



PRESS RELEASE

DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
OTTAWA - CANADA

NO 3

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

THURSDAY, JANUARY 8 1959

THE DEPOSITORS OF THE TWO TRUNKS CONTAINING POLISH ART TREASURES, WHICH HAD BEEN ON DEPOSIT IN THE BANK OF MONTREAL IN OTTAWA, HAVE SIGNIFIED THEIR WILLINGNESS THAT THE TWO TRUNKS BE DELIVERED TO A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE POLISH INSTITUTIONS TO WHICH THEY BELONG FOR RETURN TO POLAND.

THESE TWO TRUNKS FORM PART OF A COLLECTION OF POLISH STATE ART TREASURES. THEY WERE BROUGHT TO CANADA FOR SAFEKEEPING IN 1940. AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE WAR, THE NEWLY ESTABLISHED GOVERNMENT OF POLAND LEARNED THAT TWO TRUNKS CONTAINING MANUSCRIPTS AND TREASURES OF THE FORMER ROYAL HOUSE OF POLAND HAD BEEN DEPOSITED IN THE VAULTS OF THE BANK OF MONTREAL ON WELLINGTON STREET IN OTTAWA. THE DEPOSITORS WERE MR SWIERZ-ZALESKI, FORMERLY DIRECTOR OF THE STATE COLLECTION OF THE WAWEL PALACE IN CRACOW, AND MR POLKOWSKI.

ATTEMPTS DURING THE FOLLOWING YEARS BY REPRESENTATIVES OF THE POLISH GOVERNMENT TO SECURE THE RELEASE OF THE TWO TRUNKS WERE UNSUCCESSFUL BECAUSE THE AGREEMENT OF BOTH DEPOSITORS COULD NOT BE SECURED. MR SWIERZ-ZALESKI SUBSEQUENTLY RETURNED TO POLAND, WHERE HE DIED.

LAST DECEMBER FOUR POLISH PROFESSORS REPRESENTING POLISH STATE MUSEUMS AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS CAME TO OTTAWA TO EXAMINE WITH THE SURVIVING CO-DEPOSITOR, MR POLKOWSKI, THE TREASURES IN THE BANK VAULT IN OTTAWA TO ASCERTAIN THEIR STATE OF PRESERVATION. ONE OF THE FOUR PROFESSORS, DR SZABLOWSKI, HAD THE NECESSARY POWERS OF ATTORNEY.

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GOVERNMENT



CANADA

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Ottawa, Canada

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ON EXAMINATION OF THE TREASURES IT WAS FOUND THAT, WHILE THEY HAD SUFFERED NO SERIOUS DAMAGE, THEY WERE IN NEED OF EXPERT ATTENTION. IN ORDER TO MAKE POSSIBLE THE NECESSARY PRESERVATION, MR POLKOWSKI AND DR SZABLOWSKI AGREED THAT THE TWO TRUNKS SHOULD BE WITHDRAWN FROM THE BANK'S VAULTS AND RETURNED TO POLAND.

SUCCESSIVE CANADIAN GOVERNMENTS AT ALL TIMES HAVE TAKEN THE VIEW THAT IN ADMITTING THE TREASURES TO CANADA, THEY ASSUMED NO RESPONSIBILITY FOR THEM. THE DIFFICULTY CONCERNING THEIR WITHDRAWAL WAS ESSENTIALLY ONE OF ESTABLISHING LEGAL TITLE, AND NOT ONE TO WHICH THE CANADIAN GOVERNMENT WAS A PARTY.