

PROF. T. BALBERYSZKI

September 9, 2014

Your Excellencies, Distinguished guests and Visitors

Seventy years ago I stood at the very place you are standing now and with tears streaming down my face I took my father's hand, and looked in horror at a sight I could not comprehend. I was just thirteen years old and the sight of hundreds of half burned bodies spread over several huge timber platforms was beyond my comprehension. Some of the bodies were only half burned and I could recognize one or two faces that only two three days ago were living human beings, my neighbors in the labor brigades doing their work and quietly dreaming of the end of the war and their fervent hope to return to their homes and to a normal life.

For them the war was over but their dream did not come true. My father, apparently noticing my condition, pulled me gently away from the "death platforms" and walked me slowly back to our room in the camp barracks. And that was the beginning of our return to civilization and to a normal life after we were reunited with my mother and sister who also survived the concentration camps in Germany.

My father started writing the story of the destruction of the Vilnius Jewry and of the camps in Klooga and Lagedi while still in the camp and continued until it was finished and published in the late 1950s. He was imbued with the conviction that the more stories of the Holocaust, in all their ramifications, which are reported to the world at large, the better the chances that humanity might learn the meaning of hatred, cruelty and brutality and thus prevent it from ever happening again. He passed away some 40 years ago just before the appearance of the early holocaust deniers and years before the renewal of the scourge of anti-Semitism that is sweeping the "civilized", western part of the world.

And it is because anti-Semitism is so rampant, especially in Europe, that the decision of the Estonian Government to create and dedicate a monument to the memory of the victims of the "Final Solution", near their burying grounds is a noble gesture that brings honor to the people of Estonia and should serve as an inspiration to other countries that have yet to live up to their obligations to meet the challenge that will ensure that the murder of European Jewry will be forever recorded and remembered.

Thank you, Estonia, for such a noble gesture.

11/5 AHIMEIR STREET. TEL AVIV 69126 • ISRAEL

PHONE: 972-3-6412541 • FAX: 972-3-6418129. E-MAIL tmb@zahav.net.il