

CHAPTER 17

REDEPLOYMENT

THE successful penetration of the western wall of *Festung Europa* by the Anglo-American armies and their lodgment in Normandy, followed by the liberation of Paris, had brought the European war within measurable sight of its end, and there was now, especially in the British and American camps, a quickening of interest in the war against Japan. Within weeks of D-day on the Normandy beaches, landing craft needed for the conduct of war in the vast reaches of the Pacific Ocean were headed for the Pacific by way of Panama. General Kenney had been informed that he could expect considerable reinforcements of aircraft, and men to fly them, as the war in Europe seemed likely soon to end. A powerful British fleet to be used "in decisive operations against Japan" was preparing to move to the Pacific.

For some months the Australian Prime Minister, Mr Curtin, looking beyond the military victory to the political consequences of the Pacific war, had been urging on Mr Churchill the need for showing the British flag as prominently as possible in the closing stages of the struggle. On 4th July he had cabled to Churchill urging the early assignment of a British naval task force to South-West Pacific Area. The coming operations by General MacArthur against the Philippines and Borneo, he said, would present an ideal opportunity for the employment of the British naval task force. "It not only would contribute in great measure to the acceleration of the operations, but would be the naval spearhead in a large portion of this campaign. It is the only effective means of placing the Union Jack in the Pacific alongside the Australian and American flags. It would evoke great public enthusiasm in Australia and would contribute greatly to the restoration of Empire prestige in the Far East. The opportunity that presents itself is very real, but the pace of events here demands immediate action." In another cable five weeks later Curtin said: "I am deeply concerned at the position that would arise in our Far East if any considerable American opinion were to hold that America fought a war on principle in the Far East and won it relatively unaided while the other Allies, including ourselves, did very little towards recovering our lost property. . . . I put this matter to you frankly as one of deep and far-reaching consequence to our future role and prestige in the Pacific sphere."

In his reply, Churchill said that a strong British fleet which by mid-1945 would probably comprise four battleships, six fleet carriers, four light carriers, fifteen escort carriers, twenty cruisers, forty escorts and a considerable fleet train was being built up as fast as possible and that it was hoped they would be used in the "crucial operations" leading to an assault on Japan. If the American Joint Chiefs of Staff were unable to accept the British fleet in the main operations, then Churchill would suggest to them the formation of a British Empire task force consisting of

British, Australian and New Zealand land, sea and air forces to operate in the South-West Pacific under General MacArthur's supreme command.¹

In September the question of future British participation in the war against Japan would come up for discussion at the OCTAGON conference at Quebec—a conference of great importance for the Pacific war. There was little likelihood that Churchill, who in 1942 had declared, "I have not become the King's First Minister in order to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire", would fail to use every opportunity to regain as much as possible of Britain's prestige in the Pacific. However, American leaders were equally determined that the world should know that the Pacific war was essentially an American victory, were frequently outspoken about "imperialism", and openly advocated that it was high time Britain, France and Holland gave up their colonies in Asia.² MacArthur, according to Admiral Leahy,³ contended that the British "should not be allowed to assume control of any territory that we recaptured from the enemy". Admiral Leahy added: "I suspected that the Australians, in this matter, were in complete agreement with MacArthur." In this respect Leahy was mistaken.

At Quebec in September, Churchill offered to the Americans not only the main British fleet but a large part of the R.A.F. Bomber Command, comprising from 500 to 1,000 heavy bombers. President Roosevelt accepted the offer. Not only did he welcome British participation but he was anxious to see that Russia also should come in against the Japanese because he believed that a long and costly struggle still lay ahead.⁴

At a plenary session of the Quebec conference, Churchill said his government wanted British ships and troops to take part in the war against Japan in order to do Britain's part. He reiterated on several occasions that it was necessary that British forces should retake Singapore which had been the scene of the greatest blow to British prestige in the Far East.

