

February 19, 1939

When Air Giants Battle!

THIS IS an air battle of 1945.

It is a battle of massed fleets of superplanes. It is fought so high that to the fighters the earth down below is but a dim blur.

You are seeing it through the eyes of a gunner perched in the nose of one of the \$500,000 battle planes that is part of the formation in the foreground.

The battle has just begun. Enemy pursuit machines, each carrying at scorching velocities one man and a pair of guns, are diving on the formation.

Thin white lines of tracer bullets show the exchange of fire. Above the big fighter-bombers on a course that will intercept them is another formation of fighters. They are awaiting an opportunity to turn and dive to the attack.

Behind this enemy fighter formation is a squadron of four-engined battleships of the air awaiting their turn to engage the main invading fleet.

Below the bombers with which you, reader, are riding is a squadron of defending fighters. They are the twin-engined types now recognized as the best machines of their kind. These smaller fighters carry two quick-firing cannon instead of machine guns. They are almost as fast as the single-seaters.

By

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Assume, if you will, that the twin-motored fighters and the bombers in the foreground have flown half way across Europe to attack an enemy city. Their progress toward the target has been detected and defenders have climbed to do battle with the invaders.

In another moment the greatest air engagement of history will be in full progress. Vast formations of the heavily armored battleships will begin circling and firing at one another with their heavy guns.

The battle is not with solid lead bullets. These Big Berthas of the sky are firing explosive shells weighing from one to four pounds each. The shells explode on contact, and whenever there is a direct hit a huge hole is torn in a wing or a motor is shattered.

When these shells strike one of the small single-seaters the damage is even greater. Usually the metal skin of fuselage or wing is ripped apart in a gaping hole where icy winds moving at 500 miles an hour proceed to buckle and twist the ship into hurtling wreckage.

The lucky few will jump from these lost ships to fall headlong to within a few thousand feet of the earth before opening their parachutes. (Continued on page seven.)



Human eyes never have beheld a battle such as this. The artist has produced his conception of an aerial conflict of the near future. The vast formations depicted here do not now exist. But—the day of the air giants' battle is near. Planes pictured are sublimations of war machines already flying.

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