

Extract from the Diary of Tadeusz Kwissa

3rd August 1944: From RAF Ford to France

12 British transport aircraft, Dakota type made in America, arrive about 10⁰⁰. We all wait, ready, after completing last formalities we load into the machines, 12 to 15 people each. We take off individually at 12⁰⁰. My Dakota takes off as the fourth. After circling above the airfield we set course for France immediately. A bit to the south of Bayeux. Almost at once the sea coast can be seen, as Ford is located very close to the coast. Some small English port escapes beneath us, 'it's probably Southampton' says an English nurse that flies constantly on this transport aircraft. The coast of England slowly starts to disappear in the slight sea mist so typical for England. We start to feel sorry, with lumps in our throats that we leave this Island full of good people, friends, the island that is jealously hiding my fiancée somewhere... Despite this feeling we also feel strong joy in our hearts that, at last, for once, we're getting closer to Poland rather than further away from Her, as it was the case until now... Underneath us clouds in places, the sea has a strangely beautiful pale blue colour, sometimes turning green, with very small waves. We pass a couple of aircraft of various types, also a couple of small ships, all Allied. From mid-Channel the weather deteriorates, while we have flown at about 2000 feet until then, we now have to either descend or climb to avoid clouds and mist. Finally our operator, a young English Warrant Officer, says that we return to England because the weather is getting worse and worse. We're disappointed, but also glad that we will see England again.

At 16⁰⁰ we take off again, this time arriving at our destination. We pass whole convoys of ships, small and big. It seems to me we can see a small islet ... and behind it a cape of the mainland. We can already see beaches, on which there are lots of barges and equipment, a whole town of ships of various size near the coast. We make landfall. In the fields, everywhere, crates with equipment, ammunition, tanks, tracks of heavy vehicles everywhere. We pass an airfield full of American Thunderbolts, field hospitals, we can see a destroyed town, then a smaller town, houses without roofs or windows etc. Traffic on the roads like in Piccadilly Circus, but on the right hand side, and purely military. Finally our aircraft makes a circle over an airfield and we land. The airfield has only one 'runway' from tar paper like roof covering. The sun is shining, terrible dust at the airfield. It turns out that the 'A' and 'B' parties of the ground crew have also only just arrived in barges, unloading onto the beach. We sleep in a ditch, in which we have dug sideways holes. There are many 'apartments' left by the Jerries. During the night a raid, terrible Anti Aircraft fire. Our airfield is called Plumetot, near the village of Plumetot. We're about 7 to 10 miles from the front line. All the time we can hear field artillery, light and heavy.

5th August 1944 – Plumetot

A fine and sunny day. I send my first letter to my fiancée. I'm very proud, as our address is: 'British Liberation Army'.