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**AIR OPERATIONS IN SOUTH EAST ASIA 3RD MAY, 1945
TO 12TH SEPTEMBER, 1945**

NOTE.—A set of maps for this despatch is on separate sale at 1s. 0d. net.

This set of maps also covers the operations described in the other Air and Army despatches of the Burma Campaign from 16th November, 1943 to 12th September, 1945.

The following despatch was submitted to the Secretary of State for Air in August, 1946, by AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR KEITH PARK, G.C.B., K.B.E., M.C., D.F.C., Allied Air Commander-in-Chief, South East Asia.

FOREWORD.

1. Air Power's contribution to the overthrow of Japanese land forces during the closing stages of the war in South East Asia, is reviewed in this Despatch, which opens with the period following the Allied Forces' victorious entry into Rangoon on 3rd May, 1945, and culminates in the official surrender of the Japanese Southern Army to Admiral The Lord Louis Mountbatten, at Singapore, on 12th September, 1945.

2. During this period, squadrons of the Royal Air Force played a conspicuous rôle in the last battle against the enemy land forces on Burmese soil. More than ten thousand Japanese troops, ill-equipped, sick and demoralised, were annihilated by our air and ground forces while attempting a mass escape from the Pegu Yomas across the Sittang River and south to Moulmein. Their Air Force had already been eliminated from Burma.

3. August 1945 brought with it Japan's realisation of defeat and her decision to surrender. It forestalled by only a few weeks the planned invasion of Malaya in which over 500 aircraft of the Royal Air Force and about 200 carrier-borne aircraft of the Royal Navy would have demonstrated again the power of air superiority.

4. Instead, squadrons of the Royal Air Force re-directed their energies to the most extensive mission of mercy by bringing relief and liberation, in the initial stages, to tens of thousands of Allied prisoners-of-war and internees in the many Japanese prison camps scattered throughout the vast territories of South East Asia.

5. The successful accomplishment of this task made a fitting conclusion to Air Power's participation in a war against a ruthless and fanatical enemy whose years of aggression in these territories ended with crushing and complete defeat.

PART I.

RANGOON AND AFTER.

THE SITUATION IN MAY, 1945, AFTER THE FALL OF RANGOON.

1. With unconditional surrender of Germany on 8th May, 1945, the conflict in South East Asia and in the Far East against the last remaining of the Axis Powers took on a new significance, with the balance weighted heavily in favour of the Allies against Japan.

2. The only outcome of the war in the East, like the one prescribed for Germany, could be complete and unconditional surrender of Japan.

3. Decisively beaten in Burma, and with Rangoon recaptured only five days before the surrender of Germany in Europe, Japan, fighting alone, faced almost certain invasion of her homeland in the coming months. The systematic loss of territories throughout South East