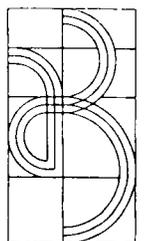

Airport Terminals

Christopher J. Blow
MA(London) RIBA



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Preface

The significance of airport terminals, and the politics of design

In this age, as in the age of steam, long distance travel is a special experience. Arrivals and departures are events, and points of arrival and departure are assembly places for large numbers of people.

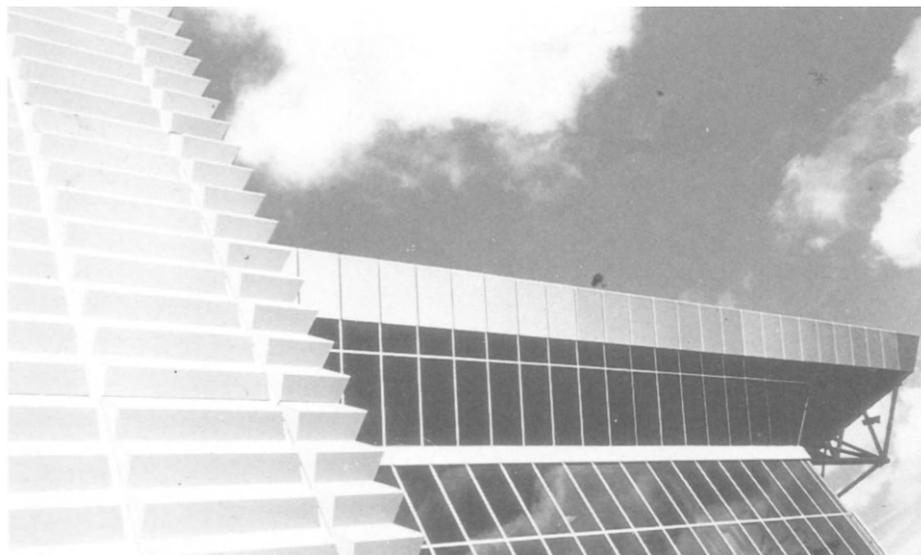
The real difference is in our perception of distance. A journey to another continent is both as adventurous and as unadventurous as a journey to another city might be. In other words, within a hundred years a long distance train journey has been replaced as a scalar human activity by a long distance flight.

Furthermore, really long distance personal travel by any other means than by air is a thing of the past. It is well-nigh impossible to travel by public transport around the surface of the globe, as was proved by the British Broadcasting Corporation. In 1988 the BBC sent Michael Palin 'Around the world in 80 days' accompanied by a television camera crew to emulate the fictional journey taken 115 years earlier by Phileas Fogg. Since that famous journey was made without aircraft, the BBC set out to see if it was still possible and only proved that aircraft have largely replaced the ocean liner.

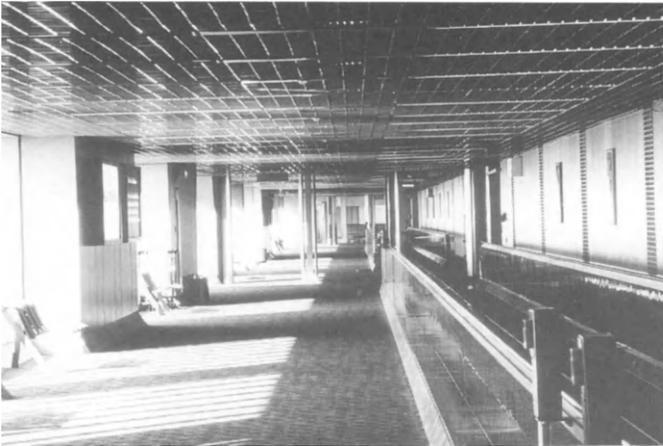
As a statement of the spirit of the age, a Victorian railway terminus has been replaced by an international airport terminal.

When we think about the activities in an international airport terminal, the comparison with a railway station breaks down. International travel, which accounts for the majority of air travel (although the world's total figures are distorted by enormous volumes of domestic travel in the USA), involves border controls on customs and immigration. These processes, when combined with those relating to passengers' baggage – international travel involves stays of such duration that significant volumes of baggage are carried and need to be stowed in the hold of the aircraft – involve delay and centralization. The distances which passengers have to travel inside airport terminals mean that some passengers may be forgiven for thinking that it is for the benefit of the staff concerned with these processes that the terminal is organized rather than for them.

