



## JAP PILOT MATERIAL

FROM THE ATTACK on Pearl Harbor through the battle of Midway, Japanese naval pilots were described as almost uniformly good. Japan held the initiative and her air force personnel, trained to think in terms of attack, made the most of their opportunities.

They were seasoned and experienced products of a thorough training program extending over several years. They were a distinct credit to the Navy's long preparation for the Pacific war. Aggressive and resourceful, they knew capabilities and advantages of their own aircraft, and they flew them with skill and daring. They were quick to change their methods to meet new situations and to counter successfully the changes, modifications, and new designs of Allied aircraft.

After Midway, in the summer and fall of 1942, there was a noticeable deterioration in quality of Japanese naval pilots. In their over-all competence and their com-

bat proficiency, a markedly inferior brand of pilots appeared in the South and Southwest Pacific areas. They made glaring tactical mistakes, unnecessarily exposed themselves to gunfire, got separated and lost mutual support, and at times seemed completely bewildered.

OF COURSE, this represents only the general trend, to which there were exceptions. So far, all actions involving carrier pilots have borne out indications from other sources that they are the cream of Japanese naval air force. Before joining their carriers, they apparently are given a long period of advanced training and operational flights at naval air bases in the Empire, and they pile up a large total of flying hours before seeing action in a combat zone. One cannot assume that these pilots will be met only in the vicinity of carriers, for a group may at any time be shore-based for strategic reasons.

# HUSBANDING AIR STRENGTH GNAWS AT STAMINA OF JAP PILOT TRAINING

ABOUT THE FIRST of last year, Japanese Army pilots appeared in the Southwest Pacific. Combat reports indicated they were inferior to the naval personnel. The Army men, probably drawn from China, Manchuria, and the Empire, apparently lacked the combat experience of the naval pilots. On the quality of the latter, from January until about May, reports were mixed.

One flight of Japanese planes might show a considerable difference in ability among the individual pilots involved. There is evidence that a sub-flight leader is picked on the basis of combat experience regardless of rank. Undoubtedly, relative novices were being mixed in with older hands on many combat missions. Occasionally, attacks were pressed home, and the fliers showed great skill, but the over-all picture of comparatively poor quality remained much the same.

Many hypotheses, based on actual information, have been set forth to explain this diversity of quality exhibited by Japanese air personnel. There continue to be puzzling features in the situation, but the following general explanation is believed to be reasonably accurate. During the period up to Midway, the Japanese went "all out" to accomplish as many objectives as possible.

With respect to both planes and trained personnel, they had no adequate regard for economy of force. Reserves of both were limited, and production and procurement also were limited. In the early summer of 1942, Japan reached the limit of her expansion: by that time, it now seems apparent, her supply of excellent first-line pilots was largely exhausted.

Those who had survived were returned to the Empire for rest; in many cases they became instructors in various naval air schools. They were replaced by second-rate personnel. At the same time, following Midway, a further drain on front-line pilots resulted from Japan's realizing the value of night operations. Considerable time was needed for training night-flying pilots. (These have been appearing in increas-

ing strength through the summer of 1943.) Later in 1942, some of the better pilots, drawn probably from this group and from the early veterans, may have been withdrawn for special training in the new types of planes, both Army and Navy, that have in recent months appeared in forward areas. Arrival of these aircraft coincided to some extent with reports indicating improvement in flying personnel.

To explain the cases noted of great diversity in quality shown on the same day by different flights or even within the same flight, at least two points set forth above should be recalled. A flight or sub-flight leader may on occasion be the only pilot in his group with any extensive combat experience. Carrier pilots may appear at the same time as less highly trained, land-based personnel.

The total elapsed time from the beginning of the average pilot's training until his appearance in a combat zone is believed to have been shortened considerably.

It is believed that the shortage of trained aircraft crews is one of Japan's gravest handicaps. This is not to say she has no good pilots or that Allied fliers as individuals have reason for over-confidence. They are likely to meet just as efficient Japanese pilots as they ever have encountered, flying faster and more rugged aircraft with increased firepower.






THE SHORTAGE of good crews, it is believed, has resulted in a relative husbanding of air strength. This already has been a notable feature in the Southern Pacific combat zones in recent months in regard to bomber sorties. To what extent that comparative inactivity has been a result of personnel shortage is not known, but a correlation between them is believed to exist.

One final aspect of this subject should be noted. There is little evidence to support early war propaganda that Japanese airmen are suicidal fanatics. Some instances have been reported of pilots attempting to crash their planes into Allied ships, aircraft and land targets, but these have been comparatively few.

Lt. Gen. George C. Kenney, Allied air commander in the Southwest Pacific, declared recently: "The Japanese pilots we are meeting now are definitely second rate and they probably will stay that way. I am satisfied that the Japanese do not give their personnel nearly as much training as we do our boys." This may account for the deficiency.



## WHY QUALITY OF JAP PILOTS IS WEAKENED

- 1 LESS RIGID SELECTION ..... 
- 2 SPEED UP OF TRAINING ..... 
- 3 INADEQUATE GUNNERY, NAVIGATION, COMMUNICATION ..... 
- 4 LOWERING STANDARDS OF FLIGHT TESTS ..... 
- 5 CUTTING DOWN OPERATIONAL PRACTICE ..... 

NA NEWS ANALYSIS



**INSTRUCTOR** explains air traffic regulations around training field to group of Japanese cadets diligently taking notes on procedure to be followed in landing



**PARACHUTE** adjustment is checked for proper fit by instructor before cadet takes first flight in trainer, similar to "Yellow Peril" used by U. S. naval cadets