

## —FLYING WITH WILLIAMS—

## Command Of Air Is Vital

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BY THIS time the tactical plan of a German Blitzkrieg has been revealed for all to see. Fast and highly maneuverable single-seaters engage the enemy planes of similar type to keep such forces aloft. Dive bombers and ground strafing planes attack enemy lines of communications, moving as a curtain of flying fire in the attempt to dislocate the back areas behind the front and prevent the transportation of supplies and reinforcements.

Lending permanence to this disruption of enemy back areas in the campaign in the Low Countries, the Germans introduced the parachuting of machine gun detachments to hold airports and strategic points from which enemy forces had been driven temporarily. Following as closely as possible behind the air attack are the mechanized troops and heavy gun units. Naturally, there is a wide gap in the progression of the frontal wave of airpower attack and the mechanized detachments, and this is proportionate to the difference in respective speeds. Into this gap is poured the secondary and successive waves of air transports loaded with reinforcements to be landed at air-dromes under control, or parachuted where landing area is not available.

Surprise, speed and "timing" are the essentials, and none of the machinery available could accomplish a lightning war without each of these vital factors being completely covered.

With communications completely upset and supplies cut off, it is



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only a matter of a short time before enemy front line positions must be evacuated under threat of encirclement by attacking ground troops.

The nearest the generals of other ages could come to such swift raiding operations was with cavalry, but now, with even the slowest battle aircraft capable of at least 250 miles an hour, the piercing of enemy back areas as deep as 50 or 100 miles is only a matter of a little less than 30 minutes. Words are decidedly inadequate to portray the lightning destruction of such co-ordinated operations. One thousand dive bombers, each carrying two 1,000 pound bombs, or a single 2,000 pound egg of destruction, can cut a swath through the countryside, outdoing the worst of tornadoes, rendering transportation impossible, and even changing the face of the terrain.

After discharging the bombs, the dive bombers concentrate on machine gunning enemy forces in the open or holding them helpless while mechanized units attack and overrun their positions. And alert commanders ascribe to low flying machine gun aircraft the greatest disorganizing values. One or two bombs released by a plane constitute its bombing mission, and it is through and impotent as far as heavy destruction is concerned. But with thousands of rounds of machine gun ammunition available, each ground-strafing machine then becomes more terrible than a thou-

sand of the old time cavalry hunting men through the woods and even in the streets of cities. In the early stages of the last war the machine gun became known as the "concentrated essence of infantry," and along with barbed wire, stymied the struggle to win the war. But now the machine gun is flying 250 to 300 miles per hour.

And still, in face of this dreary flying war, no mind has been so brilliant or daring enough to more fully scratch the possibilities of a new type of attack from above the head of the enemy, that cunningly avoids the enemy strongholds, to destroy nerve centers far behind the front line.

A sign should be hung on the wall of every classroom of military and naval academy. The next war will not be fought as the last war was fought—nor with the same machinery. By pouring that sound maxim into the ears of young strategists, million bloody mistakes could be avoided. In 1914 the world marched steamed to war. In this war nations are flying and trying to keep their enemies from doing the same. Command of the air is the essence of this conflict, while it was only an important factor in the last World War. And it is Marshal Foch's pointed warning that started this war by insisting that air power was an auxiliary arm.

Turning an enemy flank has been for centuries the tactical mark of victory. But in all other wars man has been limited by his marching speed, railroad and air drawn transportation. The era of the flank was then a physical limitation of forces or fortifications. modern Blitzkrieg is an attack with airpower and mechanized ground forces, where flanks are created by spearhead drives of these two types, "timed" and co-ordinate

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in the Gulf Building. I was in Pittsburgh frequently  
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