

at an early date should the enemy agree to accept the terms of the Potsdam declaration of July 26th.

359. The wisdom of this planning made itself apparent early in August when the first atomic bomb was dropped on the Japanese homeland and Russia entered the war.

360. It was the possibility of Japanese treachery, however, which decided the course that planning would take, and the initial occupation of Singapore, known as Operation "Tiderace" was, therefore, mounted from resources other than those earmarked for Operation "Zipper". In this way, it was possible to counter any Japanese opposition to "Tiderace" which may have taken place, by continuing to mount the strong fighting "Zipper" operation as originally planned.

361. Although the first objective in the re-occupation plan was Singapore, a necessary step in order to establish an advanced air and naval base to clear the Straits of Malacca for shipping, it became clear that Bangkok in Siam, and Saigon in French Indo-China, would also have to be occupied soon after the Japanese surrender.

362. Operations known as "Bibber", which involved the occupation of the Bangkok area, and "Masterdom", involving the re-entry into French Indo-China to gain control over the forces of Field Marshal Count Terauchi, whose Southern Army Headquarters were at Saigon, had therefore to be worked out in detail. Moreover, it had been indicated by the British Chiefs of Staff that the former British port of Hong Kong must also be occupied at an early date.

363. To meet these exigencies, therefore, it was found necessary to modify to some extent the air effort for Operation "Tiderace" so that the Dakota Squadrons, based in Rangoon, could be utilised for essential trooping and air lift during the occupation of Bangkok and subsequently of Saigon. This was exceedingly important, since a long voyage with troops from existing Allied bases to Siam and French Indo-China would almost certainly have prohibited the speedy occupation of these territories had not the ground forces been lifted by air.

364. That 14,000 Army and Air Force personnel for the garrison at Bangkok and Saigon were carried in by our Air Forces without loss after the Japanese surrender, was evidence of the additional role which the Air Forces of my Command were called upon to play on the cessation of hostilities, at a time when it was imperative to establish ground troops at key points within the scattered enemy-occupied territories in the quickest possible time.

Original "Zipper" Plan Forestalled.

365. The Surrender by Japan cut right across the ambitious air plan for Operation "Zipper" which had been so carefully conceived to support the landings by ground troops on the Southern region of the Malay Peninsula.

366. Landings on the beaches at Ports Swettenham and Dickson on D-Day, September 9th, were to have been made under air cover provided by carrier-borne aircraft of the Royal Navy, whose task would have included attacks on the enemy's lines of communication and troop concentrations until the fly-in of R.A.F. fighters was accomplished. Two aircraft

carriers, H.M.S. SMITER and H.M.S. TRUMPETER, carrying short-range Spitfires and Sentinels and Austers for casualty evacuation, were to carry these aircraft to a point off shore for pilots to fly them from off the carriers and land them on the newly-occupied aerodromes.

367. The planned effort of the naval carrier-borne fighters was 190 sorties a day from the moment of their arrival in the areas of the bridgeheads for about a week. This would be further augmented, within six days, by an additional 72 sorties a day from the first land-based squadrons of R.A.F. Spitfires, and six sorties per night from the night fighter Mosquitos. From the outset, therefore, air superiority was assured. The enemy was not expected to produce any serious air threat which could not be dealt with adequately by our fighters.

368. As more than a thousand miles separated the existing R.A.F. bases in Rangoon and the Cocos Islands from the landing beaches, and almost 1,500 miles in respect of other R.A.F. bases in Ceylon and Ramree Island, it was impossible for light bomber, fighter and fighter bomber squadrons to operate in immediate support of the bridgehead ground forces until the position ashore was consolidated, an airfield captured, repairs effected and runways made serviceable.

369. Basing its time-table on the speed of the Army's advance and the rapidity by which constructional engineers could repair damaged runways and taxi-tracks, it was estimated that strips could be brought into operation at the rate of approximately one per week. Once the newly-occupied airfields had been established, the long-range Thunderbolts, Mosquitos and Dakotas, flying a thousand miles from Rangoon, would then make the flight south to Malaya, being guided on the way by three navigational aid ships at specified positions off the Tenasserim Coast and Malayan Peninsula.

370. The first strip—Kelanang—was calculated to be operational by D plus 6; Port Swettenham by D plus 12 and Kuala Lumpur by D plus 20. It was possible that a fourth strip might be established at Batu Pahat, or Malacca, in order to accommodate a light Mosquito bomber and rocket-firing Beaufighter aircraft by D plus 40.

371. The value of the Cocos Islands prior to and during Operation "Zipper" would have been considerable. The Strategic and G.R. squadrons were to have taken part in large-scale pre-D-Day operations directed against radar installations covering the approaches to the assault area, and also to cutting the Bangkok-Singapore railway north of Kuala Lumpur. Other tasks included the neutralising of the Japanese Air Force, estimated at a little more than 170 aircraft in Malaya and Sumatra, also attacking enemy shipping employed in carrying supplies or reinforcements to Malaya to oppose our landing. The aerodromes at Kelanang, Port Swettenham and Kuala Lumpur were not to be bombed, since they were the first objectives on establishing the bridgehead.

372. Five R.A.F. Wings were detailed to operate in the tactical forces contained within Air Vice Marshal Bandon's 224 Group, whose advanced Headquarters were to be established