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THE ROLE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS IN PUBLIC SOCIAL PARTNERSHIP OF POLISH ARMED FORCES AND THEIR STAKEHOLDERS

Abstract

The article presents the description of the role played by military public relations in partnership cooperation the among armed forces and non-governmental organizations. In order to explain this role, both NATO documents and Polish reports and papers were analyzed.

The Authors would like to present various types of cooperation between the armed forces and their environment, as well as to show the role of planned and professional communication, that is, public relations. The authors begin their work from defining the basic research notions and then study various cases of Polish Armed Forces cooperation with their environment, especially with non-governmental organizations.

As the conclusion, the authors present the idea that the Polish Armed Forces realize, through the communication policy, their strategic target, which is preparing the personnel to the service in the armed forces units and to gain social acceptance for their actions and activities. Non-governmental organizations, thanks to the mentioned public relations, realize their various statutory goals.

Key words: Public relations, army, public social partnership.

Introduction

Armed Forces are the basic element of the external safety system in the majority of the countries in the world. In democratic societies, armed forces, apart from their fundamental role, meaning taking part in military conflicts and in other operations requiring the use of military force, usually back crisis management in public administration bodies, fighting the effects of natural disasters and catastrophes.

Armed forces deal with carrying the most important persons in a country both by air and by sea or land. Moreover, armed forces are often an employer offering work to civil and military workers. They are the customer, purchasing not only firearms and military equipment, but also cleaning services or security measures. Armed forces are the users for various objects of specific nature, such as barracks or military training areas. Specific uses of such objects, including the use of heavy vehicles, makes the civil adaptation or sharing them impossible.

Defending the country or fighting natural disasters require professional equipment. Purchasing military equipment not only involve great financial resources, but also specific tender procedures. Recruiting soldiers and civil workers means providing proper and attractive working conditions, as well as using personal methods and techniques.

The needs enumerated above should be accompanied by the necessity for the armed forces to take care of the natural environment (armed forces often organize military training areas in forests, at the seaside or over rivers), and of social memory, understood as funding museums or chambers of memory.

All of the above leads to the conclusion that the armed forces of a democratic country (including the Armed Forces of Poland) need social acceptance, especially the acceptance and cooperation of the stakeholders they cooperate with. Within the group of stakeholders non-governmental organizations play important role. What is worth highlighting, the stakeholders' acceptance may be received thanks to such tools, as public relations.

Basic definitions and concepts

In order to follow the article, one needs to describe the term "public relations". As Wojciech Budzyński writes [Budzyński, 2000: 10]: "public relations are conscious, planned and continuous efforts in order to create and maintain mutual understanding among given organization and its environment".

Stakeholders, according to the management dictionary [mfiles, 2014], are people or other organizations that participate in creating the project (they take active part in its realization) or are directly interested in the effect of its implementation. Stakeholders may influence given organization. One should also add that stakeholders are also defined as all people or groups of people connected with the activity of the given organization [Paliwoda-Matiolańska, 2009: 57].

According to the dictionary, partnership is "A relationship between individuals or groups that is characterized by mutual cooperation and responsibility, as for the achievement of a specified goal" (freedictionary). According to the Act of Public Private Partnership (Journal of Laws no. 96 item 873 as amended), such partnership is understood as the form of cooperation among public units and the bodies which are not included into the sector of public finance and which do not act in order to gain profits, based on the rules described in the act from 23rd April 2003 concerning public benefit and voluntary work.

Public-Private Partnership is one of the forms of cooperation where the integration mostly concerns public sector institutions, such as local government units, schools, social help centres, as well as social sector, understood as institutions of the third sector [Ziomek, 2010: 28].

The Armed Forces have much to offer to such organizations, which in turn may, for example, prepare people to work with Armed Forces through trainings offered to their participants.

Summing up, the authors of the article would like to show the role of management subfunction of public relations in Polish Armed Forces cooperation with non-governmental organizations. In order to achieve this, the documents concerning public private partnerships signed by a public management body, Armed Forces of Poland, with non- governmental organizations, will be analyzed.

