

of the change was to give the former R.A.F. Element of Photographic Reconnaissance Force more mobility as a wing which could be moved forward as required for operational purposes.

513. Throughout the campaign in Burma, Headquarters 230 Group had been charged with the control of all maintenance and storage units in the area of Headquarters, R.A.F., Burma, but the Group itself was under the direct control of the C.M.O., Headquarters, Base Air Forces. This arrangement was unsatisfactory because it meant that the R.A.F. operational commander in Burma did not have complete control of his maintenance organisation. It was therefore decided to disband No. 230 Group and to absorb the Maintenance Staff of the Group into Headquarters, R.A.F., Burma, with effect from 15th May, 1945. The units under No. 230 Group were, at the same time, placed directly under the operational groups they served, and the staffs of these groups were increased to cope with this commitment by the addition of some of the posts thrown up from the disbandment of No. 230 Group.

*Withdrawal of 224 Group in Preparation for "Zipper".*

514. The main assault on Malaya, scheduled for early September, made necessary the withdrawal of No. 224 Group and units from the Arakan and Burma.

515. This was started early in May. The withdrawal was handled directly between Headquarters, R.A.F., Burma, and Headquarters, Base Air Forces. As from 1st June, 1945, H.Q. 224 Group was placed directly under the control of H.Q. Base Air Forces for the purpose of mounting operation "Zipper", but the A.O.C. 224 Group and his staff retained the right to visit all units during mounting and to advise on all matters concerning the training of units for their various tasks. Headquarters 224 Group undertook the responsibility for force planning.

516. It was decidedly unfortunate, if not serious, that owing to the acute shortage of shipping, the withdrawal of units from Burma did not go off as smoothly as might have been expected. Many of the units, indeed, came out of the Arakan with no equipment or M.T., while the equipment and M.T. of other units which arrived in India lay on the docks awaiting the arrival of the units for many weeks. When units ultimately reached India they were deployed on airfields which had been prepared for them, but owing to the non-arrival of equipment or personnel, the commencement of training was badly delayed.

*Re-organisation of Air Command in 1945-46.*

517. In view of the extension of the responsibilities of Air Command, South East Asia, towards Singapore and beyond, the future organisation of formations in the Command required consideration.

518. The principal factors which necessitated reorganisation were as follows:—

(a) Mopping up operations of the enemy in Burma would continue for some time, but, so far as the Air Forces were concerned, these could be undertaken by one composite group (No. 221).

(b) Since No. 224 Group had been withdrawn from Burma for participation in Operation "Zipper", the Group would come directly under the operational control of Headquarters, Air Command, during the next stage of the Campaign.

(c) The Heavy Bomber Group (No. 231) was no longer suitably located in Burma. It would be based at the Cocos Islands for "Zipper" support.

(d) Photographic Reconnaissance, Special Duties and Air Supply Operations would no longer be concentrated on Burma, but would be required in widely separated areas. This called for direct control from the Headquarters of the Air Command of the groups engaged in these duties.

(e) The above factors reduced the responsibilities of H.Q. R.A.F. Burma, which had hitherto controlled several functional groups.

(f) The altered military situation had also called for the move of Headquarters, Allied Land Forces to Kandy, while Headquarters, Supreme Allied Command, together with the Headquarters of the three Commanders-in-Chief, would move to Singapore at the earliest practicable date.

(g) The 10th U.S.A.A.F. had been moved to China and Eastern Air Command dissolved. At the same time the R.A.F. Target Force for South East Asia in Phase II was not to be as large as originally planned.

519. These factors, it was considered, required revision of previous operational plans, and would enable a considerable reduction of planned overheads to be effected in Headquarters and Administrative Services.

520. On the fall of Singapore the following moves were scheduled to take place:—

(a) Headquarters, Air Command would move there in company with Headquarters, Supreme Allied Commander, H.Q. Allied Land Forces and part of the E.I.F. H.Q.

(b) Headquarters, No. 222 Group would move from Ceylon to Singapore and undertake responsibilities in that area similar to those undertaken by Mediterranean Allied Coastal Forces or Air Defences, Eastern Mediterranean.

(c) Headquarters, No. 231 Group would move to Singapore and be possibly employed either as a heavy Bomber Group Headquarters, the Headquarters of a Task Force, or be disbanded.

(d) Headquarters, No. 224 Group would also move to Singapore area and remain a composite group, being modelled as necessary to undertake further operations for the reconquest of Sumatra, Java and Borneo.

521. A small Headquarters, R.A.F. Ceylon, was also planned to take over area responsibilities for:—

(a) Ceylon.

(b) Island Flying-boat, Emergency Landing Grounds and Met. Stations to the south.

(c) Cocos for administrative services.

522. Although the future strategy for South East Asia Command was not yet determined, making it impossible to forecast reliably for the future deployment of forces, it was considered that the reorganisation as planned would meet all the probable requirements.