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The Beginnings of the Organisation of Polish Historical Science in Great Britain after World War II

Summary: After the defeat of September 1939, a large number of Polish historians found themselves, together with the army, scattered abroad. They lost their previous academic research base, aids and equipment, book collections, notes, etc. As early as the autumn of 1939, the first attempts to organise representatives of this group were made in allied France. The fall of France and the necessity to evacuate to Great Britain meant that a new stage of wartime activity began here for the Polish civilian and military leadership, the organisation of the army and the organisation of the community of Polish historians. The first institutions were established soon after arrival in the United Kingdom. After the end of the war, a number of Polish historians decided to remain abroad and the process of establishing academic institutions began, giving rise to Polish historical science in the UK. The General Sikorski Historical Institute was the first institution to be established, and other institutions soon followed, including the Piłsudski Institute in London, the Polish Underground Movement Study Trust, the Polish Historical Society in Great Britain, the Polish University Abroad, and the Polish Library.

Keywords: refugee, London, Institute of History, General Sikorski Historical Institute, Piłsudski Institute in London, Polish Underground Movement Study Trust, Polish Historical Society in Great Britain, Polish University Abroad, Polish Library

As a result of the German and Soviet aggression against Poland in September 1939, many Polish historians found themselves outside Poland. Some of them were mobilised, and did their military service and shared the wartime fate of their units, while



others consciously made the decision to leave the country and left by different routes and in different directions. Thus, the community of military historians was dispersed, deprived of its previous academic research base, aids and equipment, book collections, notes, etc.

As early as the autumn of 1939, the first attempts to organise representatives of Polish historical science were made in allied France. Within the ranks of the army flowing into France, there was a high proportion of representatives of the intelligentsia, including a significant number of historians, writers, and military publicists. Historical and military writing began to revive slowly. Newspapers and magazines, mainly military ones, started publishing articles about war issues, in particular about matters related to the course of the September Campaign. The soldiers of the September Campaign shared their memories, analyses, experiences, accounts, and descriptions of war episodes with the readers.

However, another disaster came before people managed to recover from the catastrophe of the September Campaign – the defeat and the capitulation of France and the need to evacuate to the United Kingdom. It was here that a new stage of wartime activity of the supreme civil and military authorities of the Republic of Poland, the organisation of the armed forces, but also the creation of an organisational framework for the activities of the community of Polish historians began. Many well-known and respected military historians and writers arrived in the UK, mainly in London. Among them were Henryk Bagiński, Stanisław Biegański, Władysław Dziewanowski, Marian Kukiel, Otto Laskowski, Edmund Oppman, Stefan Pomarański, and Michał Sokolnicki.

As early as December 1940, the Supreme Commander's staff resumed publication of the military academic journal "Bellona". Soon more publications appeared, including "Polska Walcząca", "Dziennik Żołnierza", and various camp and unit newspapers, which readily accepted texts submitted by historians and military writers. During World War II, "Bellona" published many valuable articles and studies, both historical and those devoted to typically military issues. In 1940, the first books were published. During the war years, historical, archival, and museum services also operated in the organisational structure of the army. These services underwent several organisational changes, but still maintained the continuity of work in collecting and securing archival materials and museum exhibits.

After the end of the war, many historians and military writers decided to stay abroad until Poland regained its independence. Far from their homeland, they were deprived of their research base and cut off from national archive resources and libraries. However, despite these obstacles, overcoming numerous difficulties and problems of everyday life, at the expense of their own time and often even their health, they began to organise the first academic institutions, archives, museums, and libraries. This activity was aimed at creating, as far as possible, normal conditions for scientific work and organising Polish academic, cultural, and educational life. The beginning was

very difficult: everything but an unlimited desire to work was lacking – there was no material basis, premises, books, or funds. In such difficult conditions, the beginning of Polish historical science was born – the beginning of Polish military historiography in Great Britain.

The first institutional framework, such as libraries or the Polish Research Centre (Polish: Polski Ośrodek Naukowy), was organised during the war, but broader actions were taken only after the war ended. Already in 1945, the General Sikorski Historical Institute (Polish: Instytut Historyczny im. Gen. Sikorskiego) was established in London. In the initial stage of its operation, the main task of this institution was to collect documents and memorabilia of the tragically deceased prime minister and the commander-in-chief, and to conduct and support historical research related to the life and activities of General Władysław Sikorski. Soon more institutions of Polish academic life began to be organised: the Piłsudski Institute in London (Polish: Instytut Józefa Piłsudskiego w Londynie), the Polish Underground Movement Study Trust (Polish: Studium Polski Podziemnej), the Polish Historical Society in Great Britain (Polish: Polskie Towarzystwo Historyczne w Wielkiej Brytanii), the Polish Society of Arts and Sciences Abroad (Polish: Polskie Towarzystwo Naukowe), the Polish University Abroad (Polish: Polski Uniwersytet na Obczyźnie), and the Polish Library (Polish: Biblioteka Polska).

