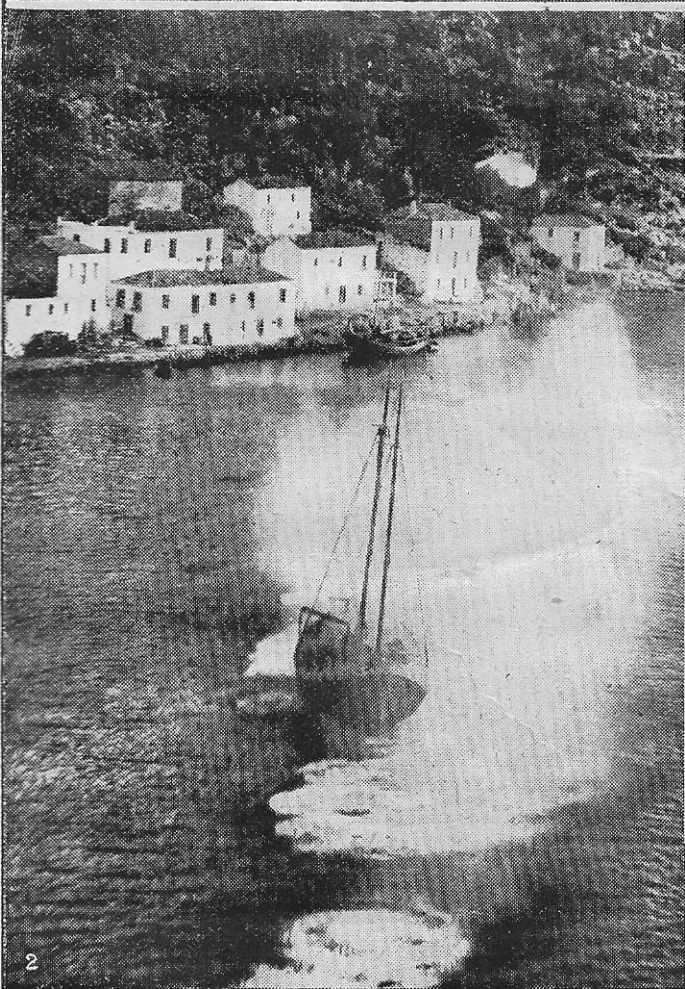
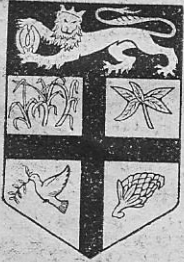


