

Mico Alvo With Fellow Officers During Air Navigation Training



This picture is taken in South Africa, in Cape Town, at the final stage of our training. All cadets wore a white ribbon around their kepi. The South Africans had ordinary hats, but all the rest we wore a kepi.

My first training was in Rhodesia, in Bulawayo. After that, we were taken to East London, South Africa, for the second stage of our training.

We went to East London at the beginning of 1944. Every training (there were three stages) lasted three or four months. In East London we specialized in air navigation.

East London was a nice city. Small city, but very pleasant. There were English and blacks too. In Rhodesia it was the first time that we encountered the segregation between the whites and the blacks. This actually made a great impression on us, a very bad impression.

We would go for a walk in the park and they would have a sign saying, "Europeans only". We couldn't understand it. Later, when we stayed for a little longer, we realized that they were partly, not completely, but partly, right.

They really were people of a much lower intelligence than us. But why were they lower? Because they didn't allow them to be educated.

After East London we went to Cape Town. In Cape Town we mainly had practice on air navigation, which was very interesting. On the plane.

The English had everything so organized, they were great. Of course, we didn't have many real English. Most of them were Welsh and Scotch. The Scotch were the best. What I liked most was their discipline.

For example they would teach the machine gun of an airplane and how to dismantle it and turn it into screws and nuts, and mantle it anew so it can be used again. Our trainer on armaments was a Flight Sergeant. In the class, we had students that were Flight Lieutenants and even of higher ranks.

Because they were people that had fought and now wanted to join the air force and because they were very good, they were sending them too. You should see when the Flight Sergeant was giving the lesson, how the Flight Lieutenants sat in front of him.

Even though they were allies, the English and the South African really disliked each other. Especially in Pretoria, where there were many Boers, there would be battles. At the bars and wherever else. The Greeks avoided trouble, they didn't mix.

Something that made an impression on me when I went to South Africa, was that I found there Greeks from the Sailing Club. They had left from here as refugees and went to Johannesburg, opened a Tea Room and made a lot of money. Their Tea Room was open all night. There we were told that most of the Tea Rooms were owned by Greek.

At the end of 1944 we finished. But we weren't fit to fight yet. One had to do the OTU, which was the Operational Training Unit.

They trained you on the aeroplane that you were going to fly with. However, we didn't do the OTU. We didn't do our OTU, because by that time Greece was free and they sent us back.