With their development, new academic journals began to appear. The Historical Institute began publishing *Bellona*, and its museum section undertook to continue the pre-war publication “Broń i Barwa”. The Piłsudski Institute in London resumed the publication of the “Niepodległość” journal, while the Cavalry Regimental Association (Polish: Zrzeszenie Kół Pułkowych Kawalerii) published “Przegląd Kawalerii i Broni Pancерnej”. The airmen had their own periodical called “Skrzydła”, and in 1945 the Navy Association (Polish: Stowarzyszenie Marynarki Wojennej) began publishing the “Nasze Sygnały” journal. The Polish Historical Society in Great Britain published an excellent scientific journal, “Teki Historyczne”, and the Polish Society of Arts and Sciences Abroad published the journal “Rocznik”, in which reports on the activities of individual academic institutions associated with the Polish Society of Arts and Sciences were published, in addition to the most interesting papers from meetings and other academic projects, including numerous events organised by the above-mentioned scientific institutions.

The General Sikorski Historical Institute

The origins of the General Sikorski Historical Institute in London go back to the final stage of World War II, when to most Poles in exile it became clear that recognition of the Polish government in exile was coming to an end and the new political situation made it impossible for them to return to Poland. In this situation, one of the

most important issues was the preservation of state and military archives. It became necessary to create an institution capable of taking over and securing the collections of state archives and the Archive and Museum Service of the Polish Armed Forces (Polish: *Służba Archiwalno-Muzealna Polskich Sił Zbrojnych*). Therefore, the war had not yet subsided for good when the Polish authorities in London undertook work to rescue and preserve archival and museum collections bearing witness to the Polish contribution to the war and the role the Poles played in it.¹ Of course, special care was given to the files of the President of the Republic of Poland, the government and civilian offices and the Polish Armed Forces, from the Cabinet of the Commander-in-Chief, through the Supreme Commander's Staff and the other chief military authorities, to the branches and smallest military units.

The initiator of the establishment of the institution responsible for the gathering of the above-mentioned collections of documents was the then head of the Archive and Museum Service of the Polish Armed Forces, former head of the Supreme Commander's Staff, Lieutenant Colonel Zygmunt Borkowski, who wrote in his memoirs: 'I wanted to create a centre that would not only give evidence of the activities of General Sikorski but could continue to serve the Polish cause'.² From the beginning, the Institute was not intended to be a state institution. Andrzej Suchcitz, a long-time employee of this institution, emphasises that the fact of its independence from the emigration state authorities was supposed to protect it in the future from possible pressure from the British authorities and the scheming of the authorities in Warsaw.³

President Władysław Raczkiewicz, Prime Minister Tomasz Arciszewski, and acting Commander-in-Chief General Władysław Anders were informed about the plan to establish the Institute. The General Sikorski Historical Institute was finally founded on 3 May 1945.⁴ The Council of Ministers of the Republic of Poland, with the consent of President W. Raczkiewicz, ordered individual ministers to hand over their files and archives to the newly-established institution. On 13 July, Lieutenant Colonel Z. Borkowski, on behalf of Helena Sikorska, formally took over General W. Sikorski's possessions and documents. The letter from the widow to her husband's friend and closest associate, General Marian Kukiel, dated 22 July 1945 reads: 'Dear General, The legacy of my husband, General Władysław Sikorski, in the form of memorabilia and documents related to his political and military activities, cannot be wasted. Therefore, I decided to entrust them to the Władysław Sikorski Institute based in London'.⁵

1 Suchcitz A. 1999, 183.

2 Borkowski Z. 1975, 146.

3 Suchcitz A. 1999, 184.

4 Bokszczanin B. 1991, 2.

5 AIPMS. List.

The basic statutory tasks of the Historical Institute were:

- Securing collections of General Sikorski's memorabilia and documents;
- Collecting and securing books, documents, publications, and other materials concerning the life and activities of General Sikorski;
- Conducting and supporting historical research on the period of General Sikorski's life and activity;
- Establishing and managing scholarships and grants for those involved in research on this period;
- Commemorating the contribution of Poland and the Poles to the victory in World War II.⁶

Helena Sikorska invited 12 people – close friends and associates of General Sikorski – to the first Council of the Institute. These were: Anthony Drexel Biddle (former US Ambassador to Warsaw and then to the Polish Government in London), Stafford Cripps (*inter alia* Minister in Winston Churchill's government), Lord Elgin (President of the Polish-Scottish Society), James Irvine (Principal and Vice-Chancellor of the University of St Andrews), Col. Harold Mitchell (Vice-Chairman of the Conservative Party in 1942–1945, former liaison officer at the Polish I Corps), Archibald Sinclair (Minister of Aviation of the British Government), Stanisław Leśniowski (General Sikorski's son-in-law), Professor Stanisław Stroński, Colonel Dr. Stanisław Szurlej, Vice-Admiral Jerzy Świrski, Dr. Józef Retinger, and General Marian Kukiel.⁷

From the Institute's earliest days, efforts were made to develop academic research and publishing work. An important step in this area was the establishment of the Scientific Commission in September 1945 with prominent historians Marian Kukiel, Stanisław Biegański, and Władysław Dziewanowski.