However, when the subject of British participation came up at a meeting of the Combined Chiefs of Staff, there was soon evidence that the American chiefs of staff were not eager to have the British taking a major part in the Pacific. General Arnold describing the meeting said "everything went along normally and without excitement until the British again brought up the question of participation in the Pacific. Then all hell broke loose! Admiral King could not agree that there was a place for the

¹ Churchill suggested that the task force should be under a British commander and Curtin in his reply and in later correspondence took strong exception to this proposal because it would disturb the existing arrangement by which MacArthur controlled the Australian forces, engaged in SWPA.

² Chester Wilmot points out (in *The Struggle for Europe*, 1952, pp. 714-15) that while the Americans disavowed political aims in their conduct of the war against Germany, it was not so in the case of Japan. He said that the Americans believed that the sole aim should be victory, nothing else. "Since America fights for no political objective, except peace, no political directives should be given to American commanders in the field. They should be completely free to determine their strategy on military grounds alone. . . . To pursue a political aim is to practise Imperialism. This was the doctrine applied by Marshall and his colleagues in the conduct of the war against Germany, although, with an ambivalence not uncharacteristic of the American people, it was not always applied in relation to the war against Japan."

³ W. D. Leahy, *I Was There* (Eng edn, 1950), p. 296.

⁴ E. R. Stettinius in *Roosevelt and the Russians* (1949) said that the American Chiefs of Staff had warned Roosevelt that without Russia it might cost the U.S. a million casualties to conquer Japan.

British Navy in the Pacific, except for a very small force. The American Navy had carried the war all the way from Honolulu to the west and it would carry it on to Japan!"⁵ Admiral Cunningham, the First Sea Lord, who attended this meeting said that Admiral Leahy sharply called Admiral King to order and that he "eventually gave way, but with a very bad grace".⁶

The resentment of some of the Americans was heightened all the more by the belief held in some quarters that the Japanese were already virtually defeated. Leahy for example said that "by the beginning of September, Japan was almost defeated through a practically complete sea and air blockade". He was against the army proposal that there should be an invasion of Japanese home territory. "My conclusion, with which the naval representatives agreed," he wrote, "was that America's least expensive course of action was to continue and intensify the air and sea blockade and at the same time to occupy the Philippines. I believed that a completely blockaded Japan would then fall by its own weight."⁷

Apart from politics and national pride there were the vital questions of bases and logistics to be considered. Indeed the biggest problem in the Pacific war now was to find room and facilities to deploy the immense forces that would soon become available from Europe. Since it was generally believed at this time that the war in Europe would probably end in 1944, preparations for the movement of forces against Japan were becoming a matter of urgency.

Churchill discussed the question of bases for his R.A.F. squadrons with Arnold who said: "I told him the question of putting planes in there wasn't quite that simple. There were not enough land masses in the Pacific Ocean to use the heavy bombers we would have available from Europe when that phase of the war was over. As a matter of fact, if we could use 1,500 of the 3,500 we had in the E.T.O. we would be very, very lucky."⁸ Arnold said that Churchill turned to him and asked: "With all your wealth of airdromes, you would not deny me the mere pittance of a few for my heavy bombers, would you?" Arnold said he assured him that was something for the Combined Chiefs to decide. As far as he was concerned the Superfortresses were moving in—they had already started their operations and the Americans planned to use all the airfields available at Guam, Saipan, Tinian and Iwo Jima. If the Combined Chiefs decided to replace Superfortresses with Lancasters that was all right with him. The Royal Canadian Air Force also wanted to send forty-seven squadrons to the Pacific. Nobody knew where they were going to be based and the question was never firmly decided.

The over-all objective decided on was to force the unconditional surrender of Japan by (a) lowering Japanese ability and will to resist by

⁵ H. H. Arnold, *Global Mission*, p. 527.

⁶ Cunningham, *A Sailor's Odyssey* (1951), p. 612.

⁷ Leahy, p. 305.

⁸ Arnold, p. 526. (E.T.O.—European Theatre of Operations.)

establishing sea and air blockades, conducting intensive air bombardment and destroying Japanese air and naval strength, and (b) ultimately invading and seizing objectives in the industrial heart of Japan.

