

# The Guilty Silence

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**Abstract.** The implementation of the “Racial Laws” in 1938 severely affected Italian school and university. The expulsion of Jewish professors represented a long term loss for Italian academic world, also because many of them had to leave Italy to continue their work and some never came back. Giuseppe Levi, well known anatomist and professor at the university of Turin, was expelled together with some of his assistants, like Rita Levi Montalcini, later awarded with the Nobel Prize. Levi’s experience after 1938 is extremely telling and shows how hard it was for those who were expelled to find a way out from Italy, to get a job abroad and to sort out the needed papers. From the testimonies written by his daughter, Natalia Ginzburg, and his students, from the letters he wrote and received in his correspondence with his son Mario, exile in France, and the archival documents in the Belgian Archives, it is possible to understand how Fascism and the implementation of the racial legislation affected people, as scholars and individuals. Giuseppe Levi, who had always been antifascist, had to make hard decisions to continue his work already in 1931, when he had to take the oath the Fascist government imposed to the professors, and later, in 1939, when he went to the University of Liege, where he was caught by the German invasion. He managed eventually to come back to Italy in 1941, and had to face the risk of being deported after September 8, 1943. At the end of the war he got back his professorship in Turin. The common thread which can be found in Levi’s experience, during the seven years he had to stay away from the Italian university, is his strong dedication to research and to teaching at a time when these activities, being subjected to an antisemitic policy. were not considered by the government as priorities for the academic work.

**Keywords:** University, Research, “Racial Laws”, Expulsion, Antisemitism, Antifascism, Academic work, Exile.

Liliana Segre, talking about the implementation of the racist laws in the Italian universities in 1938, told that then there was «the guilty silence from the entire academic world»<sup>1</sup> which didn’t react to the expulsion of the Jewish professors. When those, who were professors in the Italian universities at that time, saw that their Jewish colleagues were being forced out because of their being born Jewish, they didn’t take to the streets to cry out their disgust, (several Jewish professors were then invited to go to the United States, since they were so experienced and professional), nobody told anything: on the contrary it was very attractive to fill up the vacancies. There was then that silent consent that played a significant role in the triumph of Fascism in those years.

With a guilty silence the racist laws, which marginalized the Jews from both Italian society and culture, were accepted. As it had happened in Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy took a stand against its own citizens. As a matter of fact, according to a misguided belief, the identity of the national community had to be constituted and strengthened through an excluding policy, not by inclusion.

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<sup>1</sup> Silvia Romero (editor), Intervista a Liliana Segre. In: *Deportate Esuli Profughe (DEP). Rivista Telematica di Studi sulla Memoria Femminile* [Deported Exiled Refugees. Online Journal of Studies on Female Memory]: [https://www.unive.it/pag/fileadmin/user\\_upload/dipartimenti/DSLCC/documenti/DEP/numeri/n2/11-Testimonianza\\_Segre.pdf](https://www.unive.it/pag/fileadmin/user_upload/dipartimenti/DSLCC/documenti/DEP/numeri/n2/11-Testimonianza_Segre.pdf), p. 156. «(...) quando i professori dell’università italiana di allora videro mandare via dei professori ebrei per la colpa di essere nati ebrei, invece di scendere in strada a gridare il loro disgusto (molti di questi ebrei furono poi chiamati in America, tanta era la loro professionalità ed esperienza), nessuno fece sentire la propria voce, anzi fu molto interessante prendere i posti lasciati liberi; ci fu questo silenzio-assenso che faceva parte del grande trionfo del fascismo di quegli anni». Translated by the author.

The attack to education, that was deprived of estimated professors and researchers, brought about two main consequences. On the one hand, the academic research as well as the cultural development were deeply affected and limited. On the other, the students, both Jewish and not Jewish, were prevented from having access to a high level education which they could have got from those professors, who had represented for decades a crucial bulk in the intellectual Italian universe.

In history, every official paper, every decree and law can be interpreted according to their historical value and juridical consequences, but also, if possible, examining how they affected individuals, groups and society.

What happened to the professors who were expelled, how their life changed, what they had to go through in order to continue working on their projects and studies?

From this point of view, Giuseppe Levi's experiences are paradigmatic.

