

Taking History to the Street

by Francesco Maria Talò*

On January 27 the world remembers. On January 27, 1945 the world was forced to open its eyes and face the supreme horror of the liberated Auschwitz concentration camp. After 64 years we must not forget. Italy was among the first countries to dedicate January 27 to the duty of remembering the Holocaust. The day of remembrance then became a commemoration recognized by the European Union and as a result, the entire international community decided that every year on this date there should be a concerted effort to prevent the past from slipping away in our hearts and minds. The generation of victims and executioners is passing away and it is even more important now to stop and think, to remember and understand. We must continue to pay tribute and learn because ignorance often borders on distortion and bad faith. We then risk repeating the mistakes of the past and falling into the abyss of inhumanity of which man is capable.

New York is the most Italian city outside of Italy and it is the most Jewish city outside of Israel. With the U.N.'s headquarters located here, New York is also at the heart of the international community, which makes these observations even more significant.

* Consul General of Italy in New York

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For a Peaceful Union of Minorities

by Amos Luzzatto*

Remembrance Day was established in Italy and the rest of the European Union with the justified concern that the gradual disappearance of the witnesses who have personally experienced the suffering of deportation to Nazi death camps could lead to detachment, indifference, and eventually even disbelief that gives way to denial.

The social, cultural, and political conditions which lead a campaign of denial today are not the same ones that gave rise to the anti-Semitic movement of the 1930s and 1940s, but nevertheless their goals are not entirely different.

These goals can be described as two distinct phases.

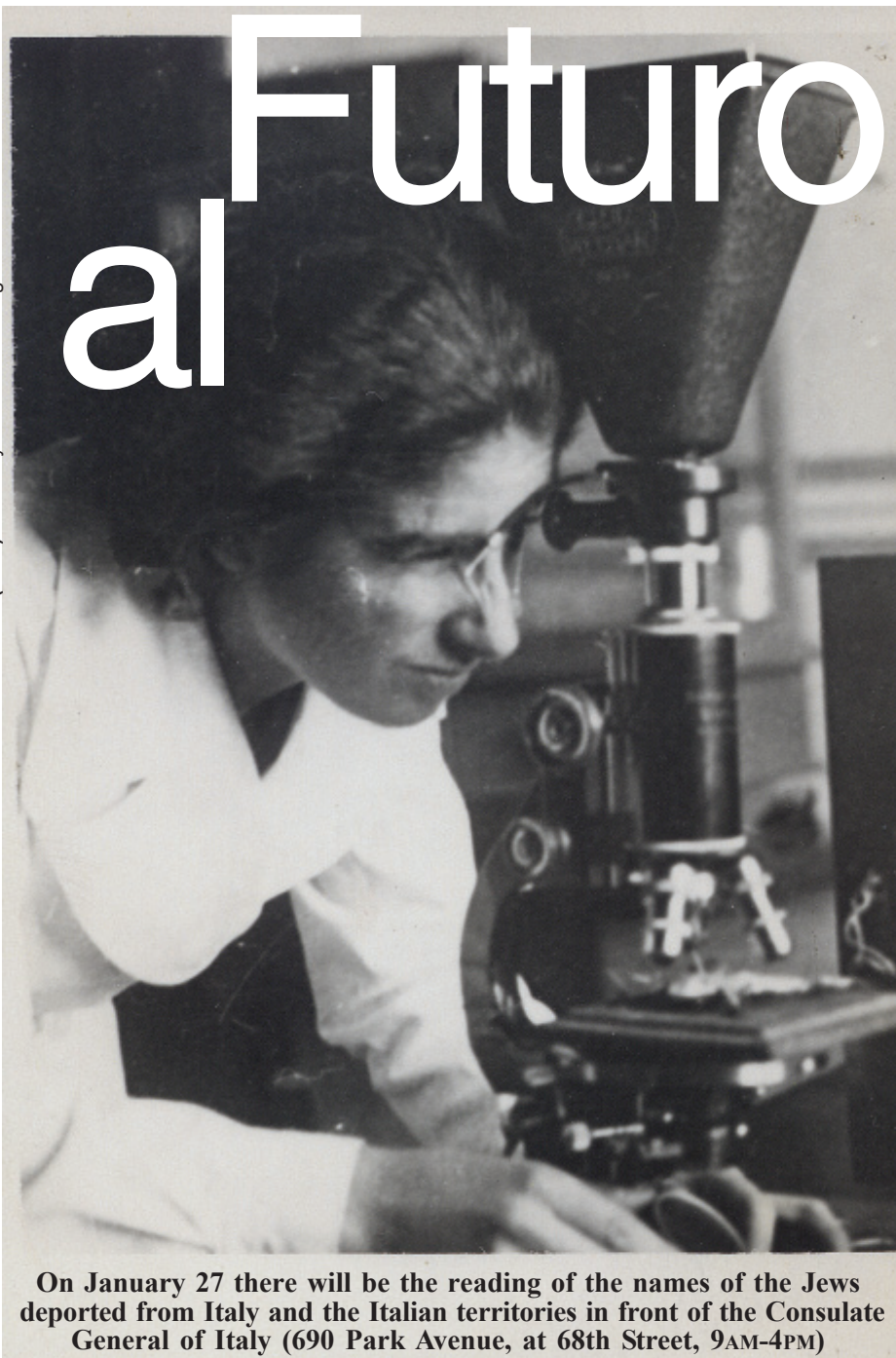
One begins with the denial of the Holocaust, or at least with its drastic downsizing. The victims would be far fewer. It would not involve a targeted killing, but a regrettable yet unavoidable episode of such an extended war as the Second World War between 1939 and 1945. One then moves on to claim the alleged crimes committed by the Allies: the bombing of Hamburg and Dresden, the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

* Former President of the Union of Italian Jewish Communities

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Memoria al Futuro

Gisella Levi Cahman (1939) Courtesy Abramo Ottolenghi and Leo Back Institute NY



On January 27 there will be the reading of the names of the Jews deported from Italy and the Italian territories in front of the Consulate General of Italy (690 Park Avenue, at 68th Street, 9AM-4PM)

The i-italy network (www.i-italy.org) has been online for about a year now. As you know, periodically we publish thematic issues on paper. This one is dedicated to Remembrance Day, and it is our contribution to the many initiatives the Italian and Italian/American communities promote in New York to commemorate the liberation of Auschwitz.

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Italian, American & Jewish

by Ottorino Cappelli

Interview with Anthony Julian Tamburri Dean, John D. Calandra Institute (Cuny)

How is your Institute involved in the celebration of Remembrance Day?

"The reasons are numerous. First, we are dedicated to research and promotion of all things and events dealing with Italian Americans. This, for many of us, extends to a wider population that includes Italians living in the United States and Italian culture overall. Second, while the predominant religion among Italian Americans is Catholic, not all Italian immigrants and their progeny are. Third, while much of what is commemorated during this period may deal specifically with Italy, we see this, too, as a component to our overall mission. For to understand more profoundly and more extensively the Italian/American experience, a more intimate knowledge of Italy and its culture and history can only have a most constructive and, henceforth, productive outcome."

