



POLISH AMERICAN CONGRESS

VOLUME 3, NUMBER 2

Your Voice
in *America!*

DEADLINES FOR SUBMISSIONS

Our PAC Newsletter will be sent out five more times this year.

Deadline for submission	Publication date
Friday, June 3, 2016	Friday, June 10, 2016
Friday, August, 5, 2016	Friday, August 12, 2016
Friday, October 7, 2016	Friday, October 14, 2016
Friday, December 2, 2016	Friday, December 9, 2016

“Your Voice in America” newsletter is published bimonthly by the Polish American Congress. The purpose of the newsletter is to offer PAC National Directors and PAC Executive Committee members the opportunity to share news and information about their state divisions and offices. The newsletter does not receive funds from any external source. The editor is Dr. Mark Pienkos.

Articles should be between 100 and 400 words. Some editing will be done to match our style guidelines and spatial constraints, as well as correcting grammatical errors. We do not send proofs for approval. When sending photos, please include captions with names, official titles. All submitted materials become the property of the Polish American Congress and may be used to promote the mission of the PAC. Materials will not be returned unless requested.

Articles are due according to this schedule. Send your submissions to PAC National VP for Public Relations, Mark Pienkos at markpienkos2012@gmail.com.

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2016 Council of National Directors Meeting

On January 12, 2016 the Executive Committee voted to hold the next meeting of the Council of PAC National Directors in Chicago, IL.

The meeting will begin on Thursday September 15, 2016 and will conclude on Saturday, September 17, 2016. Additional details will be coming soon.



POLISH AMERICAN CONGRESS

1612 K Street, NW, Suite 1200, Washington, DC 20006-2802
Tel.: (202) 296-6955 ♦ Fax: (202) 835-1565 ♦ E-mail: pacwash@pac1944.org
WWW.PAC1944.ORG

March 29, 2016

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

On behalf of the Polish American Congress, the largest and one of the oldest Polish American umbrella organizations in the United States, I would like to express a sense of sadness and disappointment that as of yet there is no meeting scheduled between you and the President of Poland, the Honorable Andrzej Duda, during his upcoming visit to the United States.

Poland has been consistently both one of the most loyal allies of the United States and one of the most active members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. We would hope that the head of the Polish state would be welcomed in the White House, thus sending a strong message to the people of Poland and Polish Americans about the unwavering transatlantic friendship and cooperation between Poland and our Great Nation.

We urge you, Mr. President, to review the possibility of holding such a meeting in the upcoming days.

Thank you for your consideration,


Frank J. Spula,
President



SIXTH ANNIVERSARY OF SMOLENSK AIR CRASH



The Polish American Congress Executive Committee met on April 7, 2016 via a conference call to conduct organizational business. A moment of silence was observed to remember the victims of the Smolensk tragedy.

Background

On April 10th, 2010 a TU-154M plane crashed in Smolensk (Russia) 1km short of the runway in foggy weather conditions, killing all 96 passengers on board. The plane was carrying a delegation of deserved and distinguished patriots, members of the Polish elite, including the Polish President Lech Kaczynski and his wife, former President Ryszard Kaczorowski, the entire general army command, the Chief of the Polish General Staff and other senior Polish military officers, the president of the National Bank of Poland, Poland's deputy foreign minister, Polish government officials, 15 members of the Polish parliament, senior members of the Polish clergy, and relatives of victims of the Katyn massacre. Those on board were on their way from Warsaw (Poland) to attend an event marking the 70th anniversary of the Katyn Forest massacre.

This event is regarded by many as the worst national disaster Poland has experienced since World War II. It is still under investigation to determine the reasons for the crash.

Polish American Congress Remembers Smolensk

April 10, 2016

As the 6th Anniversary of the Smolensk Air Crash was approaching, the following message was sent to members of the Polish American Congress by PAC President, Mr. Frank Spula:

This Sunday, April 10th, 2016 is the 6th anniversary of the Smolensk air crash, a date that will forever be embossed in the minds of Poles throughout the world.