At the final meeting at the Quebec Citadel on 18th September the Combined Chiefs agreed that for the purposes of the planning of production and allotment of manpower, the end of the war against Japan should be set at eighteen months after the defeat of Germany. This date would be reviewed periodically in the light of developments. There was no decision on specific operations in the Pacific, and it was assumed without question that the Americans would continue to exercise command in the final phase of the war. The policy in Burma would not be to push all the way down from the north because the enemy with his communications behind him would be at an advantage, but to carry out combined sea, land and air operations against Rangoon. It was agreed to press unremitting submarine action against enemy ships and to step up the long-range air bombardment of Japan from the Marianas, from China and from other bases to be prepared.

In 1942, when they were formed, the first objective of both South-West Pacific Area and South Pacific Area had been to advance along two mutually-supporting axes to the same goal—Rabaul. Rabaul had not fallen but had been neutralised and its garrison largely cut off from the outside world. The last operational mission given to the forces of the South Pacific Area was a landing in March 1944 on Emirau Island. This had been carried out successfully, and there was now no further function for this command apart from garrisoning the northern Solomons where a large number of by-passed Japanese remained. On the other hand, South-West Pacific Area, after establishing bases along the northern coast of New Guinea and in Morotai was now poised to attack the Philippine Islands.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff had therefore decided to disband South Pacific Area. Admiral Halsey, its commander, was reassigned to the Central Pacific and most of the units of South Pacific were handed over to South-West Pacific Area. This development considerably increased the power of MacArthur's command, but in the coming months he would need all the ground and naval forces he could muster.

The Joint Chiefs gave the XIV Corps (Major-General Oscar W. Griswold), its corps troops, and the 25th, 37th, 43rd, 93rd and Americal Divisions to MacArthur, while I Marine Corps, its corps troops, and the 1st and 3rd Marine Divisions were handed over to Pacific Ocean Area. South-West Pacific Area also received the entire Thirteenth Air Force, together with Navy and Marine air units and Royal New Zealand Air Force units.

The six divisions from the Solomons increased MacArthur's total of American divisions to twelve, and by September 1944, with the adding of Sibert's X Corps and Hodge's XXIV Corps, he controlled eighteen

American divisions in addition to two Australian corps—Morshead's I and Savage's II.⁹

MacArthur's policy of establishing air and naval bases in areas otherwise held by strong enemy garrisons, while it avoided the heavy losses that might be expected if he were to attempt to destroy the enemy concentrations, had the disadvantage of tying up large numbers of troops to hold the perimeters protecting those bases. Of his eighteen American divisions six and one-third were tied down to the containment of by-passed enemy forces in Bougainville, New Britain and New Guinea, and others were similarly employed elsewhere. It had been necessary also to assign many American, Australian and New Zealand air units to air garrison duties in support of these divisions.

MacArthur needed these divisions for his assault on the Philippines where there were believed to be a total of thirteen Japanese divisions, and he solved the problem by handing over to the Australians garrison duties in all the bases in Australian New Guinea, except one—Manus. In a letter to General Blamey on 12th July, notifying him of the plan to hand responsibility over to the Australians, MacArthur said:

A redistribution of Allied forces in SWPA is necessitated by the advance to the Philippine Islands. Exclusive of the Admiralties, it is desired that Australian forces assume the responsibility for the continued neutralisation of the enemy in Australian and British territory and mandates in the SWPA by the following dates:

Northern Solomons—Green Island—Emirau—1 Oct 1944

Australian New Guinea—1 Nov 1944

New Britain—1 Nov 1944

So that intensive preparations may be instituted for future operations, forces [i.e. US forces] now assigned combat missions in the above areas should be relieved of combat responsibility not later than the specified dates. It is desired to use 2 AIF divs in the advance to the Philippine Islands, one div to be made available by Nov 44 and the other by Jan 45.