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Nedo, Andrea and Talia

by Letizia Airos Soria

Interview with Andrea Fiano Chairman of Centro Primo Levi, NY

I met with journalist Andrea Fiano whose father, Nedo, was one of the few Italians to survive Auschwitz. I had a very specific, powerful image in mind. It comes from the transcript of an interview I read some time ago which said that as a child, Nedo was no longer allowed to go to school because Italian law prohibited it. I was struck by the image of a child who in 1938 lost the right to an education, along with the right to play with his Italian peers. Instead, he had to attend classes organized by the Jewish community.

My interview with Andrea Fiano therefore followed an imaginary thread: before me was Nedo as a boy, Andrea as a boy, and Talia, Andrea's daughter.

"Being the son of an Auschwitz survivor means growing up with big questions. I have resolved them over time but they still partly remain. This is with respect to what happened, and why it happened to me and to other families. Why are there grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins whom I have never seen?" In Andrea's memory there is an incident in particular that may have coincided with his growing awareness as a child.

"I remember once, in elementary school, we went to sing as a choir in a retirement home and I saw a kind of tombstone. I became convinced, incorrectly, that it bore my grandmother's name. I became very emotional and started to cry, and the teacher calmed me down. I was eight years old. It was a different life for a child; that is to say, I had no relatives on one side of the family, and my father was somewhat peculiar. He was a father who was not like other fathers, and there were many situations that provoked very intense emotions."

Andrea describes those days: "We are talking about an Italy where my father's story was rare, even for the Jewish community. Fewer than 8,000 Jews were deported, a few hundred returned, and today there are about one hundred who are still alive. It was an unusual fact which was not discussed, and for many it was an issue that was close or farther away depending on their sensitivity, but I had this at home. I grew up asking about very little, and until I became an adolescent I don't ever remember having friends who were children of the deported; I had never shared my story."

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In this issue: Stefano Albertini, Franco Baldasso, Damiano Beltrami, Ottorino Cappelli, Elio Di Muccio, Barbara Faedda, Andrea Fiano, Bruno Fortunato, Giovanna Landolfi, Maria Rita Latto, Stefano Longobardi, Natalia Indrimi, Stella Levi, Amos Luzzatto, Germano Maccioni, Eleonora Mazzucchi, Marina Melchionda, Renato Miracco, Angelo Russo, Letizia Airos Soria, Francesco Maria Talò, Anthony J. Tamburri, Tullia Zevi

Francesco Maria Talò

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For this reason, just a few months after my arrival last year, I decided, along with other Italian institutions, to do something special to commemorate this day. This year we will repeat the event. It is an experience that we want to share with the entire city. We hope to provide an opportunity for reflection in the city's frenetic daily life, as well as a chance for us to be more inclusive and for the city to be more involved in our initiatives. In this vein, we will read the names of the Italian victims of the Holocaust on the sidewalk in front of the Consulate General on Park Avenue on Tuesday, January 27. Beginning at 9:00 a.m. for about seven hours there will be a relay of personalities and anonymous Italian, American, and world citizens who will read the names of people who lived like us and whose existence was cut short by other men like us. This should never happen again. The sounds of their names will be carried into the cold air of New York. We want hurried and cold passersby, motorists, and the indifferent to ask themselves about these names that echo in the New York sky. Last year, hundreds joined our call including the President of the U.N.'s General Assembly, the Consul General of Israel, the Nuncio representing the Holy See to the U.N., Rabbi Arthur Schneier, school children from Park East Synagogue and the School of Italy (which participates increasingly in our activities), the Permanent Representative of Italy to the U.N., leaders of Italian and Italian-American organizations, representatives from the Jewish community, members of the N.Y. Police Department, and journalists. One after the other they read the names of those who perished because someone had decided that they were different.

Italy does not forget. Although we are proud not to forget, we still feel shame that this occurred in our country. Perhaps again this year we will be the only foreign or American institution to organize such a singular event, which takes place on a city street—a way to recreate a community feeling in the vast city of New York.

The realization of our goal was made possible by the Centro Primo Levi, the organization for Jewish culture in New York that is dedicated to Primo Levi, the Italian Jewish author who revealed the brutal reality of the concentration camps to many of us. The existence of the Centro Primo Levi in this big city attests to the greatness of a group that is small in size but of enormous cultural importance: Italian Jews. The Consulate General and the Centro Primo Levi have not only organized the reading of the names on January 27, but are also presenting a series of events and other opportunities for reflection which will take place over a week beginning on January 26. Other Italian cultural institutions are also participating and have provided a coordinated calendar of events: the Italian Cultural Institute, NYU's Casa Italiana Zerilli-Marimò, the Italian Academy at Columbia University, as well as CUNY's John D. Calandra Italian American Institute. Together we offer the city an unparalleled variety of events to mark the day of remembrance. It is also important to have i-Italy join our mission, as it becomes a part of the system and shows that we can create a vibrant sense of *italianità* in New York that is completely different from the worst clichés.

Amos Luzzatto

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The argument then automatically switches to the Jews: the Holocaust, blown out of proportion to become the episode that ultimately earned the Jews a land that did not belong to them, by way of compensation. This would have justified the expulsion of most Palestinians from their homes and villages, as well as the ruthless oppression of those who remained. American Jews, then, would have acted as a financial and electoral lobby forcing the U.S. government to become an instrument of this operation.

Ultimately, the argument focuses on a powerful Jewish conspiracy and Jews as persecutors. It transforms the Middle East conflict from a localized political problem—to be resolved by political means—to a conflict that is once again racial, as well as religious and therefore virtually untreatable.

Meanwhile, the processes of decolonization and then economic globalization have expanded in former colonial countries and have created increasingly new forms of poverty as well as caused the erosion of a centuries-old socio-economic fabric, often with large clandestine migration and the emergence of substantial, and growing alien minorities in many European countries.

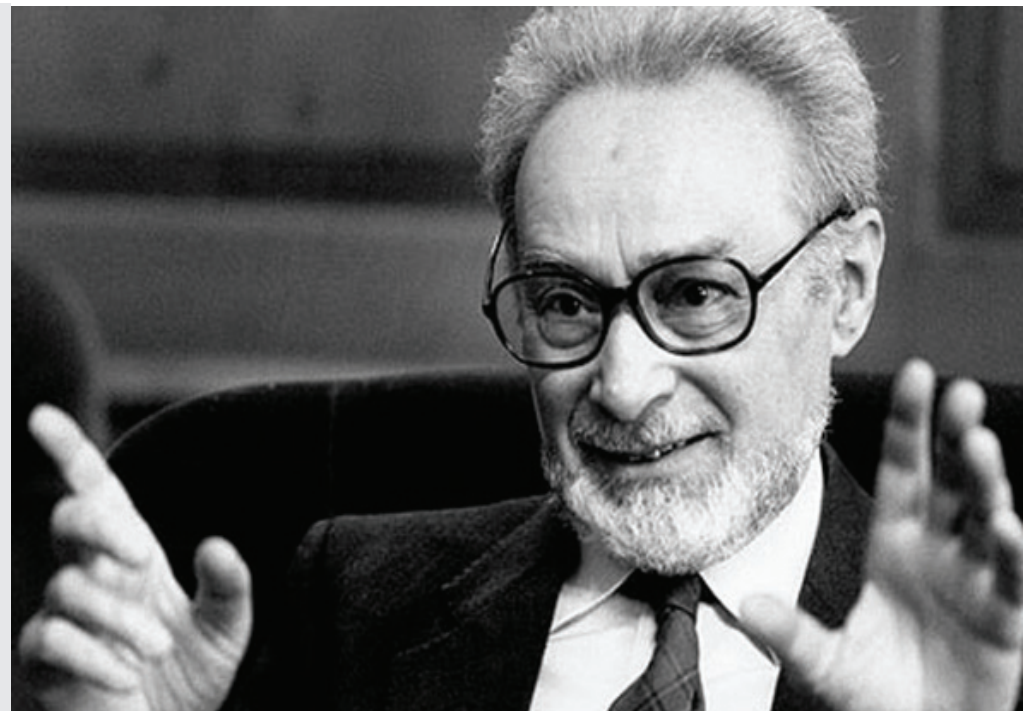
All these minorities are now experiencing problems that the Jews have already lived through: how to balance the need to integrate into "Western" society with the need to safeguard their cultural and religious identity. It is easier to ignore, rather than attempt to resolve, the tensions that arise from a chronic situation in which masses of people reside in an area yet are still perceived as foreign. And it is easy to see things in terms of a clear-cut alternative: either their complete cultural and religious assimilation to the resident European population—or their expulsion, as has happened to the Jews.

