



CHICAGO SOCIETY FORUM

Volume 63

January, 2012

Number 1

The Voice of an Autonomous Lodge of the Polish National Alliance

INAUGURAL BALL IS JUST AHEAD

DINNER NETWORKING MEETING

WEDNESDAY
January 18, 2012
6:00 P.M.

Copernicus Center
5216 W. Lawrence Ave.
Chicago, Illinois

RESERVATIONS
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meeting@chicagosocietypna.org

NEXT BOARD MEETING AND FORUM DEADLINE

Monday, January 30, 7:00 P.M.
Folak's Lincoln Tavern

COMING EVENTS

Wednesday, January 18
General Dinner Meeting
Copernicus Center, Chicago

Saturday, January 21
Inaugural Ball
Beau Jolie, Schiller Park

Wednesday, February 15
General Dinner Meeting
Site To Be Announced

Ball Chairman Brother **Mark Orwat** and his co-chairman Brother President **Frank Czaja** cordially invite all members of the Chicago Society of the PNA, their families and friends to the 2012 Inaugural Ball and Kick-off of the Society's 100th Anniversary. This is the premier event of the year for the Chicago Society. The Ball will be held on Saturday, January 21, 2012, at **Beau Jolie by Victoria**, 9950 Lawrence Avenue #5, Schiller Park, Illinois.

Guests at this black-tie optional gala will enjoy a delicious plated gourmet dinner featuring a choice of three entrées, dancing, and a program featuring the Induction of Officers. In addition, the Society will honor Hon. Diann Marszalek as Person of the Year and will present the Booster Award to the member who has sponsored the most new members during 2011. The Most Reverend Andrew P. Wypych, Auxiliary Bishop of Chicago, will give the invocation and induct the new officers of the Society.

The evening will begin at 6:30 p.m. with hot and cold hors d'oeuvres. Complimentary premium liquor will be available throughout the entire evening. Guests will have their choice of three entrées, to be selected that evening. The choices of entrée are Steak Delmonico, Chicken Limón and Atlantic Salmon. Brother **Anthony Kawalkowski** will be serenading everyone during dinner with his strolling violinists. His orchestra will then provide dancing music until 12:00 a.m.

Tickets for the Gala are \$120.00 per person. For more information or to request an invitation, contact Brother President **Frank Czaja** 312-520-6144 or frankcz@usa.net. Payments can be made by check when you return your response or by PayPal on our web site. Reservations are due by January 10, 2012. No tickets will be sold at the door. Reservations will be held at the entrance table; tickets will not be mailed.

All members should add this elegant evening to their calendar of activities. Singles, nonmembers and newcomers are welcome! The committee would be honored to see members and non-members alike at the Ball.



HOW TO PLAN FOR THE WORST

Is your financial future secure? Will you outlive your money? These are some of the concerns that keep people up at night. This anxiety is only made worse by the current financial meltdown.

Our speaker at the January General Meeting will be Brother **Tom Kedzie** from Lincoln Financial Advisors. Tom is a financial planner whose practice specializes in retirement planning. Tom will present some simple strategies that everyone can use to reduce taxes, decrease stock market risk, and increase retirement income.

POLISH TRIVIA

He was born January 28, 1887 in Łódź, Poland. He made his concert debut at the age of 4. He became a U.S. citizen during World War II. He received international acclaim for his performances of the music of a variety of composers; many regard him as the greatest Chopin interpreter of the century. He is widely considered one of the greatest classical pianists of the twentieth century. Who is this man? If you know the answer, please email it to editor@chicagosocietypna.org. The first person who emails the correct answer will be featured in the next *Forum*.

Answer to December's question: December 13 marked the 30th Anniversary of imposition of martial law in Poland. The correct answer was given by Brother **Ted Lipkowski**.



CHICAGO SOCIETY FORUM

A monthly news bulletin for the
Chicago Society PNA membership

Director of Publications

Ted Wiecek

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THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

HAPPY NEW YEAR!!! SZCZÊELIWEGO NOWEGO ROKU!!

Brothers,

I hope that everyone had a good and joyous Christmas and that everyone's wishes for Christmas came true. I hope everyone had fun and enjoyed the ringing in of the New Year and that for those of you who made a resolution or two, that you are able to see them through. I would like to wish everyone a very happy and healthy New Year. I wish all the best in the coming year for you and your families.

