

Reviews

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**Book Review: *The Power of Spirit...
Chaplains of the Polish Army in the service
for peace, security and freedom of nations,*
Scientific Editors: Jan Figurski,
Zbigniew Kępa, Jerzy Niepsuj, Editorial Office
of the Military University of Technology,
Warsaw 2019, p. 348**

1. One of the watchwords and mottos expressing the spiritual identity of the Polish Army is the formula *For our freedom and yours*, commonly recognized among the Poles. Conceived during the November Uprising of 1830, it has accompanied successive generations of Polish soldiers. Today, it finds its exemplification in the Polish Army's service delivered across many continents of our globe for the promotion of peace, security and freedom of nations.

It is therefore one of the reasons why, inter alia, we – the Poles – for centuries and one may even say always, have valued and respected our army very much. Thus, no one in Poland today is surprised that also in the period of the Third Republic of Poland the Polish Army enjoys a very high (one of the highest) prestige in the society and is regarded as one of the organizations characterized by the highest level of social trust. At the same time, as paradoxical as it may seem, Poles know very little or almost nothing about their army. This remark

also applies to the foreign missions of the Polish Army, which have claimed the life and health of several hundred Polish soldiers.

Especially after 5 August 2008, i.e. after the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Poland adopted the Programme for the Professionalization of the Polish Military, and thus the suspension of the obligatory basic military service and the eradication of all institutionalized forms of defence education for the society, knowledge about the Polish Army is the domain of a very small group of specialists. These are mostly retired professional soldiers.

The Poles' lack of general knowledge about their army constitutes one of the major, subjective, contemporary threats to the security of both the Polish Nation and the Polish State. Therefore, every effort aimed at broadening the knowledge of Poles, in particular those living in the Fatherland, as well as those living in the Foreign land, deserves attention, praise and promotion.

Without a doubt, the work that is the subject of this publication review should be considered as such an attempt.

The book under review constitutes a collection of a variety of texts and materials presented during a national scientific conference entitled: *Chaplains of the Polish Army in the service of peace, security and freedom of nations*. This conference was held on March 28, 2019 at the Warsaw Garrison Command Club. It was co-organized by: the Military Ordinariate of Poland, the Center of Foreign Missions Veterans, and the Military University of Technology. During the conference, for the first time in the history of the Polish Army, the ministry of military chaplains carried out in Polish Military Contingents outside the borders of our country was the subject of scientific reflection.

For that reason, the book reviewed is the first, and thus unique in Polish literature, publication that presents and at the same time, documents the ministry of military chaplains in all missions of the Polish Army outside the country after 1991. However, this does not necessarily imply that it contains solely reminiscences, accounts or reports of military chaplains from various foreign missions of the Polish Army.

Whilst the main reason for publishing this book (see: The word of the Field Bishop of the Polish Army. Centenary of the Military Ordinariate in the Service for God and Homeland, p. 7) was the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the Field Bishopric in Poland (only three months after the resurrection of the Polish State in 1918), the layout of the book suggests that its scientific editors addressed the issue of the ministry of military chaplains in foreign missions in a much broader, deeper and more ambitious way than it may be suggested

by the title of the work in question. It is of an interdisciplinary character, combining elements of knowledge from the area of political history and political science with elements of religious studies (political science of religion), as well as sociology, philosophy or generally understood knowledge of culture. I find such an approach very positive, since it allows one to obtain a far more complete picture of the examined subject and its ideas with particular emphasis on the axiology thereof. The book under review presents an exceptionally genuine approach to the subject. It does not limit itself to a chronological reconstruction of the service of Polish Army chaplains in successive Polish Military Contingents in peacekeeping and stabilization missions of the past 30 years alone, but it constitutes an attempt to reach the key principles of the phenomenon in question. One of them is the ontology of the army spirit, the basics of the axiology of service to the Polish Army, or the issues pertaining to the pedagogy of military chaplains' service in future missions. This is a very interesting and rewarding approach.

2. The book consists of an introduction, which includes three occasional texts – “forewords”, three content-related sections and four bibliographic, source-based, and documentary collections.

As a result, the structure of the book appears to be highly coherent, transparent and allowing for a proper presentation of the topic. One may even be tempted to state here that this structure, per se, not only reflects the subject matter of the work under consideration but, even more importantly, constitutes its particular form of explanation and justification.

The book is opened by three texts of an occasional and introductory character: A Word from the Field Bishop of the Polish Army – *Centenary of the Military Ordinariate in the Service of God and Homeland*, A Word from the Foreign Missions Veteran – Director of the Centre of Foreign Missions Veterans and the text of the Deputy Chief of General Staff of the Polish Armed Forces entitled: *The place and role of the chaplain during military drills and peacekeeping and stabilization missions*. All these texts constitute an introduction to the issue of the service of military chaplains in the Polish Army, or to be more precise, to the ministry of military chaplains in peacekeeping and stabilization missions.

