

Institute of National Remembrance

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US Deputy Chief of Mission, Daniel Lawton visits the IPN Archive, Warsaw 7 August 2023

















On 7 August 2023, the IPN Archive was visited by Deputy Chief of

Mission at the US Embassy Daniel Lawton, Kurt Holmgren (Supervisory General Services Officer) and Virginia Price, historian (Office of Overseas Building Operations).

The guests were welcomed by the Deputy President of the Institute of National Remembrance Prof. Karol Polejowski, IPN Archive Director Marzena Kruk, and International Cooperation Office Director Agnieszka Jędrzak.

Prof. Karol Polejowski presented the tasks and mission of the Institute of National Remembrance, as well as current projects, including the decommunization of public space in Poland, within the framework of which 30 monuments, which were de facto Soviet Red Army propaganda objects, have already been demolished. He also talked about the Archive of Crimes project, concerning the reopening of investigations dating back to the 1980s. The Deputy President of the IPN characterized the organizational structure of the Institute, including the activities of the newly established offices. In addition, a short film illustrating the tasks of the various substantive divisions was presented.

The Director of the IPN's Office of International Cooperation, Agnieszka Jędrzak, discussed the Institute's flagship project "Trails of Hope. The Odyssey of Freedom" aimed at commemorating the efforts of the Polish Armed Forces during World War II and the fate of civilians evacuated from the USSR with General Anders' army. The initiative, planned out for the years 2022-2025, covers more than 50 countries around the world. Director Jędrzak stressed that it has often been the

case that the exhibition constituted a starting point for other additional initiatives and activities such as the restoration of existing commemorations and the establishment of new ones. The "Trails of Hope. The Odyssey of Freedom" undertaking is aimed at popularizing Polish history through the prism of universal history, recalling the joint struggle at Monte Cassino, Narvik, Tobruk or in the Battle of Britain. Opposing totalitarianism remains relevant also today.

A short film about the opening of the renovated Polish cemetery in Rusape, Zimbabwe, and photographs from the multimedia, immersive version of the "Trails of Hope. The Odyssey of Freedom" presented during the Congress of National Remembrance organized by the IPN in April 2023, were also shown.

The representatives of the U.S. Embassy were interested in the young generation's knowledge of history and the Institute's ways of reaching out to children and young people. Prof. Karol Polejowski drew their attention to the "Cyphers Game" gaming project created by the Office of New Technologies which is based on the history of the Polish-Bolshevik War of 1920. The game was added to the Polish school curriculum last year. Also mentioned in this context was the activity of other newly established offices, such as the Cultural Events Office and the IPN History Points Office, which are also tailoring their offer to the needs of the younger generation.

Przemyslaw Gasztold Ph.D., of the IPN Historical Research Office gave a presentation on the methods of surveillance used by the Communist Security Service to spy on the employees of the US Embassy. He

described the operational strategies used by the Security Service (SB) with regard to employees working at foreign Embassies. As an example of tracking the activities of U.S. diplomats during the communist era, he presented photographs, reports and operational documents on John Roger Davis, U.S. Ambassador to Poland in the years 1988- 1990. In addition to specific individuals at the Embassy, the Security Service was also interested in the plans of the buildings themselves. Dr. Gasztold also presented operational photos of a break-in to the US Consulate in Cracow conducted by the Security Services in 1986.

The Director of the IPN Archive, Marzena Kruk characterized the archival resources of the Institute of National Remembrance and outlined the "Archive Full of Remembrance" project. She further discussed the priceless collection donated by the Polish Falcons of America to the IPN Archive and the "Strengthen Your Arm - Serve Your Homeland" exhibition prepared on its basis to celebrate the 135th Anniversary of the Polish Falcons in America.

The guests also had the opportunity to see original uniforms and banners from the Falconry's collections. While visiting the conservation and preservation workshop they could also view documents being prepared for the presentation in the expanded version of the "Strengthen Your Arm - Serve Your Homeland" exhibition which is scheduled to be opened in the autumn of 2023 at the World War II Museum in Gdańsk.

The Ambassador and his associates visited the archival warehouse, where they found out about the rules governing the proper securing

and storing of documentation. This is also where a surprise, in the form of original documents which Przemysław Gasztold Ph.D., had talked about in the first half of the meeting, including a copy of the keys to the Embassy building made by the Security Service, awaited the guests.

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