How can Remembrance Day be useful in this situation?

Clearly, we must learn from the sad experience of past centuries, beginning with the isolation, the ghettoization, the banishment of the Jews, the extermination campaigns against them waged by the Crusaders and the Cossacks in 1648 and 1649, their expulsion from England, France, and Spain, and finally the Nazi-Fascist Holocaust; and then we should ask whether our more recent experience could suggest a way to get out of this tunnel and avoid violence in the future.

It may be that the first suggestion comes from Europe where secular conflicts like those between France and Germany have finally been overcome in the context of a higher political unity, even if this is still in its early stages. The result that many hope for is that Europe cease to be a place where dominant majorities and less-tolerated minorities confront one another, but where *all* the national, linguistic, and religious groups become aware that they are all, in fact, minorities. If Europe perceived itself as a union of minorities, and therefore open to peacefully welcoming new minorities, perhaps we will have embarked on a necessarily long path, but one that will solve our current problems.

Remembrance Day could be a day that compounds contemporary experience and living memories. The very real suffering of the Jewish people should be shared with other minorities and become an opportunity to learn lessons for the future. Seen in this light Remembrance Day, rooted in the commemoration of the martyrs of Auschwitz, could create a hope for peace, to be built with slow but sustained hard work and with a spirit of brotherhood.



Primo Levi, 1975 ca. Pothograph: Martin Argles

Andrea Fiano

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He speaks of his father Nedo with affection, but with a sort of journalistic rigor: "He did not talk often about his past; he began to do so over the last twenty years. I had the good fortune to grow up with an optimistic father figure who was anything but resentful. He returned to Germany in the 1970s to work, elegantly dressed, in a country where he had been a slave only twenty, fifteen years earlier. In our home there was always a message of optimism about human nature along with a clearly anti-Fascist outlook."

For many years Nedo Fiano has been tirelessly bringing his testimony and sharing his experiences throughout Italy: "He has appeared at more than 700 venues such as schools, clubs, and churches. I believe that he felt a duty, and at a certain point he started to write out short memories and then later started to talk about them." His way of sharing his testimony is unique, and for this reason he is able to reach the younger generation. He not only tells his tragic story, but he speaks about freedom, democracy. He tries to make people understand that too often rights that have been won with great battles are taken for granted. How does his "American" granddaughter Talia, Andrea's daughter, live with her grandfather's experiences?

"It must be said that if you have a family with these kinds of stories, there is no need for a specific date. I remember once at school, she was asked to choose a hero to talk about. She chose her grandfather,

while a boy of German origin opted for his uncle who was a Lutwaffe pilot. She stood up and said, 'That's not a hero. Do you know what the Germans did during the war?' It is part of her DNA. She has respect and solidarity, but also great awareness. She has not read her grandfather's book because of the language issue, but she will."

Andrea's family story greatly influences his social consciousness and his awareness of being a citizen. His sensitivity to the phenomenon of racism and discrimination is very strong. "I remember a few years ago I was at a dinner in Italy with some childhood friends in a restaurant overlooking the sea. At one point a person began to make some very racist comments about Filipinos. I said: stop it right now or I will leave. They were all astonished by my reaction. Even my wife did not understand. Unfortunately, the situation today is much worse. It is not easy to know how to behave."

What does Remembrance Day mean to Andrea?

"As Primo Levi said, every nation that forgets its past is destined to relive it! I do not know whether this is so, but it is important to think, to reason, to know our history as Italians, as Jews. The idea of pausing to reflect, on one symbolic day, seems essential to me. The reading of the victims' names on Park Avenue in front of the Consulate General of Italy. The fact that the *New York Times*' radio last year said that 'if you see the traffic slowing down it is because they are

reading the names of the deportees'—that had great meaning for me. It is not only a tribute to the memory of these people; it is not limited to the victims' relatives who do not need an exact date to remember. Little by little the past will be reconstructed thanks to this occasion as well as to the many people who came to the U.S. to escape Fascism and racial persecution."

Last year, like many, I participated in the reading of these names. They came slowly, one after the other, like small waves on the shore. The act of repeating them all, as the surrounding silence was interrupted by the noise of the passing cars and the footsteps of the hurried pedestrians, dug into the depths of our humanity. The same surname repeated more than a dozen times; entire families exterminated. I left the small podium set up in front of the Consulate with my heart in my throat.

This is a tribute that transcends symbolic value and i-Italy had to make a contribution. So here is the special edition that you have before you. It is dedicated to the image of Nedo Fiano as a child, deprived of his own right to be a child. It is also dedicated to all children in every part of the world who, even today, are still victims of discrimination and racial violence. On the same day that a man with black skin takes the oath of office as president of the United States of America, this message—here in New York—takes on a particularly special meaning. L.A.S.

A Walk through Places of Memory

by Marina Melchionda

**Interview with Renato Miracco
Director, Italian Cultural Institute
of New York**

On January 26 (6:00 pm), the institute will host the event "Traces of Memory", a screening of the documentary "The Historic Ghetto of Venice" by Regina Resnik, followed by readings from Primo Levi's "The Truce" by Maria Tucci. (For more info: http://www.iicnewyork.esteri.it/IIC_NewYork)

First, I would like to ask you why you chose the movie *The Historic Ghetto of Venice*...

"I chose it when I met the movie's director and producer, Regina Resnik. She belongs to a generation that actually lived the facts that we are commemorating today. For us those are memories, for her they are part of her personal experience.

Having been married to a Jewish woman, I had the chance to hear and meet people who witnessed that period in a painfully intimate way. One of them is my former mother-in-law. After her parents died at Auschwitz, she moved to Great Britain and then to America. Regina's story is pretty much the same. She looks at the question of Semitism and anti-Semitism just like my family does, from the same point of view. So I thought it would have been appropriate to present her documentary for this occasion. This is also because this year I want to give more room to what I call the 'real' memory, which is what the witnesses of the facts handed down to us. Last year Stella Levi attended our event. Her words were more significant than any of our reflections and comments could have ever been".

