

# Institute of National Remembrance

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Mateusz Szpytma, Ph.D.

Deputy President of the Institute of National Remembrance



Mateusz Szpytma, Ph.D, was born in 1975. He is a graduate of the Faculty of History, majoring in History (1999) and the Faculty of Law and Administration, majoring in Political Science (2001) at the Jagiellonian University. This is also the university where he defended his doctoral thesis in modern Polish history under the supervision of Prof. Andrzej Chwalba.

Mateusz Szpytma has worked at the Institute of National Remembrance for the majority of his professional life. He started his career in 2000, working as a historian at the Chief Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation, Cracow Branch (2000–2004); a specialist at the Educational Division of the Public Education Office, Cracow Branch (2005); an assistant to the President of the IPN, Janusz Kurtyka (2005–2007), Deputy Director of the Office of the President (2007–2008); main specialist at the Historical Research Division of the Public Education Office, Cracow Branch (2009–2015). Since 23 July 2016, Szpytma has held the post of the Deputy President of the IPN. He is the author, co-author and editor of numerous historical books, including several about the rescue of Jews by Poles during German occupation, including “The Risk of Survival. The Rescue of the Jews by the Poles and the Tragic Consequences for the Ulma Family from Markowa”, 2009.

A focal point of Szpytma’s research and educational work is the story of the Ulma family, murdered by the Germans on 24 March 1944 in Markowa, along with the Jews from the Goldman, Gruenfeld and Didner families they had been hiding. In addition to books and numerous press writings on the subject, he is the founder and creator of the Ulma Family Museum of Poles Saving Jews in World War II in Markowa, as well as the curator of the Museum’s permanent exhibition. He headed the Museum in the years 2015–2016.

During his studies at the Jagiellonian University in Cracow, he was a

participant and co-organizer of an expedition to Ukraine aimed at creating an inventory of inscriptions and coats of arms preserved in churches, chapels, castles, palaces and other buildings, as well as on monuments and roadside figures made before 1945. The effects of his work can be found in the series „Pomniki epigrafiki i heraldyki dawnej Rzeczypospolitej na Ukrainie” [Monuments of Epigraphy and Heraldry of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in Ukraine], edited by Wojciech Drelicharz. At that time, he was an active member of the university’s Scientific Circle of Student Historians and the Circle of Political Sciences. He was also a member of the Jagiellonian University Senate and a two-time President of the Jagiellonian University PhD Students’ Association (self-government).

Szpytma’s educational activities include the co-organization of more than twenty expeditions for young people to places of the martyrdom of Poles (among others to Auschwitz, Sachsenhausen, and Dachau concentration camps, Katyn, Kharkiv, Mednoye). He was also the originator and co-author of an educational portfolio published by the IPN, entitled “The Katyn Massacre”, which has already had three editions. Szpytma published his press writings in, among others, “Dziennik Polski”, “Nasz Dziennik”, “Gość Niedzielny”, “Tygodnik Powszechny”, “Zeszyty Historyczne WiN”, “Biuletyn IPN” and “Pamięć.pl”. He also authored and co-authored a number of historical publications.

In 2009, he was awarded the Bronze Cross of Merit by the late

President Lech Kaczyński, and in 2016, he received the Silver Cross of Merit from President Andrzej Duda. In 2019, Mateusz Szpytma received the Medal of the Centenary of Regained Independence.

Since 2016, the Deputy President of the IPN has been an honorary member of the Polish Society of the Righteous Among the Nations. He has received recognition by the National Association of Soldiers of the Peasant Battalions, which awarded him with a “For Merits” distinction. In the years 2017–2021, he was a member of the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute (ŻIH) Academic Council and in the years 2018–2019 the Academic Council at the Ulma Family Museum of Poles Saving Jews in World War II in Markowa.

Since 2016, Mateusz Szpytma has been a member of the Janusz Kurtyka Foundation Academic Council, and since 2018 he took on this role at the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, the Pilecki Institute, an Opinion-making and Advisory Council on the Holocaust at the Polish Ministry of National Education. Since 2021, he has been a member of the Council of the Museum – Memorial Site of KL Plaszow German Nazi Labour and Concentration Camp (1942–1945).

In June 2018, Mateusz Szpytma, Ph.D., was honored with the “Bene Merito” Award by the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs in recognition of his activities aimed at strengthening Poland's position on the international arena. Deputy President of the IPN, for years strongly associated with the Podkarpacie region, also received a Distinction of Merit for the Podkarpacie Voivodeship, awarded by the Regional Council.

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