

# The Brotherhood of Veterans in Poland

## Summary of 2022

January 2023

The year 2022 was full of numerous international, anniversary, patriotic, scientific and sporting events in which members of the Brotherhood of Veterans in Poland (BVP) actively participated. We present you the most important ones in this summary.

### International cooperation

An important element of BVP's activities is international cooperation with other veterans' associations. The most important of these was the implementation of the Polish-Belgian project "Isi and Esther" together with the Interallied Military Organisation Sphinx (IMOS) and two other organisations from Belgium.



Photo: S. Tarasek. Ceremony at General Konrad Strzelczyk's grave in Chorzów.

Its aim was to familiarise Belgian youth with the martyrdom of Jews during the Second World War and to pay tribute to General Konrad Strzelczyk, the founder

of the IMOS organisation. The project included a ceremony with military assistance at General Strzelczyk's grave in Chorzow cemetery, learning about documents related to the general during visit to the Chorzow Museum, and a march and visit to the Nazi death camps at the Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum in Oswiecim and Brzezinka.

Participation in the joint Polish-Belgian project also resulted in four BVP veterans receiving IMOS membership and a decision to further strengthen future cooperation between our organisations.

BVP delegation participated in the Day of Remembrance of Fallen Patriots on invitation of the Veterans Association of Moldova. The President of Moldova, Ms. Maja Sandu, declared 2022 as the Year of Gratitude for the Veterans fallen in 1991-1992 as a result of Russian aggression. The ceremony in Warsaw was held at the St John Klimak Orthodox Church, where a Mass was celebrated in the presence of the Moldovan Ambassador in memory of Moldovan heroes who died in defending their homeland in 1991-1992 and those killed in later conflicts.



Photo: V. Baranovski. Medical supplies and equipment delivered to Ukraine.

As part of foreign aid, BVP, together with fire-fighters from the Specialised Rescue Group - Fire-fighters Together Against Leukaemia, urgently delivered medical supplies and equipment to Ukraine for the defenders of the Territorial Defence unit in Kamieniec Podolski. We were approached with this request by our colleagues, Ukrainian veterans of the UN peacekeeping missions.

In addition, one BVP member provided housing to two Ukrainian families. Stay of the young Ukrainian refugees was varied as far as possible with various activities, such as the veterans' action called "Respect and Support" starting matches and presenting prizes at the final tournament of the Polish Women's Volleyball Cup in Nysa.

BVP also strengthened its cooperation with more international organisations. In March, BVP's President signed a cooperation agreement with two Polish organisations in Italy: the Union of Poles in Calabria and the Union of Polish-Italian Associations (UAIP). The aim of the cooperation is to support each other in promoting the memory of the efforts of the Polish soldiers on all fronts of war, in peacekeeping missions and other activities beyond the country's borders, as well as to promote Polish culture, historical and scientific knowledge among Polish youth living in Italy and in Poland.

BVP also maintains close contact with veterans of the UNTAG peacekeeping mission in Namibia and from time to time we receive invitations from them to participate in ceremonies organised in Australia. Due to costs, we are unable to attend directly, but it is possible to participate online, e.g. the Last Post ceremony held at the Australian War Memorial in December. It was dedicated to the memory of Corporal Edwin Fittock, who killed in action in France in heavy fighting during the First World War.

#### Activities in the sphere of national security

According to the provisions of the Statute of the Brotherhood of Veterans in Poland, the intention of the association is to maintain contacts with military units and to participate in undertakings in the area of national and international security. Hence, during 2022, BVP members paid visits to the 34th Missile Squadron in Bytom, the 41st Training Air Base in Deblin, the Air Force Museum in Deblin, the Military Unit of Commando in Lubliniec and the Territorial Defence Forces Command in Zegrze.



Photo: A. Ostrowski. Visit of BVP members to the Territorial Forces HQ.

The visits provided an opportunity to learn both about the history of the visited military units and their current activities, as well as about the security challenges facing the Polish military.

BVP representatives participated in several conferences on European and global security issues:

1. C. George Marshall European Centre for Security Studies Conference at the residence of the US Ambassador in Warsaw. The themes of the conference were the importance of NATO's eastern flank, NATO and Ukraine and the role of the Baltic States. Its main participants were the US Ambassador to Poland, the German Ambassador to Poland, the Deputy Commander of the US Army V Corps in Poland, the Deputy Commander of the North-East Corps in Szczecin and the Dean of the Marshall Centre;

2. The Defence24 Day scientific conference, which was attended by the leadership of the Ministry of Defence, representatives of the army, science and the arms industry. Its topics included: NATO adaptation before the Madrid summit of the Alliance, directions of changes in the Polish army in the coming

years, strategic challenges for national security and the development of a modern defence industry;

3. The Academy of Military Art in Rembertow scientific symposium on modern peacekeeping operations on the example of the UN peacekeeping mission in Namibia (UNTAG). The symposium was attended by students of the academy and Polish veterans of foreign missions.

