

310. It became apparent, after the fall of Rangoon, that Photographic Reconnaissance in the Command would have to be endowed with a mobility which would allow it to move forward with the tide of battle. Accordingly, No. 347 P.R. Wing, which was formed in April, became effective as a formation in May, 1945. The new Wing Headquarters absorbed all of the R.A.F. element of the Photographic Reconnaissance Force and certain sections of the Station Headquarters at Alipore and Bally (India), where the two R.A.F. Squadrons of Spitfires and Mosquitos were based.

311. In May, No. 684 Squadron continued to be based at Alipore, but No. 681 Squadron moved to Mingaladon, Rangoon and flew most of their sorties in support of the Twelfth Army's mopping up operations along the Mawchi Road, the Sittang Bend and the road and river communications between Pegu and Moulmein.

312. On 9th June, 1945, the Wing passed to the Command of Group Captain C. E. St. J. Beamish, D.F.C.

Working against the Monsoon in Operational Areas.

313. Bad weather was the enemy which photographic reconnaissance had to combat almost continuously. Only by dint of sheer perseverance were many of the most important covers accomplished.

314. With the arrival of the Monsoon in May over the operational areas in Southern Burma and Siam, coverage from a photographic point of view became extremely difficult and flying more hazardous.

315. The inter-tropical front appeared at the Isthmus of Kra and moved as far north as Mergui, but generally it kept more to the south. By the end of May, weather deteriorated considerably and the Monsoon entered into its own for the season.

316. While Spitfires, based in Southern Burma, were able to take advantage of local weather conditions for short P.R. sorties in support of the Army, the task was more difficult, long range Mosquitos undertaking many flights of more than 2,000 miles for each sortie. More than one aircraft on occasions returned to base with torn fabric and other evidence of severe climatic conditions.

317. In August, with the weeks drawing near for the assault on Malaya, No. 2 Mosquito Detachment of 684 Squadron (based on the Cocos Islands), succeeded in flying 282 operational hours with only four crews. Some of the beach targets necessary for operation "Zipper" were exceedingly exacting, since photography had to be done at low tide in order to secure a full picture of the state and condition of beaches in preparation for the landings.

318. Intimation of Japan's surrender was the signal for P.R. to work at greater pressure than ever. The "Zipper" programme, which was all but complete, was cancelled, and a new programme substituted entailing cover, three times a fortnight, by P.R. aircraft of all important targets ranging from Penang Island to Sourabaya in Java. It is worth noting that P.R. aircraft, during this period of uncertainty among Japanese units regarding their country's

surrender, met with more opposition than at any other time. At Palembang, pilots reported that enemy A.A. fire was intense.

319. Probably the most outstanding P.R. sortie from a general and humane interest at this time was that undertaken by a pilot of 681 Squadron (Spitfires) when covering prisoner-of-war camps in the Kanchana Buri area of Siam, ten days after the declaration of Japan's surrender. Prisoners at one of the camps were crowded together and swarming over the watch towers, waving and cheering to the pilot of the aircraft. Signs were also laid on the ground, including a giant Union Jack to indicate to the pilot that the prisoners also knew of events which had caused excitement in the world outside.

PART III.

THE SURRENDER OF JAPAN.

THEATRE BOUNDARIES AND DEPLOYMENT OF AIR FORCES DECIDED AT MANILA CONFERENCE.

320. August, 1945 saw the war against Japan move with over-whelming speed towards its culmination.

321. Throughout the war, research in Britain, America and Germany had pursued the possibility of harnessing to war the potentialities of atomic energy, and the first atomic bombs were dropped with devastating effect on metropolitan Japan at Hiroshima and Nagasaki on 5th and 9th August, 1945, respectively. Adding further to the plight of Japan was the declaration of war by Russia on 8th August, followed by Soviet Forces crossing the Manchurian and Korean borders.

322. From these momentous events, and faced with certain Allied invasion of the homeland, for which air power had paved the way, Japan could see no escape. The end came in the form of surrender, which was broadcast from Tokio on 10th August, and the acceptance of the Allied terms on 14th August.

323. As the result of the Japanese intimation that they were prepared to discuss and to receive surrender terms, the Supreme Allied Commander, South East Asia, directed that a Mission representing himself and his three Commanders-in-Chief should be despatched to Manila in the Philippines. The primary object of this Mission was to discuss the terms of surrender with General MacArthur and his staff, with a view to co-ordinating measures to be adopted to implement the terms of surrender both in the South West Pacific area and in South East Asia.

324. As my representative on this Mission, I selected Air Commodore W. A. D. Brook, C.B.E., Deputy Senior Air Staff Officer. Other members of the Mission which left Kandy by York on 16th August, refuelling at Calcutta en route, and continuing the flight by night over enemy occupied territory, were:—

Major-General Penney, S.A.C.'s representative. Head of the Mission, and also representing C.-in-C., A.L.F.S.E.A.

Vice-Admiral C. Moody, representing C.-in-C., E.I.F.

Colonel Mitford-Slade, representing J.P.S., S.A.C.S.E.A.

Colonel Bull, representing J.P.L.C.-S.A.C.S.E.A.