I would like to thank House Director Brother **Chuck Cwiakala** and his assistant Brother **Ro Matuszczak** for their great job of providing for a fun and enjoyable Christmas meeting/party. A good time was had by all. Everyone enjoyed the food, music, entertainment and the camaraderie, which abounded with the breaking of the *op³atek*. Congratulations to the winners of the auction and the raffle.

Remember that we are now starting The Chicago Society's 100-year celebration. What better way to start off this milestone than to attend the Inaugural Ball. Join the officers and directors and your fellow brothers for a magnificent evening of enjoyment. So if you have not already done so, make your plans and contact me for reservations and payment. See you there for this significant event.

Join us in the support of our troops as we collect used cell phones. The Chicago Society is participating in the Cell Phone for Soldiers Campaign.

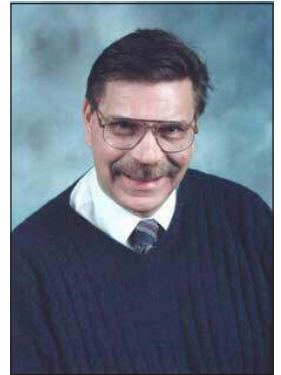
Help make this a great year in the existence of The Chicago Society and participate in the club activities. Show your pride in our club.

We will open the book. Its pages are blank. We are going to put words on them ourselves. The book is called Opportunity and its first chapter is New Year's Day.

—Edith Lovejoy Pierce

Fraternally Yours,

President Frank Czaja



FROM THE EDITOR'S PEN

I trust all of you had a joyous and wonderful Christmas. I was recently elected to the Chicago Society Board of Directors and appointed as Director of Publications, which is just a fancy name for Editor of *The Forum*. Thank you to the members and the Board for entrusting me with this significant position. I appreciate all the words of support

and encouragement I have received. I trust you won't be disappointed.

I've been a member of The Society for a relatively short time, so I'm counting on you the members to provide news and information for publication. Merriam-Webster defines *forum* as "a medium of open discussion or expression of ideas." I would like to see *The Forum* as a place in which the members can share not only news items, but also items of interest to the members.

You will see some new features in *The Forum*. Every month you will see items *From the Annals of The Chicago Society*. This is the Society's 100th Anniversary, and you will be able to follow our history through the first 100 years. You will also see *Traditions of Poland* for the given month. I hope that this will give you greater knowledge and appreciation of the beauty of our heritage.

I warmly invite all brothers to submit any and all items they would like to share with the membership. This includes life-events, events you have attended, news about other members, news you have found about a new business venture that you would like to share, anything you feel might be of interest to your fellow members. Simply email them to editor@chicagosocietypna.org. I'm looking forward to your news items.

May 2012 bring all of you peace, health, and prosperity. *Szczêeliwego Nowego Roku!*



**MAKE YOUR MEETING
RESERVATION NOW**

AROUND THE SOCIETY & POLONIA

The Polish Arts Club of Chicago held its Annual Christmas Luncheon on Dec. 11. Enjoying the festivities and the great company were President Brother **Frank Czaja** and his wife, Brother **T. Ron Jasinski-Herbert**, Brother **Ed Kuk** with his wife and daughter, and Brother **Ted Wiecek**.

Kristin Lipkowski, daughter of Brother **Ted Lipowski** and Loretta, has completed her work for a second Master's degree at UIC. In addition, she has been invited to participate in the Thirteenth Annual Graduate Symposium on Women's and Gender History to be held March 2 to 4, 2012, at the University of Illinois in Champaign. The invitation was extended to Kristin following her submission of a paper regarding the symposium subject matter.


Our condolences are extended to Brother **Bill Sufanski** on the death of his mother.

THIS IS THE CENTENNIAL YEAR OF THE CHICAGO SOCIETY

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CHICAGO SOCIETY CELEB

This year's annual Chicago Society *Celeb* will take place at La Villa Restaurant & Banquets, 3632 North Pulaski Road, in Chicago on Tuesday, February 21, 2012. Free parking is available in lots located just north and south of the building. The festivities will begin with a social hour (cash bar) at 6:00 p.m. followed by a fine dinner of various entrée choices at 7:00 p.m. This festive event is open to members, non-members, family, relatives, singles, and guests. The cost of the event is only \$35.00 per person.

