

PART VI.

CONCLUSIONS

Japan's defeat.

540. Japan, in her disastrous war against the Allied Powers, was defeated largely by her own misjudgment—embarking upon a policy of expansion which lengthened too far her lines of communication without providing adequately armed forces for their protection and maintenance.

541. Expansion brought the Japanese, in their initial flush of success, to the very threshold of India at a time when the Allies were least prepared to resist her westward march.

542. Defeat for the Japanese in South East Asia, I consider, had its beginning in the air battles over the Arakan in late 1943 and the opening months of 1944, when Allied air superiority was obtained.

543. It is my opinion that the cardinal weakness in Japan's war of aggression was undoubtedly a badly balanced war machine, which showed too heavy a bias in favour of land forces, and a much too weak air force, also air potential.

544. Without air support, the Japanese Army in South East Asia fought a losing battle after Allied air superiority had been won. The numbers actually killed during their campaign in Burma were enormous, whilst the number that perished in the jungle will never be known. This Japanese Army provided a grim reminder to any Army that embarks upon operations without adequate air support.

Close Support operations.

545. According to the Japanese, it is impossible to state definitely which of our Allied fighters had the greatest effect morally upon their ground forces in South East Asia, as each fighter had its own characteristics. The effect differed according to the nature of the target attacked and the time of the attack, whether by day or by night. On an assessment of the Allied fighter aircraft individually, however, it appears that the enemy considered the Spitfire, the Thunderbolt and the Mustang surpassed all others.

Fighter, and fighter/bomber offensive operations.

546. The effect of the Beaufighter and Mosquito attacks on Japanese shipping in the Gulf of Martaban during the early months of 1945 was such that the enemy stopped movement of shipping by day, and did movements only at night. In this way enemy shipping was conserved.

547. On the other hand, the harassing attacks these aircraft carried out on the enemy's road, rail and river transport areas was exceedingly effective. While it cost them few casualties to men, the air attacks, according to the Japanese, made troop as well as supply movements virtually impossible. Materials and food, they stated, became difficult to move, and this had a bad effect upon the civilian population.

548. Our policy of surprise raids on the enemy's rear airfields was most effective. In this respect the American fighter attacks on these airfields were not only effective, but greatly helped to reduce the operational strength of the Japanese Army Air Force.

Heavy Bomber Operations.

549. The heavy bomber attacks which our aircraft carried out on Rangoon, and on supply dumps in the vicinity, cannot be compared, in effectiveness, to the heavy air attacks made on bridges, railway tracks, marshalling yards and important installations in other enemy occupied areas. The dumps in the Rangoon area which were targets of attack were, according to the enemy, destroyed to some extent, but they did not greatly affect Japanese morale. The bombing of Rangoon itself, however, which was continued for almost a month before the enemy's evacuation, had a marked effect upon their morale. The effect of the bombings on the civilian population appeared to be small because only military targets were bombed.

550. Bombing raids on military installations in the rear areas were admitted by the Japanese to be most effective, and many targets, some highly important to the Japanese war effort, were destroyed. The attacks, it appears, could have been even more effective had our bombers struck at the targets over a wider area, as enemy installations were immediately divided up into sections and scattered once a target area was hit.

Air Mining Operations Affect Supply.

551. I consider it exceedingly gratifying, and indeed, interesting, to have it confirmed by the Japanese themselves that the isolation of large sea transports, as the result of our air mining operations, seriously affected the Japanese supply situation. The mines were laid by our aircraft in the Rangoon River and off the Tenasserim and Malayan coasts. The sowing of these mines, the Japanese stated, was directly responsible for the sinking of important supply ships.

552. Our air mining programme, which began on 21st January, 1945, and was discontinued on 24th May, 1945, since the stage was then being set finally for the assault on Malaya, resulted in a total of 925 mines being dropped in the specified areas. The minelaying operations were 86.9 successful—only 29 mines being dropped foul, and 80 being brought back by aircraft to base.

553. From a tactical point of view, I was interested to learn that, of all the weapons which we used against the Japanese in Burma—rockets, machine-guns, cannon, bombs and Napalm—the machine-guns had the most effect, both morally and physically, upon their ground forces.

554. During the advance of our ground troops, the feints and dummy attacks by our supporting aircraft proved very effective in keeping the Japanese under cover—a highly important factor when troops are storming strongly-held positions.

555. Close support by the Japanese Army Air Force was negligible. Its development was dependent upon adequate air strength, and as the Japanese Army Air Force gradually dwindled away to nothing, close support for their ground forces was therefore impracticable.

556. While the Japanese also used Visual Control Posts to indicate targets to their aircraft, shortage of wireless equipment greatly hindered them in putting through demands for air support. This is in striking contrast to our own use of V.C.P.s., which we exploited to the full with excellent results.