The relations of polish armed forces and non-governmental organizations in the context of public relations

In order to present the role public relations play in cooperation of so specific organization as armed forces and their environment, one ought to at least sketch the norms and regulations managing such relations. Cooperation norms of Polish Armed Forces are the derivatives of NATO pact, to which Poland has belonged since 1999.

North Atlantic Treaty established the key task of military public affairs [www.militaryfactory.com, 2014] and is building the relations with, among others, non-governmental organizations and with other stakeholders [Allied Command Operations and Allied Command Transformation Public Affairs Handbook, 2010: 140–141]. Thus, the directions for information policies of armed forces of the countries belonging to NATO are set; it also concerns, at least to the certain degree, NATO allies, such as Sweden or Israel.

That is how Community Relations Programs are created- the programs of connections with the civil communities interacting with military NATO objects in member states. Such programs may accept the form of relating and improving the relations with the society, the business, academic world, etc. (NATO Military Public Affairs Policy, 2011: 13). Such programs allow to accept military investment in neighbouring communities, or people accepting military activities. The latter is especially important, as the lost war in Vietnam showed.

NATO norms influence Polish regulations concerning information policies of armed forces. One of such relations is setting the rules and the targets of Polish Armed Forces cooperation with non-governmental organizations:

In the area of the information policy, the priority activities should be as follows:

1. Professionalization of the Polish Armed Forces.
2. Technical modernization (upgrade) of the army as the transformation area of crucial, positive image potential.

3. Operations abroad, which are great organizational, technical and financial challenge and which society and the media are very interested in. One might assume they will require more and more of the integrated PR actions, as well as psychological and information operations.

4. Organization – structure changes.

5. Building the professional media department of the resort [Strategia: 4].

Therefore, the first and the third point of the decision of the National Defence Ministry directly refer to public relations.

Polish Armed Forces lead various activities for the stakeholders. In the document entitled Information Concerning the Cooperation of National Defence with Non- governmental Organizations and with Other Social Parties in 2012 it is stated that in the environment of veterans and combatants there were organized numerous meetings, events and anniversaries [Informacja, 2012: 8] – that type of activities build the proper image of the armed forces. Moreover, such events allow to create the place for the armed forces in the social memory.

In such events the armed forces also participated by offering logistic or expert support – the participants of such events are the potential group for the recruitment to the military in the future.

Armed forces cooperate with organizing picnics, events related to the history and tradition of Polish Military Forces. One may then enumerate a lot of examples of cooperation among the armed forces and non-governmental organizations in Poland.

As Łukasz Wilczyński writes [Wilczyński, , 2014]: “The range of image activities of the military is quite wide (...). Those are most often open events such as airplane picnics, barracks open days, national holidays or military orchestras concerts. Our presence may also be noted on such events as Wielka Orkiestra Świątecznej Pomocy, job fairs, scientific conferences”.

As far as patronages are concerned, their number increased from 86 in 2011 to 114 in 2012, 49 of which concerned the initiatives of NGOs and 14 – of local governments and their associations [Informacja, 2012: 9].

In 2013 Polish Armed Forces, together with non-governmental organizations, planned the organization of several events, some of them are presented below [Gołowienka 2012: 1–180].

On 17th January 2013 there was the celebration of 68th anniversary of freeing Warsaw; the Armed Forces organized directing military company of honour, tribute to the killed, salute fire and honour guard, as well as delegating some of the officials to the event. The co-organizer of the event was Ogólnopolskie Stowarzyszenie Rodzina Kościuszkowska Stowarzyszenie Tradycji LWP (National Association Kościuszko Family, Tradition Association LWP) [Gołowienka, 2012: 25].

On 18th January 2013 in Żary there was planned the celebration of the anniversary of creating 11th Mechanized Brigade. The Armed Forces provided military honour guard and the coach to transport company of honour. The Association of 42nd Mechanized Regiment and of 11th Mechanized Brigade was the organizer [Gołowienka, 2012: 6].

