

high and dry on the beaches of the islands they had captured. As the night wore on there was little sign of enemy movement. Obviously the shells still dropping on the main islands and the tremendous weight of explosives which had been poured on them during the previous days had more than done the trick.

Daylight revealed a grim and murky day with low clouds and rain squalls, and the final bombardment of Roi and Namu started in earnest. I had thought that yesterday's bombardment and bombing would never be surpassed, but now it was intensified to a pitch that almost took one's breath away. It was so staggering one just could not take one's eyes off it, and when eventually I glanced over my shoulder the assault craft which I had last met outside the lagoon had by now effected a complete transformation. The whole northern end of the lagoon seemed to be packed with ducklings. Yesterday there had been scores of them, now there were literally hundreds and hundreds. Soon they were surrounding us, forming up in their proper lines and waiting impatiently the signal to attack. Many of the marines had their faces blackened, others had favoured a weird khaki background with black streaks. All were gripping their carbines and tommy-guns and obviously itching for action. The Stars and Stripes were proudly flying from the islands already captured. These men were determined that it would soon be flying over Roi and Namu.

At first, as the assault craft deployed and crushed down on the beaches, they met with little resistance, but as they moved inland across the islands there were still a number of stubborn Japs offering a last desperate resistance. The scene ashore was an indescribable shambles. Dead fish of all colours and sizes had been hurled on to the beaches by nearby explosions. Nearly every palm-tree had had its top blown off.



Routes to Tokyo.

There was hardly a square foot of ground which had not either been hit or covered with debris. Dead and mutilated Japs lay about in grotesque attitudes. Pill-boxes and air-raid shelters which had received direct hits revealed an awful scene of carnage; the stench was foul, and flies, a few lizards, some birds, a chicken, a pig, and a dog, and a few prisoners seemed to be the only living creatures who had survived the hell of the last few days.

And so, through all that day and that night and the following day and night, the grim business went on of exterminating Japs wherever they might be hiding, in drains, foxholes, or whatever cover was left, until the last one had been dealt with. The whole operation had cost us amazingly few lives, thanks to perfect organization, a bold stroke of planning and brilliant execution. I shall never forget my trip in the U.S.S. "Phelps." It is a privilege which I shall always treasure as one of my very proudest memories.