After the projection, there will be a reading of extracts from "The Truce" by Primo Levi. What brought you to choose this particular author?

"Every year, in honor of Remembrance Day, we read one of Levi's books. With his writing Levi accompanies the reader through a parallel universe, showing them at once in the simplest and most realistic way, the inhumanity he experienced and the emotions he felt once he was released. We consider these readings the most imminent way to reach the greater public's heart and to faithfully commemorate the innocent people who die, both in the past and the present".

What is your personal way of preserving this historical memory?

"I travel; I try to visit as many places as possible so I can actually come to face with what happened. When I moved to Poland for work, I immediately went to Auschwitz. I think it is mandatory for all of us born in the 20th century. We must understand, retain in our minds what it is that happened. Learning from the past is the only path to building a better future. Watching movies, documentaries, reading books is not enough. We must go there. And feel, smell, touch the scenarios of the tragedy".

The movie you are presenting is set in the Ghetto of Venice. How important is



Vera and Giuseppe Emanuele (Mene) Modigliani with Fiorello La Guardia in New York, 1934

the preservation of the urban architecture of that time for the divulgation of historic memory?

"It is fundamental. I went to the Ghetto of Prague and I thought it was amazing. It is a conjunction of history, life, architecture and memory. You feel part of it; it becomes a part of your identity. Walking in a Ghetto is like walking in the life of the people that lived there. This is why keeping them 'alive' and accessible is so important: it is a key way of

allowing significant life experiences and, thus, preserving memory".

What is the first image that comes to mind when you think of the victims of the concentration camps?

"I remember my visit to the cemetery in Prague. You might know that Jewish people do not pay homage to the dead by putting flowers on their tombs. They put stones. Well, that day I saw the highest piles of stones I had ever seen. And I knew that people of all

religions, races and cultures had put them there. It was one of the most significant examples of fraternity and solidarity I had ever witnessed".

How will you contribute to avoid similar tragedies in the future?

"One day I will bring my kids to Auschwitz. They could not go there with their grandma: it would have been too hard for her. That place affected their personal story: going there with them is part of my duties as a father".

Learning from Our Mistakes

**Interview with Stefano Albertini
Director, Casa Italiana Zerilli-
Marimò at New York University**

On January 28 (6:00 pm), Casa Italiana will commemorate the Remembrance Day with the screening of the movie "Lo stato di eccezione" by Germano Maccioni, followed by a debate. (For more info: <http://www.nyu.edu/pages/casaitaliana>)

What is Remembrance Day for you?

"It is an occasion to reflect on the past as well as on the present. They say that history always teaches and helps us avoid the mistakes we made in the past. Sometimes it is not true. Every day, in Italian (and sometimes American) newspapers, I read of episodes of discrimination and violence against immigrants and members of ethnic minorities. They are constantly humiliated, they feel frustrated and unwelcomed. What did we actually learn from the past?"

How do you contribute to the cause of these persecuted and unaccepted ethnic minorities? Is there a project, a commitment the Casa Italiana carries out outside of Remembrance Day?

"This year, in honor of Remembrance Day, we will offer a screening of the movie "Lo stato d'eccezione" by Germano Maccioni. It is only the first of a series that will be presented throughout the year. Our aim is to denounce the different forms of persecutions, both physical and psychological, experienced by the weakest members of our contemporary society, the "different", as they are often termed. This initiative is promoted by our PhDs and fellows: they are the professors of the future, those who will transmit our message of peace and solidarity to upcoming generations, paying just homage to the victims of the past. We believe that the spread of culture is the only possible form of prevention."

Why did you choose to start the program in conjunction with the commemoration of Remembrance Day?

"Because we want this day to be an occasion to reflect on how important memory is for our present and future. The documentary is about a trial that took place last year that sought to identify the persons responsible for the massacre of Monte Sole, a tragedy dating back more than 40 years. No matter how many years separate us from those facts, they are still part of our history. We must have the courage to face them and honor, in whichever way possible, those who sacrificed their life for the freedom of Italy. We must do it not for revenge, but in the name of justice."

What is it that differentiates this event from the others organized by the Casa?

"It is the fact that it originates from an extraordinary synergy among all the Italian Institutions present in New York. This spirit of collaboration allows all of us to offer a different and, at the same time, complementary contribution to the commemoration of this day. We organize the program in advance, making sure that our events concur in facing the issue, even if with disparate points of view."

M.M.

Anti-Semitism Across Borders

by Marina Melchionda

Interview with Barbara Faedda
Acting Director, Italian Academy of Columbia
University

The Institution will observe the Remembrance Day with the symposium "Anti-Semitism At Home and Abroad", scheduled on January 29 (6:00-7:45 pm). Speakers include Prof. Ira Katznelson, "The Liberal Alternative: Jews in the United States during the Decades of Italian Fascism;" and Prof. Claudio Lomnitz, "Dreyfus in Latin America: Anti-Semitism and the Ideology of the Mexican Revolution." (For more info: <http://www.italianacademy.columbia.edu/>)

What kind of events does the Italian Academy organize to commemorate Remembrance Day?

"We inaugurated a cycle of symposiums that intends to face the issue from a historic point of view.

This year our aim is to study and discuss how Semitism and anti-Semitism were spread beyond Italy—and as such, the title given to this edition of the symposium. Because we wanted to give an international imprint to the symposium, we invited two non-Italian professors who currently work at Columbia University: Ira Katznelson will develop the theme of Jews in the United States during Fascism, while Claudio Lomnitz will focus on the relationship between Anti-Semitism and the Mexican Revolution."

What brought you to change the focus of your analysis?

"The phenomenon of "globalization" is an important factor. We thought that it would have made very little sense to focus on the story of one or maybe two nations when nowadays what happens in one country can affect the rest of the world. There is little space left for national history: today we need a global lens."

What kind of public usually attends this annual symposium?

"Students and professors of Columbia University constitute most of the audience. We also have many external participants. The majority of them are officials and members of Italian institutions and academic departments in New York. This is also thanks to the extraordinary collaboration between us, a partnership enhanced in this case by the Primo Levi Center."

What is "memory" for the Italian Academy?

"We consider memory from different points of view: biological, scientific, sociological, psychological and, of course, historical. Each one of them fulfills our aim: teaching that keeping memory alive is not only fundamental but also strategic for the present and future eras of human existence."

Is there a particular class or program supported by the Academy that promotes acceptance between peoples and groups of different races, religions or colors?

"As an anthropologist, I focus my research on the development of the concepts of diversity and coexistence among peoples. I teach my students that there is a difference between "acceptance" and "tolerance", and that is a fundamental part of my courses. My efforts are also supported by the Academy, which frequently organizes conferences and workshops on these issues. For instance, at the end of the semester we will host an international conference on the topic of immigration. This is how we try to contribute to the enhancement of relationships between peoples that, in this era of great mobility, are more and more constrained to live together. Building a future of peace is the only way to give tribute to memory."