Levi was an estimated and well known Professor of Anatomy at the University of Turin: his daughter, Natalia Ginzburg, his students, some of them awarded with the Nobel Prize, like Rita Levi Montalcini, the letters he wrote to his son Mario, a refugee in France during the Thirties and the war, provide us with the portrait of him as a man and a professor. From these testimonies it is possible to understand how he faced Fascism, the Racist laws, the exile and his return to the University. These are the outstanding voices which, from different perspectives, contribute to reveal the real features of that phase of our history, so critical and full of consequences for our country and culture.

Like many other professors of his age, who were expelled in 1938, Levi had participated to the First World War as a Medical captain. In his Red Cross Record, he was described as serious, energetic, honest in judging his subordinates, whom he was deemed capable of positive moral influencing. All the people who knew him, acknowledged in professor Levi these same features. Lotte Dan Treves, who was one of his students at the Anatomy Institute in Turin, remembers:

«Levi was sincerely interested in his pupils and young collaborators. One could learn more rewriting with him what had already been written than studying for months. What one could learn most from him were his strict logic and the intellectual honesty of saying only what had already been demonstrated».<sup>2</sup>

Giuseppe Levi was one of the two tenured professors who were expelled from the Faculty of Medicine, the most affected in the University of Turin.

Worldwide known as anatomo-pathologist for his studies on neurological tissues, he was the professor of three Nobel Prize winners: Rita Levi Montalcini, Renato Dulbecco and Salvatore Luria.

All members of Levi's family were tied to antifascist circles and intellectuals who, like Giuseppe Levi, were subjected to exclusion, arrest and persecution. The picture of that world Natalia Ginzburg depicted, mainly in her novel *Family Sayings*, proves to be precious, since it provides the reader with a privileged access to a context which vanished at that time and never got back.

We can see that world both through Natalia's words and her silences: much of what she didn't write about implies painful and bulky memories.

«If one reads this book as a chronicle of events, it may be objected that there are omissions... there are also many happenings which I remembered but have passed over in writing this book. Among them is much which concerned myself directly».<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Lotte Dann Treves, *Ricominciare sempre da capo*, in *Rivista di Storia dell'Università di Torino*, V.1, N.2, (2012), p. 45

<sup>3</sup> Natalia Ginzburg, *Family Sayings*, translated by D.M. Low, New York, Hogart Press, 1967, p. 7

Again, regarding the Levis' circle of friendships, Natalia writes:

«Occasionally my father's friends came to the house for the evening. Like him they were university lecturers, biologists and scientists... Among my parents' most intimate friends there were the Lopezes<sup>4</sup> and the Terni».<sup>5</sup>

Tullio Terni, professor of Anatomy at the University of Padua, was a dear friend and esteemed colleague of Giuseppe Levi's. His story represents an important piece in the complex picture of the effects of the "Racial Laws". His tragic experience was a symbol of those tragic times, when one's academic career and fate actually depended on elements which were unrelated to his or her research and teaching activities.

Terni, expelled from the university and from the Accademia dei Lincei in 1938, was admitted again in 1945, but soon disbarred for political reasons. He had been one of the founders of the *Associazione Fascista della Scuola* in Padua in 1926, joined the Fascist party in 1932. In a letter written on July 1936 to his son Mario, who was in exile in France, Levi, mentioning his colleague, wrote:

«At the beginning of September, I will go to Milan with your mother, on the occasion of the International Anatomy Congress. I was completely cast aside for the reasons you may guess. I don't care at all; the esteem I am held in abroad cannot be taken away from me, and that's the main thing. I don't care about exterior manifestations. Tullio played a role in this ostracism, in his excess of zeal».<sup>6</sup>

Terni was, actually, genuinely Fascist and after 1938 tried all means to be "discriminated" for his service and merits during World War I. Despite their different political beliefs, he kept seeing the Levis and Giuseppe, with whom he always maintained friendly relations.

It happened then that Professor Levi was chosen as one of the seven members of the *Commissione di Epurazione* inside the *Accademia dei Lincei*, which, in January 1946, made the decision to expel Terni. He committed suicide after a few months with the same ampoule of cyanide he had always had with him during the German occupation, as Rita Levi Montalcini told. About this event, Natalia Ginzburg laconically wrote: «(...) Also Terni died, in Florence».