Celebrating the anniversary of the January Uprising in Zwierzyniec was organized by the local government of Zwierzyniec municipality and by the International Association of Home Army Soldiers, Zamość District; Polish Armed Forces supported the event by organizing salute fire, military honour guard and tribute to the killed, they also placed the flowers in the place of tribute [Gołowienka, 2012: 26].

On 4th February there were organized the celebrations of the 70th anniversary of the battle of Lasowice. The event was accompanied with the military honour guard, the tribute to the killed and with salute fire. The event was organized by the local government of Zwierzyniec municipality and by the International Association of Home Army Soldiers, Zamość District. [Gołowienka, 2012: 27].

The celebration of anniversary of renaming ZWZ (Union of Armed Struggle) into AK (Home Army) on 14th February in Zamość included flag carrying, honour guard and placing flowers. The event was organized by 1st Armoured Brigade and by the International Association of Home Army Soldiers, Zamość District [Gołowienka, 2012: 28].

In February 2013 there were organized the celebrations of 70th anniversary of eviction of Grabowiec inhabitants; the event included honour guard and offering flowers; the guard was set by 1st Armoured Brigade and by Veterans' Association of Grabowiec municipality [Gołowienka, 2012: 28].

In April 2013, Delta Association organized in Międzyrzecze the international cup LONG SHOT. 17th Mechanized Brigade was responsible for servicing the shooting range, medical support and organizing promotion point [Gołowienka, 2012: 7].

On 13th April 2013 the Veterans' Association and Former Political Prisoners Association, together with 12th Mechanized Division from Szczecin, organized the celebration of 68th anniversary of struggling the Odra river in the area of Siekierki. Static presentation of military equipment included showing Rosomak vehicle, Dana howitzer and the equipment of mechanized division. There were organized the stands promoting professional military service and the service with National Reserve Forces, and there was pea soup (traditional), offered by organizer [Gołowienka, 2012: 21].

In Warsaw, on 27th April there was organized the celebration of the birthday anniversary of general Zygmunt Berling. 1st Armoured Brigade set the honour guard, there were soldiers offering flowers. The organisers were the Association in Memory of General Zygmunt Berling and His Soldiers, the Association of Tradition of LWP (People Armed Forces) and the Association of Veterans and Reserves of WP (Armed Forces) [Gołowienka, 2012: 32].

In Kętrzyn on 1st May, 15th Mechanized Brigade and the "Military Part" Foundation, together with Aeroklub Krainy Jezior organized the event "Military May Picnic 2013". There were military honour guard, presenting military equipment: tank T-72, BWP-1 Quad-1 and the car BRDM "Zbik". Small arms weapons were presented, there was also unarmed combat presentation and the possibility to cook food together [Gołowienka, 2013: 34].

On 3rd May in Żary there was celebrated National Holiday, organized by the Association of 42 Mechanized Regiment and 11th Mechanized Brigade and by 10th Brigade of Armoured Cavalry, 34th Armoured Cavalry Brigade and Military Police Unit from Żagań. Military troops took part in honour guard, supported organization of military picnic, presented the equipment of individual soldiers [Gołowienka, 2012: 9].

The celebrations of the 3rd of May in Braniewo were supported by 9th Brigade of Armoured Cavalry. There was guard of honour, tribute to the killed; soldiers were accompanying the celebrations. Local government in Braniewo and the Association of War Veterans of Poland were the organizers [Gołowienka, 2012: 10].

On 11th May there was organized the 1st reunion of the Association of 42nd Mechanized Regiment and 11th Mechanized Brigade; there was organized Cavalry Picnic; the memorial plaque devoted to military units from Żary was unveiled, there was honour guard, the stand promoting “Black Division” and NSR (National Reserve Forces), there was also presented the equipment of individual soldiers, of tank PT-9 Twardy, Rosomak vehicle, the vehicles to transport the equipment was offered [Gołowienka, 2012: 33].

