

**Introductory remarks by HE Mr Zbigniew Gniatkowski, Ambassador of the Republic of Poland  
at the screening of “Passports to Paraguay” documentary  
Embassy Cinema Theatre, Wellington, 20 August 2019**

Thank you for joining us tonight. I am grateful for the opportunity to co-host a film screening as an event related to the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the beginning of World War Two. And I am very honoured to co-organise this event with the Holocaust Centre of New Zealand and the Embassy of Israel in Wellington. (...)

Let me start with a few words about Polish and Jewish joint actions undertaken here in Wellington during the war. You may know, the first Polish Association in Wellington was established in 1941 by the Polish Jews. In archives we find information about the Polish Jews in Wellington who observed Polish national days, they were sending parcels to the Polish POWs held in Germany and organised relief to the people forcibly taken by the Soviets from Poland to Siberia. We find this in the reports sent back to London by the Polish Consul-General in Wellington Kazimierz Wodzicki. According to him, the Polish Jews in Wellington were aware that the Polish Government in exile in London and the Polish Underground Army made every possible efforts to support the Polish Jews in their survival during the war.

Wodzicki himself and his wife Maria were instrumental in inviting a large group of Polish orphaned children who survived deportation to Siberia. In early 1944 the Polish Government in exile and the NZ Government of Peter Fraser agreed that 733 Polish Children and their caregivers would be invited to NZ later that year. (...)

Tonight's screening is another example of the lasting cooperation between the Polish Embassy and the HCNZ. To my best knowledge, this is the seventh film screening organized by us together. In the past years the Wellingtonian audience could see feature films about Janusz Korczak and Irena Sendler as well as “Ida” by Paweł Pawlikowski and “In Darkness” by Agnieszka Holland. Last year, the Wellington Polish Film Festival presented “The Pianist” by Roman Polański. In November we organised a screening of “Zookeeper's wife” by Niki Caro. This year the HCNZ presented a documentary “Who will write our history”. And tonight we will see another documentary about the Bernese Group, a six-people strong group of Polish diplomats and Jewish activists in Switzerland who forged thousands of Latin-American passports in hope they would save innocent lives, they would save Jewish people from certain death or deportation.

It is fascinating to see how the whole story was discovered recently, and it seems new little-known documents and new testimonies have been found in archives in Europe and elsewhere. Two weeks ago the Polish Embassy in Bern published new documents proving that Stanisław Mikołajczyk, the Prime Minister of the Polish Government in exile during the war, took part in obtaining fake passports for Jews during the Holocaust. It is important to know that the operation of forging passports undertaken in Switzerland was not only initiated by our diplomats, but also fully supported by the Polish Government based in London. In April this year, one of the diplomats Konstanty Rokicki was recognized as Righteous among the Nations by the Yad Vashem Institute. And we believe that was not the last word in this regard.

To conclude, I just wanted to add that it's good to see many members of the diplomatic corps and representatives of the NZ MFAT tonight. This documentary tells the story of diplomats in tragic wartime. The story of brave upstanders. Thank you for your attention.