to achieve the impossible, and they have concentrated on the jobs for which they were most suited. By sticking to such sensible tactics they have given the ground forces the best service of which they were capable. Light tanks they could and did tackle on occasions, but their most useful work was to reconnoitre and to attack the enemy's supply, while at the same time preventing the *Luftwaffe* and the *Regia Aeronautica* from interfering much with our ground troops.

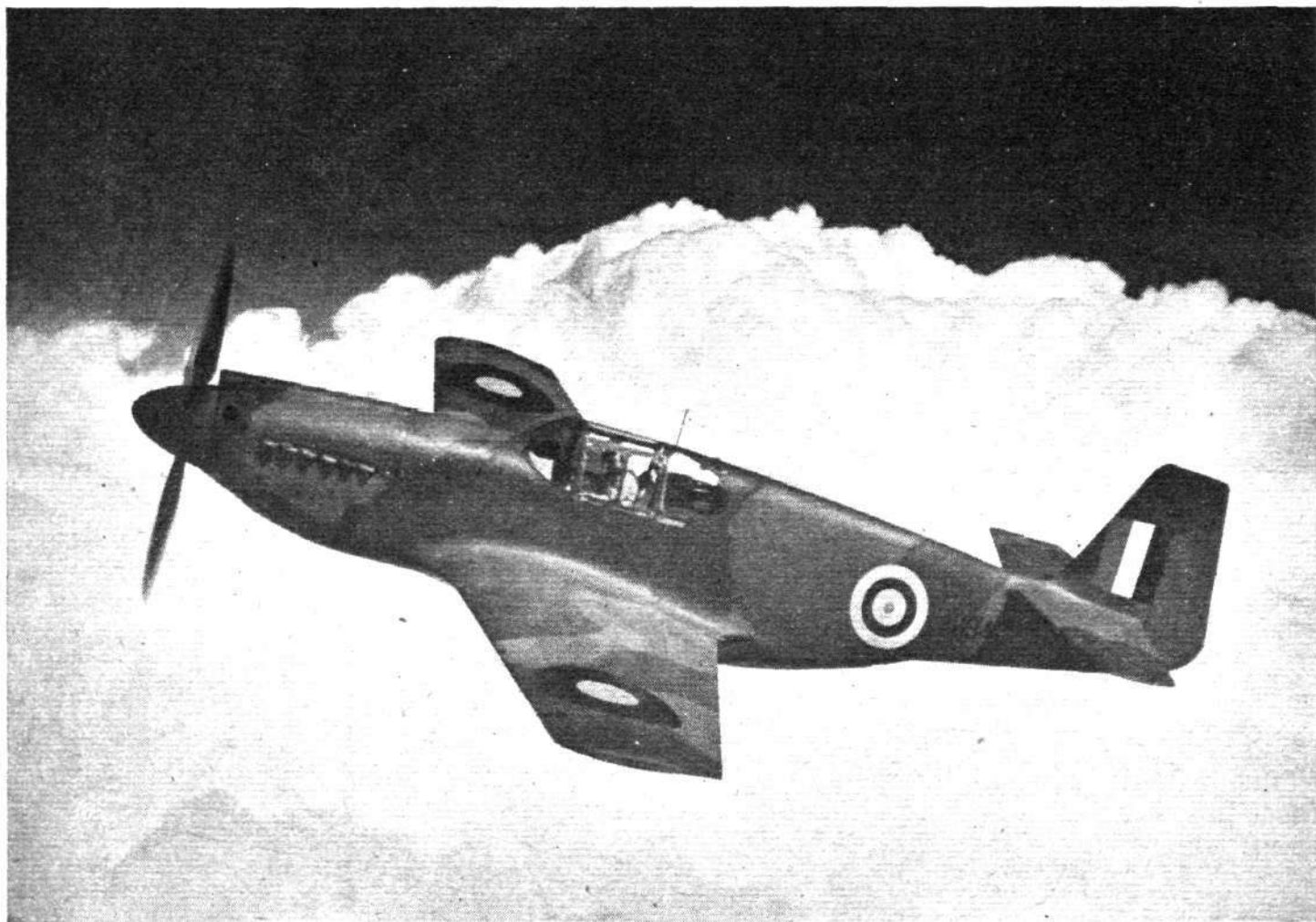
Luftwaffe Strength

IT may be noticed that the communiqués in which the Russians announce some of the details of their victorious advance have lately been very modest as regards the numbers of German aircraft destroyed. A

statement on December 22nd, for example, claimed that the troops of General Boldin, operating on one of the sectors of the Moscow front, had captured or destroyed 12 German aircraft, 143 tanks, 760 lorries, 383 motor cycles, 101 guns and many smaller arms. The contrast between the huge numbers of other weapons and the mere dozen aircraft is certainly striking. It looks as if the *Luftwaffe* has been giving up the struggle in Russia, and had been withdrawing while the going was good.

Some time ago Mr. Churchill said that the only German weakness was in the air, and at the Lord Mayor's banquet last month he asserted that we now had an Air Force which was equal in size and numbers to the German air power. It is clear that the responsibilities of the *Luftwaffe* have outrun its strength; but, even so, that hardly accounts for the apparent paucity of German aircraft on the fighting fronts.

One comforting fact we know, namely, that the daylight sweeps by the R.A.F. over France have confined an unduly large proportion of the best German fighters to that area, and that without sufficient fighters the help which bombers can give to an army is almost negligible. Perhaps that fact has had a considerable effect in facilitating the present victorious Russian advance. If the German troops in Russia have really been almost denuded of air support, the Russian advance may continue almost indefinitely. That will present another pretty problem to Commander-in-Chief, Herr Adolf Hitler.



WILD HORSES: Built to Air Ministry specification, the North American Mustang single-seater fighters are now coming off the production lines in California. The Mustang is powered by a 12-cylinder liquid-cooled Allison engine of 1,150 h.p. Gross weight is 7,724 lb. Length, 32ft. 2in. Span, 37ft. Height, 11ft. 8in. No details of speed, armour or armament may be published. Other photographs appear on pages 5 and 15.