

JAPAN GOES ON THE DEFENSIVE



Pearl Harbor's second anniversary finds Pacific war preliminaries over, major campaigns shaping up, tough fighting ahead

By Max Hill

Former Associated Press Chief of Bureau in Tokyo; Author of "Exchange Ship"

Japan has won the first two rounds in her war of aggression to control all of Asia, and up to now we have been giving her the time she needs to win the third round, which will be purely defensive action on her part. Now as another December 7 rolls around we must press costly attacks; all Japan has to do is to sit back and defend.

This is not to say that we are not going to win the war in the Pacific. Far from it. If the appeasement minded minority in the United States can be controlled, we eventually will dictate the peace terms in Tokyo. Or better, we will dictate the terms of unconditional surrender, with the military of Japan completely discredited, even in the eyes of their own people.

But the job will be long, and hard, and costly.

Japan's one purpose now is to fight back and stall for more time—not to attack. That period in her war is over, and she came out on top.

Japan started the war in the Pacific on December 7th, 1941, and in about three months she had conquered a territory half the size of the United States, and had made slave labor of one hundred and forty million people, as many as live in our entire country.

I mentioned that Japan has won the first rounds of her battle for supremacy in the Orient. Round one was this:

She talked about peace, and prepared for war; but it was not so much that Japan fooled us, as that we lulled ourselves into a false security talking about how strong we were. Actually, we were weak. Now Japan is strong, because she has the whole of the rich Orient at her disposal.

We thought that Japan didn't dare attack the supposedly strong combination of the Anglo-American powers, that she was bleeding her life away in China without taking on another war. And that was just what Premier Hideki Tojo, then the War Minister, wanted us to think.

Meanwhile he was building up a home population to an economy geared entirely to war, and training an army that would know jungle warfare down to the last detail.

Once Japan had stored up a stock pile of essential materials, such as scrap iron, aluminum and oil and machine tools and copper,

JAPAN GOES ON THE DEFENSIVE

she was ready for Round Two. That was her big gamble. And again she figured out what was going to happen. We would make Hitler our Number One Enemy and give her time to consolidate her gains, exploit the conquered territories and dig in.

Time is what Japan needs most of all, and she has been getting all of the time she wants; we are having to fight all over the world, spreading our tremendous production and strength thin as rain water in some fifty countries.

First, in appraising our enemy after two years of war, let's take up internal conditions in Japan. Japan is stronger on her home front than she is in battle, with one exception—the Black Market. It is vicious and widespread, and it is the one weakness I can find in the domestic structure.

Otherwise, the Japanese home front is strong. The people, all but a few thousands of the seventy million of them, always have lived simply; they need little more than a roof, a cup of hot tea, a bowl of rice and a piece of fish.

As to labor, all wage and hour restrictions have been eliminated by the government. Labor is cheap and plentiful throughout the Orient. Take this recent example, which will sound absurd to you. Japan now has about seventy per cent of the East Indies oil wells back in production. She has sixty million people there to work for her, producing the oil, tin, rubber and other war products that she needs.

In other words, she has an actual surplus of labor, and this labor is hewing out teak-wood barrels, which then are filled with crude oil and then tossed (*Continued on Page 40!*)



AN OIL REFINERY NEAR TOKYO. JAPAN HAS PLENTY OF OIL—SOME OF IT IS EVEN FLOATED UP FROM THE EAST INDIES IN CASKS BORNE BY THE JAPAN CURRENT.

out into the Japan current, which sweeps up the east coast of Asia. All of the barrels aren't recovered, of course, but what loss is there in that? Sufficient oil is delivered to Japan without loss of ships.

Right now in Japan, scientists are experimenting with crude rubber boats, flat bottomed and which can be towed, to carry raw materials from the Indies and Malaya and Burma. These rubber boats would make a one-way trip and then be converted into tires and other essential rubber products.

In one way, however, Japan is handicapped: she has very few skilled men and women, especially those who can make machine tools and man ships. Every time one of our submarines sinks a Japanese ship, Tokyo is more hampered by the loss of manpower than she is by the loss of the ship.

At the beginning of the war, she had about six million gross tons of shipping. We have sunk, at a conservative estimate, well over a million tons. This is a definite danger to Japan. She must ship all of her raw materials to Japan, process them, and then ship the finished products back out again to an army which is spread over an area that is six thousand miles from north to south—from Paramushiru to the Indies—and four thousand miles from east to west—from Wake to Rangoon.

She is trying to overcome this danger in two ways. First, she is building small wood ships in Japan and Hong Kong and in the Philippines. And, second, she is building a land rail line along the coast of China, which can be reached from Japan in comparative safety via the Japan and Yellow Seas. This is one of the reasons she has been fighting desperate, last ditch delaying actions around her outposts in the Solomons.