I hope you will remember the victims and their families in your prayers and participate in commemorations that will be take place in your communities.

For me, it's a day of remembrance and reflection, being I knew a number of people that were on that tragic flight. I will be participating in an event in downtown Chicago and will make remarks of this disaster and its victims to the general public.

Frank J. Spula

President

Remember

PAC NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE

Anita Jedwabski (Massachusetts)
anitareliv@gmail.com

Ania Karwan (California)
ania_k@hotmail.com

Zbigniew Koralewski (New York)
zkoral@aol.com

Tim Kuzma (Pennsylvania)
tkuzma@polishfalcons.org

Mark Pienkos (Wisconsin)
PAC National VP for Public Relations
markpienkos2012@gmail.com

LAYOUT AND DESIGN BY
POLISH FALCONS OF AMERICA:

Courtney Caughey-Stambul,
Communications Director

Andy Darragh,
Communications Assistant

President Duda Meets with President Obama

Polish President Andrzej Duda met with U.S. President Barack Obama at the White House on Thursday, March 31 at a gala dinner for participants in the Nuclear Security Summit in Washington.

The two heads of state spoke about the forthcoming NATO summit in Warsaw and the situation surrounding the Constitutional Tribunal in Poland, presidential minister Krzysztof Szczerski said.

The Polish president attended the Thursday evening gala dinner hosted by the U.S. president for leaders of states and organizations attending the Nuclear Security Summit in Washington.

Speaking to Polish reporters, Szczerski said that “during a meeting at the White House President Duda held a bilateral, face-to-face conversation with President Barack Obama. The talks focused chiefly on nuclear issues.”

Minister Szczerski added that the two heads of state spoke also about preparations for the July NATO summit in Warsaw and the Constitutional Tribunal.

“President Duda informed President Obama about the latest developments in Poland and about a meeting of political parties - which he has welcomed with satisfaction - as well as about chances for a political compromise regarding the law on the Constitutional tribunal.

According to Szczerski, President Duda declared during a meeting with president Obama that “he would soon launch steps to regulate the system of justice in Poland and the Constitutional Tribunal in the Constitution.”

Krzysztof Szczerski added that President Obama thanked Poland for its achievements in the non-proliferation of nuclear arms.

Minister Szczerski said that on Thursday evening he attended a gala dinner at the Department of State and spoke with U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry and Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs at the U.S. Department of State, Victoria Nuland.



Photo by Andrzej Hrechorowicz/ Chancellery of the President of the Republic of Poland



CONNECTING LUBLIN, POLAND AND MILWAUKEE, USA

Sister Cities International

by Joanna Gibelev, Member
Polish American Congress – Wisconsin Division

At the February 2016 Polish American Congress – Wisconsin Division meeting, members voted to approve a motion to become a main sponsor of the Sister Cities International initiative connecting the City of Milwaukee and the City of Lublin in Poland. As a new member, I presented the idea and was honored and pleased to receive the Congress’ endorsement.

After my last trip to my hometown, Lublin, it occurred to me how much Lublin and Milwaukee have in common, and that the Sister Cities relationship would provide a great platform from which the two cities could develop a creative and meaningful relationship. Milwaukee has the fifth-largest Polish population in the U.S. (over 45,000). Besides sharing and promoting our rich Polish culture and heritage, we love to dance the polka at Polish Fest (the largest Polish ethnic festival in the U.S. held annually in downtown Milwaukee), indulge in *paczki* at least once a year, admire the beauty of the Basilica of St. Josaphat, and reminisce over a glass of *Tyskie* about our ancestors who settled here decades ago. I have lived in both cities and it seems to me that Lublin and Milwaukee are a natural fit, especially when it comes to embracing our multicultural and ethnically diverse societies through top-notch festivals, our shared love for brewing great beer, and our serving as homes for large student communities.