Giuseppe was deeply affected by Terni's death, he wrote to Mario Oliviero Olivo:<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Amedeo Herlitzka and his wife Frances were among the closest friends of the Levi. He was called *Lopez*, and his family *the Lopezes*. Herlitzka had met Giuseppe Levi in Florence and in 1913 became professor of Human Physiology at the university of Turin. Expelled in 1938, he moved to Argentina where he stayed until 1945. He died in 1949 in Turin. See also: Mario Crespi, *Herlitzka Amedeo*, in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, vol. 61, Roma, Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, 2004, online alla pagina <<http://www.treccani.it>>. Valeria Graffone, Patrizia Guarnieri, Amedeo Herlitzka, in Patrizia Guarnieri, *Intellettuali in fuga dall'Italia fascista*, Firenze University Press, 2019. <http://intellettualinfuga.fupress.com>.

<sup>5</sup> Natalia Ginzburg, *Family Sayings*, pp. 16-17

<sup>6</sup> ACS, CPC, b. 2779, f. Levi Mario, lettera di Giuseppe Levi a Mario Levi, Torino, 25 Luglio 1936 cit. in Patrizia Gabrielli, *Col freddo nel cuore. Uomini e donne nell'emigrazione antifascista*, Roma, Donzelli, 2004, p. 169. «Ai primi di settembre andrò con la mamma a Milano in occasione del Congresso internazionale di Anatomia. Io fui messo completamente in disparte per le ragioni che indovini; ma non me ne importa proprio niente, la considerazione di cui godo all'estero nessuno può togliermela, e questa è la cosa più importante; delle manifestazioni esteriori me ne infischio. A questo ostracismo non fu estraneo Tullio, per eccesso di zelo». Translated by the author.

<sup>7</sup> Born in Trieste, like Giuseppe Levi, in 1896, he attended the Institute of Anatomy in Turin, which was directed by Levi, and became his assistant. His academic activity was successful and he became professor of Anatomy. In 1945 he was elected President of the University Commission for the Expulsion. He was bound by a sincere friendship to Levi until his death in 1981.

«My return from Liege was troubled by the news of Terni's death, which I've heard here today. As you can imagine, I was shocked, also because I regret I didn't try to prevent his expulsion from the *Accademia dei Lincei*: an event of minor relevance, which offended Terni because he was in an abnormal state of mind».<sup>8</sup>

Terni began collaborating with Levi in Florence, in the Institute of Anatomy directed by Giulio Chairugi. He followed him to the University of Sassari in 1910, to Palermo in 1915, and, eventually, to the University of Turin in 1919.

Natalia Ginzburg remembers her father's activities during those years:

«When my father was made professor at Sassari, my parents left Florence and went to live in Sardinia... Then moved to Palermo, where I was born...My father went to the 1915/18 war as a medical officer on the Carso. Finally we came to live in Turin».<sup>9</sup>

From then on Giuseppe Levi lived and worked in Turin at the University.

The only subjects which he tolerated were scientific subjects, politics and new appointments in the Faculty: as when some professor was brought to Turin, in his opinion wrongly, because he was a silly man, or another was not appointed, wrongly, because he was, in his opinion, 'a very valuable man'. None of us was qualified to follow his talk about scientific subjects or what was going on in the Faculty.<sup>10</sup>

He was always a leftist, antifascist, he even hosted Filippo Turati before he fled abroad.

«As for politics, we had ferocious arguments which ended in furious scenes, with napkins tossed in the air and doors slammed with enough violence to deafen the whole house. Those were the first years of Fascism. I simply cannot explain why my father and my brothers argued about it so ferociously, considering that I believe they were all against Fascism. In recent years I have asked my brothers about it, but none of them can enlighten me, yet they all remembered those ferocious disputes. I think my brother Mario, just to annoy my parents, would defend Mussolini in some fashion, and of course that sent my father into a raging fury».<sup>11</sup>

In 1925 Levi had been among those professors who signed the *Manifesto Croce* or *Manifesto of Anti-Fascist Intellectuals*, so, in 1931, he was extremely hesitant to swear allegiance to Fascism, when the regime made the decision to impose it to all the professors in the Italian kingdom. When he did that, his students applauded him, being aware of his inner struggle and happy that he didn't have to leave the University.

