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Who should speak of the Shoah? In praise of imperfect testimony*

José Nesis, M.D.** , & Marcelo Pakman, M.D.***

Abstract. A detailed analysis of the context and the text of a letter of Freud, refusing to write about anti-Semitism in his last year of life with the Shoah approaching against the horizon of nazism, but finally published as such, leads to reflections on testimony in general, on who should give it in the cases of crimes like the Shoah, and on indirect and impure testimony and its ethics.

Keywords: Testimony, Ethics, Freud, Anti-Semitism, Reflections

On June 4th, 1938, Freud flees from Vienna. After briefly passing through Paris he arrives in London, where he will live until his death, a little more than a year later. A few months after Freud's arrival Margaret Haig Mackworth, 2nd Viscountess Rhondda, known as Lady Rhondda, the editor of the weekly journal *Time and Tide*, asks him to write an article for a special volume on anti-Semitism, arguing that there is a growth of that sentiment in England (Freud, 1985) (Figure 1).

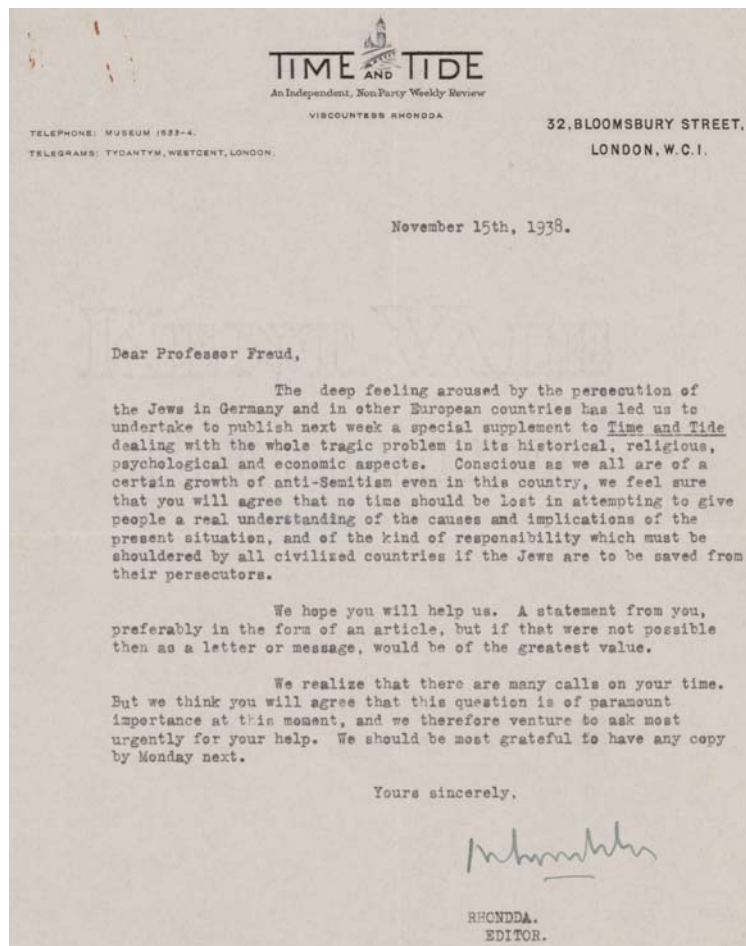


Figure 1

* A version of this paper was presented at the encounter Art and the Shoah. Singular Presences and the Insistence of Memory, April 19-20th, 2018, at the Museo della Shoah di Roma, sponsored by Università Roma-Tre

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The subject is not alien to Freud; he has referred to it before (1962a, 1962b). He is finishing his book *Moses and the Monotheism* and he has escaped nazism almost miraculously. However, he refuses to write about it, explaining his refusal in a brief letter that, with his permission, Lady Rhondda publishes in the special volume she edits on November 26th, 1938. This is Freud's letter written in English:

«20 Maresfield Gardens. London NW3, 16/11/1938
To the Editor of *TIME and TIDE*,

I came to Vienna as a child of four years from a small town in Moravia. After 78 years, including more than half a century of strenuous work I had to leave my home, saw the Scientific Society I have founded dissolved, our institutions destroyed, our Printing Press (*Verlag*) taken over by the invaders, the books I have published confiscated and reduced to pulp, my children expelled from their professions. Don't you think the columns of your special number might rather be reserved for the utterances of non-Jewish people less personally involved than myself? In this connection my mind gets hold of an old French saying:

Le bruit est pour le fat La plainte est pour le sot; l'honnête homme trompé S'en va et ne dit mot».
[The English translation would be: "A fuss becomes the Fop / A Fool's complaints are heard; / A Gentleman betrayed / Departs without a word"]

But Freud leaves the verses untranslated. And he ends up saying:

«I feel deeply affected by the passage in your letter acknowledging 'a certain growth of anti-Semitism even in this country'. Ought this present persecution not rather give rise to a wave of sympathy in this country? Respectfully yours, Sigm. Freud» (Figure 2)

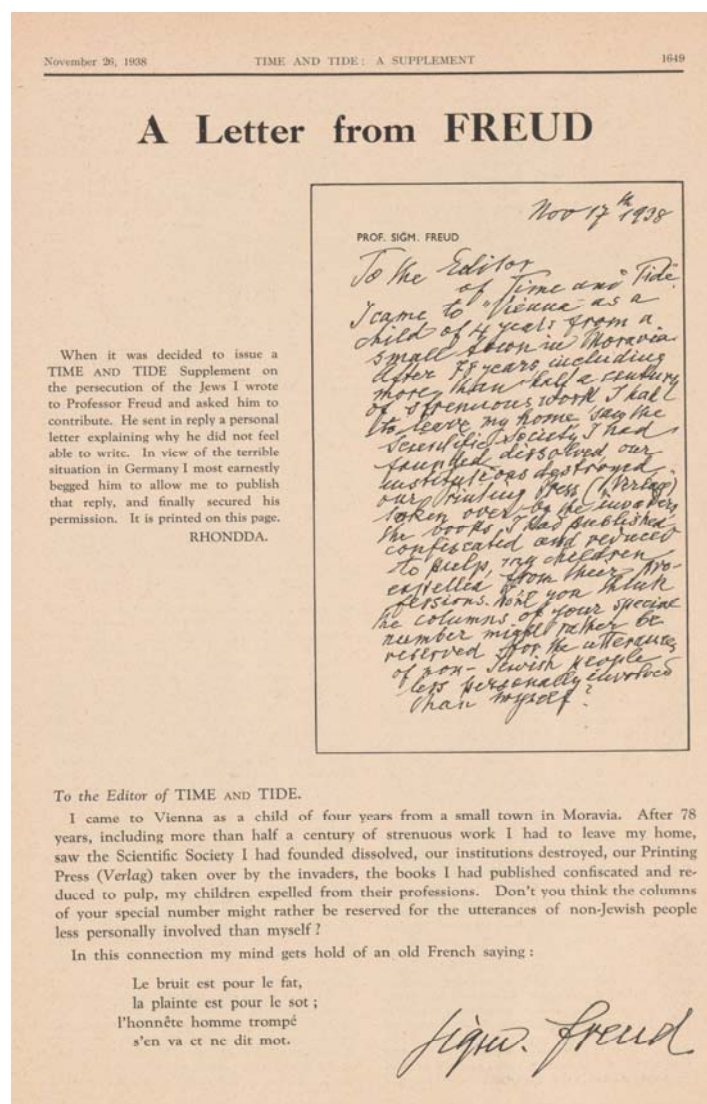


Figure 2

The circumstances of Freud's testimony become even more complicated by the shadow of a doubt. Fleeing from the Nazis often involved a secret *quid pro quo* under the form of a monetary arrangement with someone within the Nazi hierarchy. This was a typical transaction that so many Jews had to make: from those who treasured the meager savings of a lifetime or a small piece of jewelry, hidden in an improvised time capsule, to those who made a pact with the devil in the attempt to save fortunes, like the one Freud had accumulated during his professional life. In his case the devil was represented by Anton Sauerwald, who had been a dark character since his youth. A chemist in the service of the Vienna police prior to the *Anschluss*, the annexation of Austria by the Nazis, Sauerwald had the best record in the detection and identification of explosives used in the, by then, frequent terrorist attempts, the majority of which were bombs set by members of the Nazi Party themselves (Edmunson, 2017). What was the reason for this formidable performance? Sauerwald himself fabricated the explosives he would then discover. With the annexation, he soon joined the Nazis and was designated as commissar for the confiscation of Jewish properties. His assigned target was the *Verlag* - the publishing house of Freud's books - and the valuables and money of the Freud family. A long process followed, including the interrogations to Anna Freud by the Gestapo (suspiciously a few days after Sauerwald's first visit to Freud), searches in the publishing house, and the repatriation of Freud's texts - which had been sent to Switzerland in an attempt to save them - with the sole purpose of destroying them. Freud was finally forced to sign a declaration stating that he was not abused by the Gestapo. We will never know how this declaration became famous as an audacious act, interpreted by some as a last rebellious and almost suicidal cry, in which Freud supposedly stated he would recommend the Gestapo to everybody. Were this version to be true (Roudinesco, 2016) it would imply that the Nazis either did not understand the irony or else they preferred to overlook it for reasons we do not know. But what we do know is that Sauerwald had information about the bank accounts Freud kept abroad and that had the Nazis known about it they would have prevented him from getting out of Vienna. However, Sauerwald, in a new double-cross, did not communicate this information to his superiors, thus putting at risk the possibility of obtaining a promotion. Freud, and a large part of his family, were granted an *unbedenklichkeitserklärung*, a certificate of "innocence" or "innocuity" issued by the Nazis, necessary for them to be able to leave the country. But in October 1938, a few months after Freud's arrival in London and shortly before the already mentioned letter to *Time and Tide*, who do we find registered by Freud in his visitor's book? Anton Sauerwald himself.