Enrico Fermi, Emilio Segrè and Enrico Persico, Ostia 1927
(Archivio Dipartimento di Fisica Università di Roma La Sapienza)



Giuseppe Emanuele Modigliani delivers the keynote speech at the 15th anniversary of Ladies Garment Workers' Union at Madison Square Garden in New York. (Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Fondazione Giuseppe Emanuele e Vera Modigliani)

The Italian Jewish Way

by Eleonora Mazzucchi

Interview with Natalia Indrimi
Executive Director, Primo
Levi Center in New York

On January 27 (6:00 pm) the Center will commemorate Remembrance Day with a screening of the film "Quella pagina strappata" by Daniel Toaff, followed by a discussion between Andrea Fiano and Rabbi Jack Bemporad on Italian Jewish refugees in the U.S. (For more info: <http://www.primolevicenter.org/Home.html>).

Briefly, in your own words, can you explain what the Primo Levi Center is and its mission?

"The Primo Levi Center is an organization outside of Italy that fosters interest in the history and the culture of Italian Jews. It was inspired by the ideas of Primo Levi. Among them is the importance of secular memory as a shared asset of all parts of society, each contributing according to their own traditions and their own intellectual or material ways of constructing and understanding the past."

What is it that makes the Italian Jewish identity unique?

"I think the sense of identity itself, the fact that Italian Jews have over 2,000 years of uninterrupted history gives an awareness that identity is something very profound that can be kept within a group, even though that group is highly integrated and even though that group can change significantly through history. Jews in Italy have

influenced their environment and have been influenced by it during very different times. Their history prompts a sense of perspective and is the root of a great diversity within Italian Jewry."

I only know a handful of Italian Jews, and the ones I do know discuss their Jewish identity very little, if at all.

"I think that in general Italian Jews have adopted a sort of double life model, a way of not needing to be identified continuously as Jews. In fact, in a country like Italy, which after Unification had a specific internal struggle of secular trends against the Church, the secular has to a certain point prevailed."

How is an Italian Jew, considered a "rare" label by some, perceived in the U.S.?

"It's very difficult to generalize, but I would say that Italian Jews have fallen more easily into the Italian category. The language, the culture, the exterior values are more immediately Italian. Today there is a growing awareness of Italian Jewry both among Jewish and Italian Americans."

I think there is a vague feeling among Italians, and perhaps to a lot of people who look at the history of the Second World War, that Italy was not as anti-Semitic as other parts of Europe. Yet with the passing of the racial laws that isn't really true and Italians were hardly innocuous or innocent. Can you talk about perhaps dispelling that myth?

"The persecution of the Jews in Italy started later than in the rest of

Europe and ultimately the numbers of the destruction were smaller. Some people helped at the risk of their life and some people gained advantages from the losses of their Jewish neighbors. Can we draw general conclusions from this? In my view if a general statement can be made, it is about the fact that something as horrific as the racial laws was underwritten by the academic and intellectual community (with isolated exceptions) and encountered no public opposition. This paved the way to what came later."

Do you think there are forms of anti-Semitism in Italy today?

"The question is what we are doing in our societies to encourage understanding of the 'other'. There is a growing ignorance. The media use confusing language often encouraging a polarized representation of facts."

Tell us about the significance of Remembrance Day.

"Remembrance Day is not a Jewish anniversary. It's an anniversary of the European societies in which the Nazi extermination happened. They chose the day of the abatement of the gates of Auschwitz to represent the fact that from destruction we can imagine rebuilding the future. That abatement is symbolic. On this day we ask whether we can learn from and perhaps repair history through understanding, learning, and acting for a better world. The magnitude of the attempted elimination of Jews in the 20th century has become symbolic of something we must resist."



Famiglia La Guardia, Arizona, 1900 ca.

Anthony Julian Tamburri

Being Italian and then being Jewish Italian. Did this make life more difficult? What do we know about the experience of this subgroup of Italians who arrived or were born in America and were Jews?

“Considering the bigotry that existed at the beginning of the century, I believe it made things more difficult. Being an Italian was automatically identified as being part of the Catholic minority, which wasn’t easily accepted here by the mainstream Protestant culture. But then you were also a Jew, so a “minority within a minority”... And also, of course, you are part of a group that has a certain percent of its population that may also be bigotted against Jews.”

Sure, most Italians were Catholics and then some of them became Fascists, of course. It’s a peculiar clash, or overlap, between multiple identities: national, religious, cultural, political. Which would prevail? Would “italianità” be enough to create a sense of solidarity within the community?

“Historically, I wouldn’t know. It’s an interesting question and we should ask it to our panelists. I don’t know of any specific study on this subject. Based on my personal experience, I grew up in Stamford, CT, in a small Italian/American neighborhood where we had a non-Italian Jewish family, and they were very well accepted. Actually, there were also a few African-American families and they, too, were very much part of the neighborhood. The bond, in retrospect, may have been class, as the neighborhood was clearly working-class.

In broader “sociological” terms, we must keep in mind that there is a difference between someone who came here, say, in his or her thirties, and maintains his “Italian” identity, identifying as an “Italian in America,” as opposed to an immigrant, and happens to be Jewish. Then there is someone who was born here and raised by Italian parents who were Jews, and thus grew up as an Italian/

American and Jewish. The latter has not been studied to any great length, that I know of. On the other hand, being a minority group—as Italians and as Catholics—may in some instances have helped to be more understanding towards other minorities... certainly within that group itself. And finally, there are well-known, successful instances of Italian Americans who managed multiple overlapping identities. Think of the famous New York Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia, who was a quarter Jewish: he could speak Italian to an Italian neighborhood, he could then go to an upper-class, WASP neighborhood and speak English, and when he went to a Jewish neighborhood he spoke to them in Yiddish.”

Speaking of memory—in what ways can memory help our understanding of the present situation and our capacity to move towards the future? You often say, for instance, that the memory of “passage” is the foundation of Italian/American identity. But I have also heard you say that memories should be handled carefully, for they may conceal some dangers...

“I guess that my initial answer would be pretty much a stock answer—we should learn from memory in order to be able to move forward. But if we want to elaborate a little bit, there are two issues that come to mind. First regarding the notion of memory: if memory leads to nostalgia we need to be careful, for nostalgia may sometimes also be a trap and block us from moving forward. The other issue is—and this is where the concept of lived experience comes into the picture—that it is one thing to recall our Italian/American experience, and it is another thing to recall the Jewish experience, that has the horrible component of the Holocaust. To have a parent or a grandparent who remembers, that is something we can intellectualize, but

we cannot really identify with it in a real visceral sense. In that we need to be accepting of people’s notions, ideas, and feelings that we may not be able to “feel.” For the Italian American who is not Jewish, for instance, we might think back to the Enemy Alien Act, when our grandparents had to register as Enemy Aliens in this country, and some were even interned. That is painful enough when you think of it, but it pales in comparison to what the Jews have gone through.”

Definitely. However, as an Italian American would you say that this Remembrance Day—which incidentally comes only few days after the first African-American has been sworn in as the President of the United States—could be seen as a universal message of peace and tolerance among all races and ethnicities?

“Yes, of course! With a caveat though: I would not speak of “tolerance.” I actually think we should go beyond tolerance in a multicultural society. I would rather speak of mutual “acceptance,” a concept that evokes a horizontal relationship among equals.”