Actually Levi and some other professors, despite their reluctance, chose not to leave the universities under the Fascist control, following Benedetto Croce's suggestion to go on teaching according to the idea of freedom.

About his oath Levi will have to talk at the Italian Consulate in Liege in 1939, when he began working in the University of Liege after being expelled; in a dispatch of the Belgian Consulate it is stated that the professor admitted he took the oath but he said that he never signed an act of submission to the regime, neither he was prone to do that.

Even though Levi's morality, seriousness and professionalism were widely known, Mussolini didn't accept the proposal suggested by the physiologist Filippo Bottazzi to award Giuseppe Levi

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<sup>8</sup> Cited in: Guido Filogamo, *Tullio Terni* ([www.torinoscienza.it/personaggi/tullio-terni](http://www.torinoscienza.it/personaggi/tullio-terni)): «Il mio ritorno da Liegi fu conturbato dalla notizia che qui oggi appresi della morte del povero Terni; come ella immagina rimasi estremamente scosso anche perché provo una punta di rimorso per non aver cercato di impedire la sua radiazione dall'*Accademia dei Lincei*: incidente di scarsa importanza ma che offese molto Terni perché si trovava in uno stato di spirito anormale». Translated by the author.

<sup>9</sup> Natalia Ginzburg, *Family Sayings*, cit., p. 25

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 28-29

<sup>11</sup> Natalia Ginzburg, *Family Sayings*, p. 30

with the *Premio Mussolini* of the *Accademia d'Italia*.<sup>12</sup> Despite Levi's reputation, Mussolini couldn't give this recognition to a Jew and a signer of the *Manifesto*.<sup>13</sup>

All this didn't affect the professor's reputation; Renato Dulbecco stated: «He understood his students and forgave their oddities, but he couldn't stand an inappropriate behavior... His lessons were the most crowded... Students attended them because they loved and respected Levi. He was also a symbol of anti-fascist resistance within the limits the regime could tolerate»,<sup>14</sup>

Also Salvador E. Luria remembers Levi as «a scientist of international reputation in the field of nerve tissues and well known anti-fascist».

As a matter of fact, Levi always talked openly against the regime, his daughter remembers:

«My father always came home furious when he had encountered processions of blackshirts in the street, or when at Faculty meetings he had discovered new Fascists among his acquaintances. 'Clowns, impostors, buffoonery!' he would say... He would express his opinions loud out in the street to friends walking home with him and they would look round in terror».<sup>15</sup>

In March 1934 Levi was arrested as a consequence of the anti-fascist activities of his son Mario and his student Sion Segre, who had joined the anti-fascist movement *Giustizia e Libertà*. He stayed in prison for 20 days, his wife, Lidia Tanzi, went there to get information about him.

They referred to my father as “the professor”, and when my mother explained to them that he was a scientist and had never had to do anything with politics, and only thought about tissue cells, they nodded and told her not to worry.<sup>16</sup>

The “professor” went back home, but the general situation was getting worse.

For years now Turin had been full of German Jews, refugees from Germany. My father had some as assistants in his laboratory. These people were stateless. We too might be stateless some day, compelled to wander from one country to another.<sup>17</sup>

Also in the university from July 1938 there had been worrying signs. On July 7th, the lecturing qualification of Professor Renato Ottolenghi was not confirmed. Giuseppe Levi was supposed to participate in an international conference in Zurich in August, but he was not authorized by the Ministry of the Education. Even though the request had been sent in May, on July 20 1938 Bottai, the Minister of Education, issued a directive, which prohibited the students from participating in any international conference or meeting. Only a year before, Giuseppe Levi had written the entry *tissue* in the *Enciclopedia Italiana*.

On September 1938 Bottai sent a communication to the universities with the names of the professor who were going to be expelled, according to the information the Ministry had collected through the census of the professors of Jewish race commanded on August 9.

About that Natalia remembers:

«All the Jews we knew were leaving or preparing to go... They had taken away our passports... My father had now lost his chair in the university. He was invited to work in an Institute in Liege. He accepted and my mother accompanied him to Belgium. She remained there for a few months».<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> On April 19, 1931, Mussolini wrote a note next to the list of the candidates: «De Filippi or nothing.» See also Andrea Grignolo & Fabio De Sio, *Uno sconosciuto illustre: Giuseppe Levi tra scienza, antifascismo e premi Nobel. Medicina nei Secoli Arte e Scienza*, 3009, 21, 3: 847-914.

