

Institute of National Remembrance

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Deputy President of the IPN, Krzysztof Szwagrzyk meets with the Polish community in Chicago











On 16-17 March 2019 Prof. Krzysztof Szwagrzyk, Deputy President of the Institute of National Remembrance was invited by the “Polscy Patrioci” Organization to meet with the Polish community in Chicago during two open meetings.

The first meeting took place on 16 March at the Shrine of the Sacred Heart Jesuit Millennium Center in Chicago, the second – on 17 March in the hall of *Bazylika Św. Jacka* (St. Hyacinth Basilica) in Chicago.

Professor Szwagrzyk was accompanied by Agnieszka Jędrzak, head of the Independent Division of Information and International Relations.

During the visit to Chicago, Prof. Krzysztof Szwagrzyk talked about the mission and tasks of the IPN Office of Search and Identification. The

theme of the speeches was also the restoration by the IPN of the memory of the participants of the anti-communist uprising and the process of searching for their remains. Professor Szwagrzyk also spoke about the effort and commitment on behalf of the IPN staff as well as volunteers who are trying to find the burial places of the Cursed Soldiers in order for them to be identified and buried. He also touched upon issues related to the process of searching for the resting places of people who lost their lives as a result of the fight against the imposed totalitarian regime or as a result of totalitarian repressions or ethnic cleansing from 8 November 1917 to 31 July 1990.

During both meetings, Professor Krzysztof Szwagrzyk stressed the fact that in connection with the amendment to the Act on the Institute of National Remembrance, the Office for Search and Identification searches not only for the remains of victims of communist crimes but also of German and Ukrainian crimes. He further expressed his regret that communist crimes had not been treated analogously to German crimes after the war. He noted that the memory of the heroes who have been found and identified, is revived during official ceremonies at the Presidential Palace. The heroes are also granted dignified burials, according to Christian tradition. Professor Szwagrzyk also mentioned that during the state funerals of Danuta Siedzikówna "Inka" and Feliks Selmanowicz, "Zagończyk", about 50,000 people paid tribute to them. He also drew attention to the role of volunteers in exploratory work; in 2017, 250 volunteers from Poland and abroad participated in the work carried out at the so-called "Meadow" of the Powązki Military Cemetery in Warsaw. He described the work of volunteers as a joint

building of national identity and participating in a great cause. He also mentioned the important function of historical education. The topic of Cursed Soldiers is already discussed in textbooks, and it is strengthened by film materials, organized memory runs, workshops and concerts.

Apart from the domestic activities of the IPN Office of Search and Identification, Professor Szwagrzyk also talked about projects which are being carried out in Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine, Germany and Georgia. He further discussed the ongoing cooperation between the Institute of National Remembrance and the American Defense POW / MIA Accounting Agency.

He also asked the Polish community in Chicago to join in the work of sharing knowledge about Polish history, providing help in reaching important witnesses of history and the preservation of their testimonies, as well as supporting the access to genetic materials necessary to carry out the process of identification.

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