On 12th May there was celebrated the 70th anniversary of creating the 1st Infantry Division in the name of Tadeusz Kościuszko. Military support covered honour guards, the tribute to the killed together with salute fire and offering flowers to the Monument of Kościuszko Soldiers. The event was organized by 1st Armoured Brigade, National Association Kościuszko Family, the Association of Veterans and Reserve Soldiers, Tradition Association of LWP, Veterans of Right-Bank Warsaw [Gołowienka, 2012: 35].

On 17th May, the 17th Mechanized Brigade co-organized XII International Meeting Patrol “Polska 2013” in Międzyrzecze Wędrzyn. Shooting range was offered, as was medical and chemical protection, as well as communication and minesweeping equipment. Military equipment was presented and 17th Mechanized Brigade also organized promotion point. The other organizer was the Association of Active Reserve Soldiers [Gołowienka, 2012: 10].

On 17th May in Elbląg there was organized the Family Festival celebrating the 16th Command Battalion. Armed Forces organized logistics with the help of the Association “Military Family” [Gołowienka, 2012: 36].

Country Defence League – the branch in Międzyrzecze, together with the 17th Mechanized Brigade organized tactics workshops “Scouts Weekend III” in August 2013. Soldiers were offering their professional knowledge [Gołowienka, 2012: 15].

The 74th anniversary of the beginning of World War II were organized in the first decade of September in Oława by 1st Armoured Corps Veterans’ Club and by the Federation of Polish Armoured Forces Organizations. 11th Armoured Cavalry offered military honour guards and the tribute to the killed. Similar event was organized at that time in Szczecin by 12th Mechanized Division and the headquarters of Polish Veterans’ Associations and Former Political Prisoners Association [Gołowienka, 2012: 16].

On 17th September, the same division together with Katyń Association organized the celebration of the 74th anniversary of Soviet aggression on Poland [Gołowienka, 2012: 16].

Events abroad were also organized, together with non-governmental organizations; for example, the trip was organized to celebrate the 69th anniversary of freeing Breda. Federacja Organizacji Polskich Pancerniaków (The Federation of Polish Armoured Forces Organizations was the co-organizer) [Gołowienka, 2012: 17].

The events, shortly described above, do not present the full list of the celebrations co-organized by military forces and their social partners, but offer the insight into the type of such activities.

Moreover, enumerating the described events is to show the variety of communication solutions used by Polish Armed Forces, to present the issue of cooperation of Polish Armed Forces with such stakeholders as non-governmental organization. The above will allow to present the conclusions set by the authors. It is hoped that the conclusions will inspire further research.

Conclusion

Relations between the Polish Armed Forces and the non-governmental organizations are mostly based on historic memory and on tradition. This is not a disadvantage, however, it may mean that the army is “backwards-oriented”, not presenting the image of a modern organization. Obviously, there are also the presentations of new army equipment, such as Rosomak Wheeled Armoured Vehicle, but those happen less often or are used to support traditional activities. Neither the Second Przasznys Radio Electronic Centre nor Information Communication Training Centre participate in PR events despite the fact that the army could show them as the newest technology centers.

The presented events definitely do not exhaust possibilities of the Polish Army. It seems that in the era of feeling threatened, described and shown by the media due to armed conflicts and terrorism it is worth building the feeling of safety among Polish people with the help of the armed forces and the non-governmental organizations.

The described events do not constitute the full list of potential areas of cooperation with the third sector as well. What are PR activities of the armed forces cooperating with the third sector then? It appears that mostly, such role derives from the strategies accepted by the non-governmental organizations and by the armed forces. Polish Armed Forces mostly need their actions to be accepted: both the military ones and the activities due to peaceful coexistence of this public body, such as recruitment processes.

All that allows to draw the conclusion that the armed forces meet their set public relations targets, both short- and long-term, although new events and actions using modern techniques of addressing their stakeholders ought to be

used more often. There are some good practices of such kind, such as promoting the Polish Army in the cyberspace, using YouTube canals etc., nonetheless it seems important to highlight the necessity to introduce such tools more often than currently.

One may claim that public relations of Polish Armed Forces create the bond between the army and the non-governmental organizations, supporting the realization of the Army goals and of the NGOs targets alike.

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