Beaufighters Blast Enemy Merchant Shipping

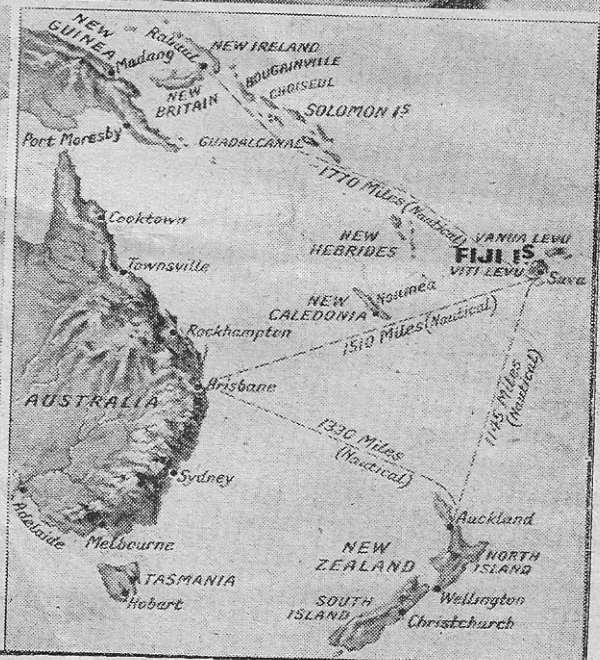
