

Introduction

These pages contain a compilation of speeches, some of them made during the sessions of the Senate of the Uruguayan Parliament, and writings that state my views and attitudes about the people of Israel, Zionism, racial discrimination and anti-Semitism. They are my testimony and my pledge.

L.A.L.H.

My Brother's Keeper

Foreword

I write these lines still under the impression caused by the following texts. These pages gather the views of who was, a few years ago, President of the República Oriental del Uruguay, our esteemed friend Dr. Luis Alberto Lacalle who continues, not only doing battle in the political life of our country, but also in the ethical-moral field of human endeavour in general. Dr. Lacalle personifies the values that he persistently invokes, which despite having their roots in the distant past have not lost their freshness, quite the opposite. These views, highly topical and of great importance, are more relevant than ever because their purpose is nothing less than conferring dignity to the life of the human being, in order, precisely, to be a human being.

Dr. Lacalle goes to the sources and he is nourished by them: the Commandments of Moses, the visions and the demands set by the Prophets of Israel, the teachings of Jesus, all of which conform a Judeo-Christian legacy whose aims is to dignify the life of the human being through a world of peace, mutual collaboration and respect for each one's neighbour.

These lessons come from very far in our past and have searched for an entry into the mind and the heart of each person in all times. This is particularly so in our times that have witnessed the unparalleled savagery of the Holocaust, where millions of innocents were murdered only because of the fact they had been born, which is, indeed, the least voluntary act in the life of any human being.

More than once, Dr. Lacalle recalls the supreme cruelty of the extermination camps, as symbolized by Auschwitz. The stone, the arrow, the lance, the sword and the gun fell way behind. The gas chambers and the crematories entered the terrible scene, evil reaching the summit of sinister effectiveness.

The author recalls with emotion his personal experience of having participated in the recent March for Life at Auschwitz, and shares with us his thoughts. He insists on the answer of Cain:

Am I my brother's keeper? And he states that at all times, in all latitudes where a human being is in danger because of his ancestry, race, the colour of his skin or his religion, the answer must be: Yes, I am my brother's keeper!

In his writings and speeches, Dr. Lacalle remembers his feelings when arriving at Jerusalem; the movement of opinion that culminated in the formation, in the General Assembly of the United Nations, of the majority of States needed for revoking the slanderous resolution that equated Zionism with racism; the memory of the Holocaust; the immigrants of the Old World, of many latitudes, that renewed their lives in Uruguayan earth, in democracy and equality, etc. There is an answer that, through the generations, must not be silenced: Yes, I am my brother's keeper.

That is the message Dr. Lacalle develops in the following texts. He was the first Head of State in the world to take part in the March for Life, in Auschwitz, its incinerating furnaces already extinguished, and he shares with us his innermost rebellion that does not go out. He mentions other terrible instances of injustice which ought not to be forgotten, among them the Armenian genocide.

The author, we know well, is a man of action and passion in the political life of our country. However, what now concerns us are not the aspects of political polemic and controversy among the different political parties, but the message that reverberates in the following pages. A message that rises above political parties and national borders, in a cause that does not belong to anybody in particular, but to Humanity in general and which reflects the perspective that characterizes Uruguay and its people, and which we have learned to value already from school.

José Jerozolinski

Three moments

November 1983

Gabriel Azulay draws back the curtains of my room at King David Hotel of Jerusalem. The autumn sunset dyes with gold the stones of the Holy City displayed, overwhelming, before us. The night breeze insinuates itself and gently rocks the cypresses where noisy birds are preparing to go to sleep.

One by one, my guide and friend explains to me the main elements of the landscape. The Tomb of Absalom, the Valley of Josaphat, the Mount of Olives. Images, names and personages flash in my mind, united to the oldest memories. I recall, together with the foundations of my faith, very old experiences.

O my son, Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! And the voice of King David returns to my mind together with the pictures of the Sacred History book, with the unfortunate prince seeing how his hair entangled in the bramble puts him at the mercy of his pursuers.

Father...take this cup from me, and the suffering image of Jesus in the hour of maximum anguish, at the Orchard.

I take the most advantage of the angle of view. Everything I see or feel strikes a chord with me. Almost three thousand years of my life as a member of the Judeo-Christian civilization have their foundations on these walls.

Our feet are already stepping across your threshold, Jerusalem!

Moments later I write to my mother: "all my Christian and Western being is shaken by this contact with our Judaic and Eastern roots"...

April 1994

The extermination camps, Auschwitz, Birkenau, Treblinka, are the embodiment of evil. If there may exist a material evidence of the existence of the malignant spirit, it is those terrible monuments to hatred. Whoever visits those places experiences disturbing moments. The feelings that drown the soul are not pleasing. If, at some time in life, one approaches a point in life where his love for his fellow men becomes exhausted, if, in some circumstance, the sources of understanding and forgiveness dry up, this is before that monstrous industrialization of genocide. Words hesitate, hope in humanity perishes and, if one manages to pray, it shall not be a prayer to the merciful and just God, but to the avenging God, *Yahweh Tzavaot*, the Lord of Hosts, tremendous in his rage and punishment.

We have come together - more than six thousand individuals - to march from Auschwitz to Birkenau. A distance of about four kilometres. This is the March for Life and I have been honoured with an invitation to be the first Head of State to lead the march.

The official retinue gathers under the infamous signboard *Arbeit macht frei* (*Work makes free*) and next to the barbed wire fence, which once was electrified. It snows quietly and persistently in a gray, doubly sad morning. The hoarse sound of the *shofar* calls to attention. In one of barracks, to our side, there is displayed, enlarged, the infamous photo of the "orchestra" of prisoners, who were forced to play dressed in their striped uniforms and skinny of hunger, in a sad symphony. A violinist is among the ghostlike players...

Today, fifty years after that photo was taken, under it, in the same place than in the image, an old man sounds the strings of his violin. He does not follow a recognizable melody, but only rhythmically draws the bow across the strings. He is under the photograph. He plays his violin. He is alive ... he is the same person. A survivor of hell, a traveller through half a century, he has come with his violin and his music. He is the victor. The evil Reich has disappeared and its

ringleaders are just forgotten dust. Its huge military power has disappeared forever and the extermination camps are museums. But the man is alive. He lives and plays the violin.

He is the victor... *Lejaim! Lejaim!*

April 1995

The archbishop of Paris, Cardinal Monsignor Jean Marie Lustinger has done us the honour to receive us. I had wanted to meet this singular religious personality who, being the grandson of a rabbi, has become a Prince of the Catholic Church.

His religious transit turns him into a symbol of the approximation between Judaism and Christianity that today materializes the hopes of those who are encouraged by that reunion.

The conversation flows easily towards the superior levels of the spirit and we are surrounded by an intimate feeling of peace and harmony. Before leaving I ask his blessing. For that purpose he does not draw the sign of the cross in the air, but he lays his hands, to the usage of the Old Testament, while imploring the blessing of God Almighty for me and my beloved ones...

Little later, already outside his residence, I read the dedication he inscribed in the book he gave me. *Dieu est fidèle, God is faithful*. An odd adjective to use when making reference to the Lord! However, it has an old Biblical ancestry. God is faithful to his people, faithful to his word, to his commitments. He is slow to anger, but quick to forgive. He is the one that fulfils, and will fulfil, his promises, the God of our parents, the God of Abraham, of Isaac and Jacob. The merciful God that, at the end of the times, waits for us. God is faithful...

Genocide during World War II

Senate, 13th May, 1987

Senator Lacalle Herrera has the floor.