Right after the end of the war, Harry, Freud's nephew, the son of his brother Alexander, a member by then of the United States' Army, searched and detained Sauerwald. Harry probably had information confirming that Sauerwald was an extortionist, and wanted to do something about it. During Sauerwald's trial, Anna Freud and Marie Bonaparte - who had done so much to facilitate Freud's flight from Vienna - both testified with mixed feelings on his behalf (in fact, at first, Anna did not want to sign her declaration). Even today some chroniclers try to show Sauerwald as "the Nazi who saved Freud", either because his many readings in the *Verlag* awakened an interest in psychoanalysis and generated sympathy for the old master, or because he had been a student of Joseph Herzig, a friend of Freud.

Now, how can we evaluate these contextual facts in relation to Freud's response to *Time and Tide*? Maybe they influenced him to become ambiguous about manifesting himself. We do not know if by then the money was recuperated, and if it was, whether wholly or partly and whether this happened before or after the letter was written. We know about one of Freud's grandsons, most likely Anton (Alford, 2012), whose claim to the Claims Resolution Tribunal (CRT) in charge of adjudicating material retributions for properties stolen by the Nazis was successful (CRT, c.2005). But that was almost 70 years later. Back to 1938 circumstances, we may acknowledge the many pressures that could have been influencing a testimony, making for conditions far from ideal in terms of what it meant to speak then and there. But Freud's answer is there, and beyond the conditions of its origin, it constitutes a differential text regarding his *oeuvre*, including his vast correspondence.

* * *

In this text Freud questions, apparently, the validity of a testimony about violence by someone directly affected by it. We don't know if what he questions of such a testimony is its legitimacy, its efficacy, or both. Thus the goal of Freud's claim remains in principle open: the eventual manifestations of those who are not Jewish, defined in terms of its condition of "not affected", would supposedly be more objective, more valid? or would that demand aim instead to achieve a more intense effect on others? A few decades earlier, Freud had rushed to name Jung as president of the International Psychoanalytic Association as a strategy to avoid the nascent psychoanalytic movement being identified as a "Jewish affair". But this attempt at privileging efficacy over solidity ended up disappointing him. In 1938, even though Freud responds to Lady Rhondda by reformulating her request with the proposal to bring the words of non Jews, we find the paradox that his letter is in fact published. Freud does not consider he is apt to write but he accounts for the reasons for that refusal, and that testimony of his supposed ineptitude ends up being published, with his authorization, solicited by the editor. Could we take the text as a contribution to the subject at hand? Could we consider it as an implicit essay about antisemitism? And furthermore on the consequences of it, as instrumented by the Nazi regime, in the years to follow that our hindsight allows us to know? Let us remember that Freud had already explicitly written about the deeper elements of antisemitism. Or we have to assume instead that we have here an essay on the condition of the possibility of a testimony. Freud seems to change his past strategy and instead of insisting in writing an explicit psychoanalytic argument he chooses to remain silent without remaining silent: he speaks about his silence.

* * *

Perhaps the most overwhelming testimony about the Nazi genocide is the silence of the submerged in the extermination camps: the *müßelman*. Agamben, after Primo Levi, considers this testimony of those who cannot give testimony a central element of the Shoah (Agamben 2002). But while the *müßelman* could not give testimony, Freud, in his letter to Lady Rhondda, by self-disqualifying himself as a witness capable of denouncing due to his condition, seems to indicate another way in which the potency of the unsaid is present when there is a choice of remaining silent, albeit only partly or, as we saw, paradoxically. Freud thus decides not to speak, apparently, to avoid not being impartial. He considers he cannot be the *terstis* required by a fair testimony. But, at the same time, Freud makes a sort of interpellation, if not accusation, to those who could fairly occupy the position of witness he rejects. But those referred to by Freud as "personally less involved [than myself]" could be transformed into the targets of an accusation only *après coup*, when with a final question he asks the editor about the supposedly unexpected unsympathetic reactions from people in those days to the victims of increasing antisemitism.

In terms of the question of the division itself between Jews and non Jews (the *goyim*, the gentiles, the members of the "rest" of the nations), although it can be seen as absurd it is part of the practice of many communities and it becomes evident when they are in exile. What is Freud's position in this regard? He identifies himself clearly as a Jew while he chooses to remain silent. Jews frequently laugh about themselves assuming a type of queer logic, at least toward the outside. And they assume this right even though it can probably give also weapons to anti-judaism. Freud seems to be saying, first, *this is a problem for those who are not affected and who show lack of sympathy* but he is careful to avoid providing further tools of disqualification; and second, let *these others speak*, these others who are not Jewish. But if it is as they tell him, they would not speak with sympathy even when confronted with the ongoing persecution. Freud's answer to the editor has then the value of an interpellation and, by the way, nobody took the challenge. Unless we consider that the very publication of Freud's letter was a way, somewhat tenuous, of "taking charge": Freud interpellates the editor of a journal dedicating a volume to antisemitism, and indirectly the readers, to take charge of *what she is taking charge of*. She in fact deviates then from a fact: associations defending the rights of the Jews are basically formed by Jews, as it happens also with other minorities. So, what represents this stepping aside of Freud while calling to those supposedly "less personally involved"? What is the type of witness Freud prefers to be and enunciates? Probably an empathic witness, capable of giving testimony but not merely to condoling. Freud chooses to keep his distance: there is a sort of *imperfection* of the empathic witness who speaks in an indirect way.

* * *

In the context of the relation between Freud (Jew, victim, intellectual, carrier of a *non plus ultra* word at the end of his life) and Lady Rhondda (*suffragette*, a woman of the nobility but also of the *avant-garde*), a relation that precipitates at the moment she requests his collaboration, his answer seems to be “you want to out me to work on this, but I believe it is really your turn and many of your readers turn to do it”. Is it perhaps that their lack of questioning of antisemitism matters more than the reality of what is approaching across the English Channel because they are not asking what is happening to themselves? (and in hindsight of what will happen in a couple of years in their own land with the Nazi bombs?) At the time Lady Astor, more famous for her sharp dialogues with Churchill than for her explicit antisemitism had already collaborated with *Time and Tide*. Freud’s answer is not only an interpellation but maybe also an anticipation of the costs the British might pay if they do not take charge of their growing antisemitism in the context of Nazism.

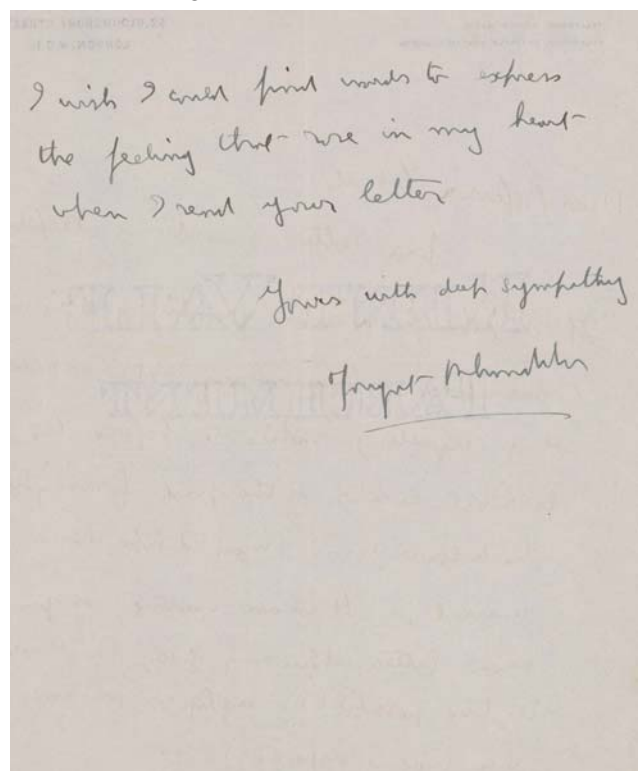
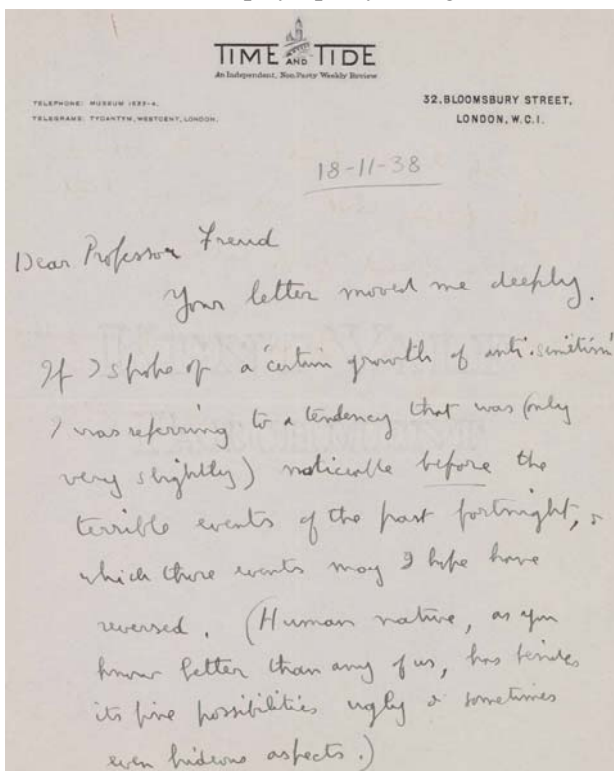
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Now, what is the role played within this context by Freud’s quote of Jean Sauvé de la Noue’s in French at the end of his letter? Why praise for silence, and disdain for complaining and making noise? We can ask now in hindsight: were the writings and other testimonies and reflections of Primo Levi, Elie Wiesel, Jorge Semprún futile and dum? Why the disdain for the testimony of a victim? If Freud’s letter is an interpellation, it is an indirect strategic text more than a direct and explicit reflexive analysis: let the English write on antisemitism given that there are more and more anti-Semites among you! The more direct style of Lady Rhondda is what puts the text back in the context of that relationship thus becoming more substantial only with this interchange. The letter is in fact published. Lady Rhondda knows it is powerful, efficacious. According to her written response to Freud she found herself shocked by his letter. This is the text of her letter from November 18th, 1938:

«Dear Professor Freud,

Your letter moved me deeply. If I spoke of a certain growth of anti-Semitism, I was referring to a tendency that was (only very slightly) noticeable before the terrible events of the past fortnight, which those events may I hope have reversed. (Human nature, as you know better than any of us, has besides its fine possibilities ugly or even hideous aspects.) I wish I could find words to express the feeling that rose in my heart when I read your letter.

Yours with deep sympathy, Margaret Rhondda» (Freud, 1938) (Figures 3 and 4)



Figures 3 and 4

Again, can we take then Freud's text as an intervention on antisemitism in overt opposition to his explicit wishes of not doing it? Considering that Freud is who he is, and that he has at that moment a powerful intellectual height, he is telling the reader that his texts were reduced to a pulp, his association was destroyed, his publishing house taken over. If the reader admires Freud he is getting his own word about what antisemitism amounts to. So, Freud: testimony, reflection and defense or else who should speak before an evil that will shortly after evolve toward the catastrophe of the Shoah.

* * *

Then, we can say that when Freud is asked to reflect or write apropos antisemitism he responds with a triple movement: first, he gives a moving testimony of his experience as a victim of antisemitism; second, he excuses himself from giving an opinion about antisemitism because he had been its victim; and third, he is astonished by the fact that the victims of antisemitism, like him, do not receive more sympathy, against what could be in principle expected.

So when Freud excuses himself to give an opinion beyond his brief and blunt testimony, he seems to sustain a Kantian ethics aimed at being free of any personal and "pathological" interest in order to be able to formulate, starting from a concrete situation, a pure and universal principle or action with the quality of a categorical imperative typical of the moral law: you can because you ought to (Kant 2012, 2015). His predicament as a victim disqualifies him to support a Kantian ethics. To act ethically as a victim is forbidden, given the condition of possibility he assumes. But is this all that is entailed here? Freud was in fact asked *about* antisemitism and not about *what to do* about antisemitism. But he finds impossible to be objective and it is this impossibility that prompts him to excuse himself from doing an analysis. Kant was not promoting and inhibition from reflection. He was only drawing attention to the obstacles for the formulation of an ethics. But Freud also inhibits himself of offering his thoughts. Is Freud extending the inhibition from taking an ethical position to even reflecting as if reflecting involved inevitably taking an ethical position? That would, however, make of the reflection a purely rational endeavor but it would be odd for Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis, to base his position only on rational considerations that he considers impossible to articulate when he disqualifies himself, because it could not escape him that both thinking and assuming an ethical position are inevitably related with unconscious elements. Furthermore, if there is for Freud an ethics totally independent of truth acting as an imperative it comes from the super-ego (Freud, 1990).

Regarding the last aspect of Freud's letter, he expects, perhaps rhetorically, that the mere confrontation with the fact that we are talking about innocent victims would be followed by sympathy. And he leaves a question hanging up in the air: why is that not the case? An interpellation anticipated by his silence and aimed at those who are not marked as victims by the chances of history. It is as if he were saying: this is what I have lived, I cannot speak about it due to my respect for the principle of objectivity so as to avoid being told that I am bleeding from my wounds, but what is the reason for your silence, you who are not affected directly? His silence, between his initial testimony and the last question, challenges the silence of the others. This is his answer to the question about antisemitism in this letter. Arguing that: I cannot speak because to be a victim has been my problem, he is saying to those who do not have this personal problem why don't you speak? This is Freud's way of saying indirectly: antisemitism is not the problem of the victims but a problem of silence and inaction, of silence as everybody's inaction. So, it is not a problem of the Jews. It is here that antisemitism resides as a prejudice stronger than the sympathy that the victims could elicit. It is also everybody's problem: what does it say about those who remain silent and about their silence?

* * *

What type of intervention is Freud then making in his interaction with Lady Rhondda and with the audience of readers through the publication of his non-contribution that she asked him to authorize? His intervention is not an interpretation of unconscious forces, of the dynamics at play in antisemitism that preoccupy Lady Rhondda, of what a psychoanalyst should do and has done in other cases: here Freud goes beyond that refusing to do it again or to continue doing it and offers instead a symptom that imposes on others the interpretive task of being worked through. Because a symptom always entails a demand for interpretation or else brings a malaise not only for the one who expresses it but also for those surrounding him. Freud responds indirectly with a transaction formation but not frontally and directly as he was asked to do. He thus avoids taking the position of the psychoanalyst but he does not resign to exercise it through his reticence to respond in the way he was expected to doing. Before the question of a directly and honestly preoccupied Lady Rhondda, Freud seems to take into account the society the publisher is part of as well as the antisemitism of this society. He avoids taking the position of the Jew who explains or defends himself. He knows that a direct, interpretative answer is condemned beforehand because it would increase the accusations of those antisemites who would see in that type of answer new tricks of the Jew that is never to be trusted, new ways of justifying his actions in order to continue manipulating others to his advantage. Freud opts then for an ironic position, indirect, symptomatic, imperfect in terms of Kantian aspirations of a pure ethics and in taking this position he reverses the situation and frees him from falling even deeper into the ignominy of the position that the antisemitic society offers him.

As we said before, when Rhondda reads Freud's letter she is moved and probably perplex and she also admits *not finding the words* to describe an intense feeling but she says goodbye with sympathy (*sic*) which is exactly what Freud had expected. This sequence appears as an almost identical description of the insight experienced by a psychoanalytic patient after an adequate interpretation, namely precise and timely. Freud's letter operates here as a symptom and as an interpretation generating an effect still questioning us. This effect elicited by the letter operating as a demand or an interpellation is included in its symptomatic quality, thus subtracted from following a pure intrapsychic dynamics.

Freud reminds us of Shakespeare's Shylock (1992) who, a few centuries earlier, in that same land that Freud comes to inhabit at the end of his life, seemed to say: if we Jews are as bad as you say, I would be like that and even worse; if you say I take advantage, you will see now how I can take advantage. But Freud, unlike Shylock, does not present himself as being worse than what is attributed to the Jews. He responds instead as a *gentleman*, not only refusing to speak because he is a victim and he would not be reliable in the antisemitic atmosphere surrounding him but also, and somewhat ironically, quoting verses that speak of the wisdom of reticence. A double cover up because he quotes the verses of De la Noue in French without translating them, at the end of a letter otherwise written in English, as a good immigrant would make the effort to do when he is trying to adjust to his new environment. But in his refusal to be the Jew who explains, who defends or who justifies himself knowing that bad intentions will be anyhow attributed to him because he has suffered and they will suppose he is bleeding through his wound, the symptom formulated with irony allows him not to respond like the Jew they expect but as the Jew who responds to a question with another question. In doing his job as a psychoanalyst, without being the psychoanalyst who interprets but one that presents instead a symptom, as much as being the Jew who answers a question with another question, Freud makes an *avant-la-lettre queer* turn that appropriates that which is usually used against the Jews, namely: to put them in an impossible position, and through this queer turn he reverts the position and imposes it as a job for the society at large to take care of.

The letter as a whole supplements the Kantian position in itself and embodies an ethics of testimony that, in spite of Freud's self-disqualification, shows that they have shut up this man of

science they have abused, and furthermore he shows also to be even more righteous in his adversity, more ethical than the perpetrators of his abuse. And there is also at play an ethics of responsibility before historical truth, an ethics of this world, embodied, and not an abstract moral or principles. We are closer here to the already mentioned ethics of Primo Levi (1989), taken by Agamben: testimony has to be given even though it is always given against the horizon of the impossibility of the absolute victim who does not survive to give testimony. Paraphrasing Derrida there could only be testimony given by the one who, by definition, cannot give it. But not in a Kantian sense due to interested and pathological personal motives. The issue is a different one: the survivor cannot transcend the position of victim because this one is not ultimately interchangeable and is related to what has already happened to him or her. Thus the corollary for Derrida that the only act that can be forgiven is the one which is in principle unforgivable (2001). To forgive is neither immanent nor mandatory but an act of freedom, a gift not based upon a logic of retribution or of compensation.