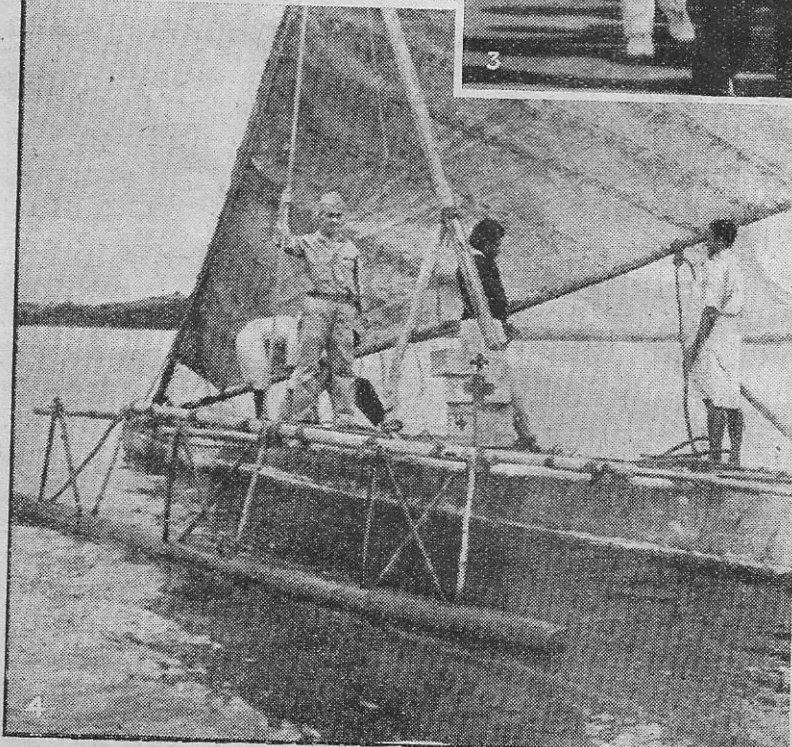
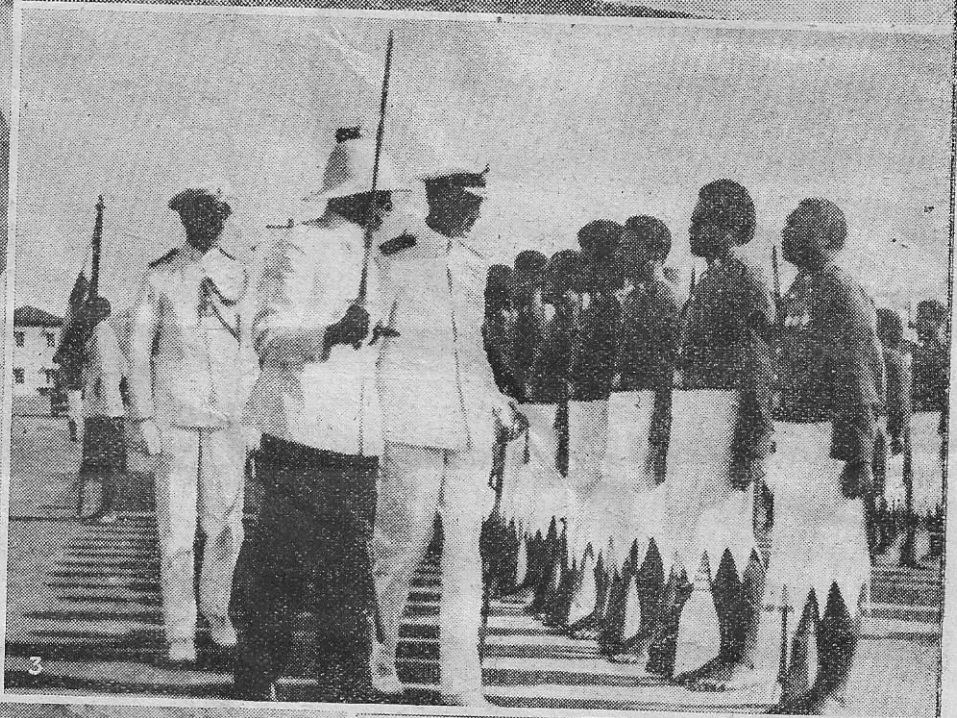
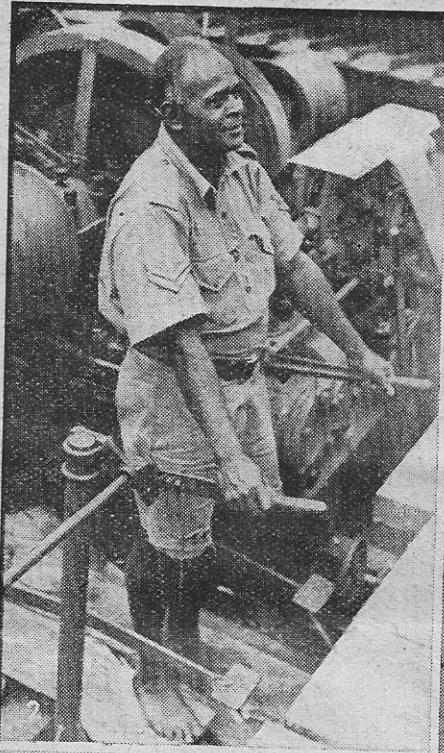


