

Planet

WAR IN THE AIR

the Sabang area and the anchorage at a place called Uleelhoe were attacked by Corsairs and Hellcats. The British force suffered no casualties.

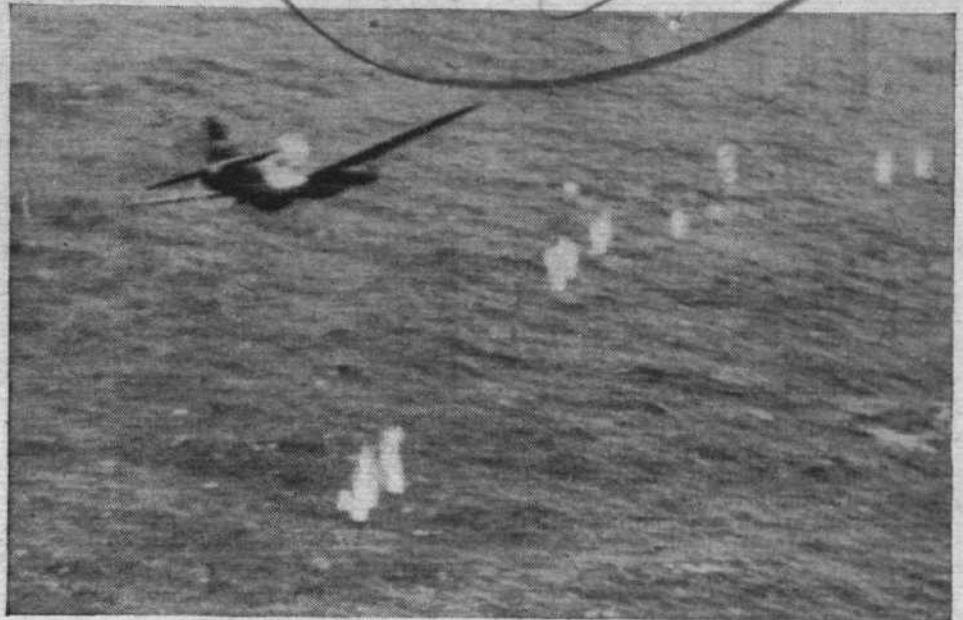
The Japanese last week made their first surface attack on the Americans on Mindoro island, in the Philippines, but as the ships were approaching from the direction of Luzon they were spotted by a U.S. Navy Liberator. It reported that the enemy force comprised a battleship, a heavy cruiser, and six destroyers.

Bombers and fighters were quickly despatched to attack the enemy, and torpedo boats were also rushed up. The battleship and the cruiser were both damaged by bombs, and three of the destroyers were sunk. Thereupon the Japanese prudently retired.

The absence of an aircraft carrier from this attacking force is worth noticing. Japanese losses in that vital class of warship have been very heavy, and possibly the supply is now running short. A carrier is not built in a day, and the Japanese shipyards are not the most efficient in the world. In any case the Japanese goose is only waiting to be cooked; if the yellow enemy now has to admit inferiority in the air side of its naval power, the final roasting should not take very long.

An Admiral's Opinion

ADMIRAL SIR BRUCE FRASER, G.C.B., K.B.E., the C-in-C. of the British Pacific Fleet, who is flying his flag in the new battleship H.M.S. *Howe*, has recently visited Admiral Nimitz at his headquarters at Pearl



ON THE WAY IN: A twin-engined Mitsubishi "Betty" falling into the sea after being set on fire by a U.S. Navy Liberator.

Harbour. On his return he made the following pronouncement: "I am in full accord with the American strategy of using large numbers of aircraft carriers. The country with the greatest sea-power must win the war. We have that sea-power. The Japanese are losing theirs."