<sup>13</sup> About this topic see also Fabre Giorgio, *I volenterosi collaboratori di Mussolini: un caso di antisemitismo del 1931*, *Quaderni di Storia*, 2008, 68 (July-December). Judith Goldstein, *The Volterra Chronicles: The Life and Times of an Extraordinary Mathematician 1860-1940*, *History of Mathematics*, 2007, 31: 196-197.

<sup>14</sup> Sara Kaminsky, *Rita la principessa della scienza*, Effatà Editrice, 2015, p. 46. Translated by the author.

<sup>15</sup> Natalia Ginzburg, *Family Sayings*, p. 31.

<sup>16</sup> Natalia Ginzburg, *Family Sayings*, p. 86

<sup>17</sup> Natalia Ginzburg, *Family Sayings*, p. 111.

<sup>18</sup> Natalia Ginzburg, *Family Sayings*, p. 120

The news about the expulsion of the Italian professors, Giuseppe Levi among them, soon reached the academic world abroad.<sup>19</sup> He went to Liege to get information about a position at the University and eventually got it.

In Liege, Levi worked in the Institute of Anatomical Pathology supported by the Foundation Franqui directed by Professor Jean Firquet and his assistant, Professor Chevrèmont who, later, thanked him for his work and his example: «*Pendant plus de deux ans, il m'a fait bénéficier des ses vastes connaissances; je lui suis très reconnaissant*»<sup>20</sup>

As a consequence and in appreciation of his work, in 1946 he was appointed Doctor Honori Causa at the University of Liege.<sup>21</sup>

Already in January 1939, Levi and his wife were requesting papers to leave Italy. In the National Archives of Belgium there are two certificates of medical fitness dated January 9 and 10, 1939.<sup>22</sup>

Levi had already received a letter, dated January 5, from the dean of the University of Liege, Professor Duesberg:

«My dear Levi,

I am sorry I am replying so late, but I had to arrange everything needed for your stay in Belgium. I am in touch with the Minister of Justice who will notify our Consul in Turin.

In relation to the practical organisation of your stay, we made these decisions. Our colleague Firket is putting at your disposal a space where you will be able to continue your research on tissue culture. About the facilities, I asked the Rockefeller Foundation, but I have not got any definitive confirmation. ... I have about 75,000 Francs available to let you live here for two years ... I still cannot promise anything after this sum will be over. ...If you agree about these arrangements, come as soon as you can...»<sup>23</sup>

In those same days, precisely on January 9, the director of the *Franqui Foundation*, Jean Willems, wrote to Monsieur Robert De Foy,<sup>24</sup> head of the Belgian State Security Service,

«Bruxelles, January 9, 1939

Mister General Administrator,

(...) I am asking you to permit the stay in Belgium during the academic year 1938/39 to Mr. Giuseppe Levi, Italian, who was professor of Anatomy at the University of Turin. He will be accompanied by his wife.

Thank you very much for paying attention to this request. (...)»<sup>25</sup>

The letter is marked “very urgent” and there is a note at the end of the page, hand written by a functionary whose signature is not intelligible:

«Mr. Willems communicated by phone that he is going to let us have the detailed biographical information of Giuseppe Levi as soon as possible. I told him that you will make a decision after examining that».

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<sup>19</sup> For further information about the attempts to find a professorship in England and France, see Valeria Graffone, Patrizia Guarnieri, Giuseppe Levi, in: Patrizia Guarnieri, *Intellettuali in fuga dall'Italia fascista*. Florence: Firenze University Press, 2019. <http://intellettualinfuga.fupress.com>

<sup>20</sup> «Per più di due anni egli mi ha fatto accedere alle sue vaste conoscenze; gli sono molto riconoscente».

<sup>21</sup> Le Professeur Giuseppe Levi «*qui a travaillé pendant 2 1/2 ans à l' Université de Liège (Belgique) (1939-1941) vient d'être nommé Doctor honoris causa de cette Université*» (Décision prise par le Conseil académique le 30 avril 1946). [www.Karger.com](http://www.Karger.com)

<sup>22</sup> Archives générales du Royaume Belgique: Ministry of Justice. Public Safety Office. Aliens' Police. Individual Files A3341610024/5

<sup>23</sup> Archives générales du Royaume Belgique: Ministry of Justice. Public Safety Office. Aliens' Police. Individual Files A3341610023.

