

Institute of National Remembrance

<https://ipn.gov.pl/en/news/2059,The-75th-anniversary-of-the-creation-of-the-Holy-Cross-Mountains-Brigade-of-the-.html>

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The 75th anniversary of the creation of the Holy Cross Mountains Brigade of the National Armed Forces.

Anniversary celebrations commemorating the activities of the National Armed Forces Holy Cross Mountains Brigade will take place on 11 August 2019. Dr Jarosław Szarek, President of the Institute of National Remembrance will participate in the event.



Polish Version:

<https://ipn.gov.pl/pl/aktualnosci/75223,75-rocznica-powstania-Brygady-Swietokrzyskiej-Narodowych-Sil-Zbrojnych.html>

The commemorative celebrations will start at 10.00 at the Field Cathedral of the Polish Army in Warsaw with a ceremonial Holy Mass for the fallen and living soldiers of the National Armed Forces. At 12.00, on Marshal Józef Piłsudski Square, a Roll Call for the Fallen along with the laying of wreaths and flowers at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier are also planned.

The celebrations are organized by the Office for War Veterans and Victims of Oppression together with the Board of the Association of National Soldiers of the Armed Forces. The event is being held under the patronage of the President of the Republic of Poland.

The Holy Cross Mountains Brigade was the only Polish partisan unit during World War II, which as a partisan unit liberated prisoners of a concentration camp outside Polish territories. It was a women's camp in Holiszów, a sub-camp of KL Flossenburg, in which over 1000 women of various nationalities were imprisoned.

The Holy Cross Mountains Brigade (Polish: *Brygada Świętokrzyska*) of the National Armed Forces was one of the largest partisan formations operating on Polish territory. Its soldiers fought simultaneously against the German occupiers and the communist underground, the latter not recognizing the legal Polish authorities in exile and constituting the forefront of the new Soviet occupation. Thanks to a happy coincidence and skillful diplomacy of the commanders, the whole unit managed to get to the West, avoiding the internal breakdown by neither the Wehrmacht, the Waffen SS, nor the Red Army. It was also the only unit of the Polish independence underground which established tactical contact with the forces of the Western Allies, joined them and cooperated tactically in the fight against Germany in the last days of World War II.

The unit was established on 11 August 1944 in the Lasocin estate. The Brigade conducted activities against the Germans. They were, however, limited in nature and consisted of self-defense, the protection of the local population against repressions and pacification activities, as well as the supply of weapons and military materials. The soldiers of the National Armed Forces fought several dozen battles and skirmishes against the gendarmerie, the Wehrmacht (including the Luftwaffe), as well as collaborative formations: the Ukrainian Schutzmannschaft and the Turkestan Ostlegionen. During one of the battles (27 August 1944), the Brigade fought against a reconnaissance unit of the Ostlegionen which was supported by an armored train. A month later, on 20 September, in the proximity of Cacow, the Brigade fought a battle against a German unit composed of about 400 Luftwaffe soldiers and around 100 gendarmes. The Świętokrzyska Brigade also carried out activities against communist units that were, in fact, Soviet agents. In the whole of the Brigade's history, there has not been a single case of its soldiers murdering Polish Jews

due to their ethnic origin. It should also be noted that Poles of Jewish origin served in the ranks of this formation.

The Americans investigated the Polish unit in terms of counterintelligence, considering it as a non-German unit, but an allied unit. The Brigade was the only Polish unit that obtained the right to wear badges of American units and to carry weapons in May 1945, which are visible in photographs - American stars, the head of a native American, symbols of American divisions.

The Holy Cross Mountains Brigade was the only Polish partisan unit during World War II, which as a partisan unit liberated prisoners of a concentration camp outside Polish territories. It was a women's camp in Holiszów, a sub-camp of KL Flossenbürg, in which over 1000 women of various nationalities were imprisoned. The attack of the Polish unit on the camp complex saved the lives of Hungarian Jewish women which the German camp personnel intended to burn alive. Then, the Brigade troops established tactical contact with units of General George Patton's 3rd American Army. In a ceremonial speech, Colonel Antoni Szacki, "Bohun Dąbrowski" (commander of the unit), wrote to his subordinates: "Today our banners are fluttering alongside the victorious American colors, alongside the banners of the liberated Czech nation. Providence has allowed us once again to take part in the fight against the eternal enemy and to contribute to the joint effort of united nations. In this moment so memorable for us, I thank you for the trust you have given me. Your trust has enabled me to fulfill most of the tasks that we have set ourselves." In January 1945, in the face of the Soviet offensive, the Brigade's command, fearing the approaching Red Army and the NKVD, attempted to retreat west and save the unit as a force capable of fighting for free Poland. Thanks to local, improvised and tactical agreements with German units, the Brigade began marching westward towards the Allied forces. During the march, the Commander of the Brigade did not agree to subordination and military cooperation with Germany. He also did not allow the disarmament of the unit. Ultimately, the unit was sent to the Czech Republic and left without further orders. During the march, it managed to establish contacts with the Czech underground. At the same time, emissaries were sent to the headquarters of the Supreme Commander and Allied troops.

After the end of the war, the unit was inspected by representatives of the Supreme Commander, and its soldiers and officers were trained in the II Corps of General Anders. In view of the pressure on the part of the Soviets, who unlawfully demanded the handing over of the Polish unit, the American army caused the dissolution of the unit and the creation of units supporting US occupation forces in Germany (*Polish Guard Companies*).

The NSZ - National Armed Forces were indisputably part of the Polish resistance movement, and only a number of their units merged with the Home Army. The remaining ones fought for independence outside the ranks of the Republic of Poland's Armed Forces re-created underground. Among them was, for instance the Peasants' Security Guard, formed by the "Roch" Peasants' Party independently of the Peasants'

Battalions.

The Third Polish Republic recognized the National Military Action Cross as an integral part of the general system of orders and decorations of independent Poland.

In the Third Polish Republic the incorporation of the National Military Action Cross, ("instituted by the regulation of the National Armed Forces' Political Council of 14 December 1944 and awarded to National Armed Forces soldiers") into the general system of orders and decorations of independent Poland was one of the forms of recognition of the contribution made by this part of the resistance movement. The incorporation took place on 16 October 1992, when the Sejm [the lower house of the Polish Parliament] passed the Act on Orders and Decorations, as well as provisions implementing the said Act. "The Republic of Poland preserves continuity of the nation's traditions of honouring merits, civic virtues and outstanding achievements," the Act emphasized. Orders and decorations "constitute the supreme honour for the civil and military merits, during the time of peace and war, for the glory and development of the Republic of Poland." The incorporation of National Military Action Cross into the state system of orders and decorations was the official recognition of the contribution to the cause of Poland's independence made also by these national formations which were among the groups most ruthlessly combatted by the communists until the very end of the Polish People's Republic.

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