

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Friends,

As the Chairman of the Association of the Jewish Historical Institute of Poland, which is an organisation that initiated the establishment of this museum, I would like to thank the curators and all the representatives of the Museum and the Association who have contributed to the exhibition that is opening today, including the donors who financially supported the Association in order to make this exhibition happen.

I thank Mr Grzegorz Jankielewicz and the Jankielewicz Foundation, Claims Conference, The David Berg Foundation, The Kronenberg Foundation, The Konrad Adenauer Foundation, The Foundation for Polish-German Cooperation and The Heinrich Boll Foundation.

Besides extending my gratitude, I would also like to share with you a thought.

I am a Polish Jew. Poland is my homeland and Warsaw is my city.

This is the place where I was born, raised, started a family, and where I work. For generations, my family has been linked to Warsaw, but the tragedy of the ghetto was only indirectly intertwined with their history. None of my close ones died in the Warsaw ghetto. At that time, my next of kin were either in exile in the Soviet Union or hiding in Warsaw, under fake identities, on the so-called Aryan Side of the wall. My mum with her sister and parents, each of them under a fake name, barely survived.

My parents never talked to us children about the times of the occupation. They never wanted to bring back the memories of the ghetto uprising. They never said what it felt like to see the burning ghetto. I could only try to image their horror and fear when the smoke and stink of the burning ghetto were spreading over the city.

What would it feel like to see the death and destruction of their people with their own eyes?

All in all, they were lucky. Their fear and horror were by far less severe than the fear and horror of the civilians in the ghetto.

The people who just wanted to live and who hid in the so-called Bunkers waiting to be rescued. In the bunkers? Were there bunkers? No. There were just concrete constructions that protected people from the outside world. During the uprising, fifty thousand Jews were hiding in cellars, in makeshift shelters, that rather provided protection from fear and produced only an illusory sense of security. Closed in the darkness, with no information from the outside world, without hope for help, they just waited for the end - for an actual miracle.

A miracle that was not happening. A miracle that never happened.

Their drama, suffering and sacrifice are the topic of the very exhibition that is being opened today.

This exhibition is seemingly devoted to the past, but in fact it continues to be valid today.

When the curators started developing the concept, their objective was to focus on human suffering and drama.

Unfortunately, last year, Putin's Russia brought back the demons of war. Once again, in Europe, there are people hiding in basements and dugouts from the beasts who want nothing but to destroy, steal, rape and murder.

They are fighting for survival their dignity.

We can watch the suffering of innocent people on TV.

"Never again" - this slogan gets repeated over and over again. This is merely a naive wish.

Unfortunately, history repeats itself. Evil turns up in a number of places all over the world.

I ask of all of you: When you commemorate the Jews murdered during the ghetto uprising, keep in mind the people who are currently hiding in basements and dugouts in Ukraine, Syria, Yemen and many other places. In places that are closer to us than we tend to imagine. Precisely 150 km away from here, at the Polish-Belarusian border. The border in which refugees from different countries try to cross. Innocent people, children, women and men, who dream of a better future, but are forced to hide like animals in the forests, ditches and swamps. They are also fighting for survival and dignity - and often die doing so.

Don't we all continue to be too indifferent to their faith?

When watching all those dramas in the evening news, we too feel for the victims. We feel defiance to their lot, but as soon as the show is over, we simply go on to eat our supper, go back to our lives and as the day ends, we go to sleep in our warm beds. We are indifferent. People are indifferent by nature. They too easily get accustomed to evil.

In this very room, there are our friends and mentors, people who have survived the ghetto - and our four protagonists who survived the ghetto already as growing children:

Krystyna Brudnicka, Marian Kalwary, Ludwik Górski, Marian Turski.

Dear all, I promise that not only will we always remember what happened, but we will continue to share this knowledge with the generations to come in order to make sure that they and their children will do their best not to repeat the past mistakes that led to injustice, humiliation, war and Holocaust.