



THE POLISH FORCES WAR MEMORIAL PROJECT

at The National Memorial Arboretum

Press Release:

London: Embargoed until 0100 hrs 1st September 2009

70 years after the invasion of Poland, leading British statesmen and military leaders from Rt. Hon. Baroness Thatcher to General The Lord Guthrie unite to remind us: “We must never forget Poland’s unique contribution to Britain’s freedom and the defeat of Nazi Germany.”

Polish veterans were profoundly shocked to find young people in the UK asking whether Poland fought with Germany in WW2. To ensure their contribution to Britain’s war effort is remembered a new book ‘First to Fight’ is being launched today, ahead of the dedication of the first national memorial to Polish forces in the UK later this month.

The Polish veterans ‘last campaign’ is being vigorously supported by Britain’s senior political and military establishment, including Baroness Thatcher, Patron Conservative Friends of Poland, who said in a statement:

“Today, as we mark the 70th anniversary of the invasion of Poland and the subsequent outbreak of World War II, we remember the unique contribution of the Polish armed forces towards the freedom of Britain, of Europe and indeed of the world. Poland fought alongside us from the first day of the war to the last. Her people showed extraordinary bravery: many giving their lives as the ultimate sacrifice. But the freedoms for which they fought were to be cruelly denied them in the post-war world. Those who remained in exile could only look on as a new wave of oppression engulfed their country. Some would never achieve their heart-felt goal of returning to their homeland. But, finally, after more than four decades under communist tyranny, the people of Poland were able to set their own destiny.

In Britain, we remember the steadfastness of the Polish people; we treasure the bond of history which ties our peoples together; and we look forward to a flourishing friendship which will serve our nations well into the future.”

General The Lord Guthrie, former Chief of the Defence Staff writes in the book:

“We owe much to the Poles who came to join us in our struggle. There was a time when the only allies the British Commonwealth had were Polish and large numbers died in battle many miles from their country. We are right to remember those gallant men and women, who at a very difficult time in both our countries’ histories were our firm friends and allies.”

Other contributors to the book and supporters of the campaign include:

HRH The Duke of Kent, KG
HRH The Duke of Gloucester, KG GVCO
Major General The Duke of Westminster, KG CB OBE TD CD DL
General the Lord Guthrie of Craigiebank, GCB LVO OBE DL
General Sir Mike Jackson GCB CBE DSO
Winston S. Churchill MP (grandson of the wartime Premier)
Sir Martin Gilbert (Churchill's official biographer)
Frederick Forsyth

'First to Fight' recounts Poland's epic six year struggle – with some historically significant texts being published for the first time, such as the English translation of Stalin's signed order to execute 14,736 of the Polish Officer Corps at Katyn Forest in 1940.

The story is brought to life with moving personal stories from Poles who fought in the air, on land and at sea, on many fronts. *[Please note that a number of veterans are available for interview.]*

For example, the myth of Polish cavalry charging German Panzers is put to bed: yes they did charge, but to good effect as recounted by Lieutenant Andrzej Zylinski. Leading the 4th Squadron of the Polish 11th Uhlan Regiment they charged with sabres drawn, breaching the German defences of Kałuszyn. After fierce fighting the town was captured with the almost complete destruction of the German 44th Regiment, whose commander committed suicide.

'First to Fight' is being launched ahead of the dedication of the first official war memorial in the UK for the 500,000 members of the Polish forces who fought in WW2 under British command. The event, in the presence of HRH The Duke of Kent, will take place at the National Memorial Arboretum on 19th September.

With the publication of 'First to Fight' and the unveiling of the Polish War Memorial this September, the last remaining veterans now know that their struggles, and those of their departed comrades, will be duly remembered in Britain for generations to come.

For further information please contact:

Andrew Baud, Director, Tala PR
T: +44 (0) 7775 715775
F: +44 (0) 8707 065863

Dr. Marek Stella-Sawicki, Publisher 'First to Fight'
Drmarksawicki@hotmail.com
07834 583 206

Michael Moszynski, Advisor
Michael@londonadvertising.com
07968 063 155

Historical Synopsis

Despite being the first to bear the brunt of Hitler's Blitzkrieg, Poland's resistance lasted longer than that of France, Norway, Holland or Belgium and was only hastened by the invasion from their rear by the Soviet Union.

After the fall of Poland and France over half a million Poles found a way to answer Churchill's call to arms of "blood, sweat and tears" by continuing the fight under British command (many having to walk over 2,000 miles after being released from Stalin's Siberian gulags to do so). From the pilots of 303 Squadron, who shot down the highest tally of German aircraft in the Battle of Britain, to the men of Anders 2nd Corps who captured Monte Casino.

Poles were also critical to cracking the German Ultra codes and providing intelligence on the V1 and V2 rocket programme threatening our population on the Home Front.

More Poles died as a percentage of its population than any other country, but at the end of the War they saw their country lose its freedom to the Soviet Union who had conspired with Nazi Germany to invade Poland in September 1939.

Over 120,000 Polish veterans settled in Britain after the war, unable to return home for threat of imprisonment or death at the hands of Stalin. Whilst they assimilated well into British society and were grateful for the safe haven offered, their contribution to Britain's freedom seemed to be soon forgotten. When over 130 allied nations marched in the great 1946 Victory Parade in London, the Poles were excluded to appease 'Uncle Joe'.

<http://www.polishforcesmemorial.com/>

Note to Editors:

Due to unprecedented interest in the book, more material has already come to light, which is being incorporated into a Second Edition. If any media would like to request their readers/viewers to contribute personal stories/recollections of the Poles in the War these will be considered for inclusion in the new edition and offered to the publication on an exclusive basis.

Note to Picture Editors:

A range of photographs from the book are available for publication. Please contact Andrew Baud at Tala PR.