



The Polish-Jewish Heritage Foundation of Canada / TORONTO CHAPTER

October 2017

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

It is with a great measure of regret that the Board of the PJHF (Toronto) has decided to suspend its activities.

It was founded in 1988 by Louis Lenkinski, a survivor of Lodz and Auschwitz, Dow Marmur, whose family fled the German invasion and spent the war in the Soviet Union, Henry Dasko, born and raised in Poland after the war, whose expulsion from the University of Warsaw in 1968 eventually brought him to Toronto, and two Polish born children of Holocaust survivors, Sharon Weintraub and Frank Bialystok. It was linked to the American Association for Polish-Jewish Studies and was formed in concert with the Montreal chapter. With the tragic deaths of Louis and Henry, and Dow's move to Israel, the foundation was bolstered by the leadership of Alex Wertheim, John Stanley and Peter Jassem, and the contributions of many members of Polish and/or Jewish origin in Toronto, including Piotr Wróbel, Witold Liliental, Kalman Weiser, Alicja Gettlich, Gunnar S. Paulsson, Rimma Volynska, Krystyna Lagowski, Pauline Pankowski and others. Our relationship with Holocaust survivors from Poland, notably Nathan Leipciger, have been a sustaining force.

The Foundation broke the door open on the history and culture of Polish Jewry and took an unsentimental perspective on Polish-Jewish relations. It developed a close working relationship with *Polonia* in Toronto and with the leadership of the Jewish community including such distinguished figures as Margaret Bonikowska of "Gazeta" and Eli Rubenstein of the March of the Living.

Five of Foundation's members were awarded the Order of Merit of the Republic of Poland for their contribution to educating Canadians about this significant history. As such, the Foundation forged a strong bond with the post-Communist administrations through the Consulate in Toronto and the Polish Embassy in Ottawa.

We were instrumental in bringing scholars, writers, and witnesses from Poland, many here for the first time. Whether it was a lecture, panel discussion, musical programme, theatrical performance or film, the programmes were provocative and well received. Our efforts were

also recognized by awarding the Sovereigns Medal for Volunteers to our chair Peter Jassem by the Governor General of Canada.

The board's decision has not been an easy one. In some respects, a small cadre has done the work for almost thirty years and it's up to a new generation, one separated from the Holocaust, and indeed, from the Communist era, to carry the torch. How and whether this happens can only result from a conviction, similar to the one of the founders, that there are important stories to tell.

Please note that PJHF will honour its previous commitments and together with the Toronto Jewish Film Society will co-present the documentary film "*Bogdan's Journey*" on November 5.

You may continue to support the work of the Montreal chapter, which, among other activities, publishes testimonies of Polish-Jewish survivors in English, French and Polish, by sending your donation to us. Tax receipts will be issued from Montreal.

Sincerely,

On behalf of the Board:

Frank Bialystok  
Rimma Volynska

Peter Jassem  
Sharon Weintraub

Witold Liliental  
Piotr Wróbel