

Summary

Bartłomiej Beniowski, a Polish post-1831 *émigré*, was the only foreign refugee to play an identifiable role in early London Chartism, and his name was widely associated with the armed rising at Newport in November 1839. This biography places Beniowski's record as a physical force Chartist in the context of his family background, education and earlier political affiliations within the Polish and international community. Reconstructing the Polish post-1831 *émigré* lifestyle in London, it examines Polish political organisations and provides information on the involvement of Polish refugees in plans for armed rising in 1839, also throwing light on the extent to which Adam Czartoryski's right-wing supporters were involved in fuelling David Urquhart's anti-Chartist revelations – implicating Beniowski – from the autumn of 1839.

It explores Beniowski's post-1840 political allegiances, which largely concentrated on his Polish affiliations but which impacted on the British political scene, through continuing contacts with Chartists and post-Chartist radicals. It examines his brief disillusion with republicanism, leading to membership of the Polish monarchist movement in the mid-1840s before a return to democratic politics. More crucially there is an exploration of Beniowski's part in the socialist Polish London Revolutionary Collective (*Gromada Rewolucyjna Londyn*) from the late 1850s to the January Insurrection of 1863. The biography at the same time investigates Beniowski's integration into the host community through work, from manual labour in the 1830s, through the structures and audience for his system of mnemonics instruction in the 1840s, to his patenting of printing inventions in the 1850s, which brought contacts with entrepreneurial politicians like the Rt. Hon. Thomas Milner Gibson M.P. and John Greene M.P. of the Irish Brigade.

Overall, parallel to his commitment to the cause of Polish independence, the study reveals Beniowski's consistent, life-long advocacy of democracy and championship of the oppressed, including vocal campaigns for Jewish civil rights. It discloses a gifted sceptic with a sharp tongue who was absorbed by practical and educational problems as much as political theory. It provides the narrative of a life acted out against a vast multi-cultural backdrop, from tsarist Russia to Liberal England via Orléanist France and Muhammad Ali's Egypt, illustrating contemporary European political and social movements and their bearing on 19th-century British labour history.