

MY FATE FITS INTO THE HISTORY OF EMIGRATION

That important day in the city - symbol of success of the 2nd Republic of Poland -marks the opening of a unique institution and museum that will tell the history of many generations of Polish emigrants. Many of them have contributed both to the world history and the history of Poland.

Also my fate fits into that history of emigration. A year before the outbreak of World War II, my family and I set off on a trip to Canada where my father was to take up a position of a consul. We started our trip from a place not far from the venue of today's celebration.

Still on board of the Batory vessel I was trying to get a promise from my father that we will come back to our country in a year. However, I returned only many years after, as an adult man, United States citizen, American with Polish origins, with Polish name, and loyal to America.

However over all those long years I have been aware that Polish history has an impact on a significant part of my identity. Therefore over my whole work - even when I held a high-level position in the US government - thoughts of Poland accompanied many of my efforts.

On that road that I was lucky to meet our great Pole, John Paul II, that unique emigrant-pilgrim who will for sure be a very important person for the Emigration Museum in Gdynia. I am glad I could present you with several letters belonging to my private correspondence with the Holy Father. They witness our personal relations, which were of great importance to me and a unique experience in my life.

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It is in a great part thanks to John Paul II's attitude and actions that today Poland is independent. It is my satisfaction that the Polish Pope's efforts were accompanied by actions which also I was involved in. I mean also efforts to ensure Poland permanent security by anchoring her in Trans-Atlantic Alliance, whose members are independent and democratic nations which adhere to common values. A very important role in that area was played by Jerzy Koźmiński, the then Ambassador of independent Poland to America. I tried to be helpful to him. Today, when the times are turbulent again, it turns out that strong bonds of Poland with the free world are of fundamental importance to her.

I keep in my special memory the moment when I was boarding the vessel in 1938. I revived that memory after over seventy years, when I was standing with Jerzy Koźmiński at the same place which I was sailing off from Gdynia aboard the Batory. I am deeply moved with the fact that a plaque commemorating the beginning of my life as an emigrant was unveiled today.

With all my heart I wish the city authorities and the management of Emigration Museum in Gdynia success in accomplishing the mission of that new institution. I am sure the museum inaugurating its operation today will become a significant institution commemorating history of Poland. And thus it will contribute to building the country's good future.