<sup>24</sup> For further information about Robert De Foy, see: <https://www.belgiumwwii.be/belgique-en-guerre/personnalites/robert-de-foy.html>.

<sup>25</sup> Archives générales du Royaume Belgique: Ministry of Justice. Public Safety Office. Aliens' Police. Individual Files A3341610020

The information requested were sent to Robert De Foy by Mr. Willems on January 24.<sup>26</sup>

Both Professor Dueberg and Mr. Willems did everything in their power to help Giuseppe Levi to get a visa first and then an identity card. They held their colleague in high regard and knew the situation but, clearly, given the novelty of the expulsion due to the “Racial Laws”, not every detail was clear to them. For instance, they didn’t know how to define Levi: a retired professor, a former professor, a scientist, a biologist, should they mention or not his role in the university of Turin? This is evident both in theirs and in Giuseppe Levi’s written statements made in the following papers.

At the beginning of 1939, Giuseppe Levi and his wife were getting ready and requesting all the papers they needed. It was the beginning of a long and difficult iter, which ended well but, at the same time, gives a clear idea of the bureaucratic problems involved in moving abroad legally to continue a research or teaching. The examined documents, 29 in all, are now in the files of the Aliens’ Police at the Public Safety Office, Ministry of Justice, held in the State Archives in Belgium. What these documents reveal is that Giuseppe Levi’s strong will and great reputation together with the Belgian authorities’ support made his stay in Belgium possible and decent, at least until May 1940.

On January 12, in Trieste, where Levi was born, a certificate for consular use was issued, which stated that his criminal record was clean.<sup>27</sup>

Two days before, a request for a visa was presented by Levi and his wife at the General Belgian Consulate in Milan. In the form, to the questions about his work, the length of stay and the reasons why he was asking a visa, Levi wrote that he was a University professor going to continue his scientific research for two years at the University of Liege. As a reference he wrote the names of Professor Duesberg and Albert Dustin, professor at the university of Bruxelles. The visas were eventually issued, temporarily, for three months, on January 31: De Foy wrote a letter to Willems communicating his authorization.<sup>28</sup> Lotte Dann Treves wrote:

«Before I left I had heard the Professor saying that he was going to Liege, where the University had made available to him a laboratory. He said: who knows if there will be anybody there who will wash my glassware; when I was in Sassari (the first university where he taught) I did it by myself, but the I was young, now I am old».<sup>29</sup>

Lotte Treves asked him if she could go to Belgium with him because, she said, «to me it was unbearable to see my professor washing his glassware».<sup>30</sup>

Before he left many of his students wrote a letter to him, to express their gratitude and tell him how sad they were because he was leaving. Despite his being abroad, during his stay in Belgium he went on helping them, also Lotte Dann Treves, in their work.

«I had been at home the last time during the summer 1938, after the discussion of my dissertation. I was among the last graduated with my professor; some days later, Mussolini made that infamous speech in Reggio Calabria, if I remember well. He stated then that also the Italians were Arian and had to take care of their racial purity. In the days between my graduation and this “revelation”, my professor assigned me a new research work and I was offered a job as a histologist in the Neurology Institute at the University of Genoa. It was not hard to understand immediately that Mussolini’s speech nullified both. I managed to collect material for my research, I wrote it down later in England and sent it to my professor in Liege. Among the other and more

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<sup>26</sup> Archives générales du Royaume Belgique: Ministry of Justice. Public Safety Offcie. Aliens’ Police. Individual Files A3341610019

<sup>27</sup> Archives générales du Royaume Belgique: Ministry of Justice. Public Safety Offcie. Aliens’ Police. Individual Files A3341610026

<sup>28</sup> Archives générales du Royaume Belgique: Ministry of Justice. Public Safety Offcie. Aliens’ Police. Individual Files A3341610018

<sup>29</sup> Lotte Dann Treves, *Ricominciare sempre da capo*, p. 52. Traduzione dell’ autrice.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 52

serious consequences of the Nazi invasion of Belgium there was also the loss of my precious contribution to human knowledge».<sup>31</sup>

From the *Bulletin d'Étranger* issued by the municipality of Liège it is possible to understand that Professor Levi, *retired university professor*, arrived to Liege on February 16, 1939, since he had received his visa on February 9.<sup>32</sup> In this paper Levi declared that he was going to request another visa for other 6 months and he had his own means of support.