Dinner will start with *celedz* (herring) as an appetizer. After dinner, the traditional pageant representing *Celedz* will be held followed by the crowning of St. Joseph for 2012. The gentlemen selected acts as a chaplain at the Chicago Society meetings and at special occasions, leading those present in an appropriate prayer. There will be a raffle and a time for dancing to the music of Polka Generation.

The celebration of *Celedz* is the Chicago Society's version of Christian and Polish traditions that date back centuries. It is a celebration of carnival, or *Mardi Gras* - the period immediately preceding Lent.

DESERVING CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PARTY

On Saturday, December 10, 2011, the annual Chicago Society Deserving Children's Christmas Party was held at the Polish National Alliance Headquarters at 6100 N. Cicero Avenue in Chicago, Illinois. Our thanks to our President Brother **Frank Spula** and National Secretary Brother **Charles Komosa** of the PNA for making the arrangements to hold the party at the PNA Headquarters.

There were sixty-nine children present. All told, including parents and the "helpers," there were over one hundred-thirty persons taking part in the event.

The festivities started at noon with a light lunch, followed by a magic act which included live birds and a rabbit. After the magic act, the children had a chance to pet the rabbit.

Naturally, the greatest anticipation was for the coming of Santa Claus, played for many years by Brother **Andy Batorski**, who delighted both the children and the parents by speaking in both English and Polish. With the bells ringing and the children singing "Jingle Bells," Santa arrived and distributed gifts. Each child received a gift which was addressed by name and age. Upon leaving, each child also received an envelope containing five dollars. A party of this size was made possible thanks to volunteers and donations received from various sources.

The chairman of the event, Brother **Ro Matuszczak**, would like to thank the following persons for their help: Christ Matuszczak, Ro's wife, who was in charge of the kitchen and was ably assisted by perennial helpers, Lottie Pilarski and Alina Tondryk. Thank you to Veronica Folak for obtaining hot dogs; to Brother **Peter** and Agnes **Dykas** for contributing and serving soda; to our President Brother **Frank Czaja** and his wife for donating potato chips; and to the following for their help: Renee Robinson, Ro's daughter, and her son Kyle; Fred Koziol; Patryk Czaja, son of Frank and Darlene; Santa Claus Andy Batorski, and Charles Komosa. Also thanks for the wrapping of the gifts to Chris Matuszczak, Renee Robinson, Yvonne Koontz, Ro's daughter, and grandson Paul, sons-in-law Chris Duff and Tom Koontz.

Donations were received from the following persons and organizations which helped make the event a success: Chicago Society - \$500.00; Brother **Ted Szywala** - \$300.00, who has been donating for over 30 years; Brother **Charles Cwiakala** - \$100.00; Brother **John Wojciechowski** - \$100.00; and Brother **Jack Skaja** - \$200.00. Both John and Jack have been long-time donors. Also, thanks to the Polish-Slavic Credit Union - \$150.00; Joan Kosinski - \$100.00; Judge Diann Marszalek - \$100.00; anonymous donor \$100.00; and to the PNC Bank -\$1,000.00 (thanks to the efforts of Mario Pucharic of Integra Communications). Heartfelt thanks to all the volunteers and contributors. You all helped make this a memorable event, one which the children will long remember.

Kudos to Brother **Ro Matuszczak**, who has chaired and organized this event for 48 years. An event of this scope takes a lot of love and dedication, and is a success thanks to Ro's efforts.

YOU CAN PAY YOUR DUES AT OUR WEBSITE

CHICAGO SOCIETY PNA JOINS CELL PHONES FOR SOLDIERS CAMPAIGN

The Chicago Society is supporting the “Cell Phones for Soldiers” program by asking members to bring cell phones and chargers to the January and February General meetings.



More than 150,000 troops are serving overseas and are away from their families. “Cell Phones for

Soldiers” and the Chicago Society are calling on everyone in the area to support these brave men and women by donating your unused cell phones.