Lublin is the largest city in Poland to the east of Vistula River with a population of 350,000 of which nearly a third are university students. The city has five major universities and several private higher education schools, which, not surprisingly, have a major impact on the fabric of society. Lubliners are inherently youthful, entrepreneurial, inclusive, and welcoming of other cultures. Lublin is known for its many festivals, which attract visitors from throughout Europe all year round. The scale and finesse with which Lublin hosts these events has become a national blueprint for other Polish cities.

Lublin has a rich history dating back to the XII century. It was always a place of a peaceful and prosperous coexistence of various ethnicities. Multiculturalism is embedded in the very identity of Lublin, and its citizens, business community, academia, and local government maintain the spirit of the past through various cultural festivals and by tending to historical monuments commemorating its often painful history. Lubliners turn these festivals into opportunities to learn and educate others in a passionate and unorthodox fashion. Especially when it comes to the Jewish presence, Lublin is a place of particular significance. Before the Second World War, a third of its population was Jewish.



Lublin



Milwaukee

Today, through the compassionate effort of the city’s government – as well as the efforts of local and international community groups – traces of the centuries-long peaceful coexistence among Jewish and Christian citizens are being systematically restored. Nowadays, visitors can count on a historically rich, multicultural experience: a time capsule that will take them back in time to understand and appreciate the daily lives and festivities of Jewish Lubliners. They can touch and admire the architecture, visit religious sites, learn about the culture and its contributions to the City, and experience that culture, as well as its cuisine, first-hand, as well as honor and remember their tragic end at Majdanek.

Over the past decade, Lublin has experienced significant growth in its economy, rapidly expanded high-speed rail connections and freeways, and opened an airport. The city also developed its Bubl-like bike rental service and upgraded its decades-old electric streetcar network. These are all services that Milwaukeeans have a strong interest in.

With this brief introduction, I hope that a seed of curious excitement has been planted in you and that you will stay tuned to learn more, in future updates, regarding the progress of the Sister Cities project connecting Lublin and Milwaukee!

(Editor’s note: Joanna Gibelev is to be commended for her efforts. She demonstrates how a new PAC member can become immediately involved in the work of a state division. Joanna has not only spearheaded this Sister Cities International initiative linking Lublin and Milwaukee, but also drawn very positive support from her fellow PAC-Wisconsin Division members. Thank you, Joanna!)

How Ukraine Can Contribute to NATO's Forward Defense

This article was first published by the Atlantic Council: <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/how-ukraine-can-contribute-to-nato-s-forward-defense>

by **Ian J. Brzezinski and Markian Bilynskij**
Authority to print granted by Ian J. Brzezinski

NATO has decided to bolster its military operations in Central Europe to better deter and, if necessary, defend against Russian aggression. Toward that end, Alliance military authorities have been tasked to develop plans for the deployment of multinational units, possibly battalions or brigades, that will be deployed on a persistent basis along NATO's eastern frontier. NATO heads of state are expected to approve these plans at a summit meeting in Warsaw this July.

Ukraine should offer to contribute to this enhanced NATO presence. High-level Ukrainian national security officials have urged the international community to be bolder in its response to Russia's provocative military actions. NATO's July summit provides Ukraine with a significant opportunity to be consistent with its own rhetoric.

The deployment of a battle tested, Ukrainian infantry company or larger unit to reinforce the defense of NATO territory in Central Europe would be a positive contribution to the Alliance force posture in the region. As NATO commanders finalize their plans, now is the time to present such an initiative to the Alliance.

Contributing to this NATO mission would not be a first for Ukraine. Its military has participated in Alliance operations with distinction. In the 1990s, Ukraine supported NATO's peace-support operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It continues to provide personnel to the Kosovo Force today. Ukrainians have served in NATO's training missions in Iraq and Afghanistan and Ukrainian ships joined NATO's Operation Active Endeavor and Ocean Shield, the Alliance's maritime patrol missions in the Mediterranean and along the coast of the Horn of Africa. Ukraine was the first non-Alliance country to have contributed military capabilities to the NATO Response Force, a rapid-reaction group able to defend any ally, deploy anywhere, and deal with any threat.