CENTRE OF CONCENTRATED CANNON FIRE from Beaufighters of R.A.F. Coastal Command escorted by Spitfires of the Air Defence of Great Britain, this enemy merchantman (1) is one of several attended to off the Dutch coast on March 1, 1944; near misses are registered (3) as torpedo-carrying Beaufighters take up the attack; later, two torpedoes struck home. In the Aegean also our Beaufighters are busy; a well-aimed bomb has wiped this vessel (2) off the active list. *Photos, British Official*

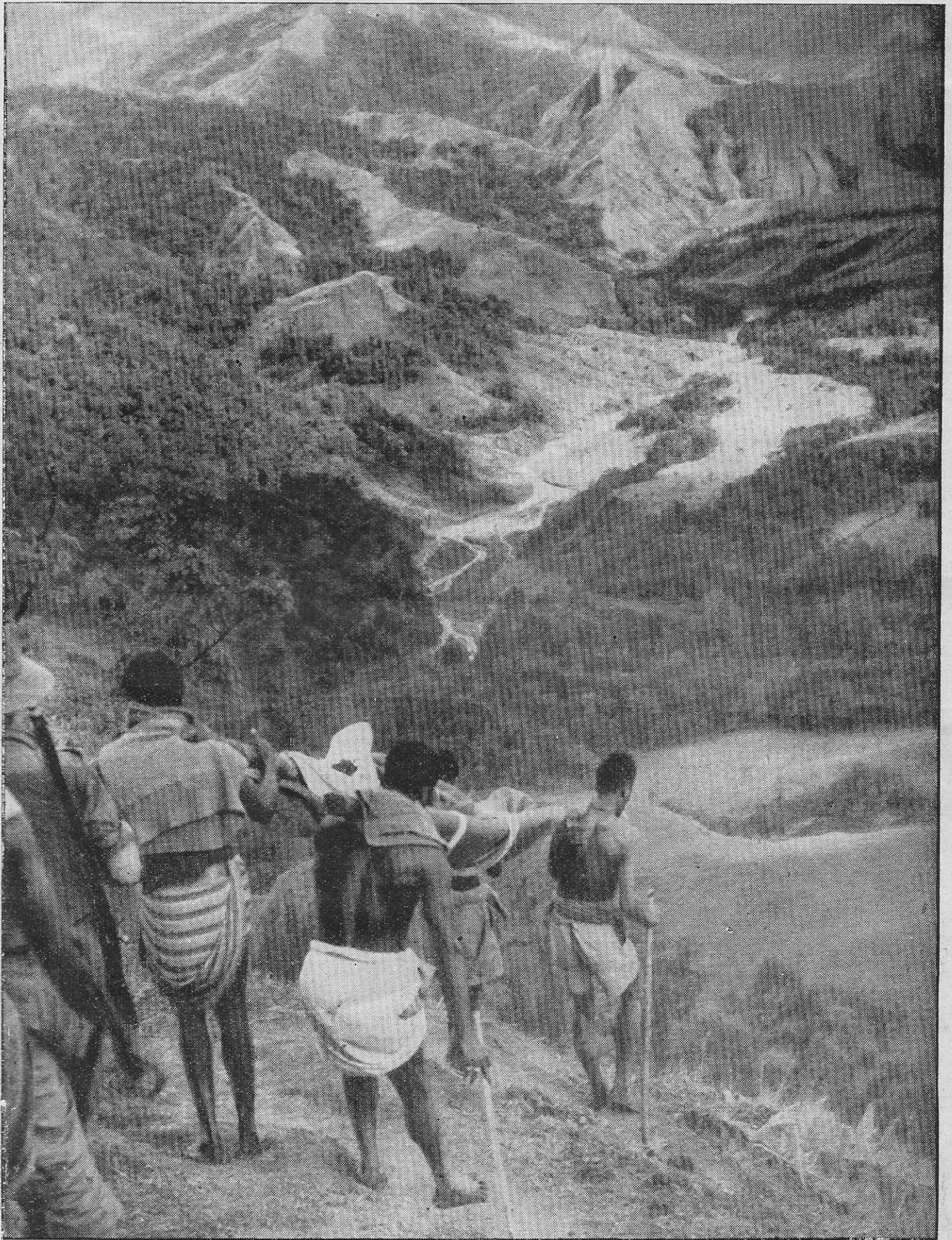
Britain's Colonies in the War: No. 5—Fiji



PACIFIC paradise in peacetime, large areas of the Fiji Islands are now training-grounds in tropical warfare for U.S. troops. The map below shows Fiji's strategic importance; its productiveness is symbolized in the Colony's arms (left). Of immense value to the Allies are the 70,000 tons of sugar and 15,000 tons of copra exported annually to U.S.A., Canada and New Zealand. Native soldiers of the Fiji Defence Force are here (3) being inspected. Among islanders decorated is Corporal Druma (2), Fiji Labour Corps; he won the B.E.M. for bravery. Outrigger canoes (4) keep isolated American units supplied. Islanders give to the Red Cross, for which a carnival in Suva (1) raised £5,000.



Australians Ejected the Japanese From These Hills



NEW GUINEA NATIVES, with sure-footed care for the casualties they carry, act as stretcher-bearers down the slopes of Shaggy Ridge in the Finisterre Range; far below is the Faria River, with Ramu Valley beyond. Australian forces driving on from Sio, on the Huon Peninsula, which they captured on Jan. 16, 1944, threw out the Japanese from their Finisterre strongholds and by Feb. 10 had joined up with U.S. troops near the American beach-head at Saidor, 55 miles south-east of Madang.

Mighty Sky-Freighters Sway the Fortunes of War

The entire picture of military operations has been transformed by transports of the air. They take to the Allied front lines the requirements of battle—men, guns, ammunition, food and water—and race back with the wounded. They can turn a last desperate stand into a resounding triumph, as MARK PRIESTLEY vigorously recounts in this article.