Mr. Lacalle Herrera. - Mr. Speaker: in 1944, in the small town of Izieu, near Lyon, a girl called Liliane Gerenstein addressed a naïve letter to God where she wrote:

It is thanks to You that I had a beautiful life before, that I was spoiled, that I had lovely things that others do not have. God? After that, I ask You one thing only: make my parents come back, protect them so that I can see them again as soon as possible, make them return so that I can say again that I have such a good mother and such a good father. I have such faith in You and I thank You beforehand.

Another document was signed in those days in the same town. The official report stated:

This morning, at the Home of Jewish Children, Colony of Izieu, 41 children that were captured there were deported, their ages between three and thirteen years. In addition to that, all the Jewish personnel has been arrested, in total 10 individuals, among them five women. It was not possible to seize neither money nor objects of value. The transport for Drancy will take place on the 4th of this month. Signed Klaus Barbie.

When one confronts, Mr. Speaker, the episode of the Holocaust, the numbers which quantify this episode may obscure the fact that it actually was an instance of genocide. When speaking of millions of individuals there is the risk of losing the perspective of the individual faces and vicissitudes, of the loves and hopes contained in each human being; but when the episodes are observed through a magnifying glass, when the individuals become the protagonists, in a world of small quantities, and when some of the participants are identified, as we have just

done with two particular cases, it is possible to fully comprehend the real magnitude of the tragedies that has experienced our XXth century.

In these days, Mr. Speaker, in the city of Lyon began the trial of this person who responds to the name of Klaus Barbie - also called Klaus Altman- charged with having executed four thousand men and women and with having deported seven thousand five hundred Jews of the area of Lyon.

Unfortunately, the trial and many other episodes of the XXth century have made clear, in a frightening and sinister way, that we have made little progress since Cain and Abel. Religions against religions, races against races, peoples against peoples, brothers against brothers; in Sri Lanka, in Central America, everywhere, men kill each other. Nevertheless, the succession of atrocities in capital letters that constituted the Holocaust occupies a special place in the midst of all that horror. An episode whose memory is revived by the bare facts, but not less horrifying because of that, exposed at the trial that has begun in the central hall of the High Court at Lyon.

Mr. Speaker, with this intervention I wanted, again, to recall those events, to endeavour that nobody forgets them. In the same fashion that in many small English towns the monuments remembering the war of 1914 carry the legend *lest we forget - so that we do not forget*. It is not our intention to issue a judgment against any specific nation, nor to attempt to make any nation responsible for anything, but to give an opinion about humanity as a whole that can fall into those abysses. And these episodes occupy again a place in the first page of newspapers. As I said at the beginning, when we identify the human beings involved in the events, the tragedy acquires a greater dimension.

This is what I wanted to say.

Zionism and racism

United Nations Resolution 3379

Senate, 9th September, 1987.

Mr. Speaker. - We enter the previous hour.

Senator Lacalle Herrera has the floor.

Mr. Lacalle Herrera. In November 1975 the United Nations passed a declaration where it established equivalence between Zionism and racism. That Resolution - Resolution 3379 - was passed with the affirmative vote of different groups that operate within the United Nations and reflected the contents of a declaration adopted by the Conference on the Equality of Women and their Contribution to the Development of Peace, held at Mexico City, on the 19th June 1975. The text passed at this conference, I say it again, later served as a preamble to the declaration of the General Assembly of the United Nations. In Mexico, a text was approved which I repeat textually:

underlined the principle that international co-operation and peace require the achievement of liberation and national independence, the elimination of colonialism and neo-colonialism, foreign occupation, Zionism, apartheid, and racial discrimination in all its forms, as well as the acknowledgment of the dignity of the peoples, and their right to self-determination.

End of the quote.

Taking into consideration these and other precedents, the Plenary Session of the 10th November, 1975, adopted, and I quote again, the following text: the General Assembly *determines that Zionism is a form of racism and racial discrimination.* I do not want Mr. Speaker, because the issues are too extensive and the time at our disposal too brief, to enter

into a detailed refutation of the essential fallacy of a decision of international political character that places on an equal footing a political movement with the policies of *colonialism and neocolonialism* or of racial discrimination as practiced in South Africa. From my point of view, this Resolution of the United Nations, that bears the number 3379, is not only profoundly unfair, but also based upon a fallacious reasoning. It suffices to read the paragraph I have just recalled, to realize that the policies of discrimination implemented in South Africa, which are consecrated in the constitution and legislation of that country, have little in common with Zionism; or, in what refers to the policy itself, about which it is possible to hold many views, there is no doubt that in this opportunity it is used as another pawn in the chess game of international politics. It is in this context that one has to regard that resolution of the General Assembly of the United Nations.

We ask, Mr. Speaker, that the written version of our words be communicated to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Mr. Speaker. The motion tabled by Senator Lacalle Herrera is to be voted that the written version of his words be forwarded to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

(Voting)

- 15 in 15. Affirmative. Unanimity.

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Senate, 1st October 1987

Mr. Lacalle Herrera. - I ask for the floor

Mr. Speaker. - The Senator has the floor.

Mr. Lacalle Herrera. Mr. Speaker: although it is clear that the session shall adjourn with the speeches that have been made, I would like to add my point of view because, for one reason or another, the Chamber has entered into an analysis of international issues about which I have a particular opinion.

The Senate will remember that in 1985 I raised my voice in this Chamber to censure the South African policy of *apartheid* and that in the same year, I obtained the agreement of the Senate that a note should be sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with the aim of emphasizing the position of the Republic with respect to the Armenian genocide, a step that was particularly successful because the General Assembly of the United Nations described that episode in those terms at its next session.

Therefore, and very briefly, Mr. Speaker, I want to add that it is important and legitimate to be concerned about the fate of the Jews residing in the Soviet Union and that we raise our voice in their support. I think that their situation is not what it should be in accordance with international treaties, not even in accordance with the Helsinki Accords. In the Soviet Union a committee integrated by citizens of Jewish origin has been formed to monitor - if such a word exists in the Spanish language and does not offend it - the implementation of the agreements. The members of the committee are persecuted because they try to monitor the fulfilment of the Helsinki Accords, which, among other issues, guarantee free transit and free emigration. It is a fact - it continues being true - that those who request their passport, by that mere fact were deprived of their chairs at the universities, could not continue with their studies, had to sell their property and their applications were delayed for years and years, to the point that it

is a newsworthy event when they manage to overcome those barriers and arrive at their land of Israel.

I think we can leave this subject for now, so that it may be discussed by the Senate at some time when the Chamber wants to go more deeply into it. This year it shall be seventy years since the Soviet Revolution, and without any doubt, there shall be controversies and commemorations providing the opportunity for us all to pass our judgment on that important historical episode. I wanted to state my views with that fact in mind that.

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Senate, 9th August, 1988

Mr. Lacalle Herrera.- I ask for the floor.

Mr. Speaker (Esc. Dardo Ortiz). The Senator has the floor.

Mr. Lacalle Herrera. Mr. Speaker: as it has been stated, in August 1986, without any official representation of the political parties, not even of the Senate - but being part of a qualified delegation of members of Parliament and ex members of governments, I attended, in the city of Porto Alegre, a meeting about which a report has already been submitted. Nevertheless, it is fit to remember that this delegation was composed by our esteemed and unforgettable friend the deceased Senator Paz Aguirre, by the Senators Martínez Moreno and Ferreira, the ex-President of the *Consejo Nacional de Gobierno*, Dr. Washington Beltrán, the President of the Unión Cívica, Dr. Humberto Ciganda, and Mr. Guillermo Stirling who represented the *Partido Colorado*.

