

AZORES - FIRST PICTURES. 43-102

On October 11th, Germany's U-Boat hopes received a body blow which set a new "low" to her Submarine warfare. On that day Portugal granted facilities in the Azores to the British Government. Our 600-year-old alliance with Portugal proved itself to be as good as new. Air and Naval stations were made available for the duration of the war, to enable better protection to be provided for merchant shipping in the Atlantic. It's easy to see how invaluable these nine volcanic outcrops in the North Atlantic are. Full scale protection for convoys is now practicable.

These pictures, just released, were taken on "moving in" day -- the culmination to Dr. Salazar's willingness to give Britain access to the islands in accordance with the ancient terms of the alliance. The bond of Anglo-Portuguese friendship, which has stood the test of time, resulted in a great influx of men and material for the creation of an aircraft staging-post in mid-Atlantic.

The spirit of co-operation shown by the Portuguese was evident immediately on landing. A site for Naval and R.A.F. Headquarters was chosen, and within two hours the combined staff moved in. Work was set in hand and the airfield began to grow with miraculous speed.

Modern methods of airfield preparation were employed: a system which has been greatly developed during the war. Local labour was organised for construction, so that the existing landing ground might be rapidly extended and new space made available for the expected rash of arriving aircraft. Round-the-clock activity which won a rich reward in the almost immediate effect it had on the Battle of the Atlantic.

Within two days the pioneer work was completed, aircraft were operating, and other aircraft from Britain were flying in.

The establishment of camps and kitchens was another important side of the "settling in" process. Messing arrangements were adequate to cope with Military appetites, and the canvas town soon settled down to an efficient routine. There was only one casualty in the landing; an airman who met with an accident during disembarkation. He was operated on at the Portuguese hospital by a famous Lisbon surgeon. A generous offer of help, typical of the island itself, which placed everything (even the old water mill) at the disposal of the visitors. A heavy run on the laundry facilities began. The friendly people met the situation willingly.

On October 26th, Air Commodore Brackley, of Headquarters Transport Command, flew from the United Kingdom to meet Air Commodore Powell from Montreal, who flew direct to the Azores, making the first East to West and West to East contact.

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The new staging post of Transport Command in the Azores forms a natural link across the Atlantic between the American and African Continents and the United Kingdom. It's the answer to the U-Boats nightmare.

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