

## George Herczeg's Reflections on the 2004 March of the Living

as told to Eli Rubenstein



The March of the Living is a very worthwhile cause. Every Jewish school should make an effort to send their students on this program. But not just Jewish schools - the program is for all people who care about the future of humanity. It is important for every human being to see what we saw in Poland, not just for Jewish people.

All decent people should see how barbaric humanity is capable of becoming.

You see, in 10-15 years from now, none of us survivors will be here to tell the truth. So if these young students don't come on the trip and stand up and tell about what happened, about what they saw and learned, then the deniers of the Holocaust will win.

If you can send a 3 year old child -the same age as my grandchild - to the gas chambers.....what kind of human beings are these? How can human beings sink so low?

For things like this to happen is simply unbelievable - but it happened!

And if we are not careful it can happen again.....

I'll tell you a story: when we visited Auschwitz-Birkenau, the guide and the group went into one of the barracks. I was having back trouble, so I stayed outside. Suddenly, I hear sirens going off, and lights start flashing. Two motorcycles pass me by, followed by a few limousines, and more motorcycles, and a large number of Polish police and security people. I learned later that one of the limousines was carrying Israel's Cabinet Minister, Tommy Lapid, and Rabbi Israel Lau, Israel's former Chief Rabbi, both of whom were speaking at the ceremony in Auschwitz-Birkenau.

And you can't imagine what an uplifting feeling that was, for me a survivor, to see an Israeli Minister and Chief Rabbi being escorted here in Auschwitz with such honor and dignity. All the money in the world couldn't buy you such a feeling! And then we went to Israel..

On Yom Hazikaron (Israel's Memorial Day for fallen soldiers) we attended a ceremony at Latrun, the museum to Israel's tank core. And our students saw all these young soldiers, in uniform, standing on guard for the state of Israel.

And written on the wall, we saw the names of 4,900 Israeli soldiers who died fighting with the Israeli Armored Corps since 1948: They sacrificed their lives not just for the state of Israel, but to defend all of world Jewry. And it's so important to see that Israel exists today- and forever!. I was in Jerusalem and I watched the sun rise over the city...and it was such an incredible, emotional feeling: to see what the Jewish people have built in this country.

For anyone who has lived through the Holocaust, to come on this trip, to leave Auschwitz-Birkenau and travel to Israel, and to not be afraid or intimidated, to see us living as a free people - it's a tremendous feeling; it gives you such a feeling of self-respect and dignity, you can't imagine!

Every person in the world deserves to have such a feeling