

ON AIR POWER

K.K. MAJUMDAR

May I begin by saying, I am very glad to talk to you this evening. The Indian Air Force is travelling across India to meet young Indians and students, and spread the doctrine of the air. The first question that comes to mind is: why are so many officers and pilots doing this instead of fighting against the enemy? The reason is, all the officers and pilots have recently spent many months in operations against the enemy and are now having a rest. They are utilising the rest period to go around and meet the young men of India and tell them something about the Indian Air Force. If you remember the spate of war more than five years ago, if you recall the events that had taken place and the general course of the war, you will find that the strategy of war had been controlled by balance of air power. It was air power which enabled the Germans to destroy the Polish state and the Polish Army. It was air power which enabled them to fight a very successful campaign in Norway in the face of various powers. It was air power which led to the German victory in Western Europe and the destruction of the Allied Army on the mainland of Europe. Then came a bitter struggle for air power between the League air power and the Royal Air Force in the skies of Britain. The outcome was the defeat of Germany in the air over England and the Channel. The loss of air superiority by the Germans resulted in their inability to carry out the invasion of Britain. Similarly, in the Pacific, it was an overwhelming, unexpected concentration of Japanese air power,

* Recorded Speech by the Late Wing Commander K.K. "JUMBO" Majumdar, DFC & Bar, in February 1945.

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which led to the destruction of large parts of the American Fleet, at Pearl Harbour; it was air power which enabled the Japanese to take on the British Fleet in the Eastern waters. That proved the air superiority, and the Japanese were able to gather up in the areas of Indo-China, Malaya, the Philippines, Burma, which fell into their hands like dry fruits. On the Eastern front, it was air power which enabled the German Army to drive relentlessly on to part of Russia.

Then came a period when the Allies rebuilt and regrouped their air forces and put the crème of their engineering skill into them. After bitter fighting in the air, the Allies gradually built up air superiority over the enemy, and from air superiority, they developed air supremacy. The Allied air efforts gradually equalled and then outstripped enemy air efforts — outstripped them 5, 10, 20 times. That is why the Japanese never entered India. That is why the Germans could be driven out of Africa. That is why the Allied Army was able to land successfully on the continent of Europe and drive the Germans out of the front. That is why the Americans drew back in Miranda and that is why the Russian Army was free to walk into Germany.

The lesson from this is: **if India has ever to become a great nation, we must have air power.** Air power must include a good Air Force, good airfields, systematic aviation, and a large aircraft industry; above all, we must have good airmen and good leaders in the air. It takes weeks to build an airfield, months to build aeroplanes, but it takes years to build leaders. That is why we are travelling around India and meeting the students. It is our hope to find among you some of those men India will need in the future to lead and direct our air power. Every service benefits from good leaders, but for a fighting service, they are essential. The Indian Air Force has expanded much since the war and our squadrons have done well against the enemy. But the limiting factor in our ability to expand and develop is the lack of young Indians and par excellence leadership.

Leadership requires the qualities of initiative, character, energy, determination. We have to find some among you with these qualities. We do not expect all of you to join the Air Force here and now. But if we have framed the steel of air-mindedness in your hearts and minds, and if we find a few of those who have the urge, we should be satisfied. Flying is a strange and novel idea to many people. For those who wish to take it up as a career must face a great deal of opposition and prejudice in their homes. This and some other qualities form squadron leaders. For those of you who are interested, a special officer has been deputed to offer you information and advice. He is known as the IAF General Duty Recruiting Officer and you can always get in touch with him at 22, Harrison Road. The Indian Air Force offers a happy life and a good career in a new field of human activity. If any of you should come forward for those motives alone, I would not advise you to go further. You would be fundamentally unsuitable to yourself. Those alone who seek to serve the nation out of a spirit of patriotism and adventure will find fulfilment in the air.

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Finally, I would like you to meet the officers of the Indian Air Force in a place like this when they come to your town. They were all in combat against the Japanese. Some of them are dead; they have been killed by the Japanese. On the other hand, a great many Japanese are also dead; they have been killed by these young Indians. You will see these officers are just like your parents. They have the same rig and the same background. It is very encouraging to see that young Indians can do these things as well as any other young men in the world. What they have done, you can do. I hope, some day, I have the pleasure of seeing some of you in the Air Force.