In the matter of food, the people of Japan get enough to eat, and I doubt that we ever can starve them out.

Now, as to Japan's army, navy and air force. She has at least five million men under arms now, and a reserve of about eight millions.

OldMagazineArticles.com



JAPAN HAS ENOUGH FOOD, BUT NO EXTRAS. JAPANESE DIET CONSISTS CHIEFLY OF FISH (ABOVE), RICE AND TEA. PHOTO SHOWS A BIG CATCH OF BONITAS

Her navy is much more of a mystery than her army. We do know, however, that a good part of her shipbuilding facilities are being devoted to war ships, and not to merchant marine. And the great reserves of scrap iron Japan piled up before Pearl Harbor are now being used to replace battle losses.

MILLION JAPANESE SOLDIERS IN CHINA

At least a million men in Japan's army are tied up in China, while perhaps another million men are stationed in Korea, Kwantung Leased Territory and Manchuria.

They are there to keep a wary, watchful eye on Russia, and for no other reason. In my opinion, there has been a lot of unfair criticism of Russia for her failure to declare war on Japan. I used to talk with the Russians in Tokyo about the situation in Siberia, when all of us thought the next objective of the Japanese army would be in that direction. They admitted, frankly, they couldn't hold out for long against a Japanese attack.

This situation makes it just about a toss-up. Stalin keeps on demanding a second front against Hitler in Europe. I have a feeling we may counter, or perhaps we already have, with a demand that he open up a second front against Japan. Russia and Japan hate each other more bitterly, and deeply, than any other two nations in the world.

One million men in China, another million in the north—that leaves about three million soldiers for the home islands, and the vast conquered territories—Indo-China, Thailand, the Philippines, the East Indies, Burma and Malaya, and Japan's outpost islands.

The problem of how to bomb Japan is so involved and complicated that it is deserving of a story in itself. It is enough to point out now that we have no land base at this time from which our bombers can reach Tokyo.

In other words, Guadalcanal, New Georgia, Vella Lavella, Salamaua and Lae were just stepping stones to the main objective. We were just nibbling at the edges. General Douglas MacArthur is on the move, and any advance we make certainly is a gain over the early part of the war when all we were doing was backing up.

There are many encouraging signs that we really mean to strike a hard blow at the Japanese in the Burma area, and such an attack will be a real test of our strength. Japan must hold Burma to keep us from giving new aid to China. Burma is the road to Chungking.

It was a little discouraging at first to wait for the arrival of Lord Mountbatten in India. But actually, the presence of the Allied commander-in-chief wasn't needed in advance of the actual start of a drive.

The British, American, Chinese and Indian troops—and there now are about one million native Indian soldiers under arms—aren't the only ones now in that area. A large force of East African native troops has been trained at Colombo, on the island of Ceylon, and they are tall, muscular men, to whom the heat of the tropics is normal. I doubt that the Japanese will have the stomach for too many hand-to-hand engagements against them.

All signs now point to a growing major Allied offensive, and for the first time the enemy will be faced with the problem of holding territory which he can't afford to lose. The re-capture of Burma will put Japan in a tight spot, because it will pave the way for us to attack through China.

The job will be long and hard—it is about four hundred miles from the Burma coast to the China border—but it will be done. After that, we will be in a better position to start the naval war into which the battle for Asia must eventually develop.

JAPAN GOES ON THE DEFENSIVE**Four Routes To Tokyo:**

Max Hill finds there are four possible routes from which to attack Japan, not counting Russia, which can't be considered now:

1. Island to island, as General MacArthur is now moving up from the south.
2. The Aleutians, which present so many weather and other difficulties that they can almost be counted out.
3. From Hawaii, and although in the end he says the war in the Pacific will end up as a naval battle to the death, this route presents really serious difficulties. The Japanese-held Mandate Islands are a constant threat to any task force which sets out from Hawaii.
4. This leaves Burma as the logical route. It is the way we can give the most help to our allies in China.

The Author:

When Japan attacked our fleet at Pearl Harbor Max Hill, a veteran American newspaperman, was head of the Associated Press news bureau to Tokyo. Hill was held prisoner for seven months, was finally released and exchanged with other prisoners. Besides being known as the author of "Exchange Ship"—written about his experiences—he is a lecturer and radio commentator for Press Association. He was born in Colorado Springs, Colo., is 39, and lives in New York with his wife and daughter. He worked as a newspaper man in Denver, then with the AP in New York and Washington, D. C., before going to Tokyo.



CLICK

THE NATIONAL PICTURE MONTHLY

OldMagazineArticles.com