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Coming Invasion Of Japan.

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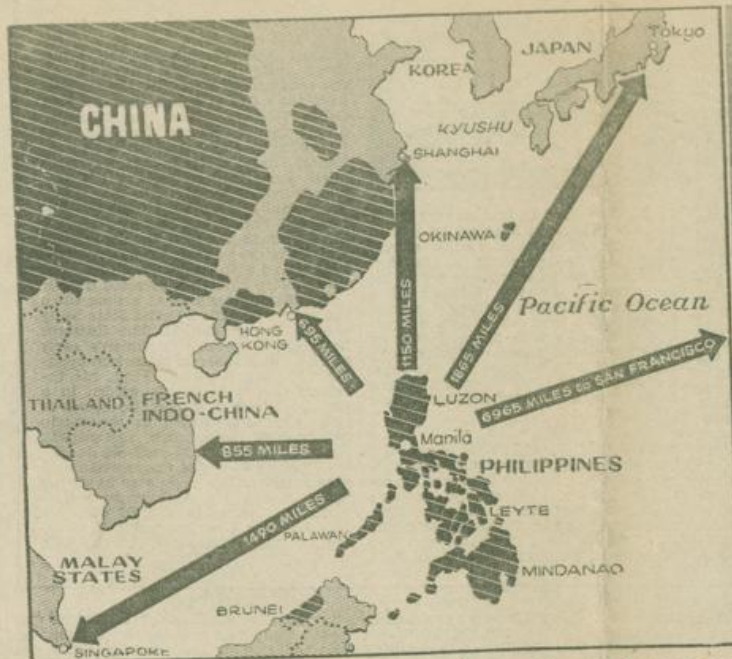
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The Philippines have become a gigantic base for future operations against Japan in any chosen direction.



Coming Invasion Of Japan

By A Staff Writer

ABOUT TWO weeks ago, Admiral Chester W. Nimitz announced in a radio broadcast that the "pre-invasion stage" of the war against Japan was opened with the shelling of the enemy's homeland by the big battleships of the Third Fleet and the current carrier raids. "At this—the pre-invasion stage—we depend on two principal strategies to further our aim," Admiral Nimitz pointed out. "The first is an ever-tightening blockade of Japan's homeland; the second, destruction by shelling and bombing of every industry and resource which contributes to Japan's ability to make war."

There can be no doubt that these two main "pre-invasion strategies" are already showing considerable results. The "Fortress of Japan" is now being softened and undermined to make it ripe for the final assault and decisive blow—the invasion.

Yet this ultimate venture of World War II—the conquest of Japan proper—will be a terrific job, however weakened the enemy's strength may be. Geography gives the Japanese a good chance to make a desperate last stand on their native soil, if they choose to do so. Nippon is indeed a forbidding target for any potential invader.

BEFORE THE war the Empire of Japan consisted of five large islands—Honshu, Kyushu, Shikoku, Hokkaido, and Taiwan (Formosa); several small island groups such as the Bonins, Volcanoes, Ryukyus, Pescadores, Kuriles, Marshalls, Carolines and Marianas, which the Japanese either claimed outright or held under mandate from the League of Nations; and Korea, or Chosen, on the Asiatic mainland. Manchuria, seized from the Chinese in 1931 and renamed Manchukuo, remained allegedly "an independent country under Japanese protection."

Politically and industrially, the heart of the Japanese Empire consists of the three islands of Honshu, on which Tokyo is located, Kyushu and Shikoku. Those three constitute Japan proper, or Nippon. There live the bulk of the 70,000,000 Japanese who are not engaged in mounting guard over Korea, Manchuria and the other parts of Asia and Oceania where they hold an estimated 425,000,000 other Asiatics in bondage. Formosa and Hokkaido both are sparsely settled. Formosa has about 5,000,000 inhabitants—mostly of Chinese descent; Hokkaido has an estimated population of 3,200,000.

THE THREE mountainous islands of Honshu, Kyushu and Shikoku are composed of three great ranges which rise in China and of which the islands form the outer arc. The ranges are volcanic, and the whole area is subject

to frequent earthquakes. Nippon has a yearly average of 1,500 quakes, or four a day. In Tokyo there is an average of one noticeable shock every day. This volcanic condition may prove helpful, from the Allied point of view. Nature, however, is an ally upon which one cannot depend too much. There has been no evidence that any of the tremors since the beginning of the war has caused enough damage to affect the Japanese war effort.

All three of these main islands have only narrow coastal plains—the largest one being that in the Tokyo-Yokohama area, known as Kanto. It is there that the highest and most sacred mountain, the often-portrayed Fujiyama, is situated. The coastal plain of Kanto comprises only 5,000 square miles—about the size of Connecticut. An advance through such an area will be like that through the hedgerows of Normandy or the German cities, ditch by ditch and house by house. There is little opportunity for large-scale maneuvers on any of the Japanese islands. It's the ideal terrain for a guerrilla-type of warfare, such as many observers think the Japanese may wage in defense of their homeland.

