

## Speech of His Excellency Tomasz Młgarski, Ambassador of the Republic of Poland in France

Distinguished guests,

For us Poles, Normandy has a special meaning, because scattered across it are places dear to our hearts and memories; places where our servicemen fought bravely and shed their blood to bring to an end the Second World War. We find ourselves today here in Plumetot, a little village which in 1944 witnessed the deeds of Polish airmen, serving under the Royal Air Force, a village which today begs leave to honour their memory.

In a few moments we are going to inaugurate this Memorial to the memory of Polish pilots who served at the Advanced Landing Ground B.10. I am exceptionally pleased that this splendid project, fruit of the closest co-operation between French, British and Polish authorities, will finally see the light of day. I would like to congratulate most warmly those who conceived this tremendous initiative, especially Mr Richard Kornicki, Chairman of the Polish Air Force Memorial Committee and son of the former Squadron Commander, Franciszek Kornicki. I would also like to express my warmest thanks to the French and British authorities who, from the beginning, participated wholeheartedly in this project.

This monument, dedicated to Polish pilots, will be a reminder of their unequalled exploits during the Battle of Normandy, but it also pays tribute to the memory of all Polish airmen, most of whom graduated from the school of military aviation at Dęblin, who saw action on many fronts during the Second World War. The story of these heroes deserves to be remembered in the West because they fought not only for their own country, occupied by the Nazi invaders, but also for the freedom of the whole of Europe. Their deeds have been the subject of many works of history, literature and film; and they are still fresh in the memory of everyone in Poland.

According to historians, more than 200 Polish Aces died under French skies during the Second World War. Many of them gave up their lives over the English Channel and their bodies were never recovered. Others were laid to rest in French soil without being identified to this day. The Polish Embassy pays particular attention to these anonymous graves and rejoices whenever one of these airmen recovers his personal place in history. This was particularly so in the recent case of Lt. Tadeusz Stabrowski, a fighter pilot whose remains rested in anonymity in the cemetery of Crotoy until recently identified, or of [Major] Eugeniusz Horbaczewski whose memorial stone was unveiled recently at Valennes, near Beauvais.

The monument inaugurated today at Plumetot allows us once again to fulfil our duty of remembrance, to keep in mind all those brave Polish airmen, and to pay tribute also to those who, to this day, have never been found.

Ladies and gentlemen, this ceremony, which forms a natural part of the commemorations of the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Normandy, has an additional dimension in the year when we celebrate the centenary of the renewal of diplomatic relations between Poland and France.

What a splendid symbol this is! A monument designed in Poland, by a Polish architect, has taken its place here on French soil, to tell of the role of Polish airmen in the liberation of France and of Europe.

“A soldier dies twice: the first time when he falls in combat, the second time when he falls from memory”. Allow me to repeat my most sincere thanks to those who have given back their deserved place to these exceptional heroes who fell for our shared freedom, preserving their memory, and passing it on to the youngest of generations.

Glory to these heroes!