By offering a military unit to the forward defense of NATO member states, Kyiv would underscore its commitment to Alliance security and values.



Credit: NATO

Ukraine's ambitions include attaining NATO membership, and toward that end, Ukraine should act as a *de facto* ally, which means proactively sharing in the Alliance's burdens. Active participation in NATO missions has always been among the most effective strategies toward this goal.

Second, Ukraine's military adopted NATO standards and tactics so that its forces can be fully interoperable with those of the Alliance. Embedding a Ukrainian unit into a NATO task force would be an outstanding way to further develop such interoperability. Ukrainian units would gain valuable experience participating in a significant NATO operation and all the tasks, training, and exercises it entails.

Third, the Alliance would benefit greatly from the integration of a combat-tested Ukrainian unit. This goes beyond the provision of men and equipment. The Ukrainian military has been in sustained, often intense, combat with Russia over the last two years. When it comes to understanding and countering the latest infantry, artillery, tank, drone, electronic warfare, and other capabilities, technologies, and tactics of the Russian military, there is no military unit in the West that can match the battlefield experience of Ukraine's armed forces.

Ukrainian military units and personnel trained by the United States have been praised by senior US military commanders for their professionalism and morale. And the sharing of experience in these engagements has been reciprocal; the Ukrainians have provided invaluable insight into the tactics and technologies of their adversaries. Lieutenant General Ben Hodges, commander of US Army Europe, has observed that "none of us [NATO Allies] have ever been under Russian artillery and rocket fire like the Ukrainians have."

As NATO positions itself to better deter and defend against Russian forces, the Alliance would be foolish to turn down an opportunity to incorporate into its operations units from the Ukrainian military and all the highly relevant operational experience and knowledge they would bring to this challenging mission.

AN EVENING WITH REPUBLIC OF POLAND SENATOR AND PLENIPOTENTIARY MINISTER ANNA MARIA ANDERS

Submitted by Anthony J. Bajdek,

President of the Polish American Congress - New Hampshire Division & PAC Vice President for American Affairs

On Wednesday, March 23, 2016 in the parish hall of Saint Hedwig Church in Manchester, some 51 Polish American citizens and voters living in New Hampshire experienced a memorable and historical opportunity to meet Anna Maria Anders, a newly-elected Republic of Poland Senator and earlier appointed Plenipotentiary Minister for International Dialogue, who explained her role in Poland's government and her life as a person holding citizenship in three nations: the United Kingdom, the United States, and Poland. As the result of that fact, she had an extraordinary personal story to relate to the audience. The meeting was arranged and sponsored by the Polish American Congress - New Hampshire Division and its State Division President, Anthony J. Bajdek of Hudson. Bajdek, who also serves as the National Vice President for American Affairs in the Polish American Congress (www.pac1944.org) which has its national office located at 1612 K Street NW, Suite 1200, in Washington, DC. Nationally, the organization has Divisions in 19 states (AZ, CA, CT, DE, FL, IL, IN, MA, MD, MI, NH, NJ, NY, OH, PA, RI, TX, VA, and WI) and the District of Columbia. The possibility of sponsoring the meeting had been presented to Bajdek by a member of the New Hampshire Division, Michael Speidel of Windham, who coordinates the current visits of Senator Anders to the United States in her new capacity.

Prior to her appointment as Plenipotentiary Minister and election as Senator in Poland's government, she admittedly had been known first and foremost in Polish circles in Europe as well as in the United States simply as "the General's daughter." Indeed, she is the daughter of Lieutenant General Wladyslaw Anders (1892-1970), the World War II Polish Army General who saved some 140,000 Polish soldiers and their families that had been taken captive by the Soviet Union when it invaded eastern Poland in September 1939. In Soviet-occupied eastern Poland, several million Poles were deported to Siberia where they faced certain starvation and death as slave laborers in remote work camps. In 1941, when Germany invaded its territory, the Soviet Union, mindful of the need to augment armed forces to fight the Axis Powers (Germany and Italy) in Russia as well as in Europe, agreed to allow Anders to take the 140,000 Poles out of the Soviet Union by way of Iran, Iraq, and into Palestine to join the Western Allies. At that time, General Anders commanded the 2nd Polish Corps, an integral component of Allied forces in the Italian theatre of operations against Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy in 1944. There, the 2nd Polish Corps earned glory in May 1944 for its successful assault - following upon earlier unsuccessful assaults by other Allied forces - against German forces entrenched in the Benedictine Monastery atop Monte Cassino in Italy which had been built by Saint Benedict, the founder of Western monasticism, in the year 524 A.D.

Since her father (living in exile in England after 1945 in company with his 2nd Polish Corps) had been declared an enemy of Soviet Russia's puppet communist Polish government, the so-called Polish People's Republic, he could never return to Poland. As such, Anna Maria had been born in London in 1950. She earned a bachelor's degree in Romance Languages from the University of Bristol in England and in 1989, an MBA from Boston University. She is the widow of U.S. Army Colonel Robert A. Costa (1934-2007) of Wellesley Hills, Massachusetts, and the mother of US Army 2nd Lieutenant Robert W. Costa, who graduated from Tufts University in Medford, Massachusetts.

Anders' purpose on March 23 had been to describe her role as a representative of Poland's national government as she travels in the United States meeting Polish Americans who are generally referred to as members of Polonia, the traditional Polish term describing people of Polish descent living elsewhere in the world apart from Poland.



Modern Poland is doing well. However, apart from articulating Poland's desire for more American financial investment, and cultural and academic exchanges, for example, Anders stated that Poland's greatest existential concern - as a member of NATO and the European Union - is centered on its national security. This is in the face of an aggressive Russian Federation led by Vladimir Putin, whose war in eastern Ukraine has caused several hundred thousand Ukrainian migrants to seek sanctuary in Poland.

In this regard, Anders stated bluntly that Poland is losing confidence that its EU neighbors will have the will to stand up to the Russian Federation's armed forces if ever Vladimir Putin initiates an aggression against Poland. It has good reason to be concerned about its security.

On the Eurasian landmass that stretches from Scandinavia to Iberia in the west through to the Russian Federation's shores on the Bering Sea across from Alaska, the Russian Federation has a population of 141,031,000. In comparison, Germany has 81,459,000; France has 66,417,000; Italy has 60,963,000; Spain has 46,335,000; Ukraine has 42,850,000; Poland has 38,494,000; Romania has 19,822,000; the Netherlands has 17,001,000; Belgium has 11,259,000; Greece has 10,769,000; the Czech Republic has 10,535,000; Portugal has 10,311,000; Hungary has 9,835,000; and Sweden has 9,858,000, to name some of the EU examples. Taken as a whole, the combined population of EU member states far exceeds that of the Russian Federation, so long as the EU member states maintain unity of purpose and the will to sustain it.

Not included among the nations of Europe is the United Kingdom by its own choice. British people consider the islands constituting the United Kingdom with its population of 65,081,000 not to be part of the European "continent" per se. Yet Americans, in contrast would never consider Martha's Vineyard or Nantucket not to be part of Massachusetts. Or Long Island not to be a part of New York. Nonetheless, in the event of war in Europe, the United Kingdom typically participates with its "western Allies." Hopefully, that will remain true into the unknown distant future in an increasingly dangerous world.

Ukraine today is neither a member of the Russian Federation nor the European Union. As a result, Vladimir Putin has successfully destabilized it by seizing control of its Crimean peninsula and has fostered a less-than-covert civil war in eastern parts of Ukraine, a nation that borders Poland. This sustains Poland's fears that western sanctions against Russia have not stopped Putin's ambition to restore a 21st century version of a geographical entity equivalent in scope to that of the 20th century's Soviet Union which viewed all of Eastern Europe as an integral part of its political and military sphere of influence.

Poland's population is the second largest after Ukraine's in Eastern Europe.



According to Anna Maria Anders, Poland is more dependent, therefore, on the armed forces of the United States to come to its aid militarily against Russia than it is on its fellow-nations constituting the European Union and NATO, thereby implying that there is no will to fight Russia in Europe, except in Poland. Anders says this is happening because the European Union is being overrun by hordes of migrants from places such as Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, and northern Africa, in a process that is not likely to change soon even if peace were to be restored in those parts of the world. That migration and the growing threat of Islamic jihadist terrorism is destabilizing the European Union, all to Russia's satisfaction, and perhaps according to Russia's plan. In this regard, how many migrants seek safety within the territory of the Russian Federation? None, of course, whether by coincidence or complicity is yet to be fully determined.

Outside of Europe, the next largest concentration of people of Polish descent is located in the United States. Through the efforts of Anders, working in concert with the Polish American Congress, for example, rests Poland's hope that the strong ties between it and the United States (that go back to the principled service to America during its War of Independence by Poles such as Thaddeus Kosciuszko, who George Washington appointed to design West Point's fortifications, and Casimir Pulaski who became the "Father of the United States Cavalry") will continue, by way of sustained focused lobbying the members of the United States Congress and the Administration in the White House.

Needless to say that Republic of Poland Senator and Plenipotentiary Minister Anna Maria Anders spent a productive, pleasant evening with a receptive audience. Following her remarks and responding to questions, all had been afforded an opportunity to meet her personally for added one-on-one discussions and photo opportunities.

Note: Several years ago while my wife and I had been residents of Massachusetts, we had been introduced to Anna Maria by a mutual friend, Professor Mark Kon of Boston University, for an informal, small private dinner at the Papa Razzi Trattoria Italian Restaurant in Wellesley. Needless to say, it had been a pleasant experience for us then much as it had been for us in Manchester's Saint Hedwig parish hall on March 23.

Editor's Note: This article was written for an audience much broader than our state's Polish American community. PAC Vice President for American Affairs, Anthony Bajdek, is to be commended for his efforts to make this special event happen.



POLISH AMERICAN CONGRESS

Founded in May, 1944, the Polish American Congress is a National Umbrella Organization, representing at least 10 million Americans of Polish descent and origin. Its membership is comprised of fraternal, educational, veteran, religious, cultural, social, business, political organizations and individual membership. The Polish American community prides itself on its deeply rooted commitment to the values of family, faith, democracy, hard work and fulfillment of the American dream. We are present in every state and virtually every community in America, on various social, business and economic levels.

The Polish American Congress, an “umbrella” organization, is a federation of over 3000 Polish American organizations and clubs, ranging from national fraternal benefit societies, such as the Polish National Alliance, Polish Women’s Alliance, Polish Roman Catholic Union, Polish Falcons and others, including veteran, cultural, professional, religious and social associations, with aggregate membership of over one million. The PAC by-laws also provide for individual membership, as well as associate membership.

The PAC promotes civic, educational and cultural programs designed to further not only the knowledge of Polish history, language and culture, but to stimulate Polish American involvement and accomplishments.

The governing body of the PAC is the Council of National Directors, consisting of directors elected by their respective State Divisions or National Organizations and up to 10 at-large directors elected by the Council. Day-to-day operations are conducted by the Executive Committee elected by the Council of National Directors for a two year term.

CONTACT US

NATIONAL OFFICE

1612 K Street NW, Suite 1200
Washington, DC 20006
Tel.: (202) 296-6955
Fax: (202) 835-1565

Visit: www.pac1944.org

E-mail: pacwash@pac1944.org

Join us on Facebook: www.facebook.com/pages/Polish-American-Congress