

WAR IN THE AIR

been met by the British and Americans for a long time before. But its effect was inconsiderable. Formations of 50 machines were seen here and there; but they could do little against the overwhelming numbers of the British and Americans. In fighting quality, too, nothing happened to upset the verdict of the Battle of Britain, when the R.A.F. was outnumbered but still mastered the *Luftwaffe*. Sir Arthur Tedder must have had a very busy time arranging it all; but he is used to busy times, and all went well—though he must have longed for the help of the lamented Sir Trafford Leigh-Mallory.

Long-term policy was not neglected while this mighty battle raged, though Bomber Command and the 8th Air Force had, quite rightly, to concentrate their efforts on Rundstedt's rear. General Spaatz has another string to his bow, in the 15th Air Force based in the Mediterranean. It made its contribution by attacking oil plants and other targets in Austria, which might have tried to top up the waning supplies of fuel in the Battle in the West—the Rhine Battle seems an appropriate name for it, for when the German attack finally fails the Allied riposte should carry General Eisenhower's men up to the Rhine, and perhaps across it.

Budapest Surrounded

THE Russians celebrated Christmas week by completing the encirclement of one enemy Capital, Budapest. Hungary is now the last satellite which clings to Germany's coat-tails;

TURNING ON THE HEAT: Using hot air to warm up the Napier Sabre of a Typhoon during intense cold weather in Holland.

but we may remember that in the first world war the Austro-Hungarian Empire was an equal partner and Ally of Germany, and that Budapest was one of its two main Capital cities. Vienna alone took some sort of precedence of it in what some British statesman called the "ramshackle Empire," and now Vienna is not the Capital of anything. Something will have to be done about that when Hitler's régime is over.

As usual, the Russian Air Force is the silent service, but correspondents have told how the Russian aircraft have been diving at the guns placed in the parks of Budapest. We may speculate also as to whether the mastery which the Russian Generals have shown over the Germans in manoeuvre and surprise has not been largely due to the Red command of the air. Marshals Malinovsky and Tolbukhin seem to have known at all stages where their opponents were, and therefore what they were likely to do; while the German Generals appear to have been enveloped in the fog of war. Air



EVASIVE ACTION: A Japanese destroyer jinking to avoid bombs from an attack by U.S. Mitchells on enemy shipping in Ormoc Bay, Leyte.

superiority can make that difference.

On December 27th Tokyo was bombed once more by Superfortresses based on Saipan. The attack took place at noon, and seems to have made a great impression on the Japanese, judging by the fairy stories they put out about the damage which they said they had inflicted on the raiders.

The U.S. Pacific Fleet has made another combined sea-air attack on Iwo Jima, in the Volcano Islands, which are half-way between the Marianas and the Japanese homeland. Added to this, the U.S. Navy has announced 27 new sinkings of Japanese vessels by submarines. One of the victims was a large aircraft carrier, the first of its kind to be sunk by a submarine.

The British Navy likewise has not been idle in eastern waters. Not long ago it made a sea-air attack on Japanese positions at the western end of Sumatra. On the morning of December 20th, it has recently been announced, it sailed further afield and attacked the harbour of Belawan-Deli on the east coast of that great island, and also went for oil installations in the area. No mention has been made of fire by the guns of the ships; the whole attack was apparently carried out by aircraft. Avengers, bombing from 1,500 feet, scored hits on jetties, warehouses and railway yards. Fighters meanwhile set fire to an oil tank and a petrol tank. The weather was bad, and flying was difficult, and results could not be fully observed. One enemy bomber was shot down by a Hellcat.

That was not a bad morning's work; but in the afternoon airfields in