

73. *Scale of attack brought to rest.*—Between 23rd and 29th January a second attempt was made to overwhelm our small fighter force, the enemy putting in a total of 218 plus—mostly fighters. In the air battle of those 6 days our fighter force claimed a total of some 50 enemy bombers and fighters destroyed. He at once went back to night operations and continued these until his third and last attempt to achieve air superiority over Rangoon on the 24th and 25th February. On those two days, when he put on a scale of attack of 166 bombers and fighters, he sustained the heavy loss of 37 fighters and bombers which were claimed destroyed with 7 probably destroyed. On the second day, the 25th, the P.40's of the A.V.G. claimed no less than 24 aircraft shot down. This terminated the air superiority battle over Rangoon.

74. *Such wastage had been inflicted on the enemy that thereafter he never attempted to enter our warning zone round Rangoon until the city was captured and the air bases in his hands.*

75. *Result.*—This had a critical influence on the course of our land operations and on the security of our convoys bringing in final reinforcements. These and the demolition of our oil and other interests in the port and the final evacuation by land or sea were completed without interference from enemy bomber or fighter aircraft.

76. Thus up to the last moment the P.40's of the A.V.G. and the Hurricane force were able to provide a state of absolute air superiority over this wide and vital area against a considerable weight of air attack.

77. *Conclusion.*—To sum up on the air superiority battle over Rangoon, for a force of 1 Squadron of P.40's of the A.V.G., a half Squadron of Buffaloes and the equivalent of 2 Squadrons of Hurricanes commencing to arrive in January and continuing to half-way through February, a claimed loss of 130 enemy bombers and fighters was inflicted on the enemy with 61 claimed as probably destroyed—the greater proportion falling to the guns of the A.V.G. Counter-offensive action by our fighters and bombers to reduce the scale of attack had inflicted a loss of not less than 28 enemy aircraft destroyed on the ground, not counting those destroyed by our bombing attacks. Air superiority was achieved over Rangoon and maintained until it fell on 8th March. The A.V.G.—first in the field—fought with ready devotion and resolute gallantry.

Fighting Tactics.

78. In regard to the major tactics employed in the air battle over Rangoon, in the first place the warning was good. As long as the telephone lines remained in our hands the Burma Observer Corps provided this with high war efficiency. The R.D.F. set from Moulmein had been sited in Rangoon looking over the main avenue of enemy approach. Thus enemy plots were accurate and frequent until the line of the Sittang was threatened.

79. *Fighter deployment.*—Fighters in the correct proportion could be deployed against the enemy scale of attack. The A.V.G. and the Hurricanes fought together. The Wing leader system was introduced. The pilots of the A.V.G. had considerable flying experience.

Some of the pilots, particularly the leaders in the Hurricane force, had considerable war experience against the G.A.F. Consequently, the force fought well together. In the operations room there were two R/T. sets for the control of the air battle on different frequencies—one for the American fighters and one for the Hurricanes.

80. The general principles of fighting the air battle were agreed between myself, the Wing leader and the Commander of the A.V.G. Pursuit Squadron, and the major tactics employed were those generally exercised in the Western theatre; the single point of difference being that on account of the manoeuvrability of the Japanese fighter (which was the only advantage it had over our aircraft), the best method of attack was a dive, taking advantage of height and the sun, breaking away in a half roll or aileron turn before resuming position to carry out the attack again.

81. Enemy escorted bomber raids were met on first interception, the bombers were attacked with a suitable proportion of our forces while the fighters were attacked and drawn off by the remainder. Against the fighter formations of (say) 40 to 60 plus, which so frequently appeared at height with the object of drawing up our fighters and shooting them down before they got their height, the P.40's and the Hurricanes leant back on Rangoon and delivered their attack when the enemy fighters either lost height, with the object of carrying out a ground attack, or turned for home.

82. Throughout this air action from the 21st January onwards the fighter force in addition to defending Rangoon had also to meet its commitments over the battle area, providing security for our bombers and carrying out ground attacks on enemy concentrations in support of the Army.

83. *Night Fighting.*—As regards night bombing, there were no facilities for night interception. Although the enemy bombers were operating without flame dampers, and at first with navigation lights burning, the P.40's and Buffaloes were not able to intercept. On the arrival of the Hurricanes, trained in night fighting, however, some success was achieved. On the first night an enemy bomber was shot down in flames at 9,000 feet over the aerodrome at Mingaladon, the aircraft, with bombs, exploding close to the airfield. Two further successful night interceptions were made, both enemy aircraft being shot down in flames. With pilots at constant readiness throughout the hours of daylight, however, it was impossible in view of our limited resources to put the Hurricanes up each night.

84. I have no doubt that on moonlight nights—and the enemy bombed on no other—considerable success would have been obtained from the "fighter night" system, had Rangoon held.

85. *Assessment of Fighter Results.*—There was a little feeling in the A.V.G. on the assessment of results. Consequently I held a meeting with the A.V.G. Squadron Commander, and the Wing leader and Squadron Commanders, at which it was agreed that the standard of assessment should be that obtaining in Fighter Command at home. Colonel Chennault was informed. Combat reports by pilots were