

# WAR in the AIR

Santa Claus' Weather : Rundstedt Feels Our Air Power : Blows at the "Under-belly" : Pacific Aggression

226

Photo  
Blows



UPSETTING THE TIMETABLE: Thunderbolt fighter-bombers of the Ninth U.S.A.A.F. attacking a German supply train bound for the Third Army front. Some of the waggons are derailed and the engine is blazing.

**I**N the first stage of Rundstedt's great counter-attack on the Allied lines in Holland the weather favoured the Germans—even as early mist favoured the start of Ludendorf's attack on Gough's 5th Army on March 1st, 1918. For days on end the Allies got no advantage from their superior air power, as the weather reduced flying to a minimum. Santa Claus, however, gave the Allies a welcome Christmas present in the form of several days of bright frosty weather.

At once the air was filled with the deep-toned note of aircraft engines as every class of machine hurried up to take up its own appropriate task. The fighters and fighter-bombers of the Tactical Air Forces sped along above the roads looking for German supply vehicles and reinforcements; and sometimes they found them massed bumper to bumper. The medium bombers ranged further afield. The Spitfire-bombers sought out buildings in Dutch towns connected with the business of rocket shells. The heavies, both of Bomber Command and of the 8th Air Force, went for the railway

centres and marshalling yards behind the German lines.

Naturally the slaughter of vehicles on the roads was great at first, and many tanks also felt the blow from the air and had to stay put. Soon, however, the roads began to clear by day, showing that the Germans had been driven back on to movements by night. Tanks and other vehicles were found by the Americans deserted on

the roads, not in the least damaged, but with empty petrol tanks. Nothing proved more conclusively than that the value of their air power to the Allies. Further evidence of petrol shortage was seen in the fairly extensive use of horse-drawn carts by the Germans.

It had been said that the *Luftwaffe* had been carefully saved up for this battle, and certainly more German aircraft put in an appearance than had



SECOND WIND: Long-range tanks fitted to 2nd T.A.F. rocket-Typhoons before a raid on targets in Hanover. This represents a penetration of over 120 miles behind the front line.

116