

Rudi Leavor – statement on the Holocaust Memorial public enquiry, Tuesday 6 October 2020

Thank you for giving me the opportunity and honour of addressing you on this important and highly personal matter.

To present my credentials – my name is Rudi Leavor and I was born in Berlin in May 1926, so I am almost 94 and a half!

Although modesty prevents me talking too much about myself, I want to share that it is great privilege that I was awarded a BEM for my work on interfaith relations.

I am one of the lucky ones. My immediate family and I fled from Berlin and came to England, arriving in Bradford in November 1937 – coincidentally, exactly one year before the infamous Kristallnacht.

That I could come to England was fortunate; my parents being able to secure visas. Subsequently, my father got permission to work as a dentist having qualified in Germany.

But, although we were fortunate to escape, my family lost 13 of our closest relatives in the Holocaust. Persecuted by a regime and a twisted ideology, but murdered by conscious and witting human beings.

This is a photograph taken in about 1942 of my ancestors most of whom perished and a photograph of my four year old cousin Dan, who was brutally murdered together with his parents and grandfather.

And, it is both for the memory of those who perished and the opportunity to learn about their experiences, I feel it is imperative that there is a Memorial and a Learning Centre.

The Holocaust was a once-in-a-world life-time event, surpassing even the Crusades in its cruelty, being not only cruel but with unnecessarily obscene meanness, making death even more horrible than it needed to be.

To commemorate this monstrosity is essential and reflects and recognises the growing number of memorial events that are indeed held across our country and worldwide annually, and which I have personally had the honour to participate and recite the Memorial prayer, El Male Rachamim, including once at the national Holocaust Memorial Day commemoration.

This is a matter of honour for our country. We must have our own statement to stand alongside the growing number of monuments and Museums in so many other countries around the world.

But, in addition a concrete memorial is of the utmost desirability – not only that, but it must stand out and make its mark loud and clear. I would refer you to such a memorial in a foreign country, large and imposing as it is, but in a side street and to be seen only if you stumble across it by accident.

The siting of the proposed memorial in Victoria Towers Gardens makes a bold statement, which cannot be missed and would proudly stand to expose the shame, depravity and

darkness of the Holocaust for as long as the Houses of Parliament will stand.

Ladies and gentleman, I firmly and strongly and passionately believe that this proposed prominent Memorial and Learning Centre will frame the story of the Holocaust in public consciousness. It will bring awareness of the greatest tragedy in the history of mankind. It will act as a warning as to the evil that mankind can do. But, above all, it will stand to the permanent honour of the United Kingdom and as an eternal memorial for those who perished so needlessly.