



Final Word

Addressed by Felix Kolmer

International Auschwitz Committee

Mr. Chairman, Excellences, ladies and gentlemen

The time for our conference on welfare for the holocaust survivors and other Nazi victims is fulfilled. We have listened to very interesting ideas on the topic of welfare of former prisoners. We shall hear in a while an excellent analysis of the health and welfare situation of holocaust survivors and other Nazi victims, composed by both conference co-chairmen.

We have given naturally to the survivors time to explain, what is their meaning on improving their social welfare, what are their needs. The most important topic of the conference has proved the main program for improving the social situation of holocaust survivors and other Nazi victims, as was agreed before by Special Session in the year 2009 and the outcomes of the workshop in the year 2013. Both actions recommended urgently increasing pensions, to support the organizations of the former prisoners with more money and to support the organizations which are taking care of the former prisoners, also with more money, as it is done today. These all we could hear again from the panelists, especially from panel III. That means, no progress in the last 6 years in these most important problems. We have listened also to a very interesting lecture, which was given by prof. Scruggs, which has reinforced the above mentioned requirements of us, the former prisoners.

The closing of the conference doesn't mean that by this conference we are at the end of the welfare program. We are still at the beginning; we have finished only the first chapter. The second chapter is the negotiations of the organizations of the former prisoners with their governments or local authorities. This may be more difficult than the chapter which we have finished just now. The success of these negotiations depends in most cases on the accessibility of the clerks of the authorities. Many of us had been ready, to risk our lives for our country, many of us behaved as heroes, so we expect that the authorities will behave themselves adequately. We are the partners, we are not the beggars. We have a great and heroic history behind us. I do hope that after these negotiations between the organizations of the former prisoners and the authorities on pensions, the pensions even in the lower income countries will permit a higher living standard even to them, who have higher need because of their illnesses and high age.

The living standard of the former prisoners, aside from the pensions, which will allow them to live with dignity on the end of their life, depends also with the possibilities of the organizations, which are taking care of the survivors.. Therefore the organizations need to be supported by the authorities.



From the psychological point of view and to overcome their social isolation it is necessary to support financially the organizations of the former prisoners.

The last wish expressed by former prisoners is the adoption of legislative measures at the national level which would define the social and legal status for them as the veterans of war, as it is in many countries, f.i. in Belgium, Poland, Russian Federation and many other countries.

To conclude my short remarks about our future negotiations with the authorities of the countries where former prisoners are living, I should like to recommend speeding up future negotiations about welfare of the former prisoners. That depends mainly on the governments or the authorities of the countries where the prisoners are living. Do it in time, in which we are still alive. How long will the governments wait? The decision and recommendation of the Special Session in the year 2009 and the outcomes of the workshop in the year 2013 have not been followed by a realization at all. Will the governments wait, until the problem will be solved by itself, by our death? Unfortunately the biological watch is working very precisely. Take the chance, while we are still alive. Do it now, today, not tomorrow, which could be too late.

To finish my remarks, I should like to address many thanks to the Jewish Claims Conference and the German organization Erinnerung, Verantwortung und Zukunft for their help given to the former prisoners.

You have heard the arguments as they have been seen by the International Auschwitz Committee, spoken by a survivor of Terezín, extermination camp Auschwitz II.-Birkenau and Friedland, side camp of Gross Rosen. This is our position. I do hope that it is yours too.

Thank you, Mr.Chairman.