These three texts alone fully depict the extraordinary peacekeeping mission that has been carried out for more than 60 years by the Polish soldier as a peacemaker and, for nearly 30 years, the special place and role of military chaplains in carrying out this mission.

The essential, content-related part of the book is constituted by its constituent parts represented by a variety of articles with the following titles: *Military chaplains as an integral part of the Polish Army*, *Chaplains of the Polish Army in peacekeeping missions*, *Military Chaplaincy in the face of new challenges in foreign missions*. What needs to be emphasized, the authors thereof – with a few exceptions – are primarily military chaplains – veterans of the Polish Army peacekeeping missions and professional soldiers of the Polish Army (in active service and reserve) in the vast majority also veterans of foreign missions.

The authors of theoretical considerations, mainly from the field of history, philosophy and pedagogy, are mostly scientists from the Faculty of Logistics of the Military University of Technology (J. Figurski, J. Niepsuj, K. Komorowski, M. Górnikiewicz) and one author representing the Centre of Foreign Missions Veterans (M. Szybalski). The aim of their largely theoretical disquisitions – as the title of this part of the work denotes – is to depict the ministry of military chaplains as an integral part of military service. The considerations of this part of the work are crowned by a text by Mariusz Szybalski depicting the participation of chaplains of the Military Ordinariate in military missions outside the country. This is a synthetic and highly factual description of the participation of chaplains of the Military Ordinariate in all peacekeeping missions of the Polish Army since 1991.

The crucial and most valuable part of the work from the point of view of the subject matter thereof is its next chapter containing several accounts by military chaplains – participants to specific peacekeeping missions of the Polish Army. They give their account of the ministry of soldiers in the Polish Military Contingents, starting from Cambodia and including, inter alia, Syria, Golan Heights, Iraq, Afghanistan, Kosovo, Congo, Chad. The accounts of the chaplains in this part of the monograph are complemented by two extremely valuable texts by rev. Zbigniew Kępa devoted to: 1) participation of troops of Polish Military Contingents in meetings with the Popes: Saint John Paul II – son of the Polish Army officer, Benedict XVI and Francis, and 2) the selection of the pastoral teaching of the Field Bishops on missions outside the country. Another noteworthy text in this part of the work is the one by Adam Buszko devoted to the humanitarian aid of the Caritas of the Military Ordinariate of Poland in operations held outside the country.

All papers in this chapter depict the Polish soldier participating in foreign missions as a peacekeeper and knight of freedom of nations and the Polish Army as one of the warrants of international and national security. They also

prove that Polish soldiers can carry out the above-mentioned roles, inter alia, thanks to the ministry of chaplains of the Military Ordinariate. For it is they who shape the spiritual strength of soldiersevery day, and this, as we know, is the final resort of the effectiveness of the actions of every man and the organization such as the army.

A separate, highly valuable part of the reviewed monograph, the part entitled: *Military ministry in the face of new challenges in foreign missions* consist of two articles whose authors are, on the one hand, an experienced veteran of peace-keeping and stabilization missions, rev. Colonel Piotr Kowalczyk (the title of his study is: *Preparation of chaplains for ministry in military operations outside the country*) and, on the other hand, Colonel Paweł Chabielski and Jakub Strzeblecki, M.A. – on a daily basis participating in training Polish Army soldiers for foreign missions at the Centre of Preparations for Foreign Missions in Kielce. These authors complement the entirety of the reflections on the issue that constitutes the subject of the book with their own vision of the challenges facing military ministry in future missions abroad.

A remarkable supplement to the content of the work are the compilations of the selected bibliography, a selection of photographs documenting the ministry of military chaplains on missions, annexes in the form of scans of documents evidencing the ministry of military chaplains and a bibliography of articles on military missions and the pastoral involvement of chaplains published in “Nasza Służba” – a bi-weekly of the Military Ordinariate from 1991 to V/2019.

4. Due to its scientific and factual (utilitarian) value, the book under review constitutes a unique collection of knowledge on the ministry of chaplains of the Military Ordinariate and an excellent supplement to the existing literature on the mission of the Polish Army outside our country in the service of peace, security and freedom of nations. It provides knowledge with well-documented sources, embedded mainly in the field of safety and security-related sciences. The material presented in the monograph meets all academic expectations and requirements. The book can be used in analytical, conceptual and scientific research work as both substantial and unique source material. In view of the above, I hereby recommend the monograph: *The power of Spirit... Chaplains of the Polish Army in the service for peace, security and freedom of nations.*