

# Institute of National Remembrance

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## The IPN recalled the story of the Ulma family in Iceland - 28 January 2024







The Ulma Family was commemorated at the Polish Embassy in Reykjavík. The meeting was opened by a welcoming address by the

Polish Ambassador to Iceland, Gerard Pokruszyński focused on the tragic story of the Ulma Family. The Deputy President of the IPN Mateusz Szpytma, Ph.D., outlined the historical background and presented the unique photos taken by Józef Ulma. Prof. Marek Wierzbicki, representing the IPN Historical Research Office, gave lecture about the Holocaust.

The Ulmas were beatified by the Vatican in 2023. It was the first time that an entire family had been proclaimed blessed. Pope Francis said the Ulmas *represented a ray of light in the darkness* of the war and should be a model for everyone in *doing good and in the service of those in need*.

Iceland's Chief Rabbi Avraham Feldman addressed a few words to those present at the event and initiated a prayer. The meeting was attended by numerous representatives of the diplomatic corps from the United States, Japan, Norway, Germany Great Britain, Denmark, Faeroe Islands and Canada.

The event was closed with the screening of a documentary entitled "The Story of One Crime". The 76-minute-long documentary presents not only the circumstances of the crime in Markowa, but also its perpetrators and their postwar fate. The IPN is the substantive partner

of the film.

We encourage you to watch a video spot prepared by the IPN Office of International Cooperation for the occasion of the beatification of the Ulma Family. The film, presenting Józef and Wiktoria Ulma and their children, consists of three parts: family life in Markowa; German occupation marked by brutality and mass terror, and the beatification.

During his stay in Iceland, the IPN Deputy President Mateusz Szpytma, Ph.D. visited the home and community of the Order of Carmelite Nuns in Hafnarfjörður. The community is made up of nuns from Poland. It has the invocation of the Immaculate Lady of Częstochowa and St. Joseph. The mission and charism of the Carmelite Nuns is prayer and personal relationship with Jesus. They provide spiritual ministry to all those seeking support, both from among Catholics and Protestants. They are also an important Polish center in Iceland.

Mateusz Szpytma, Ph.D., also met Fr. Mikołaj Kęcik, a priest from the Neocatechumenal Way who works in Iceland on a daily basis. Fr. Kęcik is the son of Wiesław Kęcik, a famous activist of the Workers' Defence Committee, an expert on the countryside and agriculture, and an organizer of the independent peasant movement. Together with his wife Marzena Górszczyk-Kęcik – born during the return of Anders' army in Tehran, baptized in Bethlehem – they created in their house on Gimnastyczna Street in Warsaw a center of communist resistance in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Members of the anti-communist opposition community used to meet there.

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