“Cell Phones for Soldiers” was founded by teenagers Robbie and Brittany Berquist from Nowell, Massachusetts, using \$21 of their own money. Since then, the registered 501(c)3 non-profit organization has raised almost \$1 million dollars and distributed more than 5000,000 prepaid calling cards to soldiers serving overseas. The donated phones are sent to ReCellular, which pays “Cell Phones for Soldiers” for each donated phone, enough to provide an hour of talk time to soldiers abroad with prepaid calling cards.

Please help us support our troops. We will be collecting used cell phones with chargers at our January and February General meetings. This activity is being chaired by Brother **Fred Koziol**, Director of Special Projects. Bring in your cell phones and chargers and give them to Fred at the meetings.

LETTER OF THANKS

Dear Officers, Board, and Members of the Chicago Society PNA,

Many thanks for including me in your generous ad in the 2011 Heritage Award Banquet program book! Your kindness made the distinguished recognition even more meaningful!

My 41 years as a Chicago Society spouse have brought many friends and many positive experiences. Thank you for acknowledging that joy in this way!

Most gratefully,
Maria Ciesla

CHICAGO SOCIETY ANNUAL CHRISTMAS PARTY

Over 60 members, their wives and guests enjoyed the Chicago Society’s Annual Christmas Party on Wednesday, December 21 at Przybylo’s House of the White Eagle. After the membership dispensed with the business portion of the meeting, our St. Joseph Brother **Walter Pieciewicz** began the festivities with the customary invocation. The guests then broke and shared the traditional *op³atek*, extending to each other wishes for a wonderful Christmas season and a joyous New Year. Music throughout the evening was provided by the very talented Brother **Kamil Bartoszcze** and Ania Leszczynska. Following a delicious dinner prepared by Brother **Andy Przybylo** and his staff, the Polonia Dance Ensemble delighted the guests with songs and dance from Kraków. The youthful energy shown by the dancers was warmly received by all. We are gratified that the members of the Ensemble are upholding and continuing the treasures of Polish folklore with its uniqueness, diversity, and power of expression. Anna Krysinska, director of the Ensemble, expressed her wishes for a Merry Christmas to all present. Ola Pawlowska of the Polonia Ensemble enchanted everyone with her singing of *Pastora³ka Tysi¹ ciecia: Dzieci¹ tko niesie mi³oæ* (“The Baby brings love”).

Santa came early for a number of our guests. The Chicago Society recently purchased two works at the Polish Arts Club Exhibition, which were auctioned off at the Christmas Party. Brother **Walter Pieciewicz** won “Planty Park, Kraków” by Czes³aw Pyrgies, and Brother **Richard Jadcak** won “Sunny Day” by Peter Bullock. Beautiful Christmas items from the raffle were won by: Ania Pieciewicz, Phyllis Ranalli, Brother **John Skaja**, Brother **Tony Jackowski**, Lucille Gutowski, Brother **Richard Jadcak**, Stanis³awa Witek, Brother **Walter Pieciewicz**, Brother **Joe Hercik**, Alex Czyszczonek, Brother **Fred Koziol**, Ania Bujanowska (who made sure our guests had cocktails to enjoy throughout the evening), Brother **T. Ron Jasinski-Herbert**, Brother **Rich Ciesla**, Cecylia Jadcak, Brother **Ray Golenin**, Brother **Jim Kulze**, Brother **Ronald “Topper” Topczewski**, Andrew Sopieski, Brother **Kamil Bartoszcze**, Brother **Matt Rodriguez**, Brother **Rich Bivens**, and Brother **Terry Przybylski**. Congratulations to all the winners. May you all enjoy the gifts Santa brought you.

A huge *Bóg zap³ae* to Brother **Chuck Cwiakala** for organizing this enjoyable and entertaining evening, as well as all the informative and pleasant dinner meetings over the past two years. Your efforts are greatly appreciated, Chuck.

MARTIAL LAW ANNIVERSARY REMEMBERED

Warsaw (PMN)—December 13, 2011, marked the 30th anniversary of the imposition of martial law by Poland’s communist authorities. One of the most tragic dates in modern Polish history was remembered across the country, with numerous special events scheduled to take place. These were historical debates, film screenings, exhibitions and reenactments. In Warsaw, for one, a reenactment of a street battle between anti-communist opposition members and communist police was held.

As every year, a protest took place in the capital in front of the house of Wojciech Jaruzelski, Poland’s last communist leader who, in 1981, declared martial law.