In that meeting, political leaders of Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay, Argentina and Chile discussed Resolution 3379 (XXX) of the United Nations. A Resolution that has caused much controversy and which has been given a special treatment by placing it as the first item in today's agenda of the Senate.

One month after our return from Porto Alegre, in the previous hour, we proposed that the procedure of the Senate should be put into operation with the aim of fulfilling the commitment we had undertaken in that city, of doing as much as possible, within our means, to achieve that the Resolution be, at least, discussed by the Uruguayan Senate, if not rejected or replaced by another. That is what happened.

Nevertheless, I should not cast my vote - which, by the way, I say in advance, will be for the majority report - without stating the motives of my position. Although this could not be

necessary, since my views, from the political, religious and secular perspectives, on this matter are well known. But I believe it is necessary to make an analysis of the totality of this question.

The United Nations runs the risk of following the path of the League of Nations, however for different reasons. The latter was a barrier made of paper that could not stop, the events taking place in the international scene in the decade of the nineteen thirties. For those who, as myself, have an attitude of scepticism towards international organisms, those events were the confirmation of the view that goodwill and documents can do little when the imperialistic ambitions of the great powers start off along their path. The Second World was necessary to stop those ambitions. The San Francisco Charter attempted, once again, the adventure of establishing a new international legal order based on reason and the law.

For a time, the euphoria that followed the foundation of the United Nations made believe that it was possible to achieve that ideal. There is little doubt that the United Nations are being suck down into a sea of disrepute, however, for a number of reasons substantially different from those that led to the decay of the League of Nations. This circumstance turns it into a forum of decreasing importance. The procedure of approval of the resolutions has become practically automatic owing to the formation of blocks that vote in homogenous fashion - at this moment, there must be represented at the United Nations a little more than 150 nations.

In my view, it is possible to say that, when the Organization, in November 1975, passed Resolution 3379, it perverted the aims of the San Francisco Charter of the United Nations and of the documents signed there, and that this process goes even deeper because it begins to take a more dangerous course: that of altering the meaning of the words. If, one day, the words cease to represent the truth, then the truth will cease to exist.

When that resolution, preceded by a series of meetings, determined that Zionism is a form of racism, it stated not only something that is not true, but it also assigned the words a content

that is totally the opposite of their rightful essence. Although we are not here for making philosophy, neither religion nor to deal with connected political issues - perhaps some gentlemen Senators might be tempted to do so - but we are only expressing our views about the resolution; we are not dealing with the subject of the State of Israel, its foreign policy or the Middle East.

Senator Ricaldoni. Supported

Sr. Lacalle Herrera. I have no doubt that this resolution is a historical, legal and even linguistic distortion of the true sense of the words, all of which deserves a more detailed consideration of our part.

Briefly, Mr. Speaker, it is necessary to throw off a series of prejudices that are so old as the world, as well as persecutions and differences as ancient as our Christian civilization.

In the first place, the concept of race is completely alien to the Jewish nation. I shall never forget a most vivid example that demonstrates the truth of that assertion that I witnessed at the Institute of the Diaspora Research Institute of Tel Aviv. There, automatic screens show the faces of members of the people of Israel. This is not a race, as it frequently said in a superficial way, understanding that term as an element that genetically relates several individuals. This was not the case of the people of Israel when it settled in the Promised Land, not even the case of Abraham, who the Catholics invoke in our Sunday prayers. There is not a genetical principle. There is a joining together of peoples and tribes which, in that place of the world, resolved to establish a State, and which passed through the vicissitudes we all know.

It is not accurate to use the word racism in that context. Not only because there is no such thing as a separation among races, but because such a statement ignores the fact that there does not exist a Jewish race; what exists is a Jewish nation.

Besides, I must say, that for those who believe in nationalism, the political movement of a people dispersed in the world, which was first embodied in Theodore Herzl, who had the vision of rebuilding the State of Israel, is something that touches us very closely. What is the reason of the obsession with the *next year in Jerusalem* that has been passed from one generation to the next since two thousand years ago?

The Zionist Movement - that is the patriotic movement of a people that is not ours, but in whose anxiety for having its own mother country, we recognize our own way of feeling - has political characteristics that we share.

The idea of a movement inspired by the idea of returning to the ancestral home, of liberation - if this latter word has not already been debased, because, unfortunately, sometimes it cannot be used in its true sense - that was carried out under the name of Zionism, has as its aim, in the secular field, the re-establishment of a State that, of course, has very special characteristics. It is a State whose existence and conceptual foundations are related to that great trunk formed by the three fundamental religions of Humanity, the Peoples of the Book, and from which derive the Christians, Mohammedans and Jews. We must not forget that the God of our fathers, is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Ishmael; this circumstance determines that we have a common root with the peoples of the Middle East.

That Movement struggles during many years, without his founder living long enough to see the fulfilment of his dream, and finally culminated in the establishment of that State, in 1948, when the partition of Palestine took place. From that date onwards several events take place, which, I say it again, I am not going to discuss today. However, from any point of view, those episodes were attempts to deny that political fact, nowadays irreversible and which nobody shall ever be able to erase. Something that shall not be achieved neither by force - although its enemies have always have had a numerically superiority - nor conceptually, as long as there

are people thinking that the foundation of that state is an instance of political liberation and reaffirmation of a national identity which all must respect.

At some stage I was called to give my views on that subject and I precisely returned to the question I stated at the outset of my speech: to what extent is it possible to twist concepts and make truth prisoner, not only of opinions, but of distortions that turn it around, as if were a glove? It is for these reasons that I am going to cast my vote for this declaration of the Senate. I think that with this decision Uruguay shall not retake, but simply continue, a way of seeing this issue. I think that our country must stay in this international position that led it to vote against that resolution. I also believe that this vote shall also do well to the Republic, beyond considerations of foreign policy, the judgment that may deserve the State of Israel or the situation in the Middle East. All of these are questions, I repeat, that are not at issue at this moment.

Leaving my personal views aside, Mr. Speaker, this motion represents the fulfilment of a commitment we made in Porto Alegre. For those who have deep roots in the South of Spain, in the land of Andalusia, it also means retaking the idea of reunion between the Spanish and the Judaic. The memory of all that Maimonides and Yehuda ha-Levi incorporated to our unique Spanish tradition, enriching it, might help to revert to that period of reunion, even after the atrocities that were committed against the Jewish people, also in Spain.

It is for these reasons, Mr. Speaker, that, appealing to those beliefs, to those shared origins, to the Scriptures we learned to read since childhood, I am going to cast my vote for this declaration so that it will be also a warning for us that *If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning.*

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Mr. Lacalle Herrera. Would you allow an interruption, Mr. Senator?

Mr. Rodríguez Camusso. I will be pleased to concede an interruption from the Senator, and afterwards I will ask to be allowed to continue my speech. I have not interrupted the other speakers, and I am going to ask the same treatment for me.

Mr. Speaker. - (Dr. Américo Ricaldoni). You can interrupt the speech, Mr. Senator.

Mr. Lacalle Herrera. I apologize to Senator Rodríguez Camusso for the interruption. Although I have written down several points on which I wish to speak, I want to make a comment on this subject in particular - I believe I am better informed than other members of the Chamber – in the sense that all the references of this kind were suppressed from the Catholic missal at the time of John XXIII. Therefore, what he has said has only an historical interest. I say this without prejudice to other interventions that we will have later make, commenting his words.