One of the principal anomalies about airport terminals is that they are usually provided by airport authorities rather than airlines. This is coming to be of enormous concern to the airlines, increasingly keen to offer their passengers a distinctive service in a competitive market. As Lord King of British Airways said when launching BA's half-year figures on 15 November 1988, 'If you have your own terminal and are responsible for it, you can give a much better service. It's not too bad for passengers once the aircraft doors close and they're inside, but there are problems getting there.'



P.1. Heathrow Terminal 4, close-ups of external aluminium cladding, Architects: Scott Brownrigg and Turner, Guildford. Client: Heathrow Airport Ltd (part of BAA plc)



P.2. Heathrow Terminal 4, aluminium internal cladding



P.3. Chicago O'Hare United Airlines Terminal, passenger tunnel and departures concourse. P.4. Architects: Murphy and Jahn, New York

Furthermore, he was predicting a 50% increase over the next ten years in the number of passengers per BA aircraft, with consequent demands on the passenger handling side of the airport terminal.

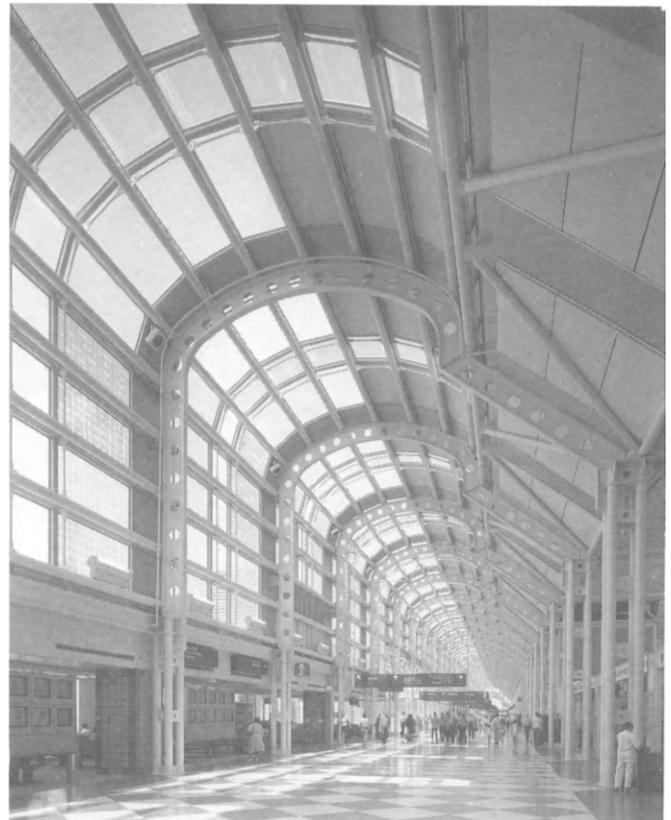
The overriding themes of this book are capacity, and the future of airport terminals. It is predicted that the number of scheduled airline passengers will double in the twelve years between 1988 and 2000 to over 2 billion. This traffic will be met not so much by new airports as by new terminals, replacement terminals and expanded terminals. \$100 billion is likely to be spent worldwide in the next decade. This may seem a large sum until it is remembered that just one new airport on an artificial island in Japan's Osaka Bay is costing \$6 billion alone.

Although the last new US airport to be built was Dallas/Fort Worth in 1974, there are now several new ones on the drawing board in readiness for the 1990s: Europe will for certain gain only one new airport, Munich 2 (see Chapter 12), before the year 2000, although new sites are being considered outside Lisbon and Athens. A new site outside Oslo was being considered but has been effectively cancelled.

In the the USA, work has started in Denver for completion in the mid 1990s and Texas may see a new airport joining Dallas/Fort Worth at Austin. With little activity in new airports in Latin America, the Middle East and Africa, it is in the Pacific rim, where one third of the world's economic activity in the next decade is seen as being concentrated, that new airports are certain or projected, at Sydney, Hong Kong, Macau, Kansai (see also Chapter 2) and possibly others in Japan, the Philippines and Thailand.

Nevertheless, new terminals and redeveloped old ones will be the order of the decade.

Architectural quality is demonstrated by terminal buildings: they represent the spirit of the aviation age in their form and external and internal detail.



Further reading

- Blacklock, M. (1990) (ed) 1991 World Development Survey. *Airports International*, December 1990
 Donne, M. (1989) Cleared for Take-off. *British Airways Business Life*, **24**, December 89/January 90