On January 30 (11:00 am-2:00pm), The John D. Calandra Italian American Institute will host the conference “Memoirs and Memories”. The event is divided into four sections: (1) John Locicero and Martin Begun, “Growing Up Italian and Jewish: A Conversation among Friends,” (Discussant: prof. Vincenzo Pascale); (2) prof. Robert Zweig, “Return to Naples: My Italian Bar Mitzvah and Other Discoveries;” (3) Gianna Pontecorvoli and Simona McCray-Pekelis, “A Conversation” (Discussant: prof. Fabio Girelli Carasi); (4) prof. Stanislao Pugliese “Primo Levi and the Double Bind/ Bond of Memory.” (For more info: <http://qcpages.qc.cuny.edu/calandra/>)

Editorial

— from page 1

We are addressing this particular issue for a variety of reasons. First of all, as Italians we feel the civic duty to preserve the memory of the Holocaust, to which Italy sadly contributed by passing the Racial Laws in 1938 and fighting the war from the wrong side of history. Several contributors to this magazine underline this aspect of celebrating Remembrance Day from an Italian point of view. And it is particularly important to highlight, as the Consul General of Italy in New York Francesco Talò says in his opening comment, that “Italy does not forget.”

Second, as Italian Americans we are concerned with a topic that seems to have been largely buried in our memory: the historical and contemporary experience of Italian Jews in the United States and of Italian/American Jews. These are “minorities within a minority,” as pointed out in our interview with Anthony Tamburri; and historically they experienced a peculiar clash or overlap of identities—religious, political, and cultural.

Third, as non-Jews we intend to dedicate this special issue of i-Italy to an uncompromising critique of racism, past and present. We are aware that, in our societies, on both sides of the Ocean, anti-Semitism is not dead—neither are other forms of racial intolerance, xenophobia, and ethnic violence. Though most of them only pale in comparison to the Holocaust, they are a heinous offense to our civilization. One can only quote Amos Luzzatto in this regard, when he writes in his article that we should realize that “we are all, in fact, minorities.”

Last but not least, as Americans we cannot overlook the coincidence between the celebration of this year’s Remembrance Day and the inauguration of the first African/American president of the United States. These pages, and the online multimedia section you will find on our website, are also a tribute to a major symbolic achievement in the struggle against racism in the world.

i-Italy.org is managed by the Italian/American Digital Project, Inc., a not-for-profit organization based in New York City. This print issue of our magazine was made possible by the contribution of the Scuola d’Italia “Guglielmo Marconi” and the Italian Cultural Institute of New York.

We would not be where we are were it not for the generous contributors of our previous print issues, and we extend a heart-warm thanks also to Justice Dominic Massaro, Alitalia, the Italian Government Tourist Board of New York (ENIT), the Regione Sardegna, and the Provincia di Ancona.



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The Italian/American Digital Project, Inc. is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to creating the first online citizen journalist network about everything Italian in America

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Cappuccino with Tullia Zevi

by Maria Rita Latta

When I called her to schedule an appointment, we talked on the phone about how important it is to make young people preserve the memory of historic horrors that must not be repeated. When Tullia Zevi learned of my eighteen-year-old daughter who is currently studying these events in school, she suggested I bring her along. It was a rare opportunity which we welcomed with immense pleasure.

Mrs. Zevi will turn 90 at the beginning of February. But she continues to be an important source of inspiration not only for the Jewish Italian community, but for secular and progressive culture as well. She was the first woman to become president of the Union of Italian Jewish Communities. She associated with many anti-Fascist leaders and was active in the Partito d' Azione. As a journalist for the American press she covered the Nuremberg trials and later Adolf Eichmann's trial in Jerusalem, and for many years she was a correspondent for the Israeli newspaper *Ma'ariv*.

We arrived at Mrs. Zevi's home in the heart of Rome's *ghetto* on a Sabbath afternoon. She welcomed us into her office and I couldn't help but notice that her desk was covered with newspapers and books—a sign of continuous work, insatiable curiosity, and a constant need to know more. During our conversation she only paused a few times, to sip her cappuccino.

I asked her, among other things, about her life in New York: "Those were very interesting years. I started playing harp in churches and synagogues; I met my husband Bruno, and I started working for a local Italian-American radio station and for NBC in Italy." She took another sip of cappuccino while I asked her about New York's Italian-American community: "They were very Fascist because they received news filtered by Fascist propaganda, things like that the trains ran on time, that there were no strikes. I joined a group of anti-Fascist exiles and we felt the need to tell the truth about the Fascist regime in Italy. We commemorated the anniversary of Matteotti's and the Rosselli brothers' assassinations. We would go to the Italian neighborhoods in New York and other cities where the propaganda was distributed. But frequently they chased us away because they saw us as traitors."

(Read the interview in full on www.i-italy.org)

Monte Sole: Film & Memory

by Giovanna Landolfi

Interview with Germano Maccioni, the young Bolognese director of the movie *Lo Stato d'eccezione*. He has followed and recorded the 2007 court proceedings brought by La Spezia's military tribunal against several accused Nazi officers and soldiers who, in 1944, murdered hundreds of Italians residing in Marzabotto and other small towns in the hills of Monte Sole in Bologna. The trials ended with nearly all defendants sentenced to life in prison, to the great satisfaction of the towns' residents who after sixty years finally saw justice served.

What drives a young director like you to make a documentary film about this issue?

"This film had to be made. I grew up not far from Monte Sole and I knew little or nothing of what happened, at least in terms of the numbers and the brutality of the crimes. I thought that coming to terms with the dark parts of history is the basis for building a solid foundation which will enable us all to improve our lives. It is up to young people in every generation to begin this process, especially if those who came before them did not want to think about it."

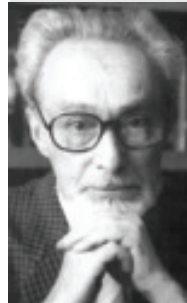
Do you believe that time may have somewhat dulled the survivors' anger and pain or diminished the responsibilities of the accused?

"If this trial had taken place in the 1950s, it would have had far more resonance with so-called public opinion. However, pain and anger are such private issues that I do not care to discuss them. I know that some of the witnesses have forgiven, while others cannot even remotely think of doing so. This, however, is a human and personal aspect, which in my opinion should be separated from the criminal issue."

What is the relationship between film and memory?

"Film is a very powerful tool and when, in addition to entertainment, it is able to deliver a message and become the basis for new civic analysis and human understanding, it goes further. It does something very important. Something necessary."

(Read the interview in full on www.i-italy.org)



Primo Levi



Tullia Zevi



From "Lo stato d'eccezione"



Mihail Karavokiros

In this page are the abridged texts of some of the articles, interviews and contributions that we have published in full in the online version of this Remembrance Day special issue of *i-Italy* (www.i-Italy.org) There you will also find pictures, videos and audio slideshows. Moreover, as it is normal on the Web, the online version will be regularly updated with new contents as well as with your comments, opinions and discussions. Come and visit us online!

Levi's Ulysses

by Franco Baldasso

One of the most fascinating figures of Western literature and culture throughout is the protagonist of Homer's epic poem, Ulysses. His story is such an insight into the human soul and so rich with adventures, that a number of writers used Ulysses as a script for their works, from Dante's *Divine Comedy* to James Joyce's notorious novel. Ulysses is a hero of memory and the model for a narration about incredible stories that happen in faraway places.