«I arrived in Belgium in order to continue my scientific research with Professor Friquet at the University of Liege. I am getting paid by the English Society for the protection of science and learning».<sup>33</sup>

On his wife's *Bulletin*, dated March 16, 1939, it is stated that Lidia Tanzi arrived in Belgium on March 9, 1939. At the end of the page there is a handwritten note dated July 31, 1939, apparently concerning Giuseppe:

«He is a well known Italian biologist who has contributed assistance at the University of Liege. I propose to allow him to get an Identity Card».<sup>34</sup>

Actually, both Giuseppe and Lidia requested an Identity Card to the *Police des Etrangers*; in those forms they stated that their stay in Belgium was going to be for an indefinite period.<sup>35</sup>

In the form<sup>36</sup> Levi filled for getting a visa when he went back to Belgium in 1946 he stated that he had stayed there from February 1939 to June 1941. Both the Levi were crossed off from the the Population records of Liege: Lidia on December 19, Giuseppe on 26, 1941.<sup>37</sup>

It took about two months to him to go back to Italy, where he arrived in August. Until autumn 1942 he stayed in Turin where he worked clandestinely with Rita Levi Montalcini in the laboratory she had set up in her bedroom. The events of the war forced them to evacuate. Levi went to Ivrea first, then to Asti and eventually to Florence. The situation was extremely dangerous for Jews after September 8 1943: they had to find hiding places since they risked to be recognized as Jews, betrayed and deported.

On August 16, 1944 the Ministry of Education informed Giuseppe Levi that he had been readmitted as a professor, temporarily in the University of Florence.

He went back to Turin in July 1945 and, on September 3, he devoted his prolusion at the university «to the memory of Leone Ginzburg and all the members of the Turin University who died for freedom». On that occasion he also openly talked about his feelings during the previous years:

«In the last seven years, when I had to stay away, I felt more deeply how much I was devoted to the university where I spent twenty years working passionately. Those years are to me the best memories of my life».<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 52.

<sup>32</sup> Archives générales du Royaume Belgique: Ministry of Justice. Public Safety Offcie. Aliens' Police. Individual Files A3341610016

<sup>33</sup> Archives générales du Royaume Belgique: Ministry of Justice. Public Safety Offcie. Aliens' Police. Individual Files A3341610016

<sup>34</sup> Archives générales du Royaume Belgique: Ministry of Justice. Public Safety Offcie. Aliens' Police. Individual Files A3341610016 (Bulletin d'Étranger Ville de Liege n. 134169)

<sup>35</sup> Archives générales du Royaume Belgique: Ministry of Justice. Public Safety Offcie. Aliens' Police. Individual Files A3341610006/08

<sup>36</sup> Archives générales du Royaume Belgique: Ministry of Justice. Public Safety Offcie. Aliens' Police. Individual Files A3341610002

<sup>37</sup> Archives générales du Royaume Belgique: Ministry of Justice. Public Safety Offcie. Aliens' Police. Individual Files A3341610003

<sup>38</sup> Prolusione presso il corso di Anatomia Normale Umana, Università di Torino, 3 settembre 1945 “La struttura della sostanza vivente”, quoted in: Alberto Piazza, Ritratto di Giuseppe Levi. *Medicina nei Secoli-Arte e Scienza / Journal of History of Medicine and Medical Humanities*, 2018, 30, 1: 15-30. «Durante questi sette anni in cui rimasi lontano, ho sentito più intensamente quanto fossi affezionato all'università nella quale trascorsi venti anni di fervido lavoro e che rappresentano il migliore ricordo della mia vita.». Translated by the author.



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## Erratum

Footnote 14 on p. 83 of issue no. 2/2019 of *Trauma and Memory* (within Tommaso Dell'Era's article "Because of the Jewish race") should be corrected as follows:  
«Fonte: dove non diversamente indicato, ASURS, Archivio Generale, Serie fascicoli personale docente, AS1711 *Rosenthal Otto*.»