The victim can and should speak of evil giving testimony. This will expose the victim to the lack of sympathy Freud was apparently surprised about, but it would also commit him or her to the historical truth. The testimony would circulate socially and would always be vulnerable to the possibility of being contested. In this way the person giving testimony would become responsible of being a witness and the emotional dimension would be transcended becoming social and certainly political. Those who listen would then be interpellated to become responsible. Against Kant, the reflection about the object of abstract knowledge cannot avoid including the testimony about the experience of the victim, even if it is not based completely on it. The ethics of historical truth is rooted in that direct testimony of the experience and is thus an ethics of memory and of the singular experiences that escape the patterns of understanding, going beyond an ethics of abstract principles related to an epistemological truth or a categorical imperative. Historical truth might not be often evident and immediate and it is exposed to social judgment, political interests and already constituted prejudices. But this exposition is not a reason to abandon the historical truth on behalf of a politically correct relativism that in fact stimulates the multiplication of positions, turning its back to the responsibility before the evil we cannot help but be a part of. Lacking a God that exposes the perpetrator while protecting him from vengeance, as it happened with Cain, who is forced to wander in the world giving testimony of his acts (Pakman, 2018), we are left with creating the social conditions for testimony and responsible action before evil to happen, as a principle of an embodied ethics opened to the battle for historical truth. The affirmation of truth, albeit indirect, refuses to submit to infinite interpretations that, dismissing truth by considering inevitably stable, rigid, partial and suspicious, contribute to a supposedly progressive view with an affinity with post-factual times. Flexibility is not necessarily virtuous when it slides toward the validation of lying. But this doesn't mean that historical truth has to be approached only as a reiteration of abstract facts.

In sum, Freud gives a testimony that is striking in its very concision saying that those who can speak, like him, cannot do it, and reflecting on the fact that those who should do it usually do not do it. The victims are pained and they would be challenged, saying they speak out of lack of objectivity. The witnesses are often insensitive and they abandon the victims. Who should then speak? Before the tribunal of history all the defense lawyers of the victims must speak but not in the style of the abstract intellectual. They have to do it as an act of resistance among others. The victim should assume this ethics for himself when possible and for all victims without becoming responsible for the problems that put him or her in that position, nor responsible for the perpetrators behaviors and in doing so should interpellate all the members of the society, the bystanders who were already part of the situation or who become part of it through listening to testimonies.

The testimony at play is imperfect and in the case of Freud, the opacity of his relation with Sauerwald adds another layer to this imperfection that, however, thus gains a peculiar strength

showing not only what Freud does with antisemitism but also what antisemitism does to him. What else can we ask from his imperfect testimony operating beyond the intent of cutting it down as interested and partial? As everything that is not *perfectum*, it lacks the roundness of the circle, and is not about the past perfect tense, a past already sealed and closed. In its imperfection this testimony opens to the future of what is to come and opens up to the necessary forms of reflection and the insistence of memory going through all the attempts at repression, disqualification and denial.

Art belongs to his type of imperfect testimony, showing indirectly what happened even when we do not know how it happened or exposing the facts in a way that touch people singularly, thus having the potential to being put to the service of an enlivening memory. Art is not limited to repeating facts, important as this is, but like Freud in his letter, it mobilizes people through touching them by an indirect path made of speaking and shutting up, of meanderings, of questioning, of seeding an uneasiness from which it is not that easy to take a distance even in spite of compassion fatigue. Not without the risk of putting the artist before the facts, it moves people to see the facts as if it were the first time. The sense art makes is always positive even when it is about the most enormous crimes. Truth then insists, like a specter, to show up in testimony with the bluntness of the sensual and singular materiality of existence. It is not a path of aesthetic salvation but it constitutes an ethics of a testimony drenched in the singular texture of suffering, and in the social degradation that allows it, putting forward the experience of being touched by traces of historical events as a constitutive aspect of a reflection – a reflection that is potentially efficacious in the service of the insistence of memory.

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The social representation of migrants in the press

Claudia Gina Hassan*

Abstract. The topic of immigration, central to the latest electoral campaigns of all European countries, has gained space and visibility also in the Italian PUBLIC debate. Like the specifically political debate, even that taking place in the public sphere and the press is strongly polarized: the immigrant is the angel to be saved or the black soul to be demonized. The paper, which is part of a research that will last until 2019, traces these different images by analyzing newspaper articles. The emptying of public opinion has created around the immigrant a symbolic space in which the vision of the present and of the future of democracy is projected.

Keywords: Immigration, social representation, stigma

1. Introduction

Many years have gone by since the day the island of Lampedusa proudly presented its Nobel prize nomination for its work sheltering migrants. This small island had never been so world-famous. Since then, print media has never stopped discussing immigration. Observations made in reaction to the emergency have, at least in part, given way to controversy, plans, complex assessments and the creation of a truly adversarial public debate. A symbolic arena has developed around the issue of immigration where visions of the world clash, a field of meanings that go far beyond the topic's actual scope. The image that emerges from the debate is often a flattened, divided one; it is one of the issues where the positions of the media and public opinion become polarised; critical and analytical voices seem truly fragmentary if not totally isolated. The topic therefore cannot be seen as collective or one where basic assumptions are shared by public opinion and print media; what is at stake here goes beyond the current emergency and it is a vision of the world, of the past and future of Italy and of Europe that is at risk. There are many players involved; what we are witnessing every day is nothing short of an arena where meanings battle against each other. From the moment the issue attracted the most media attention at an international level up until today much has been done. The real cultural problem, though, is not based on the general way in which newspapers communicate and inform the public, rather the way information influences mentalities, stances, collective experience and perhaps, above all, our ability to empathise – in a long-term, profound way – with today's victims (Rossi, 2012, pp. 21-31). However, whilst on the one hand, information is supposed to raise awareness, on the other we can clearly see the role that some newspapers have played in stigmatising immigrants, relegating them to the category of a danger to the public and to that of an emergency. The negative depiction of this phenomenon immediately presents it as a serious social crisis. The description of a series of legislative measures and actions by the police gives the impression of a society that is defending itself, creating a scapegoat. Once the issue becomes central to the political sphere, it has no trouble migrating to that of the media. However, the media machine strengthens and creates the political agenda in turn, so that the two reciprocally reflect and strengthen each other, creating a common meaning and interpretational frame.

The strategy of creating a symbolic threat, of seeking solutions, scaremongering and stirring the public's emotions has a long history that has repeated itself with stunning regularity. The mentality of an emergency and the widespread adoption of a feeling of being under threat create episodes of

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moral panic amongst members of the public (Goode & Ben Yehuda, 1994). They are the emotional waves with which those who study public opinion are entirely familiar, against which any kind of action inspired by reason seems pointless (Tocqueville, 1999). The wave sweeps away all the normal coordinates that guide everyday life and appears both urgent and extraordinary (Colombo, 2012). Once the wave has passed, everything settles back to where it was before, or at least should do. In this way, the depiction of immigrants perfectly dovetails with the need of those who ‘belong’, who are in crisis and suffering hardship, to see those ‘invisible’, homeless foreigners as the enemy that can be blamed for the social and economic crisis.

The political atmosphere supported by the papers and legitimised by opinion polls follows and confirms the dominant narrative. The language used is the most important litmus test: on the one hand, what emerges is the specific desire to create and strengthen a paradigm and a prejudice that presents immigrants as deviant (Dal Lago, 1999) whilst on the other hand there is a desire to create the image of a victim who must be saved and assisted, an image which seems to have frozen the concept of migrants in time. The language adopted, which is never neutral, imposes its own grammar and its own models. The political terms picked up by the media have become part of collective culture. Just one of many examples is the Italian word *extra-comunitario* (‘non-European’), which does not refer to Americans or Japanese people; a term that originally indicated, in a neutral way, the absence of European citizenship but has become the distinctive mark of a ‘certain type of human being’. A discussion regarding the language of fear is also found in an article of February 5, 2018, by Paolo Di Paolo in *La Repubblica* newspaper, where he analyses the language used by politicians and quotes the German journalist Carolin Emcke when remarking on how indifference has become the most widespread feeling: ‘Hatred is made possible and fostered by those who do not intervene, who would never act like that themselves, but who tolerate, who do not hate but allow others to hate.’

The research put forward here is a kind of introduction to a more extensive project that began in 2017 and will be completed in 2019.

It is a research/action that has involved 134 participants in the m&M media&Migranti seminar. This project involved an introductory phase involving two meetings I presented, in my capacity as the research programme’s director, and continued with three seminars. Working groups were set up to concentrate on different kinds of media: television, print media and social networks such as Facebook and Twitter. As far as television was concerned, the main news programmes were examined, as well as talk shows and programmes specifically discussing these issues. As far as print media was concerned, the project focused on a selection of the country’s most important national newspapers, such as *La Repubblica*, *Corriere della Sera*, *La Stampa*, *Il Fatto Quotidiano*, *Il Foglio*, *Il Giornale*, *Il Sole 24 Ore* and *Il Manifesto*. The initial phase involved the collection of information dating from November 2017, stretching into the period leading up to the election campaign. The methodology adopted for this phase of the research/action was based on cooperative learning, which took place with the exchange of information on the Padlet platform, where participants shared the various phases of their work and the material they had collected. The flexible, modular nature of the platform made forms of extended, in-depth cooperation possible, especially when researching and sharing the various different newspapers, but also during the intermediate phase of the research. The comparison of the profile given to news and how it was presented took place on the platform and in a classroom presentation.