In his reply Blamey said that the 3rd Division, comprising the 6th and 23rd Brigades and one commando squadron, would be available to take over in the northern Solomons, Green Island area, and suggested that, because of its nearness to the Admiralties, Emirau should be garrisoned by American forces. However, on 2nd August MacArthur's chief of staff demurred both on this point and on Blamey's suggestion that two brigades together with one commando squadron would suffice in Bougainville. The minimum requirements he considered were:

Emirau Island—1 battalion reinforced

Green Island—1 battalion reinforced

Treasury and New Georgia—1 battalion reinforced

Bougainville—4 brigades.

MacArthur's chief of staff pointed out also that the garrison duty in the Aitape-Sepik area was a major undertaking requiring four Australian brigades, and that three brigades would be needed for the New Britain role. Blamey thereupon decided to allot his II Corps to replace

⁹ From May to October the title of the force which before and after that period was "II Corps" was "New Guinea Force".

the American XIV Corps at Torokina, Bougainville. The 5th Division would be assigned to New Britain while the 6th would take over responsibility for the Aitape area. "The foregoing dispositions," said Blamey in a report to the Advisory War Council, "would require practically all the fighting troops now in Australia. The garrison in Western Australia was being reduced to a minimum, and that in the Northern Territory was being substantially reduced. Air strength in the Northern Territory virtually precluded an enemy landing, but it was still necessary to retain some troops there. . . . In addition to the above activities, which would absorb four divisions, the C-in-C S.W.P.A. desired to establish an expeditionary force for further operations. This would consist of the 7th and 9th Divisions, making up I Corps which was now being prepared under Lieut-General Morshead."¹

The Americans in the by-passed areas had been content merely to hold defensive perimeters, usually with a force larger than the enemy forces in the immediate area. They considered these isolated enemy forces should be left to "wither on the vine". There was no sense in "kicking a corpse around". However, Blamey in his report to the Advisory War Council foreshadowed more active operations by the Australians in Bougainville.² He said that "the Torokina perimeter had been an inactive area since it was established by the United States forces. The Australian Military Forces would not perhaps be quite so passive. Native troops would be available for scouting in the area and it was hoped to locate bodies of enemy troops which were known to be in the vicinity."

Curtin was anxious that Australian troops should go forward to the Philippines and keep up with the van of Allied forces until the end of the Pacific war. There was some fear that the assignment of Australians to containing the Japanese in by-passed areas would absorb too much effort on secondary tasks.³ However, Japanese were at large on Australian mandated territory and rounding them up was obviously more an Australian than an American responsibility. "We could not," said Curtin,⁴ "escape the logic of the decision that Australian troops should garrison the islands which formed our outer screen of defence and which were mostly our own territory. In addition to these forces, however, we would have two divisions for the Philippines operations and this would ensure the Australian flag going forward with that of the United States . . . the British government and the Australian government were fully aware of the necessity of maintaining British prestige in the Pacific and were aware also that British prestige could only be restored by the presence of British forces in the war against Japan."

¹ Advisory War Council Minute 1405, 7 Sep.

² Advisory War Council Minute 1405, 7 Sep.

³ Blamey had anticipated that MacArthur would require the Australians to garrison their own territory, but had come to the conclusion that 3 Australian militia divisions would be able to take over the task then being carried out by 6½ American divisions. However, MacArthur's directive called for a minimum of 4 divisions and it became necessary for Blamey to assign the 6th Division which he had planned to hold in reserve. When these 4 divisions in addition to I Corps comprising the 7th and 9th Divisions were committed, Australia would have six divisions engaged against the Japanese.

⁴ Advisory War Council Minute 1405, 7 Sep.

In the second half of 1944, the Australian manpower problem, to which War Cabinet devoted considerable attention, became acute. Australia was not only maintaining large forces in the field, but was also producing war materials and food for the United Kingdom and India, as well as contributing to the maintenance of American forces. By December 1943 Australian manpower was distributed as follows:

- 26.0 per cent in the A.M.F., R.A.A.F., and R.A.N.
- 14.7 per cent in munitions industries
- 30.7 per cent in other essential industries
- 21.7 per cent in less essential industries
- 6.9 per cent in all others.