In force between December 13, 1981, and July 22, 1983, martial law was introduced in order to counter growing unrest against the communist regime and suppress a potential uprising.

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POLAND PREPARES FOR EURO 2012

Warsaw (PMN)—Warsaw's national stadium is close to completion after an startling investment of half of \$647 million. In just six months time, the venue will host the opening game of Euro 2012, where Poland meets Greece.

Daria Kulinska of the National Sports Center said, "This is one of the most modern stadiums in Europe. Our colleagues from the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) call it The Big Baby."

Euro 2012 will be the biggest ever sports event organized in Poland. The country's infrastructure has developed in leaps and bounds since it was chosen to co-host the tournament in 2007. But it has been a race against time from the beginning. Billions of dollars have been spent as a result of joint investments from the government and European funds and undertaking the challenge has been a gigantic feat for organizers.

A key concern, though, is Poland's lack of high speed railway lines and due to maintenance neglect, the top speed of its older trains is often under 62 miles per hour.

GUTOWSKI TO RECEIVE COPERNICAN AWARD

Brother **Donald Gutowski**, Past President and current Executive Vice-President of the Chicago Society, will be honored by the Copernicus Foundation as the recipient of this year's Copernican Award. Donald has been in the leadership of the Foundation since its founding in 1971. He currently serves as Chairman of the Board of the Foundation, and has been instrumental in the development and renovation of the Copernicus Center. The Copernican Award is being awarded to Don in recognition of his years of service and dedication to the Foundation and to Polonia.

The Award will be presented on Friday, Jan. 20, 2012 at the opening and dedication of the Center's Annex, which Donald was instrumental in procuring and developing into additional meeting space for the Center. A VIP reception will begin at 5:30, followed by the opening of the Annex and the presentation of the Award. All Chicago Society members are invited to the VIP reception; however, an invitation is required. For an invitation or to RSVP, please contact the Foundation at 773-777-8898.

POLISH TRADITIONS IN JANUARY

In Poland, Christmas Eve (Wigilia) marks the beginning of the Christmas period, which lasts 12 days (hence, "The Twelve Days of Christmas"). On Twelfth Night, January 6th, Poles take small boxes containing chalk, a gold ring, incense and a piece of amber - in memory of the gifts of the Magi - to church to be blessed. Once at home, they inscribe the date and "K+M+B" with the blessed chalk above every door in the house to provide protection against illness and misfortune for those within. For 2012, it would be "20 K+M+B 12." The letters, with a cross after each one, stand for names of the Three Kings - Kaspar, Melchior and Balthasar. They remain above the doors all year.

Starting on Christmas and throughout January, *kolêdnicy* (Polish carolers) travel from house to house. These groups of young boys



and girls could best be described as caroler-masqueraders. One carries a large illuminated star on a pole, another comes carrying a Christmas crib and the others are dressed as King Herod, death, an angel, devil, soldier, priest, peasant, and beggar. As the season wears on, the religious figures disappear and a wild ox (*turoń*), bear and stork are often added.

Throughout January, *Jasełka*, Christmas pageants, are presented in parishes and community centers throughout Poland. These performances range from the traditional reenactment of the Christmas story to more contemporary productions.

Candlemas on February 2nd marks the end of the Christmas season in Polish tradition. Up till then, *kolêdy* are sung in churches and Christmas parties are held. In Poland the feast is called "Cewięto Matki Boskiej Gromnicznej." This name refers to the candles that are blessed on this day, called *gromnicy*, since these candles are lit during thunderstorms and placed in windows to ward off storms.

Did you know? January in Polish is *styczeń*, which comes from the word *stykac*, meaning to meet, to join. *Styczeń* is the month which joins the old with the new year.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Jan. 15 Amopod *Wieczór Kolêd* at the Polish Consulate

Jan. 20 Copernicus Foundation Copernican Award honoring Brother **Donald Gutowski**

Jan. 21 Chicago Society Inaugural Ball, 100th Anniversary kickoff

Feb. 8 Advocates Society Installation Dinner, honoring Mitchell Wiet

Feb. 18 Legion of Young Polish Women White & Red Ball and Presentation of Debutantes

Feb. 21 Chicago Society *Eladŷ*



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JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