All working groups share the same approach, involving content analysis and the examination of language. The research will continue in November 2018 and November 2019. As far as print media is concerned in particular, a comparative study during the three years of the project is envisaged, analysing the rate with which the various terms used in articles regarding migrants are repeated. The words analysed are: migrants, immigrants, asylum-seekers, refugees, illegals and *extra-comunitari*. Instead of using textual analysis, the research will involve entering data using Iramuteq software.

The newspaper articles we examine here create and promote symbolic meanings, they are an

arena of confrontation and conflict, they are in themselves the public sphere and initiators of collective culture. Their role therefore consists in reproducing and constructing social representations (Berger & Luckmann, 1969). The activation of extremely rare fragments of collective memory concerning Italian emigration during the twentieth century and beyond is particularly interesting. We cannot reconstruct all the effects of this association with the past, however these comparisons turn up in narratives, comparisons that are sometimes unsuitable when compared to other waves of migration. Apart from their practical role, integration policies also indicate the intention to make a serious investment in the construction of awareness founded on the recognition of otherness. The concept of *alter*, of what is foreign, is a cause and an effect of a stigmatising approach adopted by a section of society. Otherness always has two faces: that of the poor (Simmel, 2005) and that of immigrants. The migrant phenomenon is relatively recent in Italy. The way Italian people see themselves as welcoming and fundamentally decent has become a narrative adopted in collective culture, though controversial, in media narratives and in debates. It is interesting to note how collective meaning changes when a critical stance manages to push through the dominant narrative. It is hard to say who introduced the new concept or how, because the processes involved are always complex and there is always more than one reason behind them. Nevertheless, when we look through the articles, we can clearly tell the difference between those that propose a familiar interpretation, an established rationale, and those who put forward an alternative view that lies outside collective culture and makes new associations, straying into uncharted territory. The different terms that are used to denote people who arrive in our country and in Europe are an important linguistic indicator that reveal a particular attitude or are the sign of a lack of clarity regarding the issue. The terms legal immigrant, illegal immigrant, *clandestino*, asylum-seeker, refugee and displaced (Benhabib, 2006) are sometimes used interchangeably, without stopping to make due distinctions. The ideological dichotomy that idealises immigrants that need saving or demonises them as bringers of evil and doom certainly does not help us grasp the reality of the situation. The amount of ‘fake news’ (Pitruzzella, Pollicino & Quintarelli, 2017) created for political ends or that is sometimes merely the result of the Internet’s power, in a harmful graft with racist prejudice, should also be stressed.

2. Talking past each other

What immediately becomes clear with the perusal of the newspapers printed before the Italian election of 4th March 2018 is the polarisation of the debate concerning immigration, almost as if it were reflecting the categorical juxtaposition that characterised the election campaign. As early as 2017, the year the research began, the newspapers’ constant preoccupation with the issue of immigration became clear, with its appearance in different editorial sections: from current affairs to foreign affairs, from politics on the front pages to, admittedly, less frequent appearances in editorial columns.

A scaremongering tone of alarm has undoubtedly helped create and crystallise, on the one hand, the image of poor, desperate immigrants and, on the other hand, the concept of danger and the links between criminality, deviance and immigration. In both cases, an identity has formed and crystallised that is hard to shake off. The newspaper that is farthest from crystallising the debate and attempts to analyse the facts is *La Stampa* where, for example, it analysed the situation of migrants, their dreams and ‘adventures’ in three different cities – Bardonecchia, Gorizia and Ventimiglia – in an article published on 16th December 2017. *La Stampa* often chooses to tell individual stories, the story of Sami for example – a 30-year-old Syrian rescued at sea whilst escaping from Libya – or the story of the town that chased away 30 asylum-seekers (see the article by Poletti in the daily newspaper *La Stampa* of February 8, 2018, p. 3) *La Repubblica* almost always focuses on the economic side and the importance of immigrants for the development of our country, or tackles the issue from the point of view of its effects on national politics, for example regarding the issue of *Ius Soli* voting rights. One article that particularly stood out in *La Repubblica* was Gianfranco

Cadalanu's story 'In Cerca di un Altrove' (*La Repubblica*, March 19, 2018, pp. 20-21), which describes Turkey's conquest of Afrin, the bombing of Ghouta, divided Congo, starving Venezuela and the millions of desperate people who are trying to save themselves amidst so much suffering and xenophobia. Cadalanu describes different worlds in different parts of the globe but all with a common denominator: the escape from desperation and the hope of a better life. The article is extensive, detailed and also includes photographs that have been seen all over the world. The one that stands out is a picture of a father who carries his young son away from Eastern Ghouta in a suitcase. Behind the journalistic debate are the statistics produced by the Censis social study and research institute, which were picked up to some extent by all the newspapers. What emerges is a country full of resentment against politicians, against the future, against the freeze on mobility and, of course, against immigrants. Censis produced a snapshot of a country in the grip of fear. In such circumstances, 'immigration evokes negative feelings among 59% of Italians, a rate that rises the lower a person is on the social scale: 72% of housewives, 71% of the unemployed and 63% among manual labour (www.ilmattino.it/primopiano/cronaca/censis_ripresa_italia_rancore_anti_immigrati_dalle_fake_news_1_dicembre_2017-3401530.html.)

Italians are resentful and feel defenceless. Faced with such a situation, Giancarlo Bosetti (Bosetti, *La Repubblica*) writing for *La Repubblica* attempts to explain this widespread feeling that the country's political and cultural elite entirely fail to understand. He does so by introducing a new point of view in the debate in *La Repubblica* and in print news in general: that of a young researcher based at the European University Institute in Florence, Liav Orgad, who believes that 'liberal leaders have proved unable to empathise with the anxiety felt by millions of people due to the upheavals that are happening all around us: war, unemployment, refugees, migrations, they have been unable to adopt an "us" that many can relate to because they react automatically, holding that the only thing that is important to them are the rights of minorities, which prevents them from talking about the rights of the majority.' In this way, he provides a key to understanding the fear of immigration and the victory of the various populist movements that thrive in Italy and in the rest of the world: the inability to feel and speak the language of the majority of the population. It is an entirely liberal argument that is far from anti-immigration scaremongering, which asks that the rights of the majority be given, at the very least, the same weight as those of minorities: a taboo amongst short-sighted democrats who believe that the majority can defend itself and that minorities are the ones who need constitutional safeguards. The public debate becomes more complex when it gains new views that take into account the everyday anxiety of those who voted for 'reassuring' parties that feed on fear. It is no coincidence . (Coppola, *Corriere della Sera*) that an article published before the election campaign attempted to explain how immigration influenced elections in four different European countries, where nationalists made a difference without winning outright. The issue of immigration was also at the centre of the public debate in the European countries that had elections in 2007. Research published by the ISMU Foundation, of which Italian journalists are aware, examined elections in the Netherlands, France, Great Britain and Germany where 'antimmigration parties did not present themselves as governments-in-waiting but instead occupied the political scene and won significant public approval.' The analysis was less concerned with the traditional polarisation between left and right, and more with the polarisation between the acceptance and rejection of immigration. In two cases out of those four, rejection parties won a relative majority: in Great Britain and France. In any case, voting responded to the fundamental issue: the fear of foreign invasion.

At the forefront of election campaigns and on the front page of newspapers, the issue of migration takes pride of place whether an article continues in the financial pages or involves commentary, politics or simply reporting news, such as, for example, in the case of Fiorenza Sarzanini's article in *Corriere della Sera* regarding the agreement between Rome and Frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency. The result of the agreement, which was handled by Minister Marco Minniti, changed the rules concerning arrivals by sea and envisages that refugees