The freedom of Joseph Latinsky

In September 1988, leaders of the Jewish Collectivity in Montevideo proposed to different political leaders to take actions to achieve that Jewish families should be allowed to leave the Soviet Union. I reckoned that the most direct and suitable procedure was to address the Secretary General of the Communist Party Dr. Mijail Gorbachov. So I did, with the letter I transcribe below. Mr. Latinsky left Leningrad and although he did not realize the *alia*, returning to the Land of Israel, today he lives in freedom with his family in California.

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Montevideo, 3d October, 1988

Mr. Secretary General of Soviet Communist Party

Dr. Mijail Gorbachov

Present.

With my greatest consideration:

Last October, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Soviet Union, Mr. Eduard Schevernadze visited our country and maintained conversations with representatives of the Jewish collectivity of Uruguay on the situation of the Jews in the USSR. By common agreement a visit to the Soviet Union was arranged to interview Jew-Soviets citizens who have found difficulties to emigrate from that country.

Among them is the family of Josef Latinsky composed by his wife Olga Victorovna and his daughter Ana, who live in the city of Leningrad.

Different Uruguayan political leaders have decided to establish links, at the distance, with those persons who we do not know personally but who we wish to support spiritually. In my

quality of Senator of the Republic, but even more as a plain Uruguayan citizen, allow me to address the Mr. Secretary with the purpose of asking him to make the necessary arrangements so that Mr. Latinsky and his family may successfully complete the procedures necessary for them to leave the Soviet Union.

Public opinion worldwide, Mr. Secretary, has favourably commented on the process of modernization and aperture you have initiated in the Soviet Union. Without doubt this process constitutes an invaluable contribution to world-wide peace and the better understanding among peoples.

The fact that Jew-Soviet citizen may travel freely will, beyond question, strengthen and reaffirm the policy you are carrying out. In my name, in the name of the citizens who accompany me politically, and in that of the Jewish collectivity of Uruguay, I thank the Mr. Secretary for adopting measures that could help achieve this noble end.

Thanking your attention, I greet the Mr. Secretary with my greatest consideration.

Luis Albert Lacalle Herrera

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Montevideo, 13th October , 1988

Mr. Josef Latinsky

USSR

Dear Mr. Latinsky:

Even if I do not have the pleasure of knowing you personally, I have heard of you and your family though the Jewish Community in Uruguay.

They told me about the difficulties you have found in obtaining a visa to travel abroad.

I visited the Soviet Ambassador and gave him a letter addressed to the General Secretary of the Communist Party, Mr. Gorbachov asking him to help you.

I do hope meet you someplace, sometime.

My son John sends his own letter for your daughter. Both have the same age...

God bless you.

Yours.

Luis Alberto Lacalle Herrera

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Montevideo, 22d. December, 1988

Mr. Senator Luis Alberto Lacalle Herrera

Dr. Luis Alberto Lacalle Herrera

Dear Mr. Senator:

I have the honour to write to you concerning your fourth on the situation of some Soviet citizens of Jewish nationality, and to communicate you the following:

Within the framework of the progress of the USSR in the path of the creation of a Socialist State of Law, decisions are being taken with the aim of leaving without effect restrictions for the emigration, because of reasons of security, for G. Reznikov, O. Mendeleev, Y.

Dosharovvsky, E. Nadgornyy, J. Khasin, B. Chernobilsky, E. Kuna, A. Speizman, R. Zelichonok.

The permit for emigration from the USSR for J. Latinsky has also been approved.

Some of the persons in the above list have already left the USSR (Y.Vilge, A.Kogan, E. Grechanovsky).

So far, the restrictions on emigration only remain effective in the case of N. Uspensky.

At the same time, the relatives of V. Dashevsky, V. Meshkov, I. Roitman are opposed to leaving the USSR, for which there do not exist any political obstacles.

I take advantage of the opportunity to renew to Mr. Senator the securities of my greatest consideration.

IGOR LAPATEV

Ambassador of the USSR

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Unveiling of the monument to Golda Meir

26th September, 1991

Mr. Minister

Mr. Municipal Intendent of Montevideo

Authorities of the Collectivity; national and international authorities.

Fellow countrymen, legislators, friends:

In the name of the Government of the Republic, I have the great honour of contributing to enhance this ceremony and to state, with my presence, my support for all that has been said as well as for all what the personality of Golda Meir has represented in the history of Israel and humanity.

I believe that in very few occasions it could be so appropriate to say, beyond the legal representation I am invested with, that I speak in the name of the people and the Government of the Republic. This is such an instance, because if there is a cause in which the *orientales*, the Uruguayan people, have always found a point of coincidence, this has been the cause of the permanent defence of the rights of the Jewish people to its existence as a nation and as an independent State.

I am certain that the spirit of Golda Meir shall be attending this ceremony and that she would have liked many features of it. In the first place, and I do not want to give an interpretation of the message of the artists that designed the monument, she should have liked the symbolism of this monument that will embellish our city, because I see in it the serenity of its polished elements, but above all the ruggedness and strength communicated by the elements speak somehow of destruction. Nevertheless these pieces of stone climb on each other to reach the heights, to culminate in what seem two pages of a book, that only can be our book, the one

that has marked us from the beginning of time, since the day our father Abraham began his path, as a cultural, ethical and religious identity in the history of the world.

She would have liked, I am certain, that the monument should be sited in Montevideo and in Uruguay, a country she loved. And I would also add, she would have liked this spot of the city, near the river that brought our immigrant ancestors, who arrived with the strength given by their desire to live peacefully, with their spirit of work, and who contributed, all of them, flavour, colour and substance to a tolerant society we call República Oriental del Uruguay.

I am confident, she would have liked very much that the monument should be unveiled at the moment when the nations think again about the tremendous injustice and absurdity of Resolution 3379. At a time when we are promoting, together with other countries, not only its legal repeal, but also that the international community acknowledges the violence done to the language and to essential concepts by attempting to equate Zionism with racism.

I am sure, she would have liked above all teacher Milwaukee, the schools with their children and their flags, be here. Because, we remember, that before entering public life, she engaged in the most important task any human being can carry out, that of teaching, that of being a teacher.

And, I am sure, that deep in her heart, even in the most successful moments of international prestige, she felt, as all teachers must feel, a tinge of nostalgia for the patient and permanent toil of scattering the seed of concepts and values that is the essence of teaching.

We are, therefore, honouring a person who represented the values we want to emphasize.

And, in this way, we are doing more than paying tribute to a human being that had so many achievements in the course of its life, as other human beings have had; but we celebrate and emphasize before whoever might be, within and without our country, the values this great woman served during the course of her life. These values are permanent, they are what

remains after the prayer of *Khadish* has signalled the end of a life. And we do this to show that the promise that has been made to us is true, that death will not succeed, that our spirit will live forever.

I am certain, dear fellow countrymen that the same feelings nest in your hearts. But it is also true, that today we must reaffirm that we are ready for the fulfilment of the teachings of the Scriptures and that we are ready to turn the swords into ploughshares. But, in order that there be ploughshares, there shall have to be swords. And vigilance shall not cease until, and when, it will not be necessary to turn those ploughshares, again, into swords. We all understand this commitment and so we proclaim it.

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Lecture: *The keeper of my brother*

Brussels, July, 1992

Since the beginnings of history, Humanity is listening to that question. It has not been possible to find a briefer or clearer statement of the first of the duties of the human being at the heart of our civilization and ethics: to love each other and to look after each other. Thousands of years later, Jesus gave the real and profound measure of the commitment implicit in the duties of the keeper: *Love your neighbour as yourself*. It is the kind of love that Paul regarded as fundamental for the achievement of a full life and to make sense of all our undertakings.