SOME of the fighting officers of R.A.F. Transport Command call the giant Avro York "Noah's Ark." They watch jeeps drive up the gangway of the 30-ton freighter plane and pack two by two into the plane's long interior. Smoothly the flying-pantechinons take to the air, cruise at 275 m.p.h., and presently land their cargoes at airfields that only a short time before were held by the enemy.

every plane that could fly was ordered to the rescue of Kokoda. Outnumbered five to one, the battered but valiant 39th Battalion of Australians was making its last stand when air transport turned the tide. Guns and mortars, tins of beef and crates of blood plasma, boxes of ammunition and bundles of brown mosquito netting were dropped to the fighters on the ground. The tide of battle turned; within a month the Japanese advance had ended.

were moved 500 miles by "airmail" to render them available for a new hospital. Mobile field hospitals, complete with staff and equipment, are commonly flown across the Mediterranean. Air transport has cut the route back to Britain from Egypt or Africa by 6,000 miles, and the York aircraft which recently flew from the United Kingdom to Cairo in 18 hours was no more than making a routine flight.

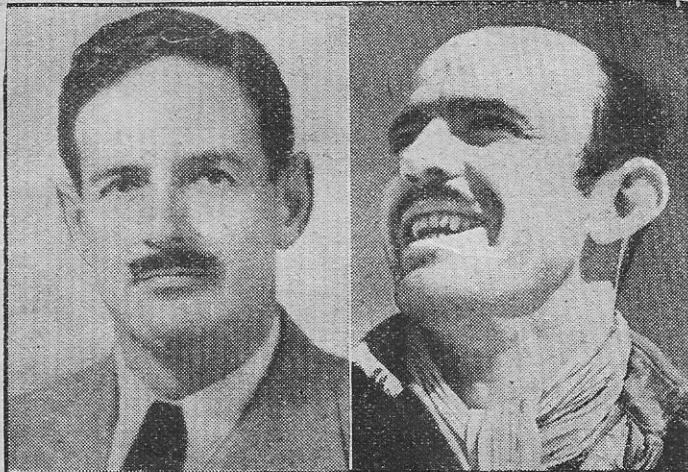
Airmail alone to the Army Post Office in North Africa totalled 36,000 lb. last Christmas—enough to stuff six Fortresses—besides 1,500,000 airgraphs to the U.K. and over 3,000,000 from home. It may look easy when you see the transport pilot make a perfect landing dead on time after a 2,000-mile run, yet the task obviously has its dangers. "Wild-Cat" Wade, the Spitfire ace with a record of 25 enemy aircraft downed by his guns, was killed in a communications aircraft miles behind the line in Italy; and the transport planes often deliberately face higher hazards.

It is not generally known—although the fact has been disclosed by the U.S. Office of War Information—that compact aluminium printing presses and other goods, and messages of encouragement, have been dropped by parachute over enemy-occupied territory and even over Germany itself. Nor did a B.24 Liberator—in the hands of Captain Richard Allen and carrying a maximum load—make any fuss about clipping 21 minutes off the fastest Atlantic record.

THE transport flyer may face an airfield that has acquired an overnight covering of ten feet of snow, and his aircraft may have to be serviced at thirty degrees below zero. He may merely be shifting mails or he may help in the movement of squadrons and of troops. It is nothing, as Squadron-Leader Ernest Murray told me, to have to land in the dark with only car headlights providing an uncertain flare path.

Transport reliability may turn threatened defeat into victory. There is the example of the Indo-China wing of the U.S. Transport Command: more supplies have been ferried to China over the 17,000-foot hump of the Himalayas than were ever hauled along the Burma Road at the peak of its traffic. As a result, air attacks on the Japanese in China have been doubled and redoubled. In a practically non-stop stream of planes the pilots in December 1943 carried ten times more tonnage of vital supplies than in December 1942.

The Indo-China wing even has its own efficient rescue squadron. It seldom happens, but when plane crews are forced to jump or crash in wild country rescue planes are always ready. This minor detail alone is significant of the transport transformation. Coming over the horizon are such giants as our 32-ton Tudor and the 70-ton flying boats, larger than any aircraft yet made in this country, being built by the British firm of Saunders-Roe. The war is pulling into shape the new world of air transport. And our sky-freighters are making peace dawn all the sooner.



