

CANADA AT THE UNITED NATIONS

POLISH ART TREASURES: Canada's Permanent Delegate to the United Nations, General A.G.L. McNaughton, delivered a statement on the Polish Art Treasures in plenary meeting of the United Nations Assembly on Thursday, April 28, 1949. Partial text is as follows:

"... The Polish representative at our last meeting chose to introduce artificially an extraneous matter for the purpose of misrepresenting the position of my Government before this Assembly. The matter in question is the Polish art collection which was sent to Canada to escape the Nazis. Since this matter forms the subject of a note presented last week (on April 20) to the Canadian Government by the Polish Government and since this communication is presently under study by the Canadian Government, the examination of this subject here in the General Assembly therefore seems singularly inappropriate.

"As this matter is under discussion through other appropriate channels I do not intend therefore to refer to it in any detail here. It is necessary, however, for me to make a brief statement in order to put the record straight.

SAYS STATEMENT FALSE

"The articles referred to by the Polish Delegate were never at any time in the custody or possession of the Government of Canada or any of its officials. Mr. Katz-Suchy stated that 'The Canadian Government agreed to take custody of these valuables.' This statement is false. Exactly the contrary is true.

"The Polish officials who brought these articles to Canada in 1940 subsequently disagreed amongst themselves about the ownership and disposition of the property in question. When disputes of this nature arise in Canada they can be settled only by agreement amongst the parties, or by a decision of the courts. The Government of Canada does not possess the power to seize property arbitrarily. Questions concerning the ownership and right of possession of property are matters which are settled in Canada in courts of law. The representative of Poland may not be able to understand this but I am sure that it will be understood by the representatives of all genuinely free and democratic countries. The courts of Canada have always been open to the Polish officials who disagreed about the ownership and disposition of the property which they brought to Canada, and the Canadian Government has repeatedly stated that it would assist the courts by making available such information as it possesses concerning the property.

"The Canadian Government has also been willing to assist in settling the dispute by agreement amongst the parties. At one stage in fact officials of the Canadian Government were approached by a representative of the persons in possession of the missing articles. This representative suggested that an arrangement

might be made to settle the question by agreement. With the knowledge of the Polish Government - for the Polish Legation was kept fully informed of these developments, the Canadian officials undertook to explore with the representative the possibility of reaching such an agreement. The offer of settlement to which the Polish delegate refers was not made by the Canadian Government but by a representative of the Poles in whose custody the property remained. The offer was merely communicated by the Canadian officials to the Polish authorities for their consideration. The good offices which were placed at the disposal of the Polish Government in this way have subsequently been subjected repeatedly to false and abusive comment by the Polish Government.

"Mr. Katz-Suchy has also sought to represent that there is some inconsistency on the part of the Canadian delegation between our support for the reports of the ad hoc Political Committee on the study of methods for promotion of international co-operation in the political field and the position which the Canadian Government is alleged to have taken in regard to the question of the Polish art collection. I do not feel that I have to defend before this Assembly the record of Canada in regard to the charges of Mr. Katz-Suchy. The record of my country in the promotion of international co-operation and in fulfilment of its obligations under the Charter is on the record and requires no defence on my part.

"However, I am entitled to draw the attention of the Assembly to the fact that once again we have an example of Mr. Katz-Suchy introducing an irrelevant topic in order to distract the attention of the Assembly from the real issues before us. We know what these issues are. We have before us a number of specific proposals in the report of the ad hoc Political Committee designed to improve the methods and procedures for the promotion of international co-operation in the political field. These proposals are the product of months of study and deliberation in the interim committee as well as in the ad hoc Political Committee and it is to be regretted that Mr. Katz-Suchy and his delegation, as well as several other delegations, have seen fit not only to withhold their co-operation from the consideration of these important matters but to endeavour on every possible occasion to subject them to abusive misrepresentation.

"Canada has supported and will continue to support every effort to improve the methods and procedures of pacific settlement, for we realize that if these processes are permitted to run smoothly and to be applied effectively, the risk that international disputes and tense international situations might lead to war will thereby be reduced. The Canadian delegation therefore will vote in favour of the reports of the ad hoc Political Committee."