The intense search and efforts led by Z. Borkowski in July 1946 resulted in the purchase of a house in central London at Prince's Gate, near Hyde Park and the Victoria and Albert Museum. The purchase of this house was made possible by the kindness shown to Poland and the Poles by its owner, the former mayor of Ipswich, member of the House of Commons, and wealthy businessman, Arthur Charles Churchman, who sold the beautiful property for £13,000, i.e., half its then value.⁸ Having its own premises allowed the start of proper statutory activities, the import of archive and museum collections, and the organisation of a library.

One of the most important goals of the Institute was to reach out with its projects to the Polish community in Great Britain. The Institute organised various scientific gatherings, lectures, talks, etc. The first lecture, on October 3, 1946, was given by Ambassador Tadeusz Romer, on the topic of his impressions of his travels in Europe.

⁶ *Instytut Historyczny* 1945.

⁷ Suchcitz A. 1999, 184–185.

⁸ Zuziak J. 2002, 61.

A month later, Marian Kukiel gave a lecture titled 'History at the Service of the Present', thus inaugurating a long series of lectures organised by the Polish Historical Society in Great Britain, which since the beginning of its operations has been based in the building of the Historical Institute. M. Kukiel was the President of the Board of the Institute and at the same time the President of the Polish Historical Society in Great Britain. The two institutions worked closely together. The Institute also cooperated with the Military-Historical Research Section (Polish: Sekcja Badań Wojskowo-Historycznych) established on December 10, 1946, which later became the Historical Commission of the former General Staff. In the spring of 1948, the Research Section became part of the Institute, and its main task was to develop a multi-volume work titled *Polskie Siły Zbrojne w drugiej wojnie światowej*.

The first period of operation of this distinguished Polish scientific institution was not easy, particularly as it struggled financially. In 1949, because of these problems, it was even considered that the Institute's operations would have to be suspended. Fortunately, such a decision was not taken, and thanks to the great commitment and enormous involvement of people devoted to the Polish cause who were dedicated to the idea of independence, this refuge of Polishness in exile, a mainstay of unfettered Polish historical science, has survived the most difficult years, through the following decades, until today, carrying out academic activities and supporting multitudes of researchers from Poland and abroad.

The Piłsudski Institute in London

Among the many thousands of emigrants and war refugees who remained in the United Kingdom after the end of World War II, there was also a large group of former associates and supporters of Marshal Józef Piłsudski. Among them were also former employees of the Józef Piłsudski Institute for Research in Modern History (Polish: Instytut Józefa Piłsudskiego Poświęcony Badaniu Najnowszej Historii Polski) founded in 1923. The largest group of representatives of this community after the war were located in London, which was therefore the most convenient place to create an organisational framework for their activity. One of the main initiators of the establishment of the institution continuing the tradition of the Józef Piłsudski Institute in Warsaw was undoubtedly General Władysław Bortnowski. On March 15, 1947 he organised a meeting of Józef Piłsudski's former associates, in which participated, among others, Tytus Filipowicz, Janusz Głuchowski, Michał Grażyński, Bronisław Hełczyński, Bogusław Miedziński, Juliusz Lukaszewicz, and Tadeusz Piskor.⁹ General Bortnowski then presented a draft resolution establishing the Józef Piłsudski Institute in London

9 Zuziak J. 2001a, 6.

as a branch of the Piłsudski Institute established in 1943 in New York.¹⁰ In fact, however, there has never been a formal organisational relationship with the New York Institute, only a gesture of courtesy, recognising its seniority.

At this meeting, the Institute's Council and the Executive Committee were appointed, i.e., the later Management Board. Tadeusz Piskor became the Chairman of the Council, and Kazimierz Schally and Juliusz Lukaszewicz were elected vice-chairmen. The composition of the first Management Board was as follows: Władysław Bortnowski – chairman, Janusz Gluchowski – vice-chairman, Tadeusz Münnich – secretary, Antoni Jakubski – treasurer, and Kazimierz Iranek-Osmecki, Konrad Libicki, Aleksander Hauke-Nowak, and Jan Starzewski as the remaining members of the board.¹¹ March 19, 1947, i.e., the name day of Marshal Józef Piłsudski, was adopted as the formal date of the establishment of the Institute.