Curtin had proposed at a meeting of the Combined Chiefs of Staff in Washington on 2nd June that in order to provide more men and women for industry and agriculture the army should be reduced to six divisions and two armoured brigades. However, the R.A.A.F. would be built up to and maintained at fifty-three squadrons by December 1944, exclusive of three R.A.F. squadrons and two N.E.I. squadrons serving with the R.A.A.F.

At the end of February the army had contained 464,000 men and women, and Blamey had said that the reduction of the army to six divisions and two armoured brigades would mean that the army could progressively release 90,000 men.⁵ General Marshall informed General MacArthur on 3rd June of Curtin's proposals and asked for his comments. MacArthur replied that Curtin's proposals were acceptable providing that units were maintained at strength and were available for combat, otherwise commitments for less strength were preferable. The Australian proposals were approved on the following basis:

- (a) The AMF would be maintained at 6 divs and 2 armed bdes for actual operations.
- (b) The RAN would be maintained at its present level, and would, in addition, man ships to be made available through the Australian naval construction program.
- (c) By Dec 44, the RAAF would be built up and maintained at 53 squadrons, excluding—
 - 3 RAF squadrons in Australia.
 - 2 NEI squadrons in Australia.
 - 2 RAAF squadrons permanently based overseas.
 - RAAF squadrons committed to EATS.
 - RAAF ground and service personnel overseas.
- (d) Food commitments to the United Kingdom would be maintained at the 1944 level.

In order to fill the gap in industrial manpower needs Curtin directed that the Defence Committee make an estimate of the manpower necessary to maintain the Services at this new level, but instead of recommending reductions, the Defence Committee suggested a big increase in the monthly intake of men to the Services and a reduction in the intake of women.

⁵ War Cabinet Minute 3691, 4 Aug 1944.

In spite of this report, Curtin, on 4th August, directed the committee to review the position again on the basis of a reduction of 30,000 men in the strength of the A.M.F. and 15,000 men in the strength of the R.A.A.F.⁶ Of these 45,000 releases, 20,000 were to be made by 31st December 1944 and the remaining 25,000 by 30th June 1945. On 23rd August in the face of protests from the Services, the War Cabinet reduced the monthly intake for the three Services from 5,000 to 4,020, including 1,020 women. Blamey, writing to Curtin on 26th September, pointed out that the new responsibility for containing the Japanese in by-passed areas meant that he needed another 10,000 more men for operations and the maintenance of forces in widely-dispersed places. He claimed that the Air Force strength of 173,000 was 25,000 above establishment.

The Chief of the Air Staff in August had stated that because of developments in the European theatre and the cancellation of further drafts of aircrew overseas under the Empire Air Training Scheme, a surplus of aircrew had been built up and aircrew were to be asked to remuster as ground staff. Obviously the need for aircrew releases from the army had diminished and in September 1944, the army issued an instruction forbidding any further releases to the R.A.A.F. The Director of Recruiting, Group Captain Chadwick,⁷ protested. However, because of unsatisfactory reports of the behaviour and discipline of ex-army aircrew trainees in Canada, the Chief of the Air Staff no longer felt inclined to press for recruits from this source, and discussion on the subject ceased.

Blamey protested strongly at the insistence of the War Cabinet that reductions be made in spite of his warnings of anticipated casualties and losses when, by June 1945, there would be six divisions and an armoured brigade in action, and that he would be forced to inform MacArthur that the Australian army would not be able to maintain the strength allotted. It was not until the following February that the War Cabinet met to consider the manpower position again and, when it did, decided to adhere to the decisions of the previous August. The Cabinet rejected the Defence Committee's recommendation that the Services' intake of men should be increased from 3,000 to 4,200; the Service intake would remain at 3,000 monthly, of which the Navy would receive 600, the Army 1,500 and the R.A.A.F. 900.

