

## **Commemoration in Neuengamme – Hamburg / Memorial of the former Concentration Camp**

### **Speech by Michael Löffelholz, 6<sup>th</sup> of September 2009**

This is the most painful hour of our meeting in Hamburg, an hour of memory.

“Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.”

(George Santayana)

There are no words for what was happened. Yet we need words.

We think of Jewish children, women and men who were senselessly tortured and murdered in Europe from 1933 to 1945.

“Here in the camp  
you ask questions  
but you should not  
as there are no answers.

There are only blows  
and they will break you  
'til you are silent  
and shuffle on  
with vacant eyes,  
staggering under your own weight  
the haunting skeleton  
of a nightmare.”

(Jean-Pierre Renouard, prisoner in Neuengamme)

Still today survivors and family members from several generations suffer from the emotional and physical consequences of the outrageous atrocities committed at the time. We feel sympathy for all who carry within them until this day the deadly pain inflicted with Auschwitz: the survivors themselves as well as the children and grandchildren of the Shoah. We also think of those men and women of our people and of other peoples who resisted the criminal racial hatred, protected Jewish countrymen, and paid for their caring with their lives.

But it is not only about the memory of past and present suffering. Our commemoration would fall short of its purpose without a commitment with regard to the future. Even if none of us is guilty for what happened, nonetheless, and especially as inhabitants of the country from which the Shoah originated, we are responsible for the consequences resulting from the atrocities.

We want to keep alive the memory of those terrible events among the youth in Germany with whom we are working, and we want to resist all attempts to draw a line over the past and to evade the responsibilities resulting from the collective crime.

“Today we know: surviving is not only survivors” problem, the long shadow of the Holocaust lies over the entire civilization, in which it happened and which has to live on with the burden and the consequences of the events.”

(Imre Kèrtezs)

The question how this industrialized mass murder could occur has to be asked again and again. We can do that with the persistence required only if we do not give up the vision of a peaceful world.

We want to devote ourselves emphatically to the clearing up of all myths and prejudice about Jewishness deeply rooted in the history of Christianity which manifest themselves unrecognized in new forms, even in specific forms of criticism of Israel, again and again.

The historical memory of what was done to the Jews in Germany as well as in other nations obliges us to defend Israel’s right to exist against those who question this right and threaten the Israeli nation. With gratitude we acknowledge that Jewish men and women deprived of their right to live in Europe have succeeded with great effort to found a nation of their own, and we hope that the time is not too far off when they will live in peace with the Arab neighbor nations.

Michael Löffelholz