

Resolution Passed At Gathering of Holocaust Survivors



Roman Kent, Chairman of the National Executive Committee of American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors, (l.) and Benjamin Meed, President of the American Gathering, (r.) at Steering Committee meeting during which Mr. Kent introduced a resolution to continue the Gathering as an organization. Photo/Gayle Rothschild, Washington, D.C.

As the 1983 American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors in Washington, D.C., comes to an end, we realize that the overwhelming success of our efforts sends a clear signal that our work must continue. Just as the achievements of the 1981 World Gathering in Israel led to the events of the week just past, so we must move forward to consider our future.

We are mindful that our time is precious, our responsibility is great and that we have a unique role to play.

When our people here in the United States, in Canada, in Israel, or anywhere in the world are threatened — our voice must be heard.

When the world shows that the facts and lessons of the Holocaust are not understood — our voice must be heard.

When the Jewish community of which we are a part needs the survivors as comrades for united activity — our voice must be heard.

When the forms of remembrance of the Holocaust are considered — our voice must be heard.

The American Gathering has caught the attention of the Nation and many now listen to our story — our voices have at last been heard.

We now resolve that the American Gathering must continue to be a positive and effective force. We must gather again to bring survivors and our children together. We must maintain and strengthen our national registry to try again and again for reunion. The interest of the public at large in us and our experience must be nourished by the truth of what we say and our right and duty to speak. Our allegiance to the people of Israel is unshakable, and we must evidence that support. Our pride in our new home and citizenship is strengthened by our continuing traditions and values of the world that is gone.

We have no other choice but to use our days well and to ever strengthen the legacy we will pass on.

Impressions From The Holocaust Gathering

By
Dr. Susan E. Cernyak-Spatz

Harry Cargas, the well-known author and lecturer from Webster College, St. Louis, retells the story he has heard, no guarantee. At the gathering two women attended with their husbands. They recognized each other as camp comrades. While they hugged and kissed, one looked up at the husband of the other one, and recognized in him the husband she had thought dead these 40 years. I can not vouch for the story, and probably neither can Harry, but such is the stuff that the dreams at the Gathering were made of. Men and women clutching the microphone attached to the loudspeaker battery in the middle of the main hall of the Convention Center in Washington. Calling, voices raised, reverberating through the hall "Ich bin Sureh Leah fuen Grodno Gubernye. Hot in gezejn mine husband /taten/-momme/"... and so it goes for hours. Pushing, shoving in their eagerness to get to the microphone. They carry name tags with outlandish designs on their back, on their front, on raised poles. One even went so far as to have a blue and white striped jacket made in the shape of the camp-capo jacket... with a prisoner's rimless cap to match. Ljuba Gurdus, the well-known artist, a friend of mine, who exhibited there, and I, roared with laughter. "You know," Ljuba said, "he could not have been a Capo, the tailoring is not good enough, but he sure must have had access to the laundry. They never looked so clean." One can laugh now.

The exhibits of survivor artists, like Ljuba Gurdus, are impressive; Ljubas in a style reminiscent of Kaethe Kolwitz, some in a primitive style a la Grandma Moses with a less endearing topic. Some abstracts show torn structures... some excellent sculpture... small bronze groups.

The exhibit prepared by the Yad Vashem, unfortunately, did not have

enough English subtitles to be comprehensive. But the pictures, if one knew what one was looking at, spoke for themselves.

Unfortunately, the hucksters had gotten hold of this Gathering too. I realized it defrayed the costs, but one felt put upon by 'Holocaust t-shirts' and souvenirs of the Holocaust Gathering.

Due to a mixup in the tickets I never received my packet and, therefore, was deprived of attending the opening meeting on Monday night. I understand it was very moving. The president spoke movingly of how "WE" shall overcome and remember. Unfortunately, at the same time "WE" were deprived by the self-same president of the planes to assure "OUR" survival in Israel.

One fact struck me as remarkable. There were more women survivors than men. This seems significant. The second generation was represented in large numbers and they were the ones who attended the seminars and lectures. It seemed the majority of survivors preferred to keep looking for the proverbial 'needle in the haystack.' I gave up looking as soon as I found out that the much vaunted computer did not contain print-out lists arranged by either countries or cities of origin or camp working commandos.

I stared intently at the faces around me, but I did not recognize anyone.

It seemed that the central Europeans, such as Germans, Austrians, Belgians, French, Czechs, etc. were in the absolute minority. The Polish survivors dominated the Gathering. One can only surmise that their precarious life even in pre-war Poland prepared them better for the ordeal than the central Europeans.

On Wednesday morning we attended the ceremony at the West steps of the Capitol to witness the handing over of the deeds for the buildings that are to house the Holocaust Museum, located near the Jefferson Memorial.

Three second generation Congress members, Lautenberg, Gejdenson and Boschwitz, spoke. Tip O'Neill spoke, V.P. Bush spoke. The congressmen were so thankful for the aid and refuge given to them by the U.S., i.e. their parents, and that included, of course, us, the survivors, after the war.

Elie Wiesel, in his address, said, "Yes, we are grateful for the help after the war, for the G.I.s who opened the gates of the camp, gave us food, but where were you during the war?" The crowd roared their approval to that rhetorical question and I believe that is a question that the world will have to answer in the future.

Since Congress members are notorious for long-windedness, the crowd thinned out considerably. It was hot and standing was not very comfortable.

I left that afternoon. I had made a few interesting acquaintances, had gotten some more material for my work. I do not think I need to go to another Gathering. There is no one waiting for me.

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with his wife and children two years ago from Miami. He is a sales representative for two ladies apparel firms, traveling a three state area. He has previously served in Augusta as chairman of their Federation Campaign back in the 1970-71 Drive, and worked actively on behalf of The Jewish Community Center, serving as Treasurer. He also served on the Young Leadership Cabinet of the UJA during the early 1970's. He has made two trips to Israel, one in 1970, and again in 1983 (the February Mission).

Concerning Project Renewal, Simon says that we Jews in Charlotte, who have so much to be thankful for, have a wonderful opportunity to share with a sister city in Northern Israel. We are putting dollars into a Project here, which will make a better place for us and future generations, a project that will be a place for the entire community to use for social, educational, religious, cultural, social services and so much more. Our Sister City, Nazarit Ellit, has the same needs. We have the opportunity to reach out and provide for our Brothers and Sisters in the same way that we as a community in Charlotte are reaching out and providing. What a wonderful opportunity, and a blessing. In the months and years ahead it is hoped that each of you will want to hear more about Nazarit Ellit, and will certainly include a stop there on any future trips to Israel. Project Renewal is a new and innovative program of shared planning and implementation and a new partnership for the 80's. Learn more about Project Renewal. Let's get excited!

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