The Chicago Society would like to extend to the following brother members, who are celebrating their birthday this month, a warm wish of *Sto Lat!*

- 2 Gregory Ciesla
- 3 Henry Ziemba
- 8 Zenon Olejniczak
- 12 Jaroslaw Jastrzebski
- 13 Frank Gondela
- 15 Joseph Kotlarz
Chester Sawko
- 21 Edward Blicharski
- 23 James Kolak
- 24 Robert Radkowski
- 26 Norbert Barszczewski
William Powell
Frank Spula
- 27 Carlton Marcyan
Walter Piecewicz
- 28 Thomas Kedzie
Bogdan Korzeniowski
Arthur Siemion

MEMBERS' ANNIVERSARIES

The Chicago Society would like to congratulate the following brother members, who are celebrating the anniversary of their induction this month, for their many years of membership.

| | | |
|--------------------|------|----------|
| Walter Kolodziej | 1992 | 10 years |
| Richard Jakubowski | 2007 | 5 years |
| Robert Mance | 2007 | 5 years |
| Frank Spula | 2007 | 5 years |

NEW BOARD MEMBERS TAKE OFFICE

At the Board meeting on January 3, 2012, the newly elected Officers and members of the Board of Directors of the Chicago Society took their oath of office. In addition, the following directors-at-large were appointed to the following posts:

- Ted Wiecek** - Director of Publications
- Richard Bivins** - Director of Finance
- Charles Cwiakala** - Director of Personnel
- Fred Koziol** - Director of Special Projects
- Tomasz Pawelko** - Director of Public Relations

Please join in wishing the members of the Board and the Directors much success in advancing the Society for all its brothers.

NEW WEBSITE IS COMING!!

Watch for a redesigned website for the Chicago Society. Our new website will have a new look, a new feel, and some new features. Look for it towards the end of January. Just go to www.chicagosocietypna.org.

FROM THE ANNALS OF THE CHICAGO SOCIETY

The first meeting of The Chicago Society was held on Wednesday, April 3, 1912, at Western Halls, 88 E. Randolph St. Mr. A. Smietanka called the meeting to order. Temporary officers of that meeting were A. Smietanka, chairman; L. S. Mallek, recording secretary, and F. A. Osuch, financial secretary. F. P. Garbarek, L. Pinderski, L. Dyniewicz, A. Balassa, Aug. Urbanski and L. Prominski, took active part in the discussion and earnestly urged that the society be organized and affiliated with the Polish National Alliance, which was unanimously accepted and adopted by those present.

The following resolution was presented by the organizers and adopted by those present:

For many years the Polish young men of Chicago felt the need of a Polish organization, appreciating well the fact that only by binding themselves together in a strong a vigorous body could they work more effectively to arouse and instill in the hearts and minds of the rising generation a love for the ideals and traditions of the Mother country and obtain a greater respect and gain a greater prestige for the Polish people in this country.

The charter members of The Chicago Society were: K. Adamowski, A. L. Balassa, B. Brokowski, K. Demek, L. W. Dyniewicz, M. P. Gorny, F. P. Garbarek, L. Jareczek, A. A. Kowalski, Aug. J. Kowalski, L. A. Koziczynski, S. Kiosowski, J. Konczyk, A. Mikitynski, M. Paszynski, W. Polczynski, Ed Prebis, L. Pinderski, V. A. Porszinski, H. A. Rewolinski, F. C. Rogalski, Aug. Urbanski, S. Wieckowski, J. A. Wisniewski, and L. H. Przybylski.

Exerpted from the forerunner of the *Forum*, the *Chicago Society News*, September, 1922.

IN MEMORIAM

Brother **Anthony S. Wesley**, lately of New Port Richey, Florida, passed away on November 25, 2011. He was a member of the Chicago Society since 1977.



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NEWS BRIEFS

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Poland's Interior Affairs Minister, Jacek Cichocki, said on December 12, 2011, that the government wants to raise the retirement age for uniformed services personnel and increase their minimum length of career as it tries to curb spending to safeguard against fallout from the euro zone's debt crisis. At present, Poland's police, military and custom officers, among others, can qualify for pensions after as little as 15 years at work. The Polish government has long been locked in difficult negotiations with labor unions about changing that. The proposals would only affect uniformed services personnel starting work in 2013. They will be entitled to retire after a minimum of 25 years at work and not before turning 55 years old.