This is true for Primo Levi as well, who always referenced Ulysses throughout his work. As he himself claims in many interviews, after his return from Auschwitz he felt like Ulysses at the court of the King of the Phaeacians, recounting adventures that nobody could since confirm, like Job in the Bible, "Nobody else who experienced it is still alive."

Yet there is another reference to Ulysses in Levi's work that is extremely telling. It is the famous chapter of *Survival in Auschwitz* entitled "Ulysses' Canto," apparently evocating XXVI Canto of Dante's *Inferno*. In this passage, Levi recounts one of his most harrowing and revealing experiences: while inside the camp, the pain of recollecting what being a man should mean.

This pain is narrated through an exceptional moment of reprieve, when Levi and "Pikolo", one of his inmates, are permitted to go to the kitchen and carry the soup vat for the entire squadron. Pikolo asks Primo to teach him Italian and the latter starts quoting the famous passage from Dante's *Inferno* in which Ulysses' monologue reads: "Considerate la vostra semenza:/ fatti non foste a viver come bruti/ ma a seguir virtute e conoscenza" ("Consider well the seed that gave you birth:/ you were not made to live your lives as brutes/ but to be followers of worth and knowledge")

Dante's verses are a glimpse of light in the darkness of the camp, the link by means of memory to a normal condition that has been buried in the prisoners' minds in order to survive.

Memory is a wonderful means, but fallible," claimed Levi in many occasions. While using it as a powerful device for gaining knowledge and truth, he warned against the dangers of its absoluteness and institutionalization. Memory can be the standpoint for unhelped-for accomplishments. Yet, if not integrated into reciprocity, it can also be used as an excuse for new hatred and violence – as Ulysses' original Homeric account reads.

(Read the article in full on www.i-italy.org)

Mihail Karavokiros. An Italian Passport For Hope

by Damiano Beltrami

This is the story of how a Greek-Italian man saved almost a dozen Jews during the Nazi occupation of the Latvian city of Riga, where 35,000 Jews lived in 1935, but only 150 remained when the Red Army ousted the Nazis in 1944.

Married to a Jewish woman and father of two, Mihail Karavokiros had been harshly affected by the Soviet occupation of Latvia in 1940; the Russians had closed his factory and suspended his bank account. This is why, on the day the German army entered Riga in 1941, Karavokiros was enthusiastic: "Germany will bring back the law," he said to his children. But less than twelve hours later, Karavokiros' excitement had faded away. That very night, in fact, SS officials arrested, tortured and executed more than 2,000 Jews in Riga's central prison. Among them was Zalman Shefer, the Jewish husband of Karavokiros' sister-in-law.

The Germans officially announced the opening of Riga's ghetto on Aug. 23, 1941. "The Jews who were put in the ghetto included 5,652 children, 8,300 disabled people, 9,507 women and 6,143 men." Karavokiros could keep on working, both because he was regarded as "Aryan" and because his Italian citizenship protected him.

The first *akzion*, the Nazi term for mass killings, took place three months later: the Nazis shot 15,000 Jews. Karavokiros got a tip about the *akzion* and succeeded in entering the ghetto in a Wehrmacht official's car with his brother-in-law Harry Barinbaum. The latter collected two big containers, where he hid his son Gidon and Benita Barinbaum, his five-year-old niece.

"My father said that if he didn't do something for them he would have felt partly responsible for that crime and we children would have hated him" said Mrs. Lorenzetti, Karavokiros' daughter. (...) Karavokiros organized a network of places where Jews could hide, which included the changing room of his factory. Soon, however, the Gestapo targeted him (...) He ended up in the ghetto with his family. When he was released, in the summer of 1943, he went back to Italy. Before leaving, however, he made sure the system could continue to work without him. Riva Shefer was one of the people who benefited from it: "I saw the Soviet tanks and I wondered whether all that had really happened; whether the Russians had really kicked out the Germans."

Karavokiros, who died in 1972, was awarded the title of Righteous Among the Nations by the State of Israel. This story was recounted by Max Dolgizer, a 54-year-old New York manager and art collector. He is a descendant of Karavokiros' wife's family.

(The full text of this article as well as an audio slide show of the story are available on www.i-italy.org)

Signora Levi, vuole raccontarci la sua vita?

“I tempi della scuola a Rodi sono stati sicuramente gli anni più belli, e sono andata in una scuola che da franco-israeliana era poi diventata italiana. Nel 1938 non potevamo più frequentare le scuole italiane per via delle leggi razziali. Siamo riusciti a trovare tre professori italiani che davano lezioni privatamente, insieme ad altri quattro ragazzi, ma non è durato a lungo... siamo rimasti a Rodi fino al 1944, e nel '43 c'è stato l'altro 'disastro', cioè quando il Re e il generale Badoglio si sono arresi. Gli italiani hanno combattuto per tre giorni contro i nazisti, ma il governatore di Rodi ha avuto timore che i tedeschi facessero delle rappresaglie e così ha reso l'isola, per cui tutti gli italiani sono stati fatti prigionieri.”

E cosa accadde nel '44?

“I nazisti ci trasportarono nel mese di luglio al Pireo, il porto di Atene, su piccole navi. Da Atene so di aver viaggiato almeno per quattordici giorni in piedi. Eravamo settanta o ottanta persone nei vagoni bestiame. Fortunatamente ero vicino alla finestra, e ho visto un 'soldatino' lì vicino che faceva la guardia, la sua uniforme era italiana. Gli chiesi: 'Sei italiano?' e mi rispose: 'Sì signorina; guardi, stia alla finestra che le porto una pagnotta'. È la mia sorte trovare sempre un italiano che offre, che fa un gesto... l'italiano è sempre quello: buono, generoso. Avevamo anche un barile d'acqua, che finì subito. Avevo diciannove anni.”

C'erano anche i suoi familiari con lei?

“Sì, certo. Eravamo in 1700 persone allora.”

Per quanto tempo è rimasta nei campi di concentramento?

“Due mesi ad Auschwitz; siamo arrivati il 16 di agosto. Nell'ottobre del 1944 ci hanno trasportato a Landsberg, un campo-satellite di Dachau. Ci hanno dovuto spostare perché stavano arrivando i russi. Ad Auschwitz il primo giorno hanno ucciso i genitori e i vecchi. Noi ne eravamo ignari. Pensavamo: 'Forse ci metteranno a lavorare, però le famiglie stanno insieme e i genitori stanno a casa'. Finché delle francesi ci spiegarono cos'era la camera a gas e il crematorio. Ad Auschwitz c'era ovunque un'aria molto grigia. Anche quando c'erano giornate di sole, il cielo era sempre grigio. Era come un buco nero.”

Come siete arrivati a Dachau?

“A piedi. Quando dicono che la gente non sapeva di tutto questo non è vero. Ci hanno visto migliaia di volte, nei treni e nelle stazioni. Lì si lavorava. Ho lavorato per un po' di tempo in cucina, ed è stata una salvezza. Potevo mangiare tutto quello che volevo. Mettevo sempre qualcosa sotto le ascelle, oppure riempivo i pantaloni di patate”

Quando è stata liberata?

“Sono stata liberata il primo maggio 1945. I soldati americani si avvicinavano impauriti verso di noi; immagino avessimo un aspetto orribile. Hanno cominciato a gettare verso di noi del cioccolato e dei chewing gum. Una volta liberi, gli americani ci hanno chiesto dove volevamo andare. Noi abbiamo detto: 'In Italia'.”

