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## Ugendfürsorge [Youth Care Department]

**Peter Erben, January 2011**

We prepared this list about 20 years ago while many Holocaust survivors still used to attend our annual May assembly; there I affixed my lists on a board and everybody corrected and completed my draft. I also compared notes with Terezinská iniciativa in Prague and the lists were accepted by all. I do not believe that anything should be changed; especially work places are noted correctly.

I thought that it is my duty to publicize the subject once more.

To the point:

Many books were written about ghetto Terezin, with precise descriptions of life there; now I want only to stress in short the functions of these educators (youth councilors) who worked in the framework of the Youth Care Department. It was mainly Fredy Hirsch who (as also later at the children's barracks in Birkenau) brought about the historical success of these few idealists, who dedicated all of their energy, awareness and diligence to raise the young people in their care, healthily, as far as possible with humanist and Zionist ideals and also some basic knowledge – normally supplied by school and home. It is generally known how and where they acted, it was described often and I will not repeat that.

In the beginning there were the youth homes and for each councilors were chosen – they did everything possible to prevent the young people from suffering overly by imprisonment and separation from their parents. Especially work in the vegetable gardens was a blessing; work in fresh air, also some vitamins could be consumed on the spot - all returned to the youth homes in a good mood.

The older age groups, assigned to the Jugendeinsatz [youth deployment] worked in ghetto workshops (various trades) and bakeries, - where in addition to professional

training something of the products contributed to their wellbeing, possibly also to their health. I can testify that all went to work in good spirit, often singing cabaret hits from the ghetto. They never complained.

I could go here into many details, also about the excellent relationship between wards and educators, but one thing all had in common: in spite of the harsh reality, they did not suffer like their parents and older prisoners did, for whom the camp was hard to bear.

I want to add a few words about Freizeitgestaltung [Leisure Time Department], where individuals (also mentioned in the list) created an atmosphere that helped to raise morale; this also contributed to health. Finally – not to be forgotten, soccer served not only as a sport of individuals, but brought about the meeting of thousands of spectators, giving them a bit of happiness and joy – subjects for youth' newspapers and conversation in the ghetto.

I will never forget the companionship there - and the youth councilors who were the bearers of a healthy spirit.