This meeting is precisely about that love, of that kind of feeling towards our brothers. At a time of deep changes, and great convulsions - how far we are from the supposed world order! - of slaughters, hatreds and of cultivating hatred, we have come to answer to the Lord, that yes, we are the keepers of our brothers.

Even though the colour of the skin of the other is different, we are his keeper, even if his faith belongs to a different God, we are his keepers.

We have been silent for too long and the mark of Cain might be clearly seen in us.

What are we doing, then, gathered today in this city? What can this Assembly of priests, rabbis, politicians, social activists, Chiefs of Government and of State, do to *build a just society*?

From a certain point of view, we are situated in an ideal spot. Government, faith, social consciousness, are parts of our daily task. But, have we given sufficient thought to the nature of the society we already have, before we begin to exchange views on how to change it?

If that is not the situation - and in my case it is not - let's explain our own children the deep motives for the situations in Sarajevo, Karabaj, South Africa, and in many other places.

Why do we try to change it?

We may carry out a survey, as wide and deep as we want, searching for the causes of the crisis we are living nowadays. It is, nevertheless, relatively easy to describe the goals we wish to accomplish. The true challenge, the most severe test of our commitment, is how to do it. When dealing with social problems, the easiest part is to define what to achieve, the real difficulty has always been how to reach that goal.

Social engineering does not work. That road has been tried and we see that sometimes hatred, racial hatred, arise in the middle of the prosperity.

Education, by itself, does not seem to be enough. There have even been instances of supposed justifications of aberrant conducts originated at the highest levels of education of a society.

Religion, may be a useful source of teachings, but, when we look at history, it has often been the blasphemous motor of the worse persecutions.

Laws and decrees, even when they are good, cannot change feelings, and human justice follows its own tortuous footpath.

The mass media, as a rule, have not taken their tremendous power to the front of battle, at the service of these causes.

Where to look then? The answer, dear friends, can be found inside men and women.

If we do not start by making an act of introspection, of self-criticism, there shall not be real changes in sight. The Bible is right: it is about me and my brother, not about my Church and my brothers, or my political party, or my country and my brother. As soon as we switch to the plural, we dodge our own and non-transferable responsibility. The easiest way to dilute it is to

submerge it into faceless generalities, anodyne, instead of going to the particular, to the specific.

As community leaders we may and we must create an environment suitable for change . The mass media may generate a social feeling of that nature, but, in the end, the last decision is ours, and only ours.

What society is just? Leaving aside the Aristotelian dimension of the concept, as a rule we are conscious of the limitations of our own society in that sense. From the government we have endeavoured - many times with success - to create levels of greater justice, be it by improving social opportunities or the care of the disabled, or by progresses in education. But the advances in that field are overshadowed by the deficiencies in more worldly values, as, for example, the neighbourhood relationships or the natural diversity of the human beings that surround us. It may seem strange that some of the most frequent instances of discrimination happen in prosperous countries where material needs have almost disappeared.

At the end of this century and this millennium, we notice a clear sign: in our societies there is confusion about the moral values. The gap between the material achievements and moral norms widens. Not even the dangerous state of the totality of our biosphere, our anchor in space, is enough to makes us act.

Not even a whole century - practically the whole of it - of crimes, the century where more slaughters happened in the history of humanity, the century of the Holocaust, of the Stalinist purges, of the massacre of the Armenians, of the slaughter of human beings of white, black, dark or yellow skin, has lead us to think about the main cause of these events: the hate that prospers in our life.

There abound subtler forms of discrimination that are more difficult to eliminate because they have roots in social habits, in bureaucratic practices, in the small shades of the law.

In my view, brothers, what is needed is a moral crusade. In the first place within ourselves and in the bosom of our families.

It is necessary to protect the schools and the education system to avoid they become sources of discrimination; the actions of the governments, the mass media, must communicate our readiness to give battle for this high moral cause.

Sixty or seventy years ago, our ancestors in different countries saw similarly disquieting signals. Appeasement and lack of will to confront that potential evil allowed the events to take the course they took. Many crimes might have been avoided if the majority had not opted for silence. Our moral obligation is to be alert, to say what we have the duty to say, to proclaim our beliefs. If we do not do it now, perhaps we shall never be able to do it.

Let us all say - with our own words, but, with far more eloquence, with our actions - *I am my brother's keeper, and what you do to him, you do to me.*

He, the other, like me, is a unique creation of God, unique in all his lifespan, different from all the others, with his own future and potential, but, at the same time, he is my brother. I am his keeper and he is mine.

The March for Life

Birkenau, April, 1994

I, Luis Alberto Lacalle, President of Uruguay will light this torch as a symbol of the struggle of Humanity against anti-Semitism, racism, Nazism, tyranny everywhere and denial of the Holocaust.

(President Lacalle lights the torch)

Brothers and sisters: I come from the other side of the world, from South America, in the name of my Government and of my people, to share the memories of the members of the Jewish community who found in my country shelter, tolerance, freedom and the possibility to develop their skills and lives unheeded.

Of course, we come here to grieve, recalling those lives taken away from children, before they knew the harsh realities of life; from those killed at the end of their lives, deprived of a peaceful death; from those mowed down in the prime of their lives, when they were able to make their contribution to their families and countries. We are here to pray to God Almighty, the God of our fathers. We arrived to think about the numbness of the ethical sense, the values, of certain countries and nations that enabled their leaders to implement policies of extermination against this people that had only a different faith, a different name, a different way of looking at things, a different nationality.

We come here also to remember, because forgetting and forgiving are not the same thing: we are not going to forget. We are very much distressed, we are very much preoccupied because once again – just as the generation of our fathers did - we are seeing the writing on the wall. But, are we prepared not to read it? Are we prepared once again to look away? Are we ready

to say once again: *it does concern neither my family nor my country?* Are we prepared not to read the writing on the wall? Are we prepared to live through these horrors once again?

That is why I am here, in the name of my country, at this March of the Living to say once again that *lejaim* will go on being the triumph of life over death. We are ready to raise our voices and consider the signs of the times that are being shown to us, lest we forget that these things should never happen again anywhere in the world.

The organizers have asked me to say some words in Spanish.

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[Translation]

I want to greet, from here, the delegations of Mexico, Argentina, Brazil, Venezuela, Colombia and my Uruguayan fellow countrymen. Our continent, that has opened its arms to the immigrants; our continent, that continues to be a place of peace; our continent, that continues to have Jewish collectivities integrated in its life, represented here by these young people that have come to say, just as we do, that one thing is to pardon and another to forget. And that our generation is not willing to ignore the writing on the wall that, as in the Sacred Scripture, warns us that anti-Semitism and racism can appear again, as the concept of “ethnic cleansing” may rise again. Words whose mere daily use by the press, ought to fill humanity with shame. Because we are not going to forget that we are also here, from Latin America, saying that *lejaim*, life, shall prevail over death.

The purpose of my presence is more than remembering the past, more than attempting an analysis of a tremendous and in truth moving historical fact. The motive of our being here is our feeling of alarm that anti-Semitism, racism and intolerance, as evidenced by terms such as “ethnic cleansing”, may rise again in the threshold of the 21st century.

Therefore, above all, we give to this magnificent congregation of young people the significance of a warning and an announcement that we must keep up our efforts in the defence of the values with which we are entrusted. Because there is the risk that episodes, as terrible as those we recall here, may happen again in our world and our civilization.