General Kenney was faced with the problem of deploying and controlling the very large air forces he now commanded. Within his command he now had not only Fifth Air Force, R.A.A.F. Command, No. 10 Operational Group, and air units of the Seventh Fleet, but also the Thirteenth Air Force of six and a quarter groups, a Marine air group, American naval squadrons and units of the Royal New Zealand Air Force, all of which he had inherited from the now defunct South Pacific Area. Kenney sought approval from Washington to form a new Headquarters—"Far

⁶ Minute 4 Aug 1944. (Quoted in War Cabinet Minute 3691, Supplement No. 1.)

⁷ Gp Capt A. E. Chadwick, MSM, 250987. (No. 1 Sqn Aust Flying Corps 1916-19.) Dir of Recruiting 1942-44, of Manning 1944-45. Sales controller; of Tungamah, Vic; b. Beechworth, Vic, 15 Nov 1897.

East Air Forces"—to control both the Fifth and Thirteenth Air Forces. Kenney would be commanding general of F.E.A.F. while continuing also to be commander of Allied Air Forces, through which he would control R.A.A.F. Command and all other air units assigned to South-West Pacific Area. Washington approved of the formation of F.E.A.F., and orders were issued on 14th June 1944, effective the following day. Major-General Ennis C. Whitehead was appointed commander of the Fifth and Major-General St Clair Streett commander of the Thirteenth, with headquarters at Los Negros where most of his bomber squadrons were then based. They assumed command on 15th June.

Kenney was informed that within three months of the European war ending he would be reinforced with 1,200 aircraft making the total in Far East Air Force 3,200, in addition to which he had another 1,200 aircraft in the R.A.A.F., R.N.Z.A.F. and the Dutch Air Forces.⁸

Kenney had decided that the Fifth Air Force would be the assault force in most of the operations from June 1944 onwards. The Thirteenth Air Force, which was much smaller in size, was to be assigned mainly to supporting roles, which was the cause of some chaffing on the part of the Thirteenth's staff officers.⁹ He also dropped No. 10 Group from Fifth Air Force control and proposed that it, like the Australian army, should carry out garrison duties in the New Guinea area. Hence, the Fifth Air Force would carry the assault to the Philippines, while the Thirteenth Air Force and the R.A.A.F. were to be left behind to carry out supporting and garrison operations only.

Air Vice-Marshal Bostock, noting that Kenney had dropped No. 10 Group from current operations instructions, signalled him on 11th September asking for "some indication of your intentions regarding employment of this group during the next few months". General Beebe, the chief of staff of Far East Air Force, replied to Bostock, saying that a letter was being prepared containing full information on future operations. However, Bostock, anxious to avoid having the R.A.A.F. confined to garrison duties in New Guinea, conferred personally both with Beebe and Curtin on the subject of the future operational role of R.A.A.F. Command. As with the army it was the Prime Minister's wish that the air force should be represented in forward operations, but that the first requirement was adequate air support of the Australian land forces. He told Bostock during an interview on 14th September that the following principles should be followed: (a) that the R.A.A.F. operational squadrons had been assigned to the Commander-in-Chief, South-West Pacific Area, and their employment was therefore a matter for his decision; (b) the first requirement was adequate air support for Australian Land Forces by the Allied Air Forces; (c) wherever major Australian land forces are stationed in operational areas in contact with the enemy, R.A.A.F. air cover should be available to them to the greatest extent practicable within our resources; (d) for the purposes of cooperation with the Australian

⁸ Kenney, pp. 420-21.

⁹ Craven and Cate (Editors), *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, Vol IV (1950), p. 651.

land forces in the forthcoming offensive operations in the South-West Pacific Area and for other operations therein, it is desirable that a R.A.A.F. tactical air force should be maintained as an integrated formation of such strength as may be practicable; (e) mopping-up and air garrison duties in (1) British and (2) foreign reoccupied territories would be undertaken by the R.A.A.F. in that order, only after the commitments set out above were provided for.¹

Bostock agreed with these principles and they were also endorsed by the Advisory War Council. Curtin had agreed that No. 10 Group should be renamed First Tactical Air Force, and appropriate orders were issued. Even if circumstances prevented the retention of the tactical air force as an integrated formation, every effort was to be made to ensure that the R.A.A.F. was represented with the Allied Air Forces by individual wings or even by separate squadrons in the advance against Japan in the S.W.P.A.