Capt. RICHARD ALLEN
Piloting a Liberator run by British Overseas Airways Corporation and carrying a maximum load, he reduced the record of flying time from Montreal to Britain to 11 hours 35 minutes.

Wing Cmdr. LANCE WADE
Before his death in Italy, on Jan. 1, 1944, in a communications aircraft, he had destroyed 25 enemy planes. His decorations include the D.S.O., D.F.C., and two bars.

Photos, British Official: Crown Copyright; Planet News

Air superiority is now a phrase implying far more than fighting supremacy. It stands for war strength in sealed packages, for guns and ammunition, crated Spitfires, and even aero engines flown direct to the battle line. In every theatre of war today Allied transport planes are delivering armies and keeping them supplied, carrying everything from water to love-letters, whisking up reinforcements and racing wounded back from the forward areas.

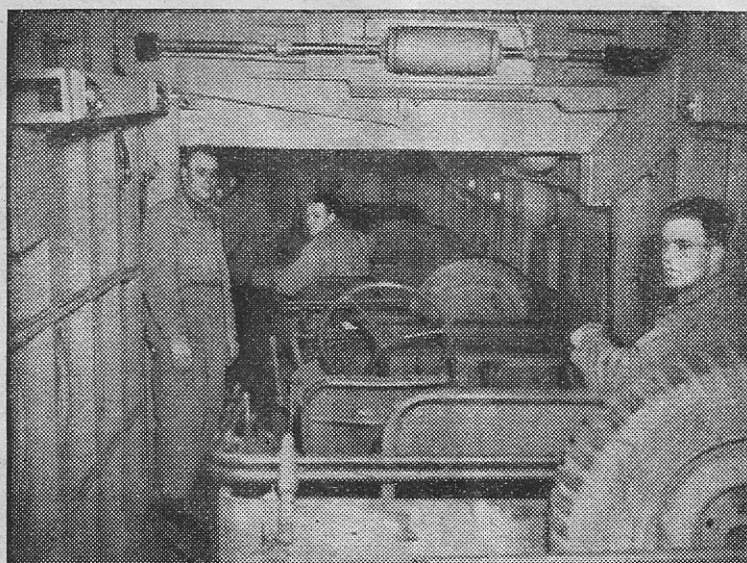
The American landings on the Marshall Islands were backed by a flood of such mighty freighters as the wooden Curtis Caravan, four-engined Lockheed Constellations and 70-ton Mars cargo flying boats. The landings on Italy were speeded directly and indirectly by transport aircraft. When Air Force Signals were putting Tripoli and Tunisia on the telephone to link all arms for immediate co-operation, key equipment was flown from England in 24 hours. Communications were established and forward squadrons and ground forces gained an advantage that has paved the road to Rome.

In these and many other ways the new era of troop and supply transport has recast the entire military picture of war. In a recent engagement, a transport pilot tipped the scales by delivering sorely needed anti-tank ammunition on time and in time. Only air transport could have done it.

In New Guinea the scene was changed over-night when

The casualties removed from Italy by air constitute a high proportion of the total (see illus. p. 687). It is now no secret that R.A.F. Transport Command conveyed 14,898 patients from Sicily in a month. Many of the planes were air ambulances proper, others were twin-engined transports fitted with removable racks for stretchers. Outward bound the planes fly food, equipment and even oil to the front lines; homeward bound they evacuate sick and wounded men with organized and in all ways admirable efficiency.

On one occasion, 21 R.A.F. nursing sisters



JEEPS PACK INTO IT TWO BY TWO, so they call R.A.F. Transport Command's four-engined Avro York the "Noah's Ark." It can carry 10 tons of war freight, has a 3,000-mile range and a speed of over 300 miles per hour. Alternative load is 50 passengers. See also illus. p. 412. PAGE 716 Planet News