EVEN WITHOUT the imponderables of Japanese psychology—a psychology so perplexingly strange to our Western way of thinking—the purely military problems involved in a direct attack on Japan are difficult enough. For a successful invasion of Nippon an attacker must take and hold air control of the beachhead areas for an indefinite period. Nothing as narrow as the English Channel lies between the Allied forces and the shores of Japan. Air cover, until adequate fighter bases can be constructed and maintained ashore, will have to come from fleet carriers. Far more will be needed than have been deployed off any Pacific beachheads so far.

Ashore on Honshu, or one of the other two main islands, the problem will be at least as great as it was in Normandy. It may be necessary to land as many as 250,000 men during the first 24 or 48 hours—and then keep putting them ashore until there are a million or more. In fact, it may take more than a million Americans to hunt down and destroy each one of the estimated 1,000,000 or 1,500,000 regular soldiers that compose the Japanese Home Army. If the enemy's morale holds up and if the enemy leaders insist on fighting it out to the bitter end.

Whatever may precede the landings

on the Japanese home islands—air raids by thousands of planes, establishment of bases in China, on Formosa, and in the Ryukyus, continuous bombardments from the sea—the attack will remain the greatest, and maybe the most costly amphibious operation ever undertaken.

CLEARLY, a military venture of such enormous dimensions could not be carried out without a major land and naval base. In the case of the Normandy landings, it was the British Isles which played the role of a huge Allied arsenal and staging area. The coming invasion of Japan is strategically anchored on the Philippines—the first great land mass to be acquired by the U. S. in the Pacific Theater.

The War Department has stated that a total of 6,000,000 men may eventually be deployed in the war against Japan. Such masses of troops and equipment could not be assembled in places like Iwo Jima and Okinawa. However useful these conquered territories may prove with their complexes of airfields and naval bases, they remain little islands. The Philippines, on the other hand, with 115,600 square miles of land, much of it sparsely settled and readily available for bases without disrupting any established industrial population, are an ideal site for staging the bulk of the American Armies.

For the past few months, American engineers and Seabees have been busy transforming the Philippines into a gigantic base for future operations in any chosen direction. When the famous First Cavalry and Maj. Gen. Robert S. Beightler's Ohio National Guardsmen of the 37th Division fought their way into the city of Manila, they found the harbor choked with sunken hulks, and it was days before the first freight ship crept alongside the ruined dock. Today, an average of some 50 ships a day lie in Manila Harbor. All of the prewar piers have been cleared of rubble and repaired, and new ones have been built. When the whole job is complete some time this fall, Manila will handle one-third as much traffic as the Port of New York.

WHAT HAS been done at Manila is only typical of what is being done throughout the Philippines. On the shores of Leyte Gulf, up which Admiral Thomas C. Kinkaid's task force moved to land General MacArthur's troops on their first Philippine beachhead, some of the 100,000 men of Admiral Glover's Service Force have built

a naval base almost a third as large as the major American naval station in the Pacific, Pearl Harbor. Its drydocks can take a ship as big as any the U. S. Navy has ever constructed. Its enlisted men's club, a picturesque establishment sheltered by coconut palms, can serve 50,000 drinks daily.

Out in the country on a grassy level—once a pasture for dairy herds—a great hospital rises. It is Mandaluyong Hospital, called "the largest military construction job in the entire Pacific area." Ground for Mandaluyong was broken on March 23. Now it has 2,000 beds; by the end of August there will be 8,000, and the hospital's 840 separate buildings will cover 1,300 acres, ready for the wounded who will come by air or ship from Japan, the China coast, Malaya—wherever American forces may strike next.

Probably few outside the ranks of Army engineers in the Pacific are competent to appreciate the enormous problems the building of bases in this area have presented—problems and difficulties which never before have been faced on so vast a scale. The Philippines largely produced only raw materials before the war and after being looted by the Japanese for the past three years, cannot provide any stockpiles useful for war purposes. Engineers were compelled to carry with them every conceivable article that might be needed to provide troops, from huge concrete mixers and heavy road-building machinery to such tiny but indispensable gadgets as electric light switches and galvanized nails.

YET THE tremendous task has been accomplished, or is at least proceeding in the most satisfactory way—in spite of all difficulties. The great American base is practically ready. The U. S. Armed Forces in the Pacific seem to be all set for the last, decisive battle—the Battle of Nippon.

The great question remains whether it will be possible to end the war short of this final venture—the invasion of the Japanese homelands. While American bombs and shells keep pounding Japanese cities, American psychological warfare is well advanced in the course of what might be called a morale offensive against Japan with the hope of inducing the enemy's early surrender. Even if the indications are not too promising, it's worth while trying, if only for the record. At least it will never be possible to accuse the American Government of not having made an effort to avoid bloodshed and destruction.

The enemy knows what is in store for him if he chooses to prolong the fight. The decision is up to him, and he'd better make up his mind quickly. The present pre-invasion stage of the war is not likely to last very long.