

photographing of an area three times the size of England in four and a half months :

Net area covered ... 152,000 square miles  
(approx.)

Made up of :

6 in. cover ... 134,000 square miles

12 in. cover ... 18,000 square miles

In addition :

12 in. cover of  
areas photo-  
graphed on  
a smaller  
scale ... 38,000 square miles

142. The foregoing account will give an indication of the great advance in the regularity and extent of the cover obtained. Targets as far away as Rangoon, Bassein and Lashio came to be regarded as routine even by Lightnings (F.5) and Spitfire aircraft, while the ranges achieved by Mosquitoes were little less than phenomenal. A high standard of photography and technical work was maintained.

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### PART THREE

#### SURVEY OF RESULTS AND LESSONS LEARNED

143. Although territorial gains in the campaign until the end of May were small, the ground won back from the enemy in Northern Burma marked the first step towards the re-opening of overland communications with China. The advance of the Chinese-American forces, and the disruption of enemy communications by Special Force which aided it, would have been impossible without the air superiority which had been gained, allowing the free use of transport support aircraft and of fighters and bombers in close support. The same is true of both the less positive achievements of the campaign, the breaking of two large-scale enemy offensives—one aimed at Chittagong and the other at Imphal. Of the attack on Imphal, C.-in-C. 11 Army Group stated: "There is absolutely no doubt that had we not had air supply we should have lost the Imphal Plain, and the position on the eastern frontier of India would have been very grave". He might with equal truth have said "Had we not had air superiority".

144. The campaign established that the employment of air transport in this theatre is capable of indefinite expansion, and yields dividends that could not be gained by any other agency. Moreover, there is scope for a wider range of transport aircraft than obtains in Europe, where thick jungle and high mountain barriers do not impede swift communication. Light aircraft which can land in a space too small for Dakotas are able to carry out a multitude of tasks for commanders, and, by eliminating the feeling of isolation brought on when fighting so far from established bases, have a beneficial effect on the morale of the forces engaged.

145. Close support of ground troops in such terrain has proved the value of accurate bomb and gun attacks in a locality where pin-points are few and targets difficult to identify, requiring a thorough knowledge of the sector. Such knowledge is clearly of special significance in this theatre. Air liaison officers when briefing crews can give targets that would often be refused in other theatres as too diffi-

cult for identification. The same is true of dropping zones for supply-dropping aircraft. Crews and staff officers from the European theatre of operations state that the dropping points given here would be considered impossible there. Thus, complete familiarity with the area over which they have to operate has been found essential for crews engaged in ground or transport support work.

146. I have discussed the complexities of close support in Burma in the section dealing with that type of operation. Certain conclusions follow that are worthy of note. First, unless used in overwhelming strength, the heavy bomber is no more the answer against an entrenched enemy than has been found in other theatres. Secondly, if air bombardment on a heavy scale is used, the infantry must follow the attack immediately in order that the limited effect on the enemy is not lost before the attack goes in. Thirdly, specialised trials are necessary to determine the best types of bombs for use against jungle targets. These are now being carried out in this Command. Finally, the fighter-bomber and the dive-bomber, with their extreme accuracy, proved excellent aircraft in close support in difficult terrain. The Hurricane, for example, could be employed against targets in valleys hemmed in by cloud, conditions that demanded high manoeuvrability if the target was to be reached at all. Comparable aircraft of higher performance and with the ability to carry a greater weight of bombs should prove an even more decisive weapon.

147. In combating the Japanese Air Force, the lack of long-range fighters was acutely felt until Mustangs (P.51) and Lightnings (P.38) of the U.S.A.A.F. became available. Once our air superiority was established in the forward areas the enemy utilised bases too far away for normal-range aircraft to reach them. I have recounted later how it was that pressurised long-range tanks were not yet ready for the Spitfires, which could not therefore be used in the rôle of long-range counter air offensive. In this theatre, where distances are so great and the enemy so widely dispersed, long-range fighters are essential both for escort and offensive operations.

148. Finally, it has been proved in this theatre as in others that air power is co-equal with land power, and that Army and Air Commanders should work from a Joint Headquarters if they are effectively to implement the principles of command required by a combined Army/Air Plan. It is according to this broad principle, which has been agreed with the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief 11 Army Group and approved by the Supreme Allied Commander, that future air operations in South-East Asia will be conducted.

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### PART FOUR

#### EXPANSION AND DEVELOPMENT

##### I.—ORGANISATION, REINFORCEMENTS AND BASES

149. The remoteness of this theatre of war from centres of control at home, together with the obligation of developing so economically backward a country as India as a supply base, has inevitably led to the assumption by my Headquarters Staff of functions which rightly