

The Solomon Area in recent months has been the scene of some of the heaviest fighting during the war. As far back as January of 1942, Japanese forces occupied the island of New Britain, and between March and May they had also obtained footholds on the east coast of New Guinea and Bougainville Island, pressing still more closely to the supply route by sea from the United States to Australia and India. A series of naval battles, comprising the largest surface actions ever known, ~~too~~ extended from Midway Island, to the Coral Sea, and most recently, to the Solomon Islands. The strategic result has been to deny the offensive initiative to Japan. ~~More~~ ^{Equally} important, the first landings by United States and Australian forces last August, at Tulagi and Guadalcanal, ~~have~~ ^{have} been a forerunner of a determined process of hanging on and driving the Japanese out. Naval battles in the Solomons during November involved losses to Japan of fighting ships and trained men, losses too heavy for any ready replacement from Japan's own resources. Since that time, Japan has been practically squeezed out of ~~South~~ ^{South-East} ~~Asia~~ ^{the Pacific} ~~and~~ ^{the} New Guinea.

It was in this Western Pacific front that the ~~for~~ United States forces were able for the first time to take the initiative on land. The maintenance of this front, and the ultimate pressure which has been crowding Japan out of many of the strongholds of New Guinea, depends ^{indefinitely} upon naval and air strength. But the fact that the front has been held, at considerable cost in ships and men, has denied to Japan the approaches to Australia and has kept open the supply route across the Pacific to many of the United Nations.