

Institute of National Remembrance

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A visit of representatives of the Polish community institutions from Australia – 18-19 September 2018

Marian Pawlik, President of the Polish Community Council of Victoria, and his wife paid a visit to the Institute of National Remembrance and met with Dr Jarosław Szarek, President of the Institute, and Dr Mateusz Szpytma, Deputy President of the Institute. The meeting was also attended by Dr Rafał Leśkiewicz, Director of the IPN's Information Technology Department and Agnieszka Jędrzak, head of the IPN's Division of International Relations at the President's Office.



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The guests also visited the Archive, where they got to know the main

tasks and activities of the Center for Information on the Victims of World War II, visited the warehouse with military documentation, got acquainted with the functionalities of the video-comparator and had the opportunity to look at the work carried out in the Conservation Workshop. They were particularly interested in souvenirs connected with Tadeusz Starzyński, the State Police officer, the Silent-Unseen and Mokotow prisoner, which have been found in Scotland.

Another point in the agenda was the Museum of Cursed Soldiers and Political Prisoners of the Polish People's Republic, where the guests were presented a temporary exhibition entitled *Evidence of Crime. Objects from Lot "Ł" in pavilion X of the Rakowiecka prison*. These are objects found during exploration and exhumation work, conducted by Prof. Krzysztof Szwagrzyk at the Powązki Military Cemetery. The visitors also saw the underground corridor connecting the X Pavilion with the building called the "Palace of Miracles", used by communist tormentors to interrogate prisoners, and the cell of Captain Witold Pilecki. In addition, they learned about plans for the future exhibition space at the museum, which will open in 2019.

In addition, at the Janusz Kurtyka Educational Center "History Point", representatives of Polish community institutions in Australia saw an exhibition entitled *Institute of Józef Piłsudski in America - history and collections of the Polish institution in New York*, prepared by the IPN's National Education Office.

During the earlier meeting of the Presidential Couple and the Polish Community in Melbourne, President of the Republic of Poland Andrzej

Duda awarded President Pawlik with the Commander's Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta for popularizing Polish culture and history. Marian Pawlik was involved in the organization of the exhibition about Captain Witold Pilecki, designed by the Board of the Pilecki Committee, at the Kadimah Center, which took place in November 2017. The above exhibition was prepared on the basis of archival materials from the IPN's resource. Thanks to the cooperation of the Institute with the Polish Community Council of Victoria, the Polish Home Army ex-Servicemen Association in Australia and the Board of the Pilecki Project Committee. Next, the exhibition was shown in the Parliament of the State of Victoria in May this year. In addition, joint arrangements resulted in the presentation of the IPN exhibitions concerning the Ulma Family and the "Żegota" Council for Aid to Jews in the Parliament. They also resulted in the proposal to show the exhibition on the Ulma Family at the Kadimah Center.

The next day, prof. Krzysztof Szwaagrzyk, deputy president of the Institute of National Remembrance, invited President Pawlik and his wife to visit the lot "Ł" at the Powązki Military Cemetery. Here, in 1948-1956, the communist security services buried the bodies of nearly 300 prisoners whom they considered particularly dangerous for the state. Their names were deliberately not recorded in the main cemetery register.

Professor Szwaagrzyk, who from the very beginning is personally involved in searching for burial places on "Łączka" ("Meadow"), talked about its history and course. The search for secret burial sites of

victims of communist terror began at the end of 2011. Until now, the remains of more than two hundred people have been excavated and later identified through DNA tests. Among the found soldiers of the Polish underground were Major Zygmunt Szendzielarz "Łupaszka" and Major Hieronim Dekutowski "Zapora". Professor Szwagrzyk stresses that the IPN's work involves not only the identification of victims, but also providing them with dignified burial and honoring their heroism.

The identity of the victims of communism is revealed during regular press conferences at the Presidential Palace in Warsaw. The upcoming event will take place in October, when we will learn the names of more heroes identified by the Institute of National Remembrance.

On 3 September 2018 the Institute also commenced a search at the Dominican monastery at 10 Freta Street in Warsaw, hoping to find burial places of the Warsaw Insurgents who died there in 1944. The first remains have already been found.

Moved by the story of the search for Polish heroes, President Pawlik expressed hope for finding the remains of Captain Pilecki, who is an important figure for Poles living in Australia.

Photos: Marcin Jurkiewicz (Office of the President) and Katarzyna Adamów (IPN's Archive)

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