Mr. Reins, Consul Bunkis, leadership of the local Latvian and Estonian Societies, Pastor, fellow consuls, and guests.

During the Holocaust there were evil perpetrators. There were bystanders and there were righteous. Albert Einstein said: “The world will not be destroyed by those who do evil, but by those who watch them without doing ANYTHING.”

The numbers of righteous were minuscule. In Lithuania the righteous were 0.04% of the population. That means 99.96% of Lithuanians were either perpetrators, bystanders, or were unable to prove their claims that they were rescuers.

It is hard to be righteous. To fight the apathy of the masses and to stand up against forces of evil. This is why there are so few righteous in any society, and this is why we must always, at all costs, honor the righteous.

What Consul Bunkis will not tell you, and what I am about to tell you, is that he is nothing short of a hero. The people in this room deserve to know exactly what has happened. Against enormous pressure, he stood up for what he believes is right. He faced relentless, insidious, pernicious, and oppressive adversity and hostility in putting on today’s event. Consul Bunkis stood up to those forces and at risk to himself, he stood firm. These are the characteristics of the brave. The fearless. People with strength of character, of integrity, of human decency. The righteous.

The only basis for reconciliation is truth. Relationships built on dishonesty are doomed to fail. With the strong stand Consul Bunkis has taken for truth, for self respect, for reconciliation, and friendship; these are characteristics of the righteous. His leadership brings grace to his community. Consul Bunkis is a statesman.

Yehuda Bauer, a Czech-born Israeli historian and scholar of the Holocaust issued an 11th commandment: ‘Thou shalt not be a victim, thou shalt not be a perpetrator, but, above all, thou shalt not be a bystander.’

Consul Bunkis, you meet every aspect of that commandment. Thank you for being my friend. I stand in respect of you and all that you do.