In addition, one of the BVP members, a professor teaching at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow, periodically gives media interviews and publishes articles on the armed conflict in Ukraine, its development scenarios and its impact on Polish and global security.

BVP members published two books on the operations of the Polish army in 2022 entitled "Poland in missions and peacekeeping operations outside the country's borders. Politics - security - experiences" and "Poles in Namibia. The first modern UN peacekeeping operation". The books were presented at author's evenings in Warsaw, Bydgoszcz, Gdynia, Wroclaw and Olesnica.

#### Celebrations and anniversaries

BVP representatives took part in various patriotic and anniversary events, which included:

1. Rally to commemorate the 72 heroes of the January Uprising killed in battle against the Tsarist army in the Kampinos Forest on 14 April 1863. The rally was attended by representatives of local authorities, residents of the surrounding municipalities, the army and various organisations;

2. The 70th anniversary of Rosomak S.A., which was attended mainly by members of the company staff. During the ceremony, medals 'For Merits to National Defence' awarded by the Minister of National Defence were presented to participants in the ISAF mission in Afghanistan, among whom were members of BVP;

3. Ceremonies related to the celebration of the International Day of the UN Peacekeepers, during which BVP members participated in state ceremonies organised in Silesia District and locally in Warsaw, where BVP veterans laid flowers at the Monument to Soldiers Fallen in Missions and Military Operations outside the State Borders, which is located at the Veteran's Centre in Warsaw,

and at the obelisk dedicated to soldiers who died in missions abroad located in the Museum of the Polish Army;

4. The interesting Kupala Festival celebrated in a Slavic village located in the Slavic and Viking Centre on Wolin Island. The ancient Slavic festival known as the summer solstice festival consists of numerous rituals dedicated to the most powerful elements known in pagan times, which were fire and water, and the Moon and Sun associated with them. The visit to the village was an opportunity not only to learn about the living conditions of the Slavs, their activities, including sailing on the Baltic Sea, but also to observe a concert of old Slavic songs, a garland weaving competition, the ordination of huts by women and numerous other Slavic rituals taking place at such a time;

5. Celebration of the 78th anniversary of the liquidation of the Gestapo detention centre at Fort III in Pomiechówek, where Polish and Jewish displaced persons and soldiers of the Polish Underground State were murdered. During the ceremony, a mural was unveiled on the wall of the Fort's guardhouse and flowers were laid on the graves of the murdered;



Photo: A. Ostrowski. March on 104. Anniversary of Regaining Independence.

6. Celebration of the 104th Anniversary of Regaining Independence, during which delegation of BVP participated in Konstancin-Jeziorna city local ceremony which included: Mass for the Homeland, laying flowers at 3 monuments: victims of the Katyn massacre, soldiers of the Independent Battalion of the National Armed Forces named after Brigadier Czeslaw Molodowski, and soldiers of the Polish Underground State. Moreover, there were the Independence March along with the 104-metre long national flag as well as picnic and music concert "Free and Independent";

7. Remembrance Day for the Fallen and Deceased in Missions and Military Operations Outside the National Borders on 21 December. As part of the social campaign "Respect and Support", the Brotherhood of Veterans in Poland organized "Minute of Silence" together with the Polish Volleyball League and the Polish Basketball League. This action is carried out every year between 15 and 23 December and consists of an extended pre-match presentation of players to honour all those who were killed in action or who died in missions abroad.



Photo: Z. Michalewicz. Invictus Games 2022 - competition in archery.

## Sport

Some BVP members actively participated in sporting events - mainly marathons and street running.

The most serious challenge of the veterans from the Brotherhood was, together with the Association of Veterans Outside the Borders of the Republic of Poland, participation in the relay of the 8th Ultramarathon Insurgent 1944 - 2022 on a demanding route of 63 km in difficult weather conditions and in the 31st Warsaw Insurgent Run in Wieliszew.

In addition, one of the BWP members - an disabled veteran - took part in the Invictus Games sports competition in the Netherlands and took 4th place in the team competition in block archery.

Upon their return, the Polish veterans' team was received by the President of the Republic of Poland in the gardens of the Presidential Palace.

As you see, the Brotherhood of Veterans in Poland is active in many fields, making our association an attractive alternative for veterans of foreign missions. Our organisation is gradually expanding with new members of the overseas operations, including those served under the UN, NATO, EU or coalition flags. We gather military, fire-fighters and servicemen who maintained and repaired equipment at a theatre as well as disabled veterans. We are also open to foreign veterans. We encourage other veterans and our supporters who wish to actively participate in the life of the Broterhood of Veterans in Poland to join our organisation.

Andrzej Adamowicz