rescued in the Mediterranean Sea must be delivered to the port closest to the site of the rescue. As often occurs, the articles are complete with up-to-date figures regarding the number of arrivals by sea and migrants' nationalities. The events that occurred in Macerata merit special attention, as they highlighted – according to the Demos research institute's *Atlante Politico* (Biorcio- Bordignon La Repubblica) – ‘a growing tolerance of intolerance’, while the fear of foreigners is felt by four out of ten people. If we go back a couple of months, we note that the economic slant of the debate often comes up in mainstream newspapers like *Corriere della Sera*, where Danilo Taino , in the commentary section, tells his readers that helping developing countries will not stop waves of migrants from arriving; on the contrary, it has been shown that it increases the rate of emigration in countries where there is a higher income per capita. *Il Messaggero* (Mangani & Pirone, *Il Messaggero*, February 6, 2018, pp. 1, 7) also regularly reports the war on the statistics regarding illegal immigrants, and clearly and directly associates the election campaign with the battle over the statistics and the terms that should be used. In the tables drawn up by the ISPI (the Italian Institute for International Political Studies) based on figures published by Istat (the Italian National Institute of Statistics), the Ministry of the Interior and the IOM (the International Organisation for Migration), the word *clandestino* (‘illegal immigrant’) disappears altogether whilst reference is made to arrivals by sea, legal and illegal immigration, unlike the diagram published by the ISMU Foundation which shows the 2017 figures for *clandestini*. *Il Giornale* has a completely different point of view regarding the powerful argument that states that immigrants play an important role in the Italian economy. In an article on the front page of *Il Giornale*, Riccardo Pelliccetti (Pelliccetti, *Il Giornale*) claims that research by the Bank of Italy reveals a U-turn. In 2041, the contribution of *extra-comunitari* to the country's GDP growth will be negative. It is an article that goes against all the ideas – defined there as bleeding-heart liberalism – held by Laura Boldrini, Emma Bonino and Tito Boeri. ‘The Bank of Italy's dossier proves the bleeding-heart liberal left wrong when it says immigration is an essential factor if we want to save Italy.’ Nevertheless, it is clear that this article, which bases its slant on a scientific study published in *La Repubblica*, is being used as a political attack against sections of the left. The article that appeared in *Il Manifesto* adopted an entirely different tone, passionate and damning of the weaknesses and shortcomings of Italian politics. The title speaks for itself, denouncing the silent and indifferent reaction to the murder of Idy Diène, which occurred in the wake of the overheated electoral climate. The writer asks if this crime was a total coincidence and the answer is of course no, just as the hope of finding suitable answers to the climate of indifference and racism is uncertain. (Cheick Tidiane Gaye, *Il Manifesto*, March 14, 2018, p. 6). 1 Cheikh Tidiane Gaye is a Senegalese writer and poet and a naturalised Italian citizen. He is well known in the field of Italian-language migrant literature. He translated Leopold Sèdar Senghor, the poet of *negritude* and Senegal's first president. ‘The proposals that politicians put forward regarding immigration are not reassuring.’ The article ends by expressing the extreme solitude felt by the Senegalese immigrant community in Florence: ‘All we can do is mourn our dead, alone, in a country that continues to expand thanks to the sweat and blood of millions of honest immigrants who feel Italian to all intents and purposes.’ This article stands out from the rest because it is the only one that gives a voice to an Italian of Senegalese origins. When it comes to the debate regarding immigrants, they are in actual fact notably absent; they are always the subject of the discussion but never the speaker. Another article of similar sensibility is that of the psychoanalyst Sarantis Thanopoulos , (*Il Manifesto*, March 31, 2018, p. 14) of Greek origins, who recalls the arrival of 20,000 Albanian immigrants in the Puglia region in 1991, penned up in *Stadio della Vittoria* stadium and kept in inhumane conditions until, exhausted, they agreed to be sent back to their country. Here too, the article ends with a moving conclusion: ‘We have lost our *aidòs*. In Ancient Greek, this meant the shame-discretion that comes from the reverential fear of damaging others and brings us to respect them.’

The real turning point in the perception and awareness of the issue of migration came with the publication of the photograph of the corpse of a drowned child washed up on a beach in all national

and local newspapers. It was a strong signal that stirred public opinion worldwide. The tendency to dramatise and hype the news increased with images of sea arrivals. The continuous coverage of the issue in the media, not always for objective ends, fostered the creation of a background climate tinged by the fear of migrants. In such an atmosphere, as we have seen when examining the articles, the newspapers are diametrically opposed, occupying a ridge that divides attitudes of openness and closure. Acting within their role as symbolic mediators, the media create social circumstances. Their adoption of the language of exclusion leaves its mark on society, encouraging, above all, social indifference. *La Repubblica* confirms this when it publishes fake news about migrants, such as (to name just a few of many examples): migrants live in luxury hotels' (The housing of immigrants in hotels is part of the CAS [*Centri di Accoglienza Straordinaria*], a system of "emergency reception centers").

Immigrants chase Italians away, refugees are fakes because they have smartphones, immigrants carry ebola, scabies and other 'medieval' illnesses etc. Despite rational arguments that disprove prejudices, convictions still probably continue to spread and resentment against immigrants is pervasively growing far and wide. The stakes we are playing for, today in the public arena, concern the quality of information and of democracy, with its power to be inclusive.

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Conversation with a hero*

Anna Rolli**

Abstract. The 2016 book *Conversazione con un eroe* [Conversation with a Hero] is the synthesis of 10 years of long conversations between the author and Simcha Rotem, in his home in Jerusalem, about peace and war, about the past and the present. Famous hero of the Warsaw ghetto uprising, during World War Two, under the cover name of "Kazik", he was a leader of the young Jews who were the first in Europe to rebel against the Nazi occupation. He was a Jewish fighter and a partisan and he saved thousand of human lives from deportation and death. After the war he immigrated to Israel to fight again and to work to defend and build the state of the Jews and to share the destiny of his people in their ancestral homeland. The article portrays part of his words of greatest historical interest.

Keywords: Heroes, Jewish fighters and partisans, World War Two, Warsaw ghetto uprising.

Śimḥah Rotem: ...and my brother was killed at the beginning, during the occupation of Poland by the Germans... they bombed us from the air and six members of the family were killed. My mother's parents, my brother and an aunt of mine were killed. I was wounded. That's it. This was the beginning...

Do you know Abba Kovner? When I finished my Memoir, I gave it to him to look at it. He said to me: "It is a police report", and I answered: "It's ok! I'm satisfied! It's you and me exactly!". He told me: "Please, write more about everything that happened...". "Abba I'm not a writer, I'm not a poet, I'm not going to do it! That's exactly what I can do. Short, clear, that's it, that's the book!"

...because, at that time I needed... you know, there were police all the time, in the mornings and evenings, so to get to the ghetto I needed a place that was nearby and didn't face... the concierge.

It was on the first floor, I went in and came out through the window... so the concierge couldn't see me... We looked for a place from where I could get in and out... that was the reason why I went from that place. It was a few meters to go down, and then I came back in the same way.

After curfew.

...there were places in which I was afraid of what I was going to do inside. Look, what the Germans did was this... the canals are 2,20 meters, the main canal 2,20 meters high. I didn't know the risk of it but I remember exactly when I was inside and I wanted to touch the sides because the stream was so strong that I was afraid that I was going to fall into it. I tried to hold on from one side to the other, I can only move a few centimeters, that's all.

What did the Germans do? They probably... maybe somebody told them that the Jews were using the canals, so they put gas inside... downstairs it is dark, you cannot see anything, nothing at all, really nothing, it's pitch dark night.

We took torches with us... electric torches... That is what we were using to make our way through. So it took a long time and I don't know how long I was moving through but it took a lot of time, that's what I remember, I went out and I was fed up...

The problem was how to get in and out, I mean even for a minute, because the Germans were standing every 150 meters. There was a place for the German soldiers to stay there all the time

* An expanded version of this text appeared in the book *Conversazione con un eroe* [Conversation with a Hero] (Rotem, 1994).

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because they had a warehouse... I was asked many times: why did we choose that place? It was very simple, we needed a place that we could use after curfew. So the only place we found was of somebody who lived in the parterre... the windows went out to the street, that's why we chose that place, I told him that I was not a Jew and he believed me at first, I told him that there were our friends in the underground that have gone inside the ghetto to do some business with the Jews - the Polish were doing it at the time, so it was easy for him to believe me - and now we were going to rescue them... suddenly the uprising broke out and they were stuck over there and we wanted to rescue them. So he helped us, but in the last minute, before I was going out he understood: they were very clever. He said: "You know, I think that you are a Jew", I answered: "You think what? No problem! I will convince you I am not, you know where I am going and I am coming back to you." So it was agreed between us that he would wait until I came back.

...maybe he didn't want to help Jews.

I told him that it was not true: "I will prove it to you, very simple, I will show you what I am. It wasn't me!" I told him: "I am going down and then I will return to you, and prove it to you!" But I didn't come back to him.

That was a bluff, of course, I didn't come back to him. Perhaps he didn't want to help Jews.

There is another time... I was staying together with Antek for a time in a flat, there was a Polish lady, and she was told that Antek was a Jew, somebody from the underground... and I was taking care of him, but after a month or maybe a little bit more, one day she said to me: "You know? I think you are a Jew too." I told her: "You know what? I can prove it to you." She said that, my pants fell down and she turned away. When I remember this I laugh. Look, you have to act immediately, give an answer. I said "Ok, no problem!" The pants fell down and I remained in there... She was ashamed. And then I decided that it was time to leave.

There were police aware and around after curfew and you couldn't be in the street. The Germans were shooting and after that they'd ask who you were. After shooting, after they had killed you...

I could leave this man, after the police was awake, I could go out through the window, so nobody could see me, I was immediately in the street, to the other side and hop there and that gentleman was waiting... with the two workers

...what I remember was, we went down immediately after curfew, then we walked for at least an hour and an half, maybe two, and then I went out and I couldn't recognize any street. Everything was destroyed. Anyway, I knew where I was, so more or less I had the direction where to go. And I didn't find anybody. No answer! We had a password and I was shouting. No answer at all! So I didn't know what to do, I was running like crazy, shouting, shouting, and then I decided, I sat in the ruins, I don't know how long I sat there, I decided I was not going back, I was staying, I would wait until the morning, the Germans will come, maybe I will succeed and kill somebody, maybe one, maybe nobody and that's it. I don't know how long I was sitting there and then suddenly I decided that I was going back to the people who were waiting for me, downstairs, the two workers and my friend who went with me, towards them, not to escape... I decided to go back... I came back, I went down, I remember I shouted: "Let's go! I didn't find anybody", and we began to go back. And then it happened... suddenly... I was feeling that... I suspected that somebody was inside, people, but I didn't know who, maybe the Germans. After a minute, maybe a second, you know, the time was... I shouted again the password we had and one of my friends came out, a girl which I knew, a ghetto fighter, with a group of other nine...

