



Poland and Britain – past, present and future



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British-Polish relations go back a thousand years. It's said that the sister of the first crowned king of Poland, Bolesław I Chrobry ('the brave'), and daughter of the first Polish leader, Mieszko I, was mother to King Canute of England.

Recent discoveries in genetics have given rise to a new theory whereby it is claimed that the last rightful heirs to the Anglo-Saxon throne – the sons of King Harold who had an arrow in his eye at the Battle of Hastings in 1066 – sought refuge in Polish territory, establishing the House of Abdanck with Magnus of Masovia and Silesia.

Since those times there have been numerous examples of British-Polish contacts which are intriguing and very surprising. One recent example is the revelation and media coverage of the resolution to the Jack the Ripper riddle, with the serial killer being found to be a Polish-Jewish immigrant. And the 18th Century fictional protagonist of Daniel Defoe's novel, Robinson Crusoe, was based upon a citizen of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Described in detail, Crusoe's "island of despair" resembles an island claimed at that time by the Duchy of Courland, as a fiefdom and subject of the Polish King.

Where do British-Polish relations stand today? The events described above were but a foretaste of a veritable Polish invasion. The founder of Tesco, Sir Jack Cohen, was a son of Polish immigrants, as was Michał (Michael) Marks of Marks & Spencer. The third largest concentration of Poles can be found in London, not far behind Warsaw and Chicago. Poles can be found in every walk of life in London, from the West End stages where John Gielgud plied his trade, via the Premier League pitches where Wojciech Szczesny keeps goal, to the Labour Party's Miliband brothers, as well as Joseph Conrad.

But what of the opposite flow? Has there been a British influx of goods, people, ideas or services to Poland? To spot the current trend, to understand the circumstances, we must look at some statistics.

Poland is an extremely fast evolving and promising location, although still burdened by 45 years of communism. Yet statistics show the position that Poland will find itself in the near future. Poland is rapidly developing in every field, a shining light, and a great example of how remarkable constant growth has been sustained over the past two decades,

despite the problems encountered by its European partners. Moreover, Poland continues to maintain a margin upon which such growth may continue. Economic forecasts expect Poland to increase its GDP by 4-5% a year over the next 20 years meaning that Poland is not only a regional leader but also a gateway to the whole CEE.

Its 38 million consumers make Poland a market that British capital cannot readily ignore; UK investment in Poland has recently exceeded the \$1 billion sum.

What is being done to enhance further investment? To answer this question, we should take a closer look at one example, among many fields of opportunity available in Poland: One of the major UK exports to Poland is medicinal and pharmaceutical products. According to UKTI, Polish healthcare is Europe's seventh largest market in terms of patient numbers and the second largest by spend per capita. These figures are promising. The Polish government only spends 7.5% of GDP on healthcare. However, the private healthcare sector is continually expanding and currently covers one third of the market by value. EU funds between 2014 to 2020 in healthcare will be spent on enhancing infrastructure and purchasing equipment such as image diagnostics, radiotherapy, intensive and emergency care. Further investments, according to EU standards, should occur by the end of 2016. High annual growth rates are expected for over the counter (OTC) products and food supplements at 6%, image diagnostics at 15% with £200 million expenditure forecast for 2014, in vitro diagnostics at 10% with an estimated £900m expenditure in 2014.

Of course, it is not all plain sailing. There are some potential threats to foreign investment such as the lack of stability of legal regulations, inefficient tax and judicial systems and, of course, a very competitive market. How can a UK investor overcome such obstacles? The answer is: by seeking professional and trustworthy advice.

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Don't hesitate to ask – we'll gladly help.