

A letter Sigrid Undset sent to Professor Joseph Klausner in 1943

Joseph Gedaliah Klausner (20 August 1874 – 27 October 1958), (Hebrew: יוסף גדליהו (קלזנר), was a Jewish historian and professor of Hebrew literature at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

Here is the text of a letter Sigrid Undset sent to him in 1943:

Dear Professor,

I take the opportunity to convey to you, and to my other friends, writers, poets, and artists in Eretz Israel, my personal good wishes, and those of all writers and artists who attended with me the emergency convention for the rescue of European Jewry.

The most important issue today is to save the surviving Jews in Europe, as much as it is still possible to save them. The "Emergency Committee" devotes all possible efforts to this gigantic endeavour. I have an additional, not less important, task: the need to create a national home for homeless Jews, and for all Jews who lack the possibility, or the desire, to assimilate themselves among the Gentiles. This need will become still stronger after the victory in the present war. I am afraid that after the war we will be faced with a substantial surge of racial hatred, with wicked and distorted theories about the nature and characteristics of various peoples, about honorable peoples and inferior peoples, and with venomous anti-Semitism. I think that this will be the consequence of the guilt complex growing in the heads and hearts of the Germans – who are guilty of the greatest crime perpetrated in the course of the war against the Jewish People.

The guilt complex will not affect only Germans, it will affect also other Peoples who took part in cruel persecutions and in the extermination of Jews, and also those who remained cold-blooded and indifferent vis-à-vis the human tragedy of a People put to death. I shall hope that we, who see anti-Semitism as a phenomenon despicable, shameful and poisonous, will be able now to hate it even more because of the horrible crimes perpetrated against the European Jewry, and that we will be able to fight it with utmost determination. The Jewish People is entitled to the right to defend itself in the

future, and to become an independent nation, equipped with all institutions necessary for a the function of a nation. Then the Jews will know that they can rely on the support of righteous men and women in the whole world, as well as on the assistance of their brethren in America, in England, in Norway, In Denmark, and in Holland. In the future, enemies will be faced by Jews armed with the strength of a renewed Jewish nation.

I send this letter to you, because I wish to assure you that any appeal to action by you will be answered by the whole civilized world – men and women of good will and courage will respond to your appeal and take part in any activity meant to establish a free and renewed Hebrew nation. I promise you, dear professor, that we shall not hesitate, and that the great courage shown by the young people from Eretz Israel will trigger an increasing response by the civilized world.

I take this opportunity to express our gratitude and admiration to the representatives of Eretz-Israel in our country, who raised the flag of Jewish rights and put on the agenda the demand for rescue, for renewal and for national pride.

Sincerely

Sigrid Undset