Those are the sentiments which have been consistently expressed in *Flight*, and it is gratifying to find the British naval C-in-C. in the Pacific concurring. Carrier-borne aircraft reduce the handicap of enormous distances in the Pacific Ocean, and in sea fights the American carrier aircraft have shown themselves capable of winning a battle on their own. We feel confident that the officers and men

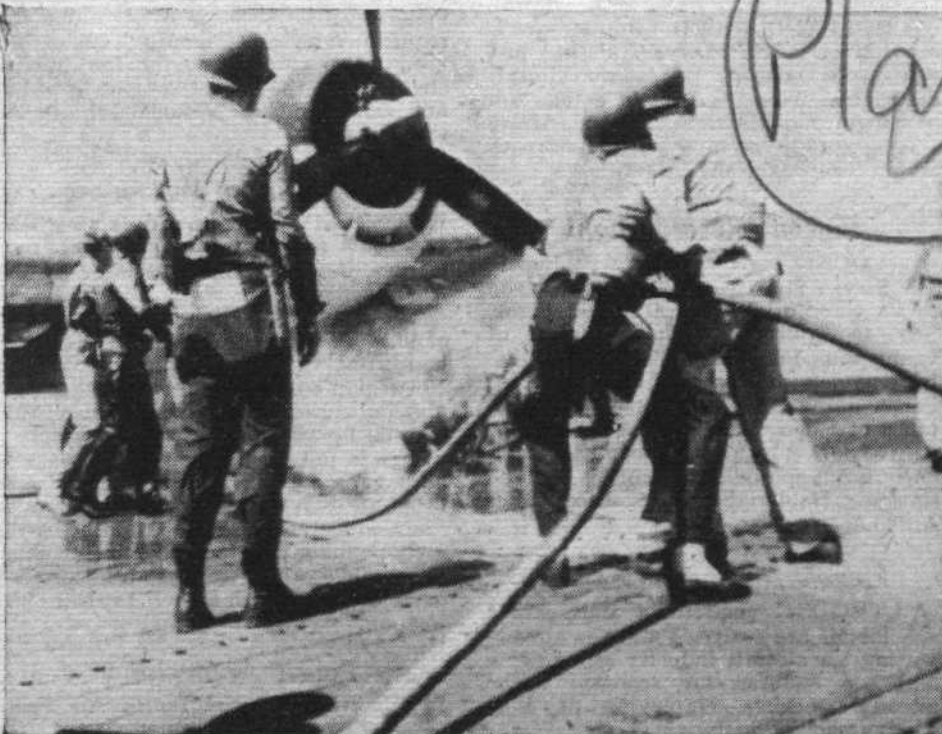
of the Fleet Air Arm will prove in no way inferior to their American brothers-in-arms. When the time comes for secrets to be revealed, it will be very interesting to learn which carriers have been allocated to the British Pacific Fleet.

The great battle in the West has reached a state (as we write) when the military commentators are anxiously asking themselves, "Who does what next?" The R.A.F. and its American colleagues have no doubts. Whenever the weather permits flying their machines go off to strafe the Huns. One muster of enemy troops and armour in a valley near the town of Bastogne was attacked by Lancasters just before dawn on the last day of 1944. In that narrow valley it is not thought possible that the Germans could quickly disperse.

The close of the year was also marked by a series of raids by the U.S. 8th Air Force on oil plants which we do not remember to have heard mentioned before, but which have evidently gained importance recently as the better-known plants have been heavily damaged, one after another. Nearly the whole of the Allied air effort has been directed towards depriving the German Army of the means of carrying on the battle. But a foggy day gives the enemy a chance to get a mass of stuff up to his firing line without interference—except from artillery shelling blindly at the roads.

On New Year's Eve Berlin was bombed by the strongest force of Mosquitoes ever sent there.

The Gestapo H.Q. in Oslo was also attacked, by daylight, on the last day of the year. An attack on these H.Q. on September 25th, 1942, was the first introduction of the Mosquito to the British public. This time the leading machines hit the building and set it on fire, and the remaining Mosquitoes, unable to see the target clearly, came home with their bombs in their racks.



BATHING THE CAT: The fire-fighting squad on the U.S. carrier *Cowpens* putting out the flames of a Grumman Hellcat which was already on fire before it landed.

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