

and geographical vagaries in mind it was essential to evolve an administration covering Royal Air Force commitments which would effectively meet the situation in South East Asia.

146. The extensive re-organizations which took place during 1944-45 were effected against a background of strict and cumbrous control of expenditure by the Government of India, and of dependence upon India through the organization known as the War Projects Co-ordination and Administrative Committee for the provision of resources. There was, too, a crippling shortage of manpower in precisely those trades which make for good administration—non-flying officers (notably signals and maintenance staffs), clerks G/D., equipment assistants, cooks and the like. Moreover, the growing body of Air Command continually bumped its head against the Command manpower ceiling. It is not intended to infer that the R.A.F. in South East Asia was badly served in relation to other commands, for it was well understood that the allocation of manpower had to be assessed in relation to theatre requirements. Nevertheless, it was considered that perhaps the incidence of and the remedies for the growing pains experienced were not fully recognised at home.

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The Move of Headquarters, Air Command, to Ceylon.

147. The move of the Command Headquarters to Kandy was compelled by the insistence of the Supreme Allied Commander that his Commanders-in-Chief should work beside him. It was, however, rendered the more acceptable to Air Command on account of the growing need for divorcing operational and higher administrative control from the extensive and complicated negotiations necessary with the Government of India and with G.H.Q., India, relative to administrative services, which had tended to hamper the primary tasks of the Allied Air Commander-in-Chief.

148. The institution of H.Q. Base Air Forces at New Delhi had, therefore, many advantages. It liberated the Air Commander-in-Chief and his staff from direct day to day responsibilities for developing India as a base, and thus enabled him to address his attention more closely to the general problems of planning and policy control.

149. Before Base Air Forces was established and re-organisation was under consideration, it was generally supposed that a vertical split between the Air Staff and Administrative Branches offered the best solution to a complex problem. This meant that operations sections of the staff would move with the Air Commander-in-Chief to Kandy while the administrative sections remained at New Delhi. It was intended that administrative representation at Kandy should be effected by the provision of small cells or projections of the administrative branches concerned, which would work in an advisory and liaison capacity. This at the time, was broadly the view of Air Chief Marshal Sir Richard Peirse.

150. Difficulties ahead if such an administrative set-up was adopted at New Delhi as suggested, were foreseen by Air Vice-Marshal Goddard. The reins of higher administrative

control and policy, he considered, must in the first instance, be held firmly at Air Command in order to effect perfect co-ordination with the Air Commander-in-Chief and the operational branches at Kandy. Beside, the geographic factor was an important consideration, for Delhi was fifteen hundred miles from Kandy.

151. A new scheme which would more effectively meet the situation once re-organisation was established and yet ensure the retention of higher administrative control at Air Command, was brought up for consideration during the visit of Air Vice-Marshal Goddard to London in July, 1944. This revised project was, in the main, largely adopted when, at the beginning of October, Headquarters Air Command moved to Kandy and Headquarters Base Air Forces was formed at New Delhi.

152. The essence of the new arrangement lay in the retention at New Delhi of an administrative staff competent to deal with all questions, save the important policy matters, direct with the analogous departments of General Headquarters, India, and the Government of India. This ensured adequate Air Force representation at the centre of political power in India and, at the same time, avoided the creation of a duplicate headquarters under Air Command for which neither the men nor the means were to hand. The administrative services, whose heads remained in Delhi were, nevertheless, represented at Kandy by responsible and independent skeleton staffs under a senior officer competent to inform and advise on his own specialist topic as required, so that broad policy might properly be formulated at the Headquarters of Air Command.

153. During October and November, 1944, there persisted a considerable amount of uncertainty as to the basis on which the administrative machinery would ultimately rest. For instance, as matters of high policy were decided at Kandy, it was decided by the Air Commander-in-Chief that he must have by his side the head of the service primarily concerned. This applied successively to the Principal Medical Officer, the Command Accountant, the Command Welfare Officer and the Command Catering Officer, and finally to the Air Officer in charge of Training.

154. The situation was finally crystallised and clarified in October, when a revised directive was issued to the Air Marshal Commanding Base Air Forces. For all day to day matters affecting administrative services, the heads of those services were solely responsible to the Air Marshal Commanding Base Air Forces. But when matters of administrative policy affecting the Command as a whole arose, then the heads of the administrative services were responsible to the Allied Air Commander-in-Chief through the Air Officer (Administration) (A.O.A.), Headquarters, Air Command. Similarly, when matters of new Command policy came under discussion and the agreement of the Government of India was required, the heads of the administrative services concerned were empowered by the Air Commander-in-Chief, through the A.O.A. Air Command, to deal with their opposite numbers in G.H.Q. India, on behalf of the Air C.-in-C.

155. As a corollary to this arrangement, the staff officers under the A.O.A., Air Command at Kandy were not established as mere liaison