

Speech of M. Bouyx, Member of Parliament for the 5th Constituency of Calvados

Mr. Prefect, Mr. Mayor, Elected Members, Representatives of Military authorities, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I will be brief, because simple things can be put simply. To Polish airmen we can only offer our deepest admiration and our undying gratitude. The debt owed by France and the Allies to Polish servicemen and airmen is immense. I am particularly pleased and honoured to be with you this morning to pay a more than deserved tribute to the Polish airmen who took part in Operation Overlord and in the liberation of Europe.

The 1st of September 1939 saw the invasion of Poland and launched the great tragedy that was the Second World War. Although Poland was invaded, the Polish Government never surrendered. The Polish Army, re-grouped in Alexandria, was thus able to rejoin Great Britain. Throughout the duration of the War, and particularly in the Battle of France and the Battle of Britain, the valour and the exceptional skill of Polish airmen were unchallengeable.

Mr Mayor, when you first came to me with this magnificent memorial project, initiated by the Polish Air Force Memorial Committee in London, I could do none other than join you in your desire to bring to life the recognition due to the heroes of the Polish Air Force. I salute your dedication, Mr Mayor, and I pay tribute equally to all the work, which has made the realisation of this Memorial possible. This is a wonderful day for remembrance, and a wonderful day to say thank-you. I will end by simply quoting the American war correspondent, Dorothy Thompson. During the Battle of Britain she wrote: "The Poles, they are pure courage". It is that pure courage that we salute today.

Thank you.