Poland's artists are beginning to see higher prices paid for their works. There have been examples of contemporary Polish artwork selling for six figure sums in recent years. Between 2009 and 2010, 10 Polish artists sold works at auction priced from 100,000 zloty (\$29,400) to 470,000 zloty (\$138,000), according to Zuzanna Sokalska, director of Galeria Art New media. But, while such prices are high for the Polish market, they are small change in comparison to the prices paid in some of the larger art markets around the world, such as the U.S., UK, or China.

According to ratings agency Fitch, the prospects for Poland's credit ratings are stable largely due to the country's relatively strong economic prospects. The *Warsaw Business Journal* quoted Matteo Napolitano, Fitch's director for Europe, the Middle East and Africa, in mid-December as saying, "We don't see grounds for any ratings action now. The risks to our rating [of Poland] are in balance. There are sufficient domestic strengths to balance out the negatives coming from the external environment, so the net result from that is the stable outlook we attach to our rating."

Dziennik Gazeta Prawna [Daily Law Journal] wrote on December 12, 2011, that approximately 7,000 Polish soldiers will have left the army by the end of 2011 with over 5,700 of them doing so voluntarily. Defense Minister Tomasz Siemoniak said that "In the

PNA ASSISTS NEEDY CHILDREN WITH CHRISTMAS TOY DRIVE

The Polish National Alliance held their annual toy drive for needy children from November through the second week of December. A large decorated carton stood in the lobby of the Home Office as well as various other locations throughout the area for donations from PNA employees and guests. This year the donations were the highest the past few years. Many of the Employees donated cash or brought items in as well. Cash donations were used to purchase additional toys from area stores.

Boxes containing over 200 donated toys, games, stuffed animals and books were delivered to Swedish Covenant Hospital in Chicago and to a Salvation Army location on the North Side of Chicago. The staff of both Swedish Covenant Hospital and the Salvation Army were very grateful for the donations and would like to thank everyone who donated to make a needy or ill child at Christmas smile.



Vice Presidents Teresa Abick and Brother Paul Odrobina with donated toys before they were packed up to be delivered to Swedish Covenant.

last decade, we haven't had this many soldiers leave," adding that "this will be a problem for the military." He said he thought soldiers were leaving the army in such numbers because of social reasons and wages. The ministry had expected that around 3,000 soldiers would leave the army this year, and made its budget forecasts based on that number. Now, however, the ministry will have to allot an extra \$129.3 million in benefits because of the unexpectedly high number of soldiers who are ending their military careers.

A ceremony to award Aleksander Bialacki, a Belarusian oppositionist, with the Polish Foreign Ministry Prize Pro Dignitate Humana [For Human Dignity] was held on December 12, 2011, at the Ministry headquarters in Warsaw. Bialacki received the prize for his outstanding commitment and efforts at protecting human rights and values. Bialacki is Vice President of the International Federation for Human Rights and the founder of the Viasna Human Rights Center, which helps those repressed in Belarus. For his activity he was sentenced in a political trial to four and a half years imprisonment in a penal colony, as well as the confiscation of property.

The number of passenger cars and trucks produced in Poland fell 9.8% in annual terms

in November due to weaker export demand, the auto market research institute SAMAR said in a statement on December 14, 2011. Factories in Poland produced a total of 768,303 cars and trucks in the January-November period, 6.4% less than in the corresponding period last year. About 98% of cars and trucks produced in Poland are exported and the slowdown in the euro zone has taken a toll on demand despite a 13% weakening of the Polish zloty versus the euro this year. Poland has four major car producers: Fiat Auto Poland with a 57% share of domestic auto output, Opel Polska with a 21% share, Volkswagen with a 21% share and FSO with a 1% share.

National Bank of Poland (NBP) President Marek Belka told reporters on December 14, that in 2011, the Polish banking sector's gain could amount to about \$4.4 billion, three times more than banks would need to secure themselves against "incredibly extreme" financial conditions, reported the daily *Rzeczpospolita* [The Republic]. He added that stress tests given the Polish banking system are much stricter than those applied to European banks by European banking supervisors.

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