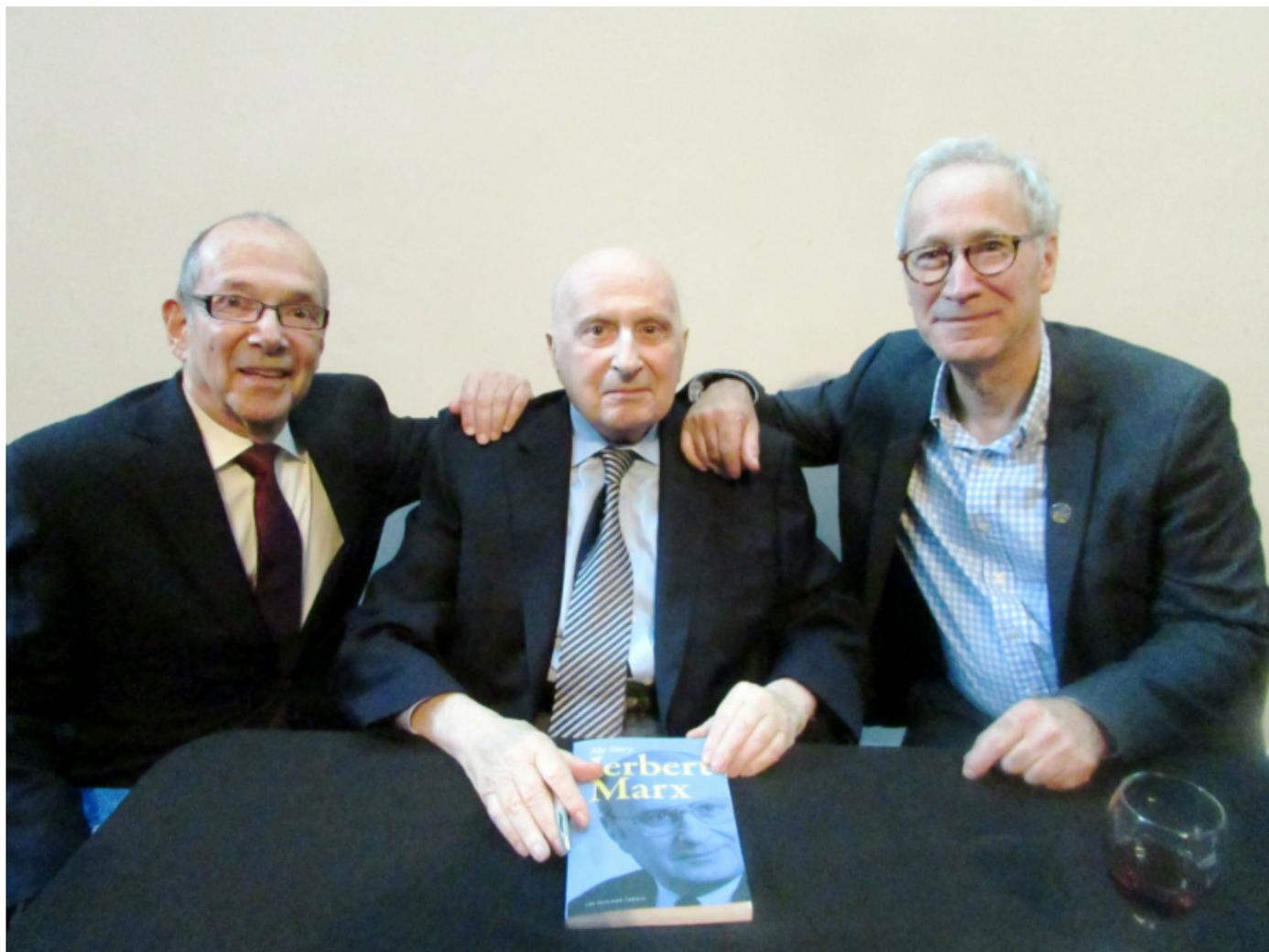


Former Quebec justice minister, Herbert Marx, dies at 88

March 26, 2020



Herbert Marx, centre, is congratulated by two of his D'Arcy McGee MNA successors, Lawrence Bergman, left, and David Birnbaum at the publication of his memoirs. (Janice Arnold/The CJN)

A former Quebec justice minister and fixture of Montreal's Jewish community for decades, died March 19, three days

after his 88th birthday.

Herbert Marx was a lawyer, law professor, politician, and judge. He was the Liberal Member of the National Assembly for the heavily Jewish riding of D'Arcy McGee from 1979 to 1989, seeing the Jewish community through Quebec's tumultuous first referendum on sovereignty-association in 1980. He was re-elected in 1981 and 1985.

He served as minister of justice and attorney general in the Liberal government of Robert Bourassa starting in 1985. But he resigned as justice minister in late 1988, and six months later resigned his seat in the National Assembly, citing the government's use of the notwithstanding clause to override a Supreme Court of Canada decision that Quebec's outdoor French-only sign law was unconstitutional.

In 2018, Marx published a memoir called *My Story* (as well as a French version called *Mon Histoire*) that offered tantalizing details about what was going on behind the scenes in those tumultuous years following the defeat of sovereignty in the first referendum of 1980.

He was named a justice of Quebec Superior Court in 1989 by the federal government and took mandatory retirement in 2007.

Marx was born in Montreal in 1932 to Robert Marx, a tailor,

and Miriam Marx, and attended the fabled Baron Byng High School. He later admitted to struggling academically and failing Grade 9. In a candid interview on the school's website, Marx once confessed that he had little interest in studying, preferring to hang out at Montreal pool rooms or selling encyclopedias door-to-door.

From 1955 to 1964, he worked in the lighting industry, becoming vice-president of Verd-A-Ray Industries Ltd.

But Marx indeed had an academic bent. He graduated from Sir George Williams University (now Concordia University) in 1958, and earned a master's degree in English literature and in law from the University of Montreal, followed by a master's degree in law from Harvard University in 1969. He joined the Montreal firm of Stikeman Elliott.

He was a professor of constitutional law, civil liberties, and poverty law at the University of Montreal from 1969 to 1979, and also taught at McGill University and the University of Quebec at Montreal (UQAM). He served on the Quebec Human Rights Commission.

When Victor Goldbloom left politics in 1979, Marx took the plunge, winning D'Arcy McGee riding just as separatist sentiment in Quebec seemed to be peaking.

His additional cabinet responsibilities under the Liberal

government included solicitor general, minister responsible for consumer protection, and minister of public security.

Later in life, Marx served as acting chair of the board of directors of the Association for Canadian Studies and as a governor of Tel Aviv University. He was on the boards of many non-profit organizations.

He published many articles and works in the areas of constitutional law, social law and civil liberties, and how the law affects the poor.

Lawrence Bergman, MNA for D'Arcy-McGee from 1994 to 2014, described Marx as a good friend and mentor.

"He was loved by the people," Bergman told the *Montreal Gazette*. "I spent 20 years in the riding and I can say that he was loved by his (former) constituents. He had an outstanding career as a professor, as an MNA and as justice minister.

"He didn't take himself too seriously," Bergman was quoted as saying. "He grew up in modest means and he understood the mentality of the people born here and those who came here. He knew there was equal opportunity out there and he wanted people to take advantage of the opportunity our wonderful province has to offer."

Liberal strategist John Parisella, who became Bourassa's

chief of staff, praised Marx as someone who “brought Jewish people back to the polls after they felt alienated” by Quebec’s French-only language laws.

In a statement, the Centre for Israel and Jewish affairs praised Marx as “an exceptional Quebecer and community leader who will be missed by all.”

Share and Enjoy !