

Institute of National Remembrance

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IPN representatives at the opening of an exhibition devoted to Captain Witold Pilecki and the Warsaw Uprising in Australia









An exhibition devoted to Captain Witold Pilecki and the Warsaw Uprising was opened on 5 November at the Kadimah Jewish Cultural Center in Melbourne. The exhibition was prepared by the Pilecki Project Committee in cooperation with the Polish Community Council of Victoria, the Polish Home Army Ex- servicemen Association in Melbourne as well as the Institute of National Remembrance. The IPN delegation present at the opening included the Deputy President of the Institute, Dr Mateusz Szpytma, Dr Rafał Leśkiewicz - the Director of the IT Office and Agnieszka Jędrzak - the Head of the Division of International Relations.

The undertaking was carried out as part of the celebration of the 99th anniversary of Poland regaining its independence. The IPN delegation

took part in a mass at the Catholic center in Essendon celebrated by Fr. Wiesław Słowik , Rector of the Polish Catholic Mission in Australia and New Zealand, and laid flowers at a monument in the form of a cross commemorating the victims of the Katyń Massacre. In the same place, the IPN's Deputy President, Dr Mateusz Szpytma delivered a speech during which he emphasized that without sacrifice, often the sacrifice of one's life, there is no freedom or independence - because freedom can often be measured in crosses, said Dr Szpytma. These crosses are frequently present in the history of Poland: they often mark the burial places of soldiers, but there are still places where those crosses are missing: for example, on the grave of a great hero, Captain Witold Pilecki, because those who opposed the independence of Poland feared him even after death and threw his body into a nameless pit. The freedom of Australia can also be measured in crosses. Yes - this peaceful and beautiful country has experienced great bloodshed during World War I and II and, like the Poles, inspired by Tadeusz Kosciuszko, was ready to fight for our freedom and yours.

The Deputy President of the IPN, Dr Mateusz Szpytma decorated Ms Zofia Dublaszewska, an outstanding oppositionist from Tri-City with the Cross of Freedom and Solidarity, on behalf of the President of the Republic of Poland. Thanks to the courtesy of Fr. Wiesław Słowik, after the celebrations, the IPN representatives met with the Polish diaspora in Melbourne where they discussed the main directions of the Institute's historical policy, conducted in Poland and abroad. They further presented the latest project of the Archive of the Institute entitled "Archive Full of Remembrance", which aims to collect and

protect against destruction the materials stored in the private drawers of Poles around the world.

Both the exhibition and accompanying events were created and coordinated by Andrzej Nowak and Jacek Glinka from the Pilecki Project Committee with the support of Marian Pawlik, President of the Polish Community Council of Victoria.

The ceremony was attended by Piotr Buszta - chargé d'affaire from the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Canberra, Izydor Marmur - President of the Australian Society of Polish Jews and representatives of the Kadimah Jewish Cultural Center and the National Library. The exhibition was opened by the speeches of Piotr Buszta and Dr Mateusz Szpytma. Dr Szpytma also read out a letter from the President of the IPN, Dr Jaroslaw Szarek addressed to the participants of the ceremony, which stressed the need to present the complex fate of Poland and Poles in the 20th century, also beyond the borders of Poland. He mentioned the heroic moral posture of Captain Witold Pilecki - "volunteer for Auschwitz". In his letter, President Szarek stressed that Pilecki, "as a volunteer, undertook a risky game in order to collect the most reliable and accurate information about the Nazi extermination policy of the Jewish Nation." A symbolic speech was also given by Zbigniew Leman, a participant of the Warsaw Uprising, a soldier of the "Ruczaj" Battalion.

The exhibition presents the figure of Captain of Witold Pilecki, taking into consideration his stay in the Auschwitz-Birkenau Concentration Camp and the preparation of the W Report, as well as the post-war

arrest by the Security Office, the brutal investigation and his assassination by the communist authorities. The exhibition is also devoted to the Warsaw Uprising and the participation of an Australian - Edward Walter Smith. The display boards were developed on the basis of archival materials made available by the IPN. During the event, commemorative pamphlets about Captain Pilecki, the Warsaw Uprising and Walter Edward Smith, prepared by the Witold Pilecki Committee in cooperation with the Institute of National Remembrance, were distributed. The ceremony, organised at the Kadimah Jewish Cultural Center, also included the presentation of the second, extended and revised English edition of the W Report, translated by Ewa Hussein.

The project is a continuation of cooperation initiated before the first publication of the W Report in February 2014.

The representatives of the Institute also met with students of the Polish Saturday School in Melbourne. In addition, on November 3, the IPN delegation took part in a radio broadcast on SBS Radio Melbourne. Dr Mateusz Szpytma mentioned, among others the history of the Ulma family from Markowa and the inclusion of the so-called Stroop report - a report on the liquidation of the Warsaw Ghetto in the spring of 1943, onto the UNESCO World Heritage List located in the archives of the Institute of National Remembrance.

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