You can imagine, it was...

I don't know. You see it turned out to be so different... I don't know, I can't give you an answer, no or yes, I don't know. I just don't know. Look, I had another episode over there... when I went out, inside the ghetto, I met, immediately after that, two or three people, they were nearly dead, Jews, of course, inside the ghetto. First of all I asked them if they knew the ghetto fighters, maybe they had heard of them or they knew... they said that they didn't know anything, they hadn't seen anything or anybody, they didn't know. I told them: "Look, I am coming from the Aryan side just now, and if you wait for me I will take you with me" and, of course, I went and I was looking for

somebody, and when I came back they had disappeared. They didn't trust me probably, that's what I think, because: "Why not? I made them a proposition that I would take them with me. Then, inside, I was shouting and shouting and suddenly somebody began to talk to me, and it took me about 15 minutes, I suppose. Once I heard the voice from the left, second time I heard from the right, and then before me, and then after me. And I asked: "Where are you?", and she told me: "I have a broken leg, I'm lying somewhere". After 15 minutes I decided: "What can I do? I can't find her, I don't know!" There was no address of where to go, and so I went farther and I didn't find anybody, and I sat down and I suppose I was really, almost unconscious for sometime. I was fed up, I decided to sit there and wait, and then suddenly I said to myself: "No, I am going back!" This was the right decision, I went down... and my friends appeared, I knew all of them, all the group, of course. All of them, one by one.

It's unbelievable!

Sometimes I think about it, just unbelievable how things are working out, you never know. Everything finished, no chance for me to see anybody anymore, that's it and suddenly...

They told me that they were convinced that I was already dead. And if I was dead, it couldn't be possible that I was over there shouting. They told me – but they were not sure one hundred per cent – that now when I told them the story, they thought they had heard my voice but if a week had passed and I hadn't return, they were sure that I had died.

Anna Rolli: Would they ever think that you could abandon them?

Simḥah Rotem: No, I don't think so, nobody. They would have told me.

Between those ten there was one of my best friends. He was about a year younger than myself, I think. And I told him immediately... I was really thinking... the same minute I met them, we were happy to see each other, and then immediately I told him: "Look, now what you are going to do..." and I asked him if he knew if there were still other members of the organization. He answered: "Yes!" I told him: "Ok, go back, take with you another man, go back, tell all of them to come down, I will leave signs inside, and there you stay and wait until..." ...Because they began to ask me: "Do you have transportation, you have that, right?" And I said: "Yes, I have everything!"

What should I say: "No"? Look, I looked at them and they were almost dead, all of them, nothing to eat, nothing to drink, no water, nothing! It was not one day. So I got up in the morning from the inside and I went, I washed myself to look proper and then... I began to run, to look for some transportation, to organize everything to take them out. It's not something that would have been done by itself. And then I lost contact with this friend: Yitzhak Zuckerman, Antek. And I had to do everything alone, and somehow we succeeded but not one-hundred per cent. Sad story! What I can say about it: we did whatever was possible in those circumstances, Nothing more could be done. We did everything that was possible, and this friend of mine, Shlamek Schuster, finally he didn't go out. It's the saddest story! I didn't even know that he remained inside, I wasn't aware. Even if I had known that he was downstairs I wouldn't have waited. It was either nobody, this was the risk, or less. When I went out, I told them again and again that nobody was moving anywhere, all of them have to stay in that place until I came back. I couldn't tell them the time I'd be back, I couldn't tell them the day. I had no idea what I was going to do... Helpless!

Now, tell me another story, I thought about you too. Are you going to translate my Memoir ?

Anna Rolli: I have already translated it.

Simḥah Rotem: Look, what they achieved... if I went, I passed and I saw a living baby in the hands of a dead woman, mother probably - I suppose she was the mother - the mother dead already... holding this baby, I could only look at them and go farther, because I couldn't help them, I couldn't do anything. I couldn't take the baby. I couldn't take. Nobody would let me in downstairs, because the baby is crying... There were mothers who, unwillingly, when the Germans came... they had a baby... they covered their mouth and found them dead after a minute. Could you imagine something like this? I never saw it but I know it happened. This was the way... It was in those days.

I found no one, what I found was a voice of a woman. Finally I was looking for her, believe me,

I was looking for her. I was almost... I didn't know what to do. I heard from right and then from left, and then from back and forth, and I didn't know what to do. She told me: "My leg is broken", then I understood I couldn't do anything, I couldn't help her. So, in the end, and this is the truth, that I sat down there for I don't know how long. I have no idea. I saw that I was on the edge of the unconsciousness... I don't remember how long I sat there, but I think it was a long time. And then suddenly I remembered that I had left somebody waiting for me and I came and I decided to go back. Look, it was a miracle that we met downstairs... so here you have already another witness: Pnina... Pnina was the first person I met... Can you imagine such a meeting, how lucky we were at that moment?

Two years ago they built a monument in Warsaw .

So, you see? These are the names of the... fighters who went out, they were about forty or fifty, I don't remember exactly. The monument has existed for only two years, that's all... I gave them the names of the people I could remember, I had to look for them, but to tell you... not less anyway, but maybe there were some more, because here there are about forty written but I think they were fifty.

And ten were left inside, they didn't come out, because they didn't do exactly like I told them to do. I told them: "In no case...", when I met them the first time, before I went out to arrange everything... I told them, in no case were they allowed to move to another canal, and somebody decided that: "Never mind!" and then they sent my best colleague, my best friend to look for them. I told them: "Look, you have to stay here, in no case you are moving away because I don't know what is going to happen in the last minute. Who knows?" And then some people asked for permission downstairs... asked permission to go to another place, more convenient to stay and wait. They got permission... and they sent him to look after them. At first he refused to go, so they promised him that they would wait for him, but they didn't... they told me on the truck that there were some other people downstairs and so I didn't agree to wait anymore.

It's a tragedy, yeah, but that is what it was. The price was very high for it, I think there were at least ten people left inside maybe more, I don't know, nobody knows. And my friend, this boy, he was my age, he was younger than myself, a year younger I think...

I talked to him before I left... All of them wanted to know if I was ready and if everything was ready and I said "Yes!" because I knew that if I would tell them the truth it would be terrible. So I wanted them to believe that everything was almost ready and everything would be good... what to do?

...they sent me from the old city... back to that place and everybody was running to the opposite side and we were going to the Germans, it was crazy! After they urged me for sometime, I said: "Ok, if this is what you want..."

Because there was no changes to do it! It was what I believe and I told them! In a couple of hours the Germans would arrive and then what to do? To look for the documents or to save the lives of the people who were with me?

Anna Rolli: Marek Edelman wrote something different. He wrote a different story.

Śimḥah Rotem: What did he say?

Anna Rolli: He said, Kazik, that you didn't know that inside the box you had to look for there were any papers. There were no papers, there were no documents inside.

Śimḥah Rotem: Ok, that's what they said to me! So why did they send me there?

Anna Rolli: Didn't you know what was inside the box?

Śimḥah Rotem: No.

Anna Rolli: They didn't tell you later?

Śimḥah Rotem: I didn't even look for it, I didn't care about the box.

Anna Rolli: I know because I read your Memoir, but... afterwards they didn't tell you the truth?

Śimḥah Rotem: No.

Anna Rolli: Marek Edelman wrote in his book: in that box there were forty thousand dollars and a big bar of gold, that American Jewish community sent to Warsaw ghetto.

Śimḥah Rotem: That is probable! Yes, I suppose that's the truth.

Anna Rolli: They didn't tell you, they didn't want you to know the truth for security reasons. If you were arrested you couldn't talk about this, but Marek is very clear. . They sent you back, not for documents, not for papers... they needed gold to finance the war, they needed gold to buy weapons. This was the reason why they sent you back.

Śimḥah Rotem: Yes, he sent me back... I didn't want to go and finally I agreed, and I went with my girlfriend there. I had no idea about it! They didn't tell me, that's the truth, they didn't tell me about the money, and I wasn't looking for the box. I didn't look for it, I didn't get it, I didn't care about it. I didn't even look for it, when I went there I didn't go to look for it, I didn't care about it... at all.

The human being is the highest and holiest being that exists, all I know, if he is a human being, if he really is, because I can't consider the S.S. as human beings. They weren't to me... they were not human beings, human beings on two foot, that's all, not anything more, no human feelings, no human behavior... nothing! So I have no pity for the S.S. men and as such, because they were volunteers. It's not soldiers who have to go to the army. They volunteers to be S.S. men, to kill innocent people, to kill innocent children, to kill innocent women... so I have no pity for them at all!

In those years we tried to prepare ourselves and take revenge and kill as many... I think that we could do it! As I saw the things until today, we could do it! And then Abba Kovner went to Israel, at that time there was no Israel, there was Palestine. He went to Palestine to talk to important political figures, and then I don't know what happened, if somebody reported us, probably, I don't know! It was a big mistake because we could do it, there was no problem at all!. Anyway most of the time I was in Dachau. In Dachau, in the American prison, there were at that time about thirty thousand S.S.

