

Introduction to the Welfare of Holocaust Survivors Conference. by Hugo Marom (Meisl)

Ladies and Gentlemen, which includes everyone here and those who will get to hear of this Conference later.

As I was brought up in this country I could speak in Czech, but then having received a good "Kinderstube" I must use the new lingua franca which is English.

I could also speak in Hebrew thanks to the fact that in 1948 when Israel was fighting for its independence alone against five Arab Armies the only country in the world that supplied arms, aircraft and training in spite of the U.N. embargo was Czechoslovakia, the country of my ancestors. Had we not received this help there would not have been an Israel and I would not be standing here, claimed Mr. Ben Gurion our first Prime Minister.

It is an honour to be able to address this Conference, especially when comparing myself to the specialists and experience gathered here. I feel, for having been a bystander to those who were in Concentration Camps, I still claim being able to better relate to Holocaust survivors, than all I repeat all of us here, who can be said like me, are survivors of the great biblical Flood the "Mabul" or more recently survivors of the Far East tsunami.

I am a survivor of the Holocaust, but not a survivor of concentration camps as my late wife Martha, she went from Auschwitz to five more camps, followed by a death march of over 1000 kms from Riga Latvia to a camp south west of Berlin. I was saved by my parent's courage to send my brother and I on Winton's trains to England. An unparalleled sacrifice of all those parents, who had the fortitude to send their children to an unknown country, without a language, to unknown homes without mobile phones and air-letters taking a month or more to arrive.

There can be no doubt, that had it not been for the likes of Nicholas Winton, Bill Barazetti, Trevor Chadwick, Martin Blake and many others, the Czech Kindertransport of 669 children would not have been possible after the UK Government was left with thousands of children from Germany and Austria without a foster home.

But how dare we refer to the above mentioned facilitators as "Heroes of the Kindertransport", when all of us who have children, just try to visualize what personal sacrifice, unbelievable agony and moral strength it took for a mother and father to see their children off, when no one in his wildest imagination

could foresee the bestiality of the nazi system and the final solution decided on at the Wansee conference.

They, the parents of the entire Kindertransport deserve, that we all contribute to the erection of a memorial already approved by the Czech Government in Prague, from where the last train left a month before WWII, a monument to the only heroes of this heroic episode in the annals of human endeavor.

I apologise for side tracking from the issues of this conference but without mentioning the children of the Kindertransport, who became orphans at the average age of 9, if not the majority forever, as my brother and I, then for at least the six years of the War for a very few lucky ones.

For 40 years of our 65 years of marriage, as most survivors, we did not discuss the Holocaust, I felt I was lucky to have been sent to England when I was near 11, my brother Rudy 9 1/2, Martha, my late wife, whose entire family went to Auschwitz 5 years later in 1944 when she was 16, survived the ordeal with her sister and mother, considered herself far luckier than I, who became an orphan at the age of 11 and was not left in the hands of an aunt, grandmother or other family member, but moved from one unknown home to another, wondering what is happening with them, our parents.

For the purpose of putting my suggestion to this Conference I have arbitrarily categorized survivors into a few groups:

1. Those that don't want anything from Germany:
 - a) Not in need. b) In need.
2. Those C.C. survivors who need assistance:
 - a) Able to apply. b) Unable to apply
3. Those indirectly affected, not C.C. inmates:
 - a) Where to go for help. b) Know where but unable
4. Those who initially refused (group 1):
 - a) Gave up trying, now in need. b) Failed in more than two attempts with wrong lawyers.
5. Those who received partial and inadequate reparations:
 - a) Think that's it but in need. b) Not told how much really due to them.
6. Next of kin/dependents born to survivors:
 - a) Don't know if and how much due. b) Don't know where to go.

It is my suggestion and plea for a way to be found whereby the remaining survivors, their children and grandchildren do not have to write, apply, fill in forms, go to lawyers or counselors but reorganize the whole issue of compensation by having, well meaning, well briefed and authoritative officials visit the survivors and their next of kin in their homes and without checking their economical status be in a position to justly compensate them on the spot with pensions transferable to the next of kin or one time sum depending on the choice of the survivor.

The system must take into account and accept the fact that there will be individuals who will make unjustified claims, but on the whole I believe that long term employment of officials in the present system together with embezzlement will waste more of the limited resources available.

I wish this conference "Gods' Speed" to find the right answers to the existing in my opinion totally inadequate system.