

Speech by Caroline Edelstam, President of the Edelstam Foundation, in the Italian Embassy in Stockholm, Italy, on the occasion of GARIWO planting a tree – Garden of the Righteous - the 24th of September 2018.

Dear Ambassador Cospito, Ambassadors, and Distinguished Guests,

It is a great honor for me, on behalf of my family that my grandfather, Ambassador Harald Edelstam, has been nominated by a school –class from Benevento to become a person of "Just" in the "Garden of Righteous in the world."

It is a perfect place for him to be remembered in, as my grandfather worked as a young attaché at the Swedish Embassy in Rome 1939-1940.

It is of importance, not only to remember my grandfather, but also other countries and diplomats who greatly contributed in saving lives in Chile during the coup, such as Italy. The staff working at the Italian Embassy in Santiago de Chile at the time, Ambassador De Vergottini, and among others, the then young diplomats Emilio Barbarani, and Roberto Toscano, courageously risked their own lives in saving others.

I would like to thank Mr. Gabriele Nissim, President of Gariwo, Ambassador Cospito, and Mrs. Enza Nunziato for the wonderful celebration today, planting an oak tree here at Oakhill, in the memory of my grandfather.

For many years I daily, through my work with the Harald Edelstam Foundation, come into contact with many persons who survived thanks to my grandfather, or knew someone that had been saved by my grandfather, or someone who had the honor of meeting him.

They tell me extraordinary stories, they want to touch me, they hug me, and they thank me.

My grandfather was not the perfect human being, but a true hero. He left me with the memory of a person who daily, worked for his convictions. He showed great bravery, creativity and civic courage in the defense of human rights.

In my memory, he is also a person with great sympathy and compassion. "I can not tolerate injustice," he said. He was compelled to act.

In Chile my grandfather saved more than a 1000 lives, by opening up the Swedish Embassy, by saving the Cuban Embassy from the junta's bullets, by endless negotiations with the military at the *Estadio Nacional*, by using his intelligence.

Not only did he help people in Chile. During the 2nd World War, in Nazi-occupied Norway my grandfather saved the lives of hundreds of Norwegian resistance fighters and Jews, and functioned as a contact link between the Germans and the Norwegian resistance movement *Hjemmefronten*. The Norwegians came to call him the "Black Pimpernel".

However, being courageous often comes with a high price to pay. My grandfather died as a lonely man, many friends and colleagues turned their back against him. It is not only the suppressed that need support. Many times the persons who dare to show civic courage, who dare to act, need support.

The famous Swedish writer of children's books, Astrid Lindgren, wrote in the *Brothers Lionheart*: "There are things which you must do, even if they are dangerous, because if you don't you, are not a human being..."

Action in extreme situations of widespread human suffering and persecution is a privilege of a few, because extraordinary courage is required.

Harald Edelstam is one of these few exceptions. In every situation in which he was confronted, he had the option of using his diplomatic immunity for saving him self, or the choice of acting to protect others in imminent danger.

He decided to act, whatever the price. His generosity left us a legacy of coherence and responsibility, a reference for our collective duty to act in protection of defenseless people who are the victims of serious abuses.

My grandfather has given me inspiration to believe that justice always wins, however, you need to fight for it.

I am convinced that his presence in this garden, now becoming a place of remembrance, fortified with a planted oak tree, will contribute to inspire many persons, to act in his spirit. To defend the defenseless, to protect the unprotected, to support the unsupported. To act with bravery – no matter what.

The world needs heroes.

Thank you.