

tours and inspections throughout this Theatre I have noted the almost "jealous-like" pride which the Regiment Squadrons have in their own service.

PART V.

ADMINISTRATIVE AND OTHER ASPECTS.

THE REPERCUSSIONS FELT BY AIR COMMAND AFTER DEFEAT OF GERMANY AND JAPAN.

502. The period May to September, 1945, witnessed a series of important changes associated with the administrative development of Air Command, South East Asia, and the recasting of plans already made to meet the changed conditions after the defeat of Germany and, later still, defeat of Japan.

503. The Command felt the full effects of the global shipping and manpower shortages; of pre-election uncertainties in England; of the change in emphasis of attacks on Japan's outlying conquests to the Japanese homeland; of the vastness of the task involved in building up the Southern Burma net of all-weather airfields in preparation for coming operations; of the monsoon; the sharp contraction in air supply resources consequent upon the withdrawal of the American squadrons, and finally, the task of re-occupying liberated territories.

504. Following the reconquest of Burma in May, the future trend of the Command's administrative development was largely influenced by the following factors:—

(i) Disbandment of the integrated Eastern Air Command Headquarters on 1st June, 1945 and the withdrawal of the United States Army Air Forces from the Command.

(ii) Reorganisation of Headquarters, R.A.F., Burma, on the assumption of full operational and administrative control of the Air Forces in Burma.

(iii) Administrative planning in anticipation of the forthcoming operations in South East Asia associated principally with the re-conquest of Malaya and the build-up of the strategic base of Singapore.

(iv) Planning for the reorganisation of the Command, subsequent to the re-occupation of Singapore.

505. It was not unnatural, on the defeat of Germany, that attention should be focussed suddenly upon the impressive array of air power promised for South East Asia in Phase II of the war. Not only was the number of squadrons expected to be increased, but more modern and more powerfully armed aircraft were envisaged. There were expectations too, of plentiful supplies of spares and ancillary equipment calculated to abrogate, for the duration of the Far Eastern war, the parsimony of indigenous industrial resources. South East Asia, it was confidently hoped, would achieve a higher place in the list of priorities as from VE-Day. But this illusion was soon shattered. At the beginning of June it was officially revealed that the Pacific Tiger Force and post-war events in Europe would take priority over South East Asia's demands. The decision was occasioned not so much by the shortage of equipment as by the global deficiencies in shipping and manpower which implied that drastic cuts in the Phase II Target of 116 squadrons

would have to be accepted. It became evident, therefore, that the basis for planning was not what the Command was entitled to expect, but what was actually available.

506. In spite of these difficulties—and they had been many in South East Asia—it was necessary to cut the administrative cloth to suit the operational coat. A target of 87 squadrons which, it was reckoned, would have to meet the air effort, both for "Zipper" and "Mailist" and other commitments, was therefore accepted.

507. Although these factors did not seriously affect Operation "Zipper", the enforced economy would have had some bearing upon the final assault on Singapore itself and upon operations contemplated early in 1946 into Siam, had the war with Japan continued. Other tasks too, included action on the development of the air base in Southern Burma and the Cocos Islands, both closely associated with "Zipper" and the redeployment of the strategic forces, once heavy bomber bases further east and south east became available.

Important Changes After Fall of Rangoon.

508. The ease with which Rangoon fell caused future administrative planning to proceed along more ambitious lines. Before further operations could be undertaken, however, it was necessary to have a reshuffle of offensive and defensive units; introduce a revised maintenance policy and new equipment to meet conditions of the Malay Peninsula; to withdraw many air forces from Burma for rest, refit and concentration for "Zipper".

509. The most important change in Command organisation at this time was the departure of the American Air Forces which were withdrawn from the Theatre as from 1st June, 1945. The disintegration of the British and American Air Forces in Burma involved the disbandment of Headquarters, Eastern Air Command, and the transfer of the Air Staff from that Headquarters to H.Q. R.A.F., Burma, which then became an independent R.A.F. Command under H.Q. Air Command, South East Asia.

510. A series of other changes was brought about as a result of the revised responsibilities of Headquarters, R.A.F. Burma, upon disbandment of Eastern Air Command. Operational control of all R.A.F. formations and units, formerly under Eastern Air Command, was taken over by H.Q. R.A.F., Burma.

511. The title of "Strategic Air Force", which had included British and American squadrons, ceased to be used with effect from 1st June, 1945, and No. 231 Group, R.A.F., continued strategic operations alone. In the same way the disintegration of Combat Cargo Task Force was carried out and, on the departure of the American squadrons, No. 232 Group took over the full operational control of all R.A.F. transport units in the A.L.F.S.E.A. area.

512. Yet another important change at this time was the reorganisation of the R.A.F. Element of H.Q. Photographic Reconnaissance Force as a Wing (No. 347 Wing), after the withdrawal of the American Forces. Included in the wing's establishment was No. 1 Photographic Interpretation Detachment. The object