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FROM
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27th October 1988

Dear Mr Powell,

Lord Bethell, who is in Strasbourg today, has asked me to write to you with reference to your conversation yesterday about the Prime Minister's visit to Poland.

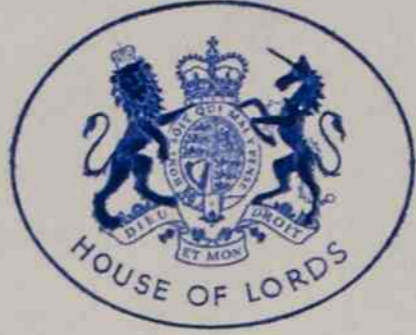
On reflection, Lord Bethell says that he agrees very strongly with the advice that you have received from Warsaw that it would not be good for the Prime Minister to dwell on Neville Chamberlain and the events of September 1939. The way the Poles see it, we the British guaranteed their integrity and then did not fulfill that guarantee. Of course, it is a historical matter over which there may be debate. Still, that is the way the Poles see it. (Lord Bethell wrote a book about September 1939 in Poland. The title is The War Hitler Won.)

Lord Bethell hopes that the Prime Minister will mention the crucial part played by the Polish army forces during the Second World War under British command. They were some of the bravest pilots in the RAF during the Battle of Britain and there is a Polish war memorial by Northolt airport, where they were based.

There were also the great battles fought by the 2nd Polish Corps, under British command, in Italy in 1943-44. Their most famous exploits were at the Battle of Montecassino.

As Lord Bethell mentioned to you, it is well known among the Polish population and seen as a blot on Britain's record that, after rendering these great services to the Allied cause in British uniform, Polish forces were not allowed by the British government of the time to take part in the Victory Parade in 1945. This was a political decision, taken so as not to cause irritation of the Soviet government and the new communist Polish government. The Poles remember it and do not like it.

As it happens, this last matter has been belatedly put right. On May 20th this year the Royal British Legion wrote to the chairman of the Council of Polish Ex-combatants' Organisations, Major F Soboniewski, inviting "on



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behalf of the Home Office" Polish veterans to take part in the Remembrance Day ceremony at the Cenotaph on November 13th.

Lord Bethell thinks that it would be tremendous if the Prime Minister could find some way of making this fact known to the Polish people during her visit. She could say something like this: "On Sunday, November 13th, at the British Government's invitation, Polish ex-servicemen who fought under British command in the Second World War, together with their friends from the Polish Home Army (Armia Krajowa), will for the first time take part in our Remembrance Day commemorative parade in London." There will, in fact, be about 150 Polish ex-servicemen there and 23 from the AK resistance movement.

Lord Bethell hopes that all this does not sound too esoteric and historical. He can assure you that it is just this sort of thing that the Poles feel deeply about.

Yours sincerely,

Harriet Watson

Harriet Watson
Assistant to Lord Bethell