It is with that purpose - the aim of not forgetting what happened and of struggling against the negative feelings in all societies - that we have attended this remembrance, so appropriately named, March for Life.

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The Holocaust Memorial

Speech given on the day of its unveiling

November, 1994

I reckon that I must begin by making a terminological precision. From the moment when a group of citizens conceived, and as soon as the whole community through its constituted powers supported, the idea of erecting this Memorial on the coast, I insisted on the word "Memorial". Although monuments are built to serve as a support for our memory, I want - we want, the whole country wants - that it should be called a "Memorial", because it is born from more than the recollection of the horrible episodes of fifty years ago. It is originated in a greater concern: the worry that in the society of today and in many places of the world, there arise signs of similar ideas of intolerance, racism, exclusion, and this makes us fear that the collective memory of nations has been too fragile.

For that reason we have chosen the word "Memorial", so that this place of the city will not be mentioned in the future without recalling the ideas of memory, remembrance. These are, by the way, something more than a faculty of the human mind; in the case of episodes, as the one recalled by this monument, they are an obligation for the human soul. For that reason from now on there will exist in our city this monument, which we will call the "Memorial". So that, the very fact of referring to it shall lead us to remember that episodes like those should not happen again.

Then, there is the beautiful symbolism the architects have managed to bring to this construction that, I think, we all understand and which shall provide the background for my words. There is the wall, which already is in itself a definition. It is the groundwork, the point of reference of the Temple of Jerusalem and the point of reference of our Judeo-Christian culture and of our religious beliefs.

Here, the architects have introduced a tremendous image: the wall has a breach, which you will be able to see when you walk through this Living Memorial. The breach is the *Shoa*, the great *wind of destruction*, of annihilation, that attempted to cut - and, perhaps, for a moment it might even have seemed that it had achieved its purpose - the millenarian tradition.

Thereafter, in these volumes built with noble red granite, typical of our country, you will see another breach, the doubt, the difficulty to see the horizon. But this is soon followed by continuity and serenity.

Its location in front of the *river as great as the sea*, the Río de la Plata, has a double symbolism. On the one hand, when looked from the coastal avenue towards that river, towards that sea, the pieces of granite that dominate the water symbolize the opening of the Red Sea for the passage of the people. They mark the traditional and old liberating act of the divine power, the opening the path for the people to reach its fulfilment. The two pieces we just mentioned, represent the breach, the death, the interruption. They look like open doors, a channel, a path, a pass, the transit to the Hereafter, freedom and fulfilment.

But also, if we observe the monument from the river towards the land, we find another symbol we all understand: the reference to the arrival of the immigrants. All of us, someday, arrived from all parts of the world. It is for that reason that those gates, now seen from the other side, represent the arrival into this land of peace, tolerance, respect and freedom that we have been building. There is, therefore, material for meditation, for thought, for remembrance, that you will surely appreciate

Today, our "Memorial" is full of people. Perhaps we all shall have the opportunity to visit it by ourselves, because in this way we will appreciate better not only its beauty but also feel the influence it can, and must, exert on minds and souls.

On a placid afternoon, in a sunset as we will have within a moment, it shall be the propitious place for serenity, for peace, for thought. In stormy days, when the river stirs up and strikes on these stones, and, perhaps, gives the impression that it is attempting to break them, as evil has endeavoured to defeat all that is good, then it will be the time to reflect about the permanence of evil but, above all, on the definitive triumph of good.

I invite you to walk in the Square of Meditation and along the symbolic difficulties that threaten to break the line of continuity of the wall, because there we shall all hear, once and again, as if to reassure us, *Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one!* Here we are going to proclaim that, if again a warning is written on the wall, this time we will understand it; and we are going to say, as we said in our celebration of the *Januca* lights, although we might seem to be short of oil, and even if the flame doubts and vacillates: the flame will always prevail over darkness.

Award of the *Jerusalem 3000* Prize

10th August, 1995

The Jerusalem 3000 Prize was awarded to ex- President of the Republic Dr. Luis Alberto Lacalle, on Friday 28th, during a ceremony held at the Carrasco Polo Club. The prize was created by the Casa Argentina - Israel Tierra Santa. With that purpose a high level delegation travelled from Buenos Aires and two members of its Directorate, the historian José Ignacio García Hamilton and the presbyter Horacio Fidel Moreno, to whose speeches we referred in our precedent edition, proposed a toast to the award. Today we offer the complete text of the speech by Dr. Luis Alberto Lacalle Herrera given on that occasion.

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Speech given by Dr. Luis Alberto Lacalle

Ms. Ambassador of the Argentine Republic in Montevideo, Mr. President of the Casa Argentina - in the future, Casa de América Latina - in Jerusalem, authorities of the different organizations here present. Mr. Commander in Chief of the Navy, Legislators, fellow countrymen, guests and dear friends:

First of all, in this opportunity, I would like to recall all those who guided me, in the years of my personal, spiritual, discovery of the deep Judeo-Christian root. There is now among us, the Apostolic Nuncio, who represents the Catholic Church in which I was born and in which I was educated. But I want to mention very particularly those who inculcated that faith in my spirit, the Jesuit Fathers, because, by teaching me to delve into the Scripture, they opened the road for an increasingly deeper understanding of our common roots. And I want to recall all those who accompanied me in all those stages of my life. When I look at them, I recognize them all. They have been my companions in the innermost discovery of the Jewishness of my ancestors,

which is the fundamental support of the Judeo-Christian ethics that I have endeavoured to serve in private and public life. I cannot name them all one by one, although they all are aware of the hours we have spent together, the reciprocal joy of the discoveries we have made when looking into the deepest roots of our beliefs and our being. However, I want to give one name as an example, that of one of the patriarchs of the collectivity which is Don Chil Rajchman, who is now among us as a living testimony of faith, courage, and permanence among us of the old Jewish values.

We are, dear friends, reaching the end of a century that has been tremendously negative for humanity. You might say there are enough positive things that could be placed on the other pan of the balance and that, eventually, the superior weight of progress, of advances in many areas, of good things, might perhaps - perhaps - make that the good things outweigh the bad ones. I have my doubts that such shall be the case. Because progress, which usually is material, although it may also be spiritual, can neither erase nor counterbalance the tremendous presence of evil among us. And the episodes through which civilization has lived during the XXth century demonstrate the existence of evil. That evil that someone has said, does not exist from the philosophical and even theologically point of view, but whose face I have seen, materialized, when I looked at the furnaces of Auschwitz, on the day when I was called to head the March for Life and walked with many of you from Auschwitz to Birkenau. This century begins with the Armenian genocide, that is going to be always present among us as another evidence of the existence of evil; continued with the persecution and the genocide in the Soviet Union and the communist area, where whole nations were persecuted and deported; and; which continues, today, with the "ethnic cleansing". This blasphemy we repeat without realizing its real meaning, continues. At present, brothers of ours are suffering in the turbulent region of the Balkans. Today we accept that the words "cleansing" and "ethnic" join and we accept them to describe a situation where one human being considers that another human

being is dirty and must be exterminated because his existence soils the earth. This happens with our Muslim brothers, hounded in the place where they have been living for centuries. Therefore, what else but a negative balance can result for our civilization and our humanity in the last years of the XXth century?

There are still those who wonder, asked by God Himself: *Am I my brother's keeper?* Yes. That is the only response. We are the keepers of our brother. Because, when Cain was challenged about what he had done, he did not dare to deny that fact. In an ambiguous fashion he answered: *Am I my brother's keeper?* And the answer, that must be rooted in our faith, in the case of us believers, and in our philosophical convictions, in the case of those who do not share that blessing, but do accept as true certain values, is: *Yes, I am the keeper of my brother.* And how few keepers do today have our brothers!

