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## Transcribed Remarks from Warsaw, Poland, Polish Restitution Symposium

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# Transcribed Remarks from Warsaw, Poland, Polish Restitution Symposium

KAROL F. RADZIWIŁŁ

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you very much for having invited me. I was invited as a person representing clients in cases related to restitution, so to speak. I am a solicitor myself, but I trust a lawyer with my family's affairs, so as to not become emotional at work. Therefore, I wish to say a few things. My grandmother, Izabella Radziwiłł, owned a palace located at Pius Street; the street was later re-named Stalin Street. Today, it is known as Piękna Street and it is home to the Swiss embassy. My grandmother was arrested by the Soviet authorities and was displaced to Krasnogorsk in 1945, after the war had ended. The lawyer she relied upon since pre-war years applied for temporary ownership in 1947. In 1955, the president of Warsaw transferred the ownership right to the Swiss Confederation until, I believe, the year 2080.

A member of our family actually applied for partial reimbursement of goods at some point in time; this application was actually granted specific rights. My grandmother subsequently wrote to Lech Wałęsa and she applied for the restitution of her properties. She then wrote to Wiesław Szczepiński who was a lawyer in Warsaw. By the way, I would like to mention that this particular lawyer did not invite me here, the organizer of this conference invited me, so I am not advertising this particular law firm. I would like to mention the fact that the legal and administrative procedures to get our property back were particularly challenging. Our properties and our entities were classified as "public use of property," I am not really sure what that meant, but that was the reality of the situation. Finally, we were provided a judgment and we were granted damages. However, I am sorry to say that we have not yet received damages. This is because today I have learned that we have some way to go. In 1996, my grandmother died and Wiesław Szczepiński retired. But nevertheless Krzysztof Wiktor was one of the lawyers also engaged in the company representing us. As my predecessor said, it is all about finances in Poland. I am not talking about the remuneration for

lawyers, of course we need to pay lawyers, but at the same time we also have to pay for administrative procedures and for legal procedures, which is usually very costly and not everyone can afford it. At the time I was conducting all of these activities I was a little bit poorer than I am now, but my family helped and we finally managed to gather some funds. This has been story of only one palace. There are other examples where we have not managed to get the restitution. Thank you once again.