Yes! yes! Or twenty-eight, I don't know, I didn't count them. S.S., yes! And because, you know, we wanted in the beginning to do something bigger than that... You know what happened: the war ended, so many people from other countries were coming into Germany. It took a very short time and there were the French, the English and the Americans, and the Russians... Yes, and Germany was divided. And we didn't want to kill somebody... innocent. We wanted only this: to be sure that we were killing only the S.S.

So, I don't know, in the last minute in Dachau I got a message that I had to run away because they were looking for me.

That is what I was told after that... I really don't know if that was true or they just didn't want to do it anymore. That I don't know.

In Nuremberg something was done. I was not in Nuremberg, I was in Dachau.

It was in June or July 1946. Something like that...

I have been in Dachau to prepare this... almost all the year, to prepare everything that should be done, like we have planned. And I thought we could do it with no problem, but you know... by the way, it was done in Nuremberg, and it could have been done also in Dachau only if we would have acted at the same time, at the same minute in Nuremberg and in Dachau... I was told, at that time, that they knew about us and I had to escape. They will come to arrest me. What they said is to go quickly, immediately, and that was a mistake!

We didn't want to kill anybody innocent... we gave up the plan of poisoning the water.

There was a bakery inside Dachau which prepared the bread for the S.S., only for them. That's how we were sure we were not going to kill innocents.

Look, we were... not only that... we decided that if we succeeded in doing it we were not going to run away, we were going to wait and... we were sure that they would arrest us and they would

put us on trial and so on, and we wanted to tell them why we had done it, we wanted all the world to know why we had done it, what we had done, because the S.S. were volunteers, not even soldiers, not the German army. They were volunteers!... We didn't see any reason why we shouldn't do it, why we shouldn't have to kill them.

So, no, it wasn't so sad, we were not going to kill innocent people, and God knows how many... no, we wanted to be one hundred per cent sure that we were killing only the S.S. men. There was a bakery and we prepared everything and we had the possibility to go inside and... really, one-hundred per cent we were going to do it, and the bread was only for the S.S. That's it!

They stopped us. Probably... somebody from Israel... I don't know if it was Ben-Gurion or it was somebody else... they thought that we shouldn't do it. Ok!

We were ready at the same time that Julek was ready, in Norimberg. I know that... Look, I know all of them... there were many colleagues, my friends, which were working on the same project in Nuremberg.

There was a bakery too, separate one... in Nuremberg also. That's what they did.

To poison the water channel, this was the first idea... and then we understood that we couldn't do it because we were going to kill innocent people, children, women, whoever. So we gave up and we went on the plan of poisoning the bread which was only for the S.S. in prison. Because also in Nuremberg there were S.S. in prison, also in Nuremberg.

Ok it's... look, I don't care, I think that it's a pity that we didn't do it.

Anna Rolli: Didn't you manage to kill some Nazi criminal?

Śimḥah Rotem: No, no, I didn't, no! I didn't succeed in killing even one of them. I am not ashamed to say the truth. If I had, I would have admitted it and said: "Yes, I did it!" No!

Anna Rolli: Because in Italy there was the Palestinian regiment, you know?

Śimḥah Rotem: That's true! That's true! They did it when they were in the British Army. During that time, from time to time they succeeded in killing... secretly... Yes! They did it! Yes, I know, I know exactly how the story was, but we had the problem... the plan was with water, that's true, and then when we began to think about it we understood that we were going to kill at the same time innocents...

human beings... people, women, children, everyone who uses water. So we decided for the bakery, because this was the bakery for the S.S. men. I couldn't give a guarantee that someone else would maybe take a piece of bread, that's true. But this bread was from a bakery that was only for the S.S. in the prison, only...

She told me that she finished the movie about me, about myself. She worked on it for one year, and she... few days ago she called me and she said: "Ok I have finished, and I want you to see the film!" And I said: "Ok, I am ready to see it."

So there are two possibilities: either we go there or she will come with the film here. So this still isn't clear, we can... I am ready to go to Poland... at the moment no, I don't think that I am ready to go... Ghina, she is ill and I won't leave her now, but I hope in another few days, maybe two weeks, she will be ok, then I will be ready to go.

I don't mind going to see the film and say: "Ok I have no objections at all!" or: "I have objections!" She is fair, she was here two weeks with the... sitting with me every day... here, outside.

...and then, in 1945 already, I was sent by Antek with my girlfriend, with Irena, to go through the front and to go to Gomulka and tell him that the situation was very bad and so on and so forth, and to our luck we went out... and the war ended...

Immediately, in the morning, and what I saw... the Russians and the Polish Army were there, so I didn't have to go far.

But, anyway, I decided that I had to see Gomulka so I went to Lublin. Gomulka received us, me and my girlfriend, and I reported to him. We talked to him for some time, in the beginning I thought that he didn't believe us... you know, they were very suspicious, so I saw in his eyes, in his

behavior, that he didn't believe me... I don't know what... He asked me if we wanted to go to eat with him and I said ok. I was hungry like... I don't know... so we went. He took both of us in his car and we went somewhere in the new Lublin, and he brought us to some place and when we went in suddenly somebody, more than one person, began to shout because they knew us, and then he understood that everything I had told him was true.

I went to Prime Minister Gomulka and told him about what I was asked to pass over to him and he said: "Ok, there is nothing to do now. It's a question of a few days." As far as I remember, exactly those were his words. It was a question of few days and Warsaw would be free. It was exactly like this, that's it, in short.

I was then living in Tel Aviv, my unit got a note that we have to go almost to Jerusalem. To go there at any price. Any army when it fights, it fights! I don't remember exactly, there were sixteen or nineteen panzer-automobiles. We have to go to... before Jerusalem there is a kibbutz called Malea Hamicha... and Kiriat Anavim, two kibbutzim, the first in the middle of Abu Gosh and Kiriat Anavim, the second one, nearer to Jerusalem.

Our mission was to go there, to one of them, to bring something to eat for the people in Jerusalem, as much as we could take with us. It is not like today that you have everything you can take with you. Also some ammunitions for the unit which would remain there and try to go into the city of Jerusalem and stay with the people in Jerusalem.

I myself, as a new immigrant here, I didn't know the situation exactly and what was going on, so we went out from some point and we began our way to Jerusalem.

We came to Abu Gosh, I saw some Arabs going here and there, not shooting... I didn't know what to do, I knew that the Arabs were our enemies and that you have to kill them, but I'm not a man to kill others so quickly... I didn't do it, never! I was very nervous about... killing somebody for me it's a problem, even if he is the enemy, so I was astonished, for some minutes I didn't know what to do! Because I was the last one, the one who closed the line of the panzers, the last one, all the others had disappeared... You know, when you are going all depends on the driver, and the distance had been growing and growing... I still remember this story and I will never forget... I didn't know what to do! Maybe somebody else would kill them, they were Arabs! I told myself it couldn't be true, if these people are going peacefully why should I kill them?

...The poor people get orders, they are never asked, I think so, never asked what they think, if they have their opinions and their way of seeing things. They have to obey and do what they are told to do or asked to do. I don't think that things have changed, today it is the same, in many ways...

In September 2009 I went to see him, he died in October.

I got up one day in the morning and I said to Ghina: "I am going to Poland." I don't remember exactly, it was about a month before he died. I had the feeling that that would be the last time I would see him. So I... my son, the older one, went with me... already then I didn't go alone anymore, it was after one time losing consciousness. A few weeks ago it happened to me again, here in Jerusalem... I was driving the car by myself in the city and suddenly I had the feeling that I didn't know where I was. Immediately I stopped the car, went out from the car, sat down, I didn't remember for how long, maybe ten – fifteen minutes, I sat there and then I decided I was fit to go, to drive home.

When they went out from the sewer canals and they were lying like dead people... I asked Marek: "You were my commander, why didn't you tell me what to do?" He said to me: "Look, I thought that you were the only one who knew what he was doing!"

He was a clever man, really a clever man!

I was a Zionist and he was in the Bund... they were not communists... socialist, that's right.

He wasn't against Israel. This is the mistake that Israel is making, because he was very worried about our situation, we talked about it many times. At that time, I mean, 40, 50 or 60 years ago he said to me: "How could you? You are endangered! You are surrounded!" At that time he was talking about one hundred millions Arabs. I told him: "Marek, what's the difference? If it is 10 millions or 100 millions?" Of course they outnumber us. There is no comparison, we know it. But I

think that we can survive, maybe we will come... I will be the happiest man alive if we will find a way to establish friendly relationships between Israel and Arabs, but this isn't the case, because the Arabs... what they really want to do - and I am convinced of this - is that they would like us to disappear. That is what they want, said openly, we have to disappear from this world and we are not going to do it, we are not going to commit suicide. For the time being, I don't know, maybe there will be such a day...

Anna Rolli: So Marek understood the problems of Israel.

Śimḥah Rotem: Yes, he understood very well and he was really worried about it. I said to him: "Look, it doesn't mean, it doesn't make any difference if it is 100 millions or 10 millions, it's almost the same, we are outnumbered." That's true, I know it.

Anna Rolli: Last time you told me that you asked Marek why he didn't give you orders when he came out from the sewer.

Śimḥah Rotem: That's right. About my behavior. Look, when, at this certain minute... there was a minute when nobody was coming out, I checked it myself and I was convinced that nobody else was coming...

I will begin a little bit sooner, when I met the people in the sewers, downstairs, I gave the order that under no circumstances they were allowed to move to other canