



Speech by

**Michael Choi**

**MEMBER FOR CAPALABA**

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## **POLISH EX-SERVICEMEN'S ASSOCIATION BRANCH**

**Mr CHOI** (Capalaba—ALP) (10.09 p.m.): Last Saturday night, 15 May, I attended a function on behalf of the Premier in my electorate of Capalaba—the 50th anniversary of the Polish Ex-Servicemen's Association Branch No. 8. It was formed by the soldiers, sailors and airmen who decided not to return to their homeland when Poland had become a communist state but to live in exile. As the years passed they organised themselves into worldwide association devoted to the ideal of a free and independent Poland.

The course of their lives was closely linked to the history of their country, Poland. The victorious outcome of the Second World War appeared to many Poles, whose nation had been a member of the coalition against Hitler from the first day to the last, as another defeat—exchanging one form of subjugation for another. Because of the part they played in the war—fighting, as the old Polish revolutionary slogan has it, 'for your freedom and ours'—Polish exile veterans and their descendants now live scattered in almost every country of Western Europe, the New World and Australia.

In 1939 Britain and France allied themselves with Poland against Hitler. In 1940 Winston Churchill broadcast to the Polish nation. He spoke from Britain under siege, carrying on the war against Hitler alone. He was not quite alone, for in the skies defending London were Polish fighter squadrons and Polish fighter pilots with RAF squadrons. He said—

This war will be long and hard, but the end is sure. The end will reward all those who faithfully serve the cause of European and World freedom.

No nation served that cause more painfully than the Poles. But the end of war turned out a poor reward for 'all toil, all disappointment'. Allies had withdrawn recognition from legal government to which most Poles had given allegiance and forced upon the nation 'new red subjugation'. This was hardly the independence that the British guarantee to Poland in 1939 had sworn to restore. Tens of thousands of Polish soldiers in the West, who had for six years told themselves that every pace in their march through so many foreign countries was a step on the way home, were utterly disappointed.

On the other hand, I congratulate the ex-servicemen who have been living in Capalaba and many parts of Queensland for many years for their contributions. I took the opportunity last Friday to congratulate them on their success. I met with His Excellency the Ambassador of the Republic of Poland and his wife, as well as the Honorary Consul for Poland in Queensland, Mr Kilmartin, and his wife. I wish them all the very best. I am looking forward to the next 50 years of their service in Queensland.