

# Instytut Pamięci Narodowej

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## **“Strengthen Your Arm - Serve Your Homeland”. The 135th Anniversary of the Polish Falcons in America**

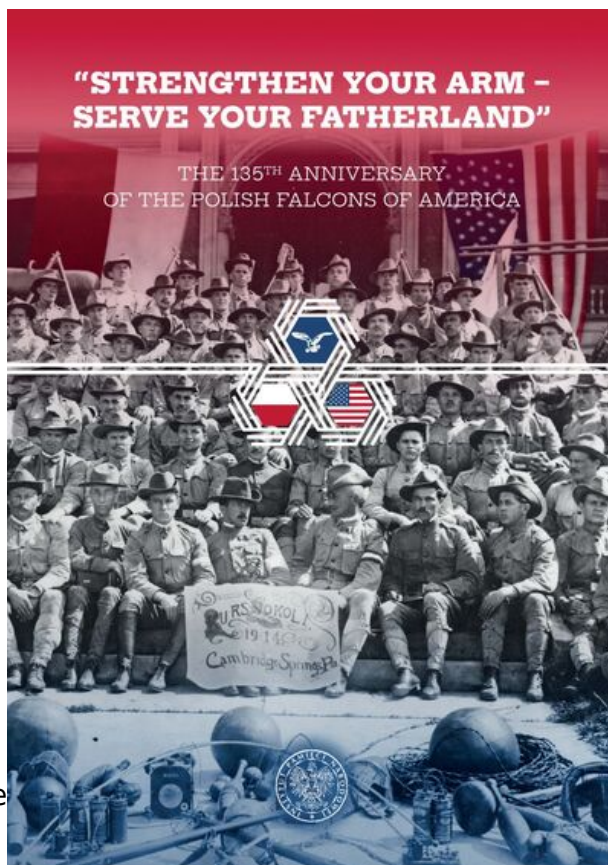
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Szostek “Strengthen Your Arm - Serve  
Your Homeland”. The 135th  
Anniversary of the Polish Falcons in  
America, Warsaw 2022, 184 pp., ISBN:  
978-83-8229-609-9**

Dear Readers!

As I place this publication in your hands, I would like to thank you wholeheartedly for the trust that was placed in us by the members of the Polish Falcons of America, headed by President Timothy L. Kuzma. The materials donated within the framework of the *Archive Full of Remembrance* project provide us with a pretext to bring to all those who are interested, the history of this important organization, in whose activities the element of patriotism was constantly present.

The welcoming land of America has received Polish immigrants for many years. Among the newcomers were also enthusiasts of the ideals of the “Sokół” (Falcon) Gymnastic Society, which was gaining popularity in the Polish lands under partition. As a result, the first Falcon nest in Chicago began its activities under the leadership of founding father Feliks L. Pietrowicz, exactly two decades after the formation of “Sokół” in Lvov – the mother nest. Despite the distance and the fact that Poland was not on any maps at that time, contact between the Polish Falcons of America and their native land was constantly maintained and strengthened over the years.

It was thanks to the aficionados emerging from Falcon structures – on Polish soil and in the United States, as well as in other countries – that the national identity of Poles could survive throughout the period of partition. When the historical hour came, the rising up of



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Polonia was not to be underestimated. Members of the Falcons, putting their lives and well-being on the line, joined the ranks of General Józef Haller's Blue Army, in this having the unceasing support of the "father of independence" – Ignacy Jan Paderewski.

Over the years, the Polish Falcons of America have responded to the greatest challenges and needs of the Fatherland – the regaining of Poland's independence, the Polish-Bolshevik war, and the difficult situation of the country during both world wars. Important events and figures from Polish history have been entered into the history of the organization. Here we cannot fail to mention the most distinguished Falcon, Teofil Antoni Starzyński, the long-time president of the Polish Falcons of America, who by his attitude and deeds embodied the ideal of a Falcon – a patriot and a Pole.

With the transfer of the Polish Falcons of America collection to the Archive of the Institute of National Remembrance repository, memorabilia inextricably linked to the history of our nation has been conveyed to Polish soil. This generous gift came to the Institute as part of the project – immensely important to me – the *Archive Full of Remembrance*. Since its initiation in 2017, we have received nearly 1,800 acquisitions from private individuals into the IPN repository. We know that remarkably valuable materials, both from Poles and associated with Poland, are outside this country, and we desire to see them – whether in originals or in the form of digital copies – revert to the Motherland. We want to expand our activities, because there were and are institutions that have their own archives that are not always safeguarded in a professional manner – we, as the Institute of National Remembrance, do not want them to be left on their own. I am convinced that thanks to the *Archive Full of Remembrance*, many unknown individual testimonies of patriotism will have a chance to find their way onto the pages of history.

I hope that the publication we are placing in your hands, "*Strengthen Your Arm – Serve Your Fatherland*" – *The 135th Anniversary of the Polish Falcons of America*, as well as the exhibition prepared by the IPN Archive under the same title, will contribute to the preservation of the history and merits of the Polish Falcons of America in the shared consciousness of Poles.

I am extremely pleased that today – in an independent Poland – we can present the heritage of those who fought for independence and never ceased to bring assistance to the country of their ancestors. This would not have been possible without the commitment of the staff at the Archive of the Institute of National Remembrance, who have looked after the archival materials and museum artifacts brought from the United States. An array of people have conducted the professional preservation and compilation of the archive of the Polish Falcons of America, and at this point, I would like to thank them.

Let this publication convey the history of this remarkable and distinguished organization to the world, along with our pledge that we will not forget it.

Dr. Karol Nawrocki

## **PLIKI DO POBRANIA**

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