Bostock after discussing the role of the R.A.A.F. with Curtin then took the matter up with Beebe at the headquarters of F.E.A.F. at Hollandia. Beebe although not meeting all Bostock's requests, agreed that No. 10 Group (Nos. 77, 78 and 81 Wings) would for the present remain in Noemfoor and be allotted to the Thirteenth Air Force instead of to the Fifth Air Force. Every effort would be made to keep the units comprising No. 10 Group together as a tactical force. No. 71 Wing would remain at Aitape for the support of land operations and, if General Blamey were to ask for it, Beebe would recommend that No. 79 Wing comprising Nos. 2 and 18 (Mitchell) Squadrons and No. 120 (Kittyhawk) Squadron be moved into New Britain to support land operations there.² Bostock also pressed Beebe to permit the transfer of No. 80 Wing (Spitfires) at Darwin to Morotai where it would later come under No. 10 Group. Beebe agreed. In a letter on 28th September Bostock warned Air Commodore Cobby that he would "have to remain patiently at Noemfoor for the time being . . . your staff should make every endeavour to make their contacts with 13th Air Force and I think you will agree from our discussion with Streett that, providing Streett gets a good impression of No. 10 (Operational) Group, which I have no doubt will be the case, he will give you a fair deal and move you forward with his units as circumstances permit. . . . It seems probable that when 5th Air Force gets into the Philippines there will be a general swing to the west and south-west. When this occurs 13th Air Force (and that includes you) will be in a most favourable position to move forward on the left flank."

Streett, said Cobby, "was tickled pink about the arrangement and was full of enthusiasm" that Thirteenth Air Force should take over operational control of No. 10 Group. On 8th October Beebe wrote to Cobby that No. 10 Group would go to Morotai as a group about the 15th November. Cobby said that Streett proposed that No. 10 Group would have com-

¹ In Advisory War Council Minute 1419, 21 Sep 1944.

² Nos. 18 and 120 Sqns were the two NEI units operating with the RAAF.

plete autonomy under the Thirteenth, and be directly responsible to the commanding general. That is, there was to be 13th Bomber Command, 13th Fighter Command and the R.A.A.F. component (either under the name of No. 10 (Operational) Group or First Tactical Air Force). It was also his intention to allot roles and areas to the three components and that Cobby would be given an area and set responsibilities with the title of air task force commander of the area.

Cobby had as his senior air staff officer, Group Captain Gibson, whom he regarded as "a most efficient officer". His senior administrative officer was Group Captain Gerald Packer, whose "ability and industry are of the greatest help". Between these two, he said, "I am well served".³

Cobby was, however, very dubious about the command arrangements which he said were "unworkable". In a letter to Bostock he protested about the divided command on a higher level which forced him "to try and serve two masters". But he was also handicapped by a section of G.H.Q. concerning themselves with the details of operations and dispositions of a lower formation. "When that formation is under the operational direction of still another authority, i.e. the Thirteenth Air Force, the position can become Gilbertian. It is impossible to campaign under such conditions. The 1st Tactical Air Force R.A.A.F. is now either administered or directed by R.A.A.F. Headquarters (with Forward Echelon thrown in for luck), R.A.A.F. Command, G.H.Q., and the Commanding General, 13th Air Force. I do not relish the role of the Duke of Plaza Toro," said Cobby.

The change of name of No. 10 Group to First Tactical Air Force, R.A.A.F. took effect on 25th October. The new formation retained command of all wings, squadrons and ancillary units commanded by the group. The new name would indicate more obviously its function as a "mobile striking force". There were other cogent reasons why its name should be changed. For one thing the units under its control were greatly in excess of those normally contained in a group. This was due mainly to the lengthening of lines of communication with the mainland of Australia and with Northern Command. Then again, in American Air Force terminology, "group" meant a force of only three or four squadrons, and, in a predominantly American setting, created the impression that No. 10 (Operational) Group had only so many squadrons under its control.