Come è arrivata qui a New York?

“Sono arrivata negli Stati Uniti perché avevo degli zii a Los Angeles. Volevo tornare in Italia, finché incontrai qui a New York una signora che mi disse: 'Vuoi tornare in Italia, ma l'Italia è distrutta, non c'è più niente'. E mi ha convinta a restare.”

A suo parere come si deve fare per ricordare?

“È importante trasmettere alle nuove generazioni le memorie del passato. Il genocidio non dovrebbe mai più ripetersi. Una vita vale quanto tutta l'umanità: se ne uccidi una, uccidi anche tutta l'umanità. Se si uccide una cultura si uccide l'umanità. Inoltre, c'è bisogno di difendere la società odierna e fare molta attenzione ai minimi errori. Non si può amare tutti, ma non si può odiare nessuno.”



Stella Levi meets her sisters and nephews in Los Angeles after surviving the concentration camp, 1948

Tutti da Stella

by Elio Di Muccio, Angelo Russo, Stefano Longobardi and Bruno Fortunato

Abbiamo accompagnato quattro studenti della Scuola d'Italia Guglielmo Marconi, ad incontrare, insieme alla loro Preside Anna Fiore, la signora Stella Levi, una dei deportati italiani di Rodi sopravvissuti ai campi di concentramento nazisti. Quella che hanno realizzato al Centro Primo Levi, dove hanno conosciuto anche la direttrice esecutiva Natalia Indrimi, è una vera intervista che pubblichiamo in doppia lingua.

We accompanied four students and their principal, Anna Fiore, from the Guglielmo Marconi School of Italy to meet Stella Levi, one of the Italian deportees from Rhodes who survived the Nazi concentration camps. What these students made at the Primo Levi Center, where they also met with Executive Director Natalia Indrimi, is a real interview, published here in both Italian and English.

Quali italiani all'estero in una metropoli multiculturale come New York è stato interessante visitare un luogo come il Centro Primo Levi, dove la nostra cultura si incontra con quella della comunità ebraica. Qui abbiamo avuto la fortuna di incontrare Stella Levi, membro del board del Centro e sopravvissuta all'Olocausto. Stella Levi nacque a Rodi allora sotto il controllo italiano. I suoi genitori allora ebbero la possibilità di scegliere tra la cittadinanza italiana e quella turca. Scelsero quella italiana. Questo le aprì le porte dell'universo culturale e letterario italiano. Rodi, situata nel Mar Egeo, era punto d'incontro tra la cultura occidentale e quella del mondo orientale.

La storia di Stella Levi è stata per noi tanto sconvolgente quanto affascinante. Ha incontrato, nel corso della sua vita, innumerevoli culture che porta con se assieme alla sua vicenda dolorosa e impensabile. Intervistarla è stata un'esperienza unica, nonostante il dolore scaturito dal ritorno dei ricordi, Stella Levi ci ha trasmesso le memorie di una vita e di un pezzo di storia con grande forza. E' indispensabile tener vive queste vicende nelle nuove generazioni perché queste si impegnino a prevenire eventi simili nel futuro. Tutto questo per la giustizia e per la tutela dei diritti umani.

As Italians living abroad, in a multicultural metropolis such as New York, we were very interested to visit an institution where Jewish culture and ours meet. Here at the Primo Levi Center we were lucky enough to meet Stella Levi, a member of the board and a Holocaust survivor.

Stella Levi was born in Rhodes, at the time occupied by Italians. When her parents had the opportunity to choose between Italian and Turkish citizenship, they chose the former. Later on, this choice gave her the possibility to embrace Italian culture and literature. Rhodes, an island off the coasts of Turkey, was a connecting link between Western and Eastern cultures. After having explained the mission of the Primo Levi Center, she allowed us to ask her a few questions.

Stella Levi's story was both upsetting and captivating. During her life, she was influenced by countless cultures that she preserves together with her painful and unbelievable experiences. Interviewing her inspired extraordinary emotions within us: despite the pain the memories gave her, Stella Levi handed them down to us with strength, while sharing a piece of history. Keeping these memories alive with in generations is necessary if we want young people to commit themselves to preventing similar events in the future, in the name of justice and protection of human rights.

Mrs. Levi, could you give us an overview of your life?

“The best years of my life were definitely the years in which I went to school in Rhodes, a French-Israeli school which became an Italian school. In 1938 we couldn't go to Italian schools because of the new racial laws, but we found three professors who privately tutored me and four other boys, but that didn't last very long. We stayed in Rhodes until 1944, and in 1943 the King of Italy and General Badoglio surrendered. The Italians on the island, however, stood their ground and fought against the Nazis for three days, until the Governor of Rhodes gave up the island for fear of German reprisals if the island would have fallen, and every Italian was taken as a prisoner.”

What happened in 1944?

“In July 1944, the Nazis took us Jews by boat to Pireo, the port of Athens. From Athens, I traveled for at least 14 days standing for the entire time. Seventy or eighty of us were packed in each cattle car. Fortunately, I was next to a window, from where I could see a guard wearing an Italian uniform. I asked him: 'Are you Italian?' and he answered: 'Yes, Miss. Stay next to the window; I'll bring you a loaf of bread.' It was my destiny to find generous, giving Italians along the way. They were always kind, altruistic. The only other thing we had on the train was a barrel of water, which finished almost immediately. I was 19 when this happened.”

Was your family with you?

“Yes, of course. The whole Jewish community was there; there were about 1,700 of us.”

For how long were you imprisoned in the camps?

“I was in Auschwitz for two months. We arrived there on August 16. In October 1944, they took us to Landsberg, a camp near Dachau, because the Russians were coming. In Auschwitz, they killed parents and old people as soon as we got there. We had no idea of what was happening. We thought: 'They will send us to work, but the families will remain together and the parents will stay at home.' Afterwards some French women who were also prisoners at the camp told us about the showers and the ovens. Auschwitz was an extremely dreary place. Even on sunny days everything was gray, even the sky. You felt like you were trapped in a black hole.”

How did you get to Dachau?

“By foot. When they say that people didn't know what was going on, they lie. They saw us thousands of times, in the trains and in the stations. In Dachau I worked in the kitchens for a bit, and it was really a blessing because I could eat whatever I wanted. I always put something under my armpits, or I stuffed my pants with potatoes.”

When were you freed?

“I was released on May 1, 1945. The Americans were afraid to approach us; we must have looked terrible. At first, they threw candies and chewing gum over the fences. Then they freed us and asked us where we wanted to go: 'To Italy,' we said.”

How did you end up coming here to New York?

“I came to the United States because my uncles lived in Los Angeles. I was almost ready to go back to Italy, when I met someone who told me: 'Why do you want to go back to Italy? The country is destroyed; there is nothing left there.' This convinced me to remain in New York.”

In your opinion, what should be done to remember after so many years?

“It's important to pass on memories of the past to new generations. Genocide should never happen again. One life is worth as much as the whole of humanity: if you kill one person, you kill the whole of humanity; if you kill a culture, you kill the whole of humanity. Also, modern society has to be controlled and protected from even the smallest errors. We can't love everybody, but we can't hate anybody.”



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