

The Poles in Britain 1940–2000

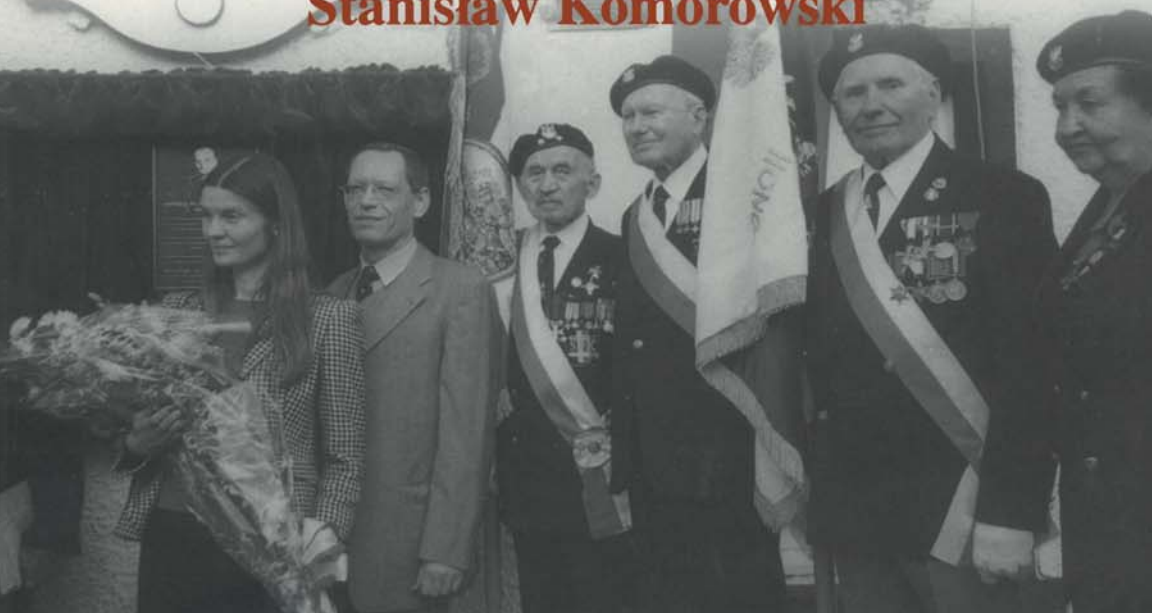
From Betrayal to Assimilation

Editor

Peter D. Stachura

Foreword by

Stanisław Komorowski



THE POLES IN BRITAIN 1940–2000

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Foreword by Dr Stanisław Komorowski

Ambassador of the Republic of Poland to Great Britain



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For Kay, Gregory and Madeleine

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Foreword

The group of scholars under Professor Peter Stachura's supervision has succeeded in writing an extremely interesting book which fills a gap in the English-language historiography. It also throws new light on hitherto unknown facts of Polish history. The objective attitude of the authors towards the Polish community in Britain needs to be praised even more, if one keeps in mind the subjective analysis made by others of some events in Polish history.

The authors' initiative should also be appreciated because for many decades the Polish soldiers of 1939 have not been granted adequate recognition, not only from the former Polish communist government – which is clearly demonstrated in the book – but also from the British side. Their heroic struggle 'For Your and Our Liberty', in accordance with a long-established Polish tradition, began with the German and Russian aggression of September 1939. It finished on the territory of the United Kingdom.

Nevertheless, as the authors show, the end of the Second World War cannot be considered as the closure of the battle for an independent Poland. The reality of the post-Yalta world order forced many of the ex-soldiers to become immigrants. During the entire communist period in Poland, they continued to cultivate in exile Polish culture, with its values and spirit. They maintained markedly high standards of patriotism and devotion. In spite of initial difficulties, internecine animosities and, often, antipathy from some British circles, they never gave up hope of returning to a free country. Some of them have now managed to visit newly independent Poland, and continue to contribute, through their own activities, to improving its image in Britain.

Having mentioned the Polish soldiers, one ought not to forget their descendants born and raised in the United Kingdom. Many of them are proud of their heritage, and their favourable attitude towards Poland needs to be fully acknowledged.

I would like to express my gratitude to the authors of the book. Thanks to them, the work of the Polish community in the United

Kingdom, and particularly of the wartime immigrants, has been recognised and highly rated.

I am persuaded that by introducing an English-speaking readership to a subject as interesting as the last sixty years in the life of the Polish community – one of the most numerous ethnic groups in the United Kingdom – the authors significantly promote an improvement in common understanding, tolerance and openness among members of British society.

Dr Stanisław Komorowski
Ambassador of the Republic of Poland to Great Britain
June 2003

Acknowledgements

All but one of the contributions in this book originated as papers at the conference 'The Poles in Britain, 1940–2000: New Research', which was organised on 2 March 2001 by the Centre for Research in Polish History, University of Stirling. A large and appreciative audience stimulated some vigorous debate, which I found most gratifying.

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Of the many individuals who have taken a sustained interest in my work with the Centre, I should like to mention, in particular, Professor Sir Ian Kershaw, University of Sheffield, and Dr Bob McKean, Head of the Department of History, University of Stirling.

Peter D. Stachura
Bridge of Allan
Polish Independence Day, 2002

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