



## Gould the giver UK envoy raises \$1.5m. for Israel's Holocaust survivors

• By RUTH EGLASH

# British ambassador raises \$1.5m. for Israel's Holocaust survivors

### *Six new clubs around country are designed to ease loneliness of Nazis' victims*

"When I was ringing people to get support, I was asked about the Israeli government's involvement in helping survivors and I explained to people that in every country in the world, no matter how developed and rich it might be, there is always the problem of old people being lonely," he said. "It is a problem across the developed world and governments are not always best placed to tackle it."

Gould said that while it is the responsibility of a government to provide its citizens with certain essentials such as healthcare and housing as they reach old age, the issue of loneliness for the elderly "needs wider community support and involvement."

For Holocaust survivors the loneliness of old age was a "double tragedy," he said.

"Not only do they carry around the trauma and sadness of what they have experienced but when you add to that the loneliness, its even worse," said Gould. "I do think its right that we do everything we can to help them."

Welfare Minister Moshe Kahlon also said this was the case.

"Israeli society must do all it can to enable our heroes who survived Nazi oppression to grow old with dignity," Kahlon said. "We are committed to doing our duty toward

Holocaust survivors who helped build our country."

He said that the ministry welcomed the ambassador's initiative and hoped that such centers would only increase in number.

Elazar Stern, chairman of the Foundation for the Benefit of the Holocaust Victims in Israel, said that loneliness was one of the biggest problems facing survivors in Israel today.

"These clubs offer a real anchor in the lives of many of the survivors, as for many of them, this is the only oppor-

tunity they have to get out of the house and meet people. This is an incredibly important initiative," added Stern.

The foundation, which receives 40 percent of its budget from the government and the rest from the Conference for Material Claims Against Germany (Claims Conference), has found itself facing financial difficulties in recent years as the needs of survivors grow and the available funds shrink.

According to the organization, an estimated 50,000 survivors in Israel live below the

poverty line and close to 35 survivors die each day. Roughly 60% of the survivors are immigrants from the former Soviet Union who arrived here during the 1990s and there are still some who are not eligible for certain pension funds aimed at helping survivors financially.

Last September, for the first time in its 16-year history, the foundation said that it had no choice but to seek financial support from Jewish and non-Jewish communities around the world in order to fund its programs for survivors.



MATTHEW GOULD (Mati Milstein)

British Ambassador Matthew Gould on Tuesday will officially open the first of several social clubs for Holocaust survivors, thanks to funds that he personally raised with help from members of the Jewish community in Britain.

Gould, who will inaugurate the new club together with his wife, Celia, and Welfare and Social Services Minister Moshe Kahlon, has spent the best part of the past year raising more than \$1.5 million for the project. He plans to double that amount in the coming year.

"This launch is the culmination of our work," the ambassador told *The Jerusalem Post* on Monday, explaining that he made public appeals to the British Jewish community via UK media outlets. He succeeded in partnering with religious authorities from across the spectrum, including the Chief Rabbi's Office, the Board of Deputies of British Jewry and Reform Jewish authorities. Gould also drew support from the Holocaust Education Trust, various British synagogues and individuals.

The project, which aimed to ease the loneliness and suffering felt by many Holocaust survivors here, will see six social and cultural centers established - in Givat Olga, the Eshkol region, Kiryat Bialik and Migdal Ha'emek, and two in Bnei Brak. The centers will provide programs and services for some 700 survivors. There are an estimated 207,000 victims of Nazi atrocities in World War II living in Israel.

Gould said that he was not deterred by the government's failure to be an equal financial partner in this venture, pointing out that the Welfare Ministry has come forward to provide space for the centers as well as services.