

## **Remarks by Dr. Maria Eva Vass Chargé d’Affaires of the Embassy of Hungary**

Thank you Chairman Schram,

Mr. de Gorgey, Mrs. de Gorgey  
Director Dempsey,  
Father Massa,  
Father McMannus

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am deeply honored and privileged to be here with all of you today at the wonderful John Paul the II Cultural Center at the 2008 Bearing Witness Award Presentation organized by the Anti-Defamation League. I am especially humbled and honored because this prestigious award is presented to an outstanding Hungarian-American, whose heroism and sense of duty should be an example for all of us.

Guido de Gorgey’s bravery and unwavering determination to reach out to and help people in peril remind us of the great Hungarian individuals who did not lose their moral compass and sense of responsibility in the course of the difficult history of Hungary.

Guido de Gorgey saved the lives of many Jewish people during the horrors of the Holocaust. When Nazi Germany occupied Hungary in 1944 and the deportation of the Jews started, Guido de Gorgey could not stay passive and watch what was happening to hundreds of thousands of innocent people but he chose to stand up against oppression, following his conviction that his duty is to help. He was ready even to risk his own life while saving the lives of others.

One of the most important lessons of the Holocaust, is that in times of severe discrimination, it is no longer enough to be tolerant, but it is an absolute necessity to act against injustice. Guido de Gorgey is a living example of such responsible action.

As the Hungarian born late Congressman Tom Lantos the only Holocaust survivor of the U.S. Congress said “it is the responsibility of the entire international community to prevent another Holocaust and to keep the memory of those who perished alive”.

In order to never forget the brutality and the most vicious inhumanity of the Holocaust, in 2000 the Hungarian Parliament proclaimed in a Resolution that April the 16<sup>th</sup> – the day when the deportation of Jewish people started in Hungary – is the Holocaust Memorial Day.

Further measures introduced by Governments of Hungary in the last decade include the following:

Free copies of Imre Kertész’s Nobel Prize-winning novel, *Fateless* was provided to every Hungarian school. Children learn about the Holocaust and the dangers of intolerance and anti-Semitism not only in the framework of history lessons, but in the context of the Holocaust Memorial Day every year.

The Holocaust Documentation and Memorial Center was opened in Budapest in a restored former synagogue, a place of remembrance for the perished Jewish and Roma people.

The Hungarian Ministry of Education and the City of Budapest supported the Holocaust exhibitions in two Hungarian high schools, bearing the names of Swedish Diplomat Raoul Wallenberg and the Italian Giorgio Perlasca, who saved thousands of lives from deportation to Náci death camps during World War Two.

The Governments of Hungary continue to support the work of the Jewish Lauder School in Budapest, which excels in Holocaust education and organizes teacher training programs every year. They have collected the stories of families and published a calendar with their life stories.

In 2006, Hungary took over the Chairmanship of the United Nations Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research, which, among others, made efforts to develop educational programs for future generations about the Holocaust in order to help prevent future acts of genocide.

The Governments of Hungary have been pursuing a very successful educational cooperation with the Yad Vashem Institute of Jerusalem, in the framework of which hundreds of Hungarian teachers took part in postgraduate education programs regarding the history of the Holocaust.

These are just some of the initiatives and measures Hungary took on with the hope to relieve the pains and heal the wounds of those who suffered in the past, and to make sure that all this is not forgotten.

We, and all future generations should remember the victims of the most horrendous persecution, in the course of which nearly six hundred thousand Hungarian Jews were sent to death-camps run by the Názis. We should also remember the individual heroes who saved the lives of many during those terrible years. The Bearing Witness Award is a noble and generous way of acknowledging such heroism.

To a large extent it is thanks to outstanding people like Guido de Gorgey that today there is a vibrant Jewish community in Hungary. We are proud of the fact that Budapest has the most populous active Jewish community in Central Europe, who cherish their religious, artistic and historical heritage, and that the Budapest Great Synagogue is the largest operating synagogue in Europe and the second largest in the world.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In conclusion let me quote the Hungarian Ambassador to the United States, Ambassador Ferenc Somogyi who wrote the following words about Guido de Gorgey:

“The steadfastness and fortitude of Guido de Gorgey in - what he called - his ‘finest hour’ is a true example of bearing witness in a dire situation. His bravery in the dangerous, life-threatening times of World War Two reminds us that we all have a responsibility to stand against hatred and evil in the present and the future. The Embassy of Hungary is proud to honor Guido de Gorgey, this Hungarian-American of compassion and strength.”

Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you for your attention