I do not think, dear friends, only on the episodes that, because of their newsworthiness appear on the TV, in the newspapers or over the radio. Let's reflect on the instances when we have made a difference because the other was "another", because he thought different, because of his surname, the colour of his skin, or because he prayed in a different manner, did not pray at all, or had given up praying, that until now, right here, we realize exists.

Then, when we reflect in that way on the episodes it we have endured, we realize that the balance cannot be positive. Because, incredibly, in the total distortion that is presently the international world order, we had seen the United Nations declare that Zionism is equivalent to racism, and how a significant majority of countries voted to pass that statement. And we had to fight, and I say "we had", because we fought together with other fellow countrymen, starting with the well-known Porto Alegre meeting and our speeches at the Senate, until I had the honour to sponsor, from the government, the repeal of Resolution 3379. But we coexisted with decisions of organizations that declared that Zionism was the same as racism. However, if

something is a *contradictio in re*, this is it. We lived it. The repeal was achieved short time ago. Poor Organization of the United Nations, sunk in that impotence, which, we do not realize it, is an echo of the events Munich in 1938! We are aware of the possibility that somebody is perhaps ready to wave a piece of paper proclaiming *peace in our time!* But it shall not be true. What today happens in Europe resembles very much what happened 60 years ago. And the international community, the organizations of the international community, the great powers, shall be held responsible if that “ethnic filth”, that some claim exists, is erased from the face of the earth. Because what is happening today may get worse.

We are living in the same indifference I told about my beloved friends that joined me in the project for a Memorial to the Holocaust. As I said to them: we are going to build it, not in order to give the city a piece of stone that commemorates something, but as a voice of warning, so that each person that happens to pass along the coastal boulevard shall be reminded of what happened. And, for that reason, I would have liked it to be more visible, more imposing, and we have considered adding a great *Menora*, so that its light during the night and its silhouette during the day, should remind and remind us. There is no contradiction between memory and pardon. But we cannot fall in the same indifference that reigned at the time of our parents and grandparents, when the world did not want to believe the things that happened. And today the corpse of an adolescent girl that hanged herself from a tree, is as impressive as the raised hands of the child of the Warsaw Ghetto. And we must put that photo and show it our children, so that as say the legends at many of the monuments to the 1914 War that abound in the English countryside, *Lest we forget - so that we do not forget*. Today that young girl that chose to put an end to her life is as symbolic as that child, with his cap and his little raised hands, without knowing what was happened in the world, and who marched towards a fate we did not know. Today we face again the same question: *Are we the keepers of our brother?* The words of prophet Hillel resound in us: *That which is hateful to you, do not unto another:*

This is the whole Torah. The rest is commentary, go study. A statement that foreshadows the words of Jesus: *You shall love your neighbour as yourself.* It is the same thought, we belong to the same spiritual, human, philosophical category.

And, because of that fact, when, thanks to the mandate of my fellow countrymen, I had the honour of speaking in the name of a country that believes, sincerely and profoundly, in these values I felt that in very few occasions could I invoke so clearly the representation of my country, as when I hoped to defend those concepts, with the aim of preventing greater evils. And, on the coast of our city a group of stones, almost as golden as those of the Holy City, will symbolize, when looked from the coast towards the river, the crossing of the red Sea, the overcoming of the natural obstacle; and, when looked from the river towards the land, the arrival of the immigrants, our ancestors, who found in this land peace and opportunity.

We are, therefore, dear fellow countrymen and visitors, particularly moved by this tribute. I would like to remember the psalmist, from who I borrowed his concepts contained in the Sunday Mass, so many times: *I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord. Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem.* That Jerusalem so many times portrayed by our dear Zoma Baitler, who depicted it from the red sky at sunrise, when the colour of the stone becomes slightly pink, until noon, when it shines like gold, that magnificent millenarian stone, three times millenarian.

A city that, materially, says much to us; that has such an impact on us. But which also, in the concept of Saint Thomas, foreshadows the other city, the celestial Jerusalem, where we all shall be summoned by the Father, some day. That Jerusalem that counts 3000 years since the times of King David, and that is going to convoke us to cultural, religious, episodes. And I want to express the great joy of being able to having it, unified, unique capital city of the State of Israel, but also spiritual capital of the world, of the monotheist religions. Religions which, when

our father Abraham embarked into his eventful journey produced the greatest qualitative change in the history of the world: the concept of a unique Good.

There has not been nothing more important, as a human episode, than the belief that the Divinity must, by definition, be one. This belief became the axis of history.

For that reason, I received with particular emotion this distinction when we are entering in these 3000 years of Jerusalem. A distinction, that like others the Presidents receive ought to be cut in small pieces so that it could be displayed by all the citizens of this blessed land, land of peace and concord.

It is in that character, gentlemen, that I receive the distinction, taking, at the same time, the antidote to the always present vanity, which sometimes may lead us to believe that prizes are well deserved. I would say that they are always on credit, they are an encouragement to do more things, to go deeper or to endeavour to rise higher in our unfulfilled projects.

This is true, we feel it always, even in those moments when it seems that the forces of evil have gone wild in our society, in the world, in our own country, and when we come to believe that the negative values might prevail, that the wicked, mean and low feelings might succeed. One is confident in that, at the end, everything shall be as it has been promised to us. And, in that case, we shall find ourselves not in the Jerusalem of stone, we will not be able to enjoy the cypresses pointing towards the sky, the perfume of its roses, the sunsets and nights in that brilliant city, but we shall find ourselves in the plenitude of time. And we shall continue to hear the voice that tells us: *Shema Israel, Hear, Israel.*

The Night of Broken Glass

Speech delivered by Dr. Luis Alberto Lacalle Herrera. 1995

Mr. President of B`nai B`rith, Mr. Vice-president of the Republic, Ministers of State, Mr. Secretary of the Presidency, Mr. Municipal Intendent of Montevideo, authorities of Jewish organizations, Rabbis, Bishops and representatives of the different religious denominations, Mr. Ambassador of Israel, fellow countrymen:

Broken glass, smoke, destruction, temples on fire, book burning, desolation. We have seen them through photographs, through documentaries. But, mainly, we have regarded the Night of Broken Glass as the first and main cause of a process of horror that culminated with the Holocaust, the *Shoa*, the *devastating wind*. We have read about this prologue to an age we recall today, we have seen it through photographs and documentaries, and, above all we have remembered it. But it should be worthwhile to ask ourselves how many *Kristalnächte* have there been, for our people, for the people of Israel, for other peoples, for Humanity as a whole; how many times did they happen in this XXth century, that seems to have earned the prize and the horrendous primacy of having surpassed all the limits known until now.

We know of the tremendous confrontations that humanity has undergone since original sin, wars for power, of conquest, for markets. For those of us who are believers what summons our most special horror is the immorality of the struggles caused by religion, against other peoples or against another part of Humanity, the wars of religion, the Inquisition, the forms of confrontation between Christianity and Islam, which surely are among the conflicts that have caused more victims.

But this XXth century of ours, which is coming to its end, perhaps has the dubious distinction of being particularly rich in that kind of events. The Armenian genocide in 1915, the *Shoa*, the destruction of complete peoples by Stalinism. And now, the awful new term of “ethnic cleansing”, so widely used and which has become commonplace, the dreadful banality of a passage in the news we read or to which we listen to.

This might lead, brothers, to a dangerous tolerance. A language corrupts when the words lose their deep meaning. And the corruption of language is the most dangerous because it prevents us, or it makes more difficult, from distinguishing between good and evil. This is so because it drives into the gray areas of morality concepts that should be clearly excluded from it. We want to fight that reduction of the awful to a routine, a dangerous process, and we should challenge it with our memory, with remembrance.

At the dedication of our Memorial I said we wanted it to become, not a monument but a memorial, as those that still can be seen in the English countryside, above all those commemorating the First World War, that plainly say: *Lest we forget, so that we do not forget*. We want that memory to remain alive among us. Especially today, when we have intoned the magnificent words of the *kadish*, which, being a song of praise we use to remember our dead, for our brother Itzjak Rabin, who may be included among the blessed because he was one of those fighting for peace.

We have now a new dimension for our horror. This bloody episode that has shaken the world has an added ingredient. In the midst of the loss of sensibility induced by our getting used to horror, we would have been overcome by a feeling of amazement if this man had been killed by his adversaries in the millenary confrontation that endures the Middle East. But our feeling of horror has been renewed because the hand that murdered him came from within his own people of Israel. This demonstrates to us that terror has no logic, there isn't one. There is no

logic in it. And our vigilance must be permanent and in all fields because of that. This true perversion of faith that led a young man to cut the life of the first citizen of Israel, leads us to centre our thoughts of today, not on the episodes this XXth century until yesterday that we could, unfortunately, have pointed out along, but on the awesome presence of evil.

Without entering into a theological study of the question, but from the perspective of our faith, we must reason about the presence of evil, which is a fellow of Humanity since the first fall. It is necessary to renew this concept, which we learned since our birth. The world is the stage for the struggle between the forces of good and the forces of evil. In few instances does evil materialize to such a degree as in the Holocaust, as in the *Shoa*. I realized that when, at the head of the March for Life, I had the disturbing experience of walking from one extermination camp to another. Only an evil and supernatural force can give birth to such an awful wind and allow it to continue to blow. What happened after the Night of Broken Glass can only be understood if we fathom the depth of the negative concept of evil. Only by knowing its root, the existence of evil, we will be able to comprehend anti-Semitism, xenophobia, the hate of man against man. Attitudes, which sometimes, although this might seem difficult to believe, originated in religious notions that deepened existing divisions and mutated them into cultural patterns. At times, and without us being aware of it, we introduce, even through our language, and not with great subtlety, elements of intolerance in our daily life. The oldest roots of discrimination must be searched in the real and daily presence of evil, in the everyday presence of evil.

The deepest foundation of our Judeo-Christian ethics cannot be erased, and this is the permanent and endless struggle between the forces of good and the forces of evil. We cannot neither deny nor escape our own and personal involvement in that struggle. Our own and personal commitment in that struggle.

The greatest success of the forces of the evil is having managed to blend into the background, it is having achieved that some might think they do not exist, that the evil principle has melted. But they have only modified their appearance and managed to conceal themselves in society. We must remember that they are inside ourselves and that we must fight them, before anything, inside our hearts. We are all agents of the great drama that unfolds since the day of creation. There is a *Kristalnacht* every day. We must remember the tremendous phrase of Cain when he was questioned by the Lord: *Am I, my brother's keeper?* And we must repeat: Yes, I am my brother's keeper. That is the ethical difference that we must introduce into this struggle that we must take up with our presence and our commitment, in the confrontation between good and evil. Yes, I am my brother's keeper. Yes, of the blood of my brother. Yes, of the life of my brother.

We recognize life as the supreme value; those who are believers do so because of their faith, and those who do not share that belief acknowledge the supreme value of life by virtue of their philosophical ideas. However, those of us who are believers know that life is one and unrepeatable in each of the thousands of millions of human beings, that life is an act of divine creation, distinct, unique and destined to eternal life. The defence of that life must be a commitment of everyone, all the time. To face up to death is to confront the forces of evil, to confront all kinds of death. The death that takes millions of lives, as in the *Shoa*, and the millions of deaths that were the outcome of the other tragedies we have recalled, but also the individual deaths, but also the other kinds of death. The death of fame, the death of the good man, the death of a reputation. How many Nights of Broken Glass happen daily each time we hurt another human being. You may kill by taking a life, but it is also possible to kill by indifference, by the want of *caritas*, which Saint Paul regarded as the cardinal virtue of humanity.

And this happens, dear friends, every day. It is our everyday Night of the Broken Glass, against which we must raise and elevate. It is enough to take a life, to speak ill of a virtue, to disregard, even in one instance only, the laws of God or men, to become an agent of evil. And, as individuals, each of us must be, must want to be, must endeavour to be, an agent of good and not an agent of evil. We must avoid that the awesome wind of *Shoa* be a wind that blows every day. This terrible and destructive wind that, at times, seems to win, that sometimes succeeds in blowing out all the candles of our *menorahs*, but which shall not prevail.

The Book tells that the Lord said to Elijah:

Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord. And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice. And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah?

This is what the Book tells us. And we say, the Lord was there and his small voice was stronger than the devastating wind of the *Shoa*. It is up to us to listen to that whisper, it is up to us to ensure that it shall always overcome the tempest. Because we continue to say, and we shall always say: *Shema Israel, Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai Ejad.*

Lejaim!

Foreword to the book “Un grito por la vida” (“A shout for life”) by Chill Rajchman, where the author describes his imprisonment and escape from the Treblinka extermination camp.

It rains in Treblinka, in that gray morning. It is a tame rain, without noise or joy, fine and persistent. There is no wind; the trees do not agitate their foliage. Steps, almost ghostlike in their silence, take us to the centre of what was that machine of horror.

We are a handful of Uruguayans that have come in peregrination to Poland, to the damned Poland of Nazism and the Holocaust. We have summoned ourselves to take part in the March for Life that shall link, on foot, the extermination camps of Auschwitz and Birkenau.

Why, then, our presence in Treblinka? We are going to witness an unforgettable episode, an emblematic event. Leaning on my arm but with firm steps, with eighty years on his shoulders and looking very well for his age, walks a gentleman, whom we all know by the name of Chil Rajchman. An esteemed businessman in Uruguay, father and grandfather of Uruguayans, he is not walking upon unknown land. He arrived at Treblinka fifty years ago. He arrived together with his sister, with his neighbours, to be murdered, exterminated, annihilated. So happened with his sister and his neighbours. But not with him...

His story, the frightening story of the reason why, is one of those tales of courage that bring tears to the eyes and to the soul, but pride and serenity to the heart and the mind. It is the serene story of how a handful of brave men defeated the machine of horror, the German executioners, the Ukrainian with his whip. The dogs, the machine guns, the barbed wire. They defeated rage, madness and death.

Because of them, before them, before us and our children, only one word: *Lejaim*. For life ... victor over death, work of God, sacred and inextinguishable flame of the people of Israel, of all human beings.

We congregated at the centre of the camp ruins. It continued to rain tamely and persistently. The voice of Chil is firm but low. Nevertheless it can be heard from afar. With a tight heart and damp eyes. Our hands search for those of the others, fraternal, to transmit company, to receive it. Oddly, over that desolation and from the tragic account, rises from the oldest blood a tremendous strength, that rivets and reaffirms the essences of being. And with the psalmist we repeated:

The pangs of death surrounded me,

And the floods of ungodliness made me afraid.

The sorrows of Sheol surrounded me;

The snares of death confronted me.

In my distress I called upon the Lord,

And cried out to my God;

He heard my voice from His temple,

And my cry came before Him, even to His ears.

[Psalm 18]