Unlike other formations of R.A.A.F. Command such as North-Eastern Area and North-Western Area, First Tactical Air Force was not confined to any definite area but would be moved freely wherever required. Bostock urged that First T.A.F. should be kept strictly to its role, i.e., that it should be the fast-moving, hard-striking formation of the R.A.A.F. He warned against the tendency to add static units to its strength, thus reducing its mobility.

Cobby's headquarters and many of the units of the First T.A.F. were located on Noemfoor. Other units, including two airfield construction

³ Letter, Cobby to Bostock, 31 Oct 1944.

squadrons, were at Morotai while some were at Biak and Aitape and others as far south as Townsville, Queensland.

The force had under its control one "attack" wing, two fighter wings and two airfield construction wings, together with all their medical, stores, base and repair and servicing units.

The "attack" wing which was at Noemfoor was No. 77 whose squadrons were:

- No. 77 (Attack) Wing Headquarters (Group Captain Fyfe).
- No. 22 Squadron (Squadron Leader Woodman)
- No. 30 Squadron (Squadron Leader Sandford)

The fighter wings were Nos. 78 and 81. These had the following squadrons under their control:

- No. 81 (Fighter) Wing Headquarters (Group Captain Steege)
 - No. 76 (Squadron Leader Bowes⁴)
 - No. 77 Squadron (Squadron Leader Stark)
 - No. 82 Squadron (Squadron Leader Grace)
- No. 78 (Fighter) Wing Headquarters (Group Captain Brookes)
 - No. 75 Squadron (Squadron Leader Lindeman⁵)
 - No. 78 Squadron (Squadron Leader Brydon)
 - No. 80 Squadron (Squadron Leader Waddy⁶)

The two airfield construction wings were:

- No. 61 (Airfield Construction) Wing Headquarters
 - No. 3 Airfield Construction Squadron (Morotai)
 - No. 14 Airfield Construction Squadron (Morotai)
- No. 62 (Airfield Construction) Wing Headquarters
 - No. 4 Airfield Construction Squadron (Noemfoor)
 - No. 5 Airfield Construction Squadron (Noemfoor)

By October R.A.A.F. Command had 41 R.A.A.F. squadrons on its order of battle. Of these, eight were in First T.A.F., and another three (Nos. 31, 452 and 457 Squadrons) were under orders to leave North-Western Area and join First T.A.F. in its forward bases. Another twelve squadrons including one Liberator squadron and three Spitfire squadrons remained under the control of Air Commodore Charlesworth in North-Western Area.

Northern Command (Air Commodore Lukis), with headquarters at Madang, controlled six squadrons which were engaged in garrison duties in New Guinea. This command would be reinforced by No. 79 Wing from North-Western Area which was to be used in New Britain, while a tactical-reconnaissance squadron (No. 5 Squadron) was under orders to go to Torokina, Bougainville, to operate there with Air Command Northern Solomons, in support of II Australian Corps. The remaining squadrons continued to be engaged from bases on the mainland on anti-submarine patrols off the Australian coast or on minelaying operations.

⁴ Sqn Ldr F. L. Bowes, 402846. 453 Sqn; comd 76 Sqn 1944. Probate clerk; of Coogee, NSW; b. Melbourne, 28 Feb 1915.

⁵ W Cdr C. W. Lindeman, DFC, 260810. 22 and 76 Sqns; comd 86 and 83 Sqns 1943, 75 Sqn 1944. Chartered accountant; of Point Piper, NSW; b. Strathfield, NSW, 19 Sep 1915.

⁶ Gp Capt J. L. Waddy, OBE, DFC, 402685. 250 and 260 Sqns RAF, 4 Sqn SAAF, 92 Sqn RAF; comd 80 Sqn 1944-45. Clerk; of Rose Bay, NSW; b. Sydney, 10 Dec 1914.