The aim of the Institute was 'to establish and preserve the historical truth of the last epochs of our history, to examine first of all the life and deeds of Józef Piłsudski, his background, guidelines and teachings he left behind'.¹² In the aforementioned letter of the Management Board informing about the establishment of the Institute, we also read that the aim of the management should be:

bringing together all those who want to build the ideological foundations of the present moment and the struggle of tomorrow on historical science. We want it to house book collections, archives, document collections, workshops for scientific and publishing work, to become a place for research, lectures, and discussions.¹³

In accordance with the first clause of the Statute, 'the Institute is called the 'Józef Piłsudski Institute for Research in Modern History, London Branch' and fulfils, until Poland regains its independence, the tasks of the Institute of the same name in Warsaw, from which it originated'.¹⁴ This document clearly emphasises the temporary nature of the Institute. Its founders had no doubts that after Poland regained its independence, Warsaw should be its seat.

Despite the difficulties in reaching the Piłsudski community in Great Britain, as early as August 1947 the Institute had 125 members.¹⁵ This number grew relatively quickly, although the fact of the establishment of the Institute had not yet been publicly announced in any media. In this situation, a significant increase in interest was expected after the publication of the information in the Polish press. The hope of

10 AIJPL. Protokół, 1.

11 Zuziak J. 2001a, 6.

12 AIJPL. Pismo.

13 AIJPL. Pismo.

14 Statute. 1947, 1.

15 Communiqué of the Piłsudski Institute in London, No. 2 of 5 August 1947.

increasing interest in the Institute's activities was also connected with the arrival of soldiers of the Polish 1st Armoured Division and the 1st Independent Parachute Brigade to the UK at that time, after completing their occupation service in Germany.

In the first period of its activity, the Institute had very modest funds. Although contributions – despite the limited financial means of the émigrés – came in fairly regularly, the Institute's financial state severely limited its possibilities for action. In the first quarter of 1947, 'Dom Własny' ('Own House') shares were issued, which raised £114. However, this did little to cover day-to-day operations, particularly publishing. It was estimated that around £600 could be raised by the end of 1947, of which £100 was intended to be used to publish the first issue of the academic journal "Niepodległość".¹⁶

The beginning of the systematic work was hindered above all by the lack of its own premises. It was with this in mind that the campaign to sell the aforementioned 'Dom Własny' shares was organised. The lack of premises made it impossible to carry out the basic tasks and statutory goals, and most importantly did not allow for the organisation of periodic information and discussion meetings with papers, historical talks and readings, and there were no appropriate conditions for starting the collection of historical materials, book publications, memoirs, accounts, etc. This type of activity unfortunately had to be postponed until premises were acquired.

The editorial plan of "Niepodległość" anticipated the publication of its first issue in 1948 and it was actually implemented, albeit not without struggle. Although it was assumed that the first issue would be published in March, due to financial problems and difficulties with finding a suitable place for printing, it was not released until the end of 1948. This was undoubtedly the first important achievement of the Institute.

The editorial board and many other members of the Institute put a lot of effort into organisational and preparatory work. On August 6, 1947, a special letter was sent to potential collaborators of "Niepodległość" presenting the journal's goals and programme. It was to be a yearbook devoted to 'Poland's recent history, with a special focus on the ideology and activities of the independence movements'.¹⁷ The intention was to publish, first and foremost, works devoted to Polish history in the period 1794–1914, the activity of Józef Piłsudski during the period of the independence struggle, his underground activity and service in the Legions, and his activity in the inter-war period, but also historical works in which authors tackled the subject of World War II, especially the Polish war effort. Significant importance was paid to historical accounts, diaries and memoirs, in which the protagonists and direct witnesses of important historical events would present little known or hitherto unknown facts. Such historical material was particularly requested from Józef Piłsudski's direct associates and people from his closest circle.

¹⁶ AIJPL. Wyjątki.

¹⁷ AIJPL. List.

Despite the lack of its own premises and modest funds, research and publishing work intensified over time. Research activities were concentrated within the Studies Department and the Historical Section, whose work in the first years was heavily influenced by Józef Moszczeński, played the key role. The most important task of this unit was to create a book collection, conduct research work and support scientific research, and collect accounts and source materials, as well as undertake academic cooperation with institutions of a similar nature and goals. The Historical Section, among other things, organised monthly open discussion meetings. The first such event took place on July 20, 1948 at the headquarters of the Polish Hearth Club (Polish: Ognisko Polskie) at Exhibition Road. The discussion focused on the issues presented in the paper given by the head of the Section, Józef Moszczeński, on the methodological experiences of the pre-war Military Historical Bureau and the Józef Piłsudski Institute in Warsaw.¹⁸

The Institute's research and publishing focused primarily on Polish independence thought, the restoration of Poland, the Polish-Russian war, and the Polish effort in both world wars. A very important role in the Institute's activities was played by the Women's Independence Work Section, headed by Aleksandra Piłsudska. Her first important achievement was a survey on the activity and independence struggle of Polish women.¹⁹

As it had not been possible to raise sufficient funds to purchase their own premises by the spring of 1948, discussions were held with several related organisations about a possible joint purchase or lease of a building. Interest was expressed at the time by the communities associated with the 1st Legions Infantry Division, the 7th Uhlan Regiment, and the Independence League (Polish: Liga Niepodległości). The idea came to fruition and on March 10, 1949 a lease was signed for a single-storey building on Upper Richmond Road, in the Putney area of south-west London.

The first two years of the Piłsudski Institute in London's operation were marked by intensive organisational work aimed at laying the material foundations for normal functioning. Above all, efforts were made to obtain its own premises, which were necessary to house the collection of archives, books, memorabilia, and museum exhibits, as well as for scientific and research activities. In the following years, it was already possible to intensify this area of activity, which was the responsibility of the Studies Department, whose work changed radically with the acquisition of its own premises. The conditions were created for building a workshop basis, collecting archival materials and books, as well as organising and cataloguing them. Having its own premises allowed the Institute to implement one of the most important forms of activity, i.e. the organisation of academic meetings, discussions, and lectures. The intensification of

18 Zuziak J. 2001b, 126.

19 Communiqué of the Piłsudski Institute in London No. 7 of 10 November 1948, AIJPL. Komunikat IJPL nr 7 z 10 listopada 1948 roku.

scholarly work was also reflected in the growing interest of the Polish community in London and beyond in the Institute's activities, which in turn meant that the ranks of its members were constantly growing.

The Polish Underground Movement Study Trust

The genesis of the Polish Underground Movement Study Trust dates back to January 1945, when, barely three months after the end of the Warsaw Uprising, the first efforts were made to set up a special unit to collect and secure archival material and study the history of the Home Army. General Stanisław Kopański, the Chief of the Supreme Commander's Staff at the time, ordered Lieutenant Colonel Z. Borkowski, then Head of the Archive and Museum Service of the Polish Armed Forces, to start talks with General Stanisław Tatar, Deputy Chief of the Supreme Commander's Staff for domestic affairs, on the organisation of the Home Army's historical and archive unit. After numerous discussions and consultations on this matter, among others, with the General Tadeusz Bór-Komorowski who had arrived in London, General Kopański issued an order in the second half of 1945 establishing the Historical Commission of the September Campaign and the Polish Armed Forces in the West (Polish: Komisja Historyczna Kampanii Wrześniowej i Polskich Sił Zbrojnych na Zachodzie), whose chairman became General Tadeusz Kutrzeba and deputy chairman General Marian Kukiel. At the same time, the Home Army Historical Subcommittee was established, whose work was to be directed by General Tadeusz Pełczyński.

In parallel with the initial work of the Home Army Historical Subcommittee, the idea of setting up a separate archival and research unit to deal with a comprehensive study of the history of the resistance movement in Poland and the history of the Polish Underground State was considered. On October 22, 1946, General T. Bór-Komorowski sent a letter to the political leaders of the independence underground and to former officers of the Home Army inviting them to participate in a meeting establishing the Polish Underground Movement Study Trust. The meeting took place on October 29, at the headquarters of the Polish Hearth Club. Among the participants were Captain Ryszard Białous, Colonel Kazimierz Iranek-Osmecki, Colonel Stanisław Juszcakiewicz, Major Janina Karasiówna, General Tadeusz Bór-Komorowski, Major Bohdan Kwiatkowski, General Antoni Chruściel, and General Tadeusz Pełczyński. The latter acquainted the audience with the initial assumptions and the most important tasks of the newly-established Trust, which were collecting archival documents and historical publications devoted to the history of the Polish Underground State, and organising an appropriate archive and book collection. The participants of the founding meeting believed that in addition to the history of the military activities of the Polish underground, the Trust should also research the social, economic, and cultural activities of the Polish Underground State. Moreover, attention was also drawn to

the need to make efforts to acquire as many documents as possible on military and civilian conspiracies from Poland.

The participants of the meeting became at the same time the founding members of the Polish Underground Movement Study Trust and members of its Council, headed by General T. Bór-Komorowski. His deputy became General Antoni Chruściel and the secretary Major Bohdan Kwiatkowski. The Trust's Management Board was composed of General T. Pełczyński, Captain Andrzej Pomian, Captain Tadeusz Zawadzki, Konrad Sieniewicz, Colonel K. Iranek-Osmecki, and Jerzy Matłachowski. Officially, the Polish Underground Movement (1939–1945) Study Trust was established on February 19, 1947.

In order to be able to start statutory activities, it was necessary to acquire suitable premises for storing archival documents and a book collection, hosting meetings, and carrying out scientific research. Having its own premises was also necessary for the official registration of the Trust. Initially, its headquarters was located, at least formally, in Barons Court, in a house occupied by two Council members. However, this place did not provide suitable conditions for work. For this reason, in March 1947, a search for new premises began, as a result of which a four-room apartment was rented in Notting Hill Gate. Unfortunately, these premises also did not meet the needs of the Trust and efforts were made to buy a house. This was achieved in the first half of 1948, when a building at 11 Leopold Road in West London was purchased.

Thus, between 1947 and 1948, the organisational structure and foundations for the future activities of the Trust were laid. Thanks to this archival and scientific institution and the extraordinary commitment of a great number of its members, historians, Home Army soldiers, activists and volunteers, it was possible to create one of the most extensive archives in source documents concerning the activities of the Polish Underground State. As a result, many interesting and valuable books and scientific articles were published over the next few decades, since numerous researchers gained the opportunity to carry out source surveys and searches. There is no doubt that the Polish Underground Movement Study Trust has fulfilled its statutory tasks well, joining the ranks of the institutions most distinguished for the Polish historical sciences.

Polish Historical Society in Great Britain

The idea of establishing the Polish Historical Society in Great Britain appeared almost simultaneously with the creation of the General Sikorski Historical Institute. It was born in the community of members of the pre-war Association of Friends of the Army Museum in Warsaw (Polish: Stowarzyszenie Przyjaciół Muzeum Wojska w Warszawie). The organising committee was formed for this purpose, which prepared

a draft statute; on November 29, 1946 a General Assembly was convened, at which the Polish Historical Society was formally established. The first Management Board was composed of Marian Kukiel as chairman, Tadeusz Sulimirski as vice-chairman, Władysław Dziewanowski as secretary, and Otton Laskowski as editor-in-chief of the “Teki Historyczne” journal (which automatically became the organ of Polish Historical Society in the United Kingdom), as well as Józef Jasnowski, Henryk Piątkowski, and Wiktor Weintraub.

During the founding meeting the following main tasks of the Society were formulated: to enable Polish historians residing in the UK to publish scientific works; to inform members of the Polish Historical Society and other individuals interested in historical research about its development, both in Poland and abroad; and to register Polish academic achievements in the field of history and the works of foreign historians who take up issues of Polish history in their research and publications.²⁰

In addition to “Teki Historyczne”, the Society also intended to publish larger scientific dissertations in a series entitled *Biblioteka Historyczna*, which was to be published in English and primarily present works in the field of Polish-British relations and Polish historiography. The intention of the initiators of such a series was to inform and make British historians aware of issues relating to Polish-British political, cultural, and economic relations.

The most important tasks of the Polish Historical Society were also collecting all types of source materials on the history of Poland, including those kept in British archives, with a view to their later usefulness and use in the prepared academic publications. The work of the Polish Historical Society was conducted in a number of sections, among which the first to be established were the sociology, humanities, and museum and historical sections. The museum section, established in 1948, started publishing its own periodical “Broń i Barwa”, which published works in the field of hopology and studies on military uniforms. It was a continuation of a periodical of the same title published in Poland in the years 1934–1939, edited by Władysław Dziewanowski.²¹ Since the beginning of their activity, members of the museum section have closely cooperated with the General Sikorski Historical Institute.

Since the beginning of the Polish Historical Society’s operation in Great Britain, one of the most active sections was the historical and military section headed by Stanisław Biegański. Its activeness was associated with the fact that after the end of World War II, many prominent Polish military historians and senior commanders settled in the UK and undertook work on the events and experiences of war. One of the most important tasks of the members of this section was to establish relations and develop cooperation within the International Commission of Military

²⁰ *Kronika* 1947, 79.

²¹ Miśkiewicz B. 1996, 321.

History and to enable Polish historians to publish in its journal “Revue Internationale d’Histoire Militaire”. In 1950, the International Congress of Historical Sciences was re-convened in Paris after a gap of several years. The organisers invited representatives of national historians to participate as the official Polish delegation; émigré historians were also allowed to attend, but only on the basis of individual applications. While the authorities in Warsaw prohibited historians from Poland from taking part in the Congress in Paris, several Polish historians in exile took part, including Marian Kukiel, Witold Kula, Henryk Paszkiewicz, Leon Koczy, Otton Laskowski, Czesław Chowaniec, Oskar Halecki, Władysław Folkierski, and Zygmunt Zaleski.²² A great achievement was the preparation of a special volume of “Teki Historyczne” for the Paris Congress, in which eight of the twelve Polish papers presented at the Congress were published. Two years later, the military history section of the Polish Historical Society in Great Britain prepared a Polish issue (12/1952) of the “Revue Internationale d’Histoire Militaire”. It is important to emphasise Marian Kukiel’s great personal contribution to its publication.

The most important forms of work since the beginning of the Polish Historical Society in Great Britain’s activity certainly included a series of lectures, which were very popular both among the members of the Society and the wider Polish community in the UK. In these lectures a special place was given to topics related to Polish and universal military history, including presentations on topics concerning tactics and strategy, the history of types of troops, armaments, and the course of the most important battles and wars over the centuries. Among the first speakers were Marian Kukiel, Henryk Paszkiewicz, and Edmund Oppman.

The Polish Historical Society members closely followed everything related to Polish historiography and kept up to date with studies published in Poland, many of which were thoroughly reviewed in “Teki Historyczne”. The Polish Historical Society in Great Britain maintained close cooperation with several other Polish historical and scientific institutions, including the Polish Historical Institute in Rome (Polish: Polski Instytut Historyczny w Rzymie), the Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences of America (Polish: Polski Instytut Naukowy w Ameryce), and the Polish Historical and Literary Society in Paris (Polish: Polskie Towarzystwo Historyczno-Literackie w Paryżu).

For Polish historians who found themselves in the UK after 1945, the Polish Historical Society was the institution in which their scientific activities were concentrated. Deprived of their pre-war research base and opportunities for scientific and research work, they laid the foundations of this activity anew, in difficult conditions in exile. For this community, the Polish Historical Society was the centre of their research work, creativity, scientific activity, and intellectual life.

22 RPTNO. 1950/1951. 22.

The Polish Library in London

The history of the Polish Library in London dates back to the war period, specifically 1942, and is linked to the activities of several Polish government institutions in exile. In 1942, the library of the Office of Education and School Affairs (Polish: *Urząd Oświaty i Spraw Szkolnych*) was established, headed by Maria Danilewicz. Ministries of Information and Documentation, Congress Works and Internal Affairs also had their own book collections. Likewise, there was a separate library of the Polish Research Centre, which took over the book collection of the Polish Embassy in London. A year later, the Office of Education and School Affairs was merged with the National Culture Fund (Polish: *Fundusz Kultury Narodowej*) to create the Ministry of Religious Denominations and Public Enlightenment (Polish: *Ministerstwo Wyznań Religijnych i Oświecenia Publicznego*), which at the same time took over the libraries of the combined institutions. In the face of the threat of German bombings, the Ministry's library was moved to Scotland, where it was hosted by the University of St Andrews and where it survived until the end of the war. After the war, as a result of the withdrawal of recognition of the Polish government by the British authorities, many Polish institutions were liquidated and their book collections were mostly taken over by the library of the Ministry of Religious Denominations and Public Enlightenment. Consequently, in 1945, it held around 11,000 books.²³ Following the liquidation of the Ministry of Religious Denominations and Public Enlightenment, the book collection was handed over to the care of the British Interim Treasury Committee for Polish Questions, and on 1 April 1947 to the Committee for the Education of Poles in Great Britain (Polish: *Komitet dla Spraw Oświaty Polaków w Wielkiej Brytanii*) and renamed the Polish University College Library and transferred to the custody of the British authorities.²⁴ The library became an important centre of Polish intellectual life, organising numerous talks, academic discussions, lectures, etc. It hosted lectures by, among others, Marian Kukiel, Stanisław Stroński, Władysław Folkierski, and Tymon Terlecki.

In October 1953, the Polish University College ceased its activity and the Library was taken over by the Library Committee established by the Polish Research Centre in consultation with the Committee for the Education of Poles in Great Britain. At that time, the name of the library was changed to the Polish Library and the already-mentioned Maria Danilewicz was appointed as its director. The legal owner of the Polish Library was the British authorities. In the following years, the Library underwent some struggles, including the intention to close it when subsidies were withheld and the demand for the return of part of the book collection purchased with British funds. After numerous protests by the Polish community in Britain, supported by various

23 Wasiak R. 1988, 66.

24 Wasiak R. 1988, 67; Kądziała P. 1994, 154.

British institutions (including professors at Oxford University), a satisfactory solution was reached whereby the Polish Library was taken over in the summer of 1967 by the Polish Social and Cultural Association in London. Finally finding its own premises helped to stabilise the work of this important institution, which has greatly contributed to the development of Polish science and culture. Since the beginning of its activity, the Polish Library has been – and continues to be – an excellent workshop for representatives of the Polish scientific community. In addition to collecting and registering publications, it is active in publishing and hosts within its walls numerous interesting academic events. In addition to the above-mentioned Maria Danilewicz, the Polish Library in London also has another long-standing director, Zdzisław Jagodziński. Undoubtedly, the Polish Library, as one of the oldest and most dynamically operating Polish academic centres abroad, is one of the most distinguished institutions for Polish science and culture.

Polish University Abroad (PUNO)

The end of the war and the inevitable liquidation of Polish higher education organised on British soil during World War II prompted the Polish academic teachers and scientists determined to remain in exile to think about the creation of a new university abroad. The first initiatives and attempts to do so began in 1949. Among the originators and initiators were several eminent professors and military officers, including General Tadeusz Kasprzycki, Professor Tadeusz Brzeski (former Chancellor of the University of Warsaw), General Professor Marian Kukiel, Professor Tadeusz Sulimirski, and Professor Tadeusz Grodyński.²⁵ Thanks to the involvement of representatives of several already functioning institutions and academic centres, including the Polish Scientific Society (Polish: Polskie Towarzystwo Naukowe), the Polish Historical Society (Polish: Polskie Towarzystwo Historyczne), and the Association of Professors and Associate Professors of Polish Higher Education Institutions (Polish: Zrzeszenie Profesorów i Docentów Polskich Szkół Akademickich), a Provisional Council of the Polish University Abroad was formed to prepare its draft statute. The university classes began in autumn 1950, although the statute itself was approved by the Minister for Polish Affairs in Exile of the Government of the Republic of Poland in exile on September 1, 1952. The Polish University Abroad was granted full university rights, based on the Act of March 15, 1933, by the decree of the President of the Republic of Poland on December 15, 1952. The academic staff consisted mainly of Polish professors who remained in the UK, but also included visiting Polish professors from the US. A large portion of the teaching staff constituted eminent pre-war historians, including Oskar Halecki, Stanisław Kościałkowski, Marian Kukiel, Tadeusz Sulimirski,

²⁵ Gawenda J. 1985, 18.

and Władysław Wielhorski.²⁶ The first Rector of the Polish University Abroad was Professor Tadeusz Brzeski.

The most important statutory task of the Polish University Abroad was to conduct teaching at the academic level with particular emphasis on Polish and historical studies, to prepare new teaching and academic staff, and to propagate knowledge. In the initial period of its activity, it was possible to establish only the Faculty of Humanities, with studies in Polish and history. Furthermore, Faculty Commissions were established: law and political science, economics, and natural sciences and mathematics commissions. In the following years, the university created new faculties, including, in 1962, the Faculty of Technical Sciences.

From the first years of its operations, the Polish University Abroad was one of the most important Polish centres of scientific life. In addition to offering academic studies in various fields, the University organised many other forms of education, including, for example, the Universal University Lectures (Polish: Powszechnie Wykłady Uniwersyteckie) popularising Polish history and culture in the community of British academic youth, which later served as the basis for the creation of the two-year-long Course in the History of Polish Culture.

The most important field of research was historical studies, which involved a large group of Polish historians already mentioned in this paper, including General Professor Marian Kukiel, one of the most distinguished scholars in this field. For many years, he taught at the Polish University Abroad giving fantastic lectures, classes, and seminars. He was a supervisor and promoter of numerous master's and doctoral theses. Among his doctoral students were the later director of the Polish Library Zdzisław Jagodziński (mentioned above), Roman Buczek, and Adam Sawczyński. In 1970, M. Kukiel received the title of *doctor honoris causa* for his outstanding contribution to the Polish University Abroad.²⁷

In 1952, 39 people studied full-time at the Faculty of Humanities, while another 105 individuals participated in correspondence courses. There were further 23 students in the Faculty Committees, for a total number of 167 students.²⁸

The Polish University Abroad also published academic textbooks required for the teaching process, as well as other works, including typical academic monographs. Among the first such publications were Tadeusz Brzeski's *Teoria rozwoju gospodarczego Polski*²⁹ and Władysław Konopczyński's *Dzieje Polski nowożytnej*.³⁰ In the mid-1960s, the University began publishing 'Zeszyty Naukowe Wydziału Humanistycznego', in which the best doctoral and master's theses were printed.

26 Radzik T. 1991, 61.

27 Helczyński B. 1978–1980, 33.

28 Radzik T. 1991, 61.

29 Brzeski T. 1955.

30 Konopczyński W. 1959.

The Polish University Abroad was an academic centre that gave both historians and representatives of other academic disciplines the opportunity to carry out their research, pursue their own individual academic interests, their own development paths, and improve their qualifications.

Conclusions

In this paper, the author presented only a few – in his opinion, the most important – institutions and centres within which Polish historical science was organised in Great Britain in the first years after the end of the war. They were places where Polish scientific and cultural life after 1945 was born in difficult financial, organisational, and staffing conditions. There were no archives or libraries necessary for the work of historians, no pre-war private research bases and collections for scientific work. All of this was created with enormous effort and unprecedented grassroots commitment. It is worth quoting here a passage from the work of Paweł Kądziała:

Since they planned to tie their fate to the strange, in many ways [...], rainy and cool city on the Thames, for the sake of mental hygiene, the infrastructure of Polish cultural institutions had to be created at all costs.³¹

Although this idea refers to representatives of the cultural milieu, representatives of almost all disciplines, in particular the humanities, found themselves in the same situation.

All the institutions discussed above and the representatives of the Polish academic world involved in their establishment and operations contributed to the development of Polish science, in particular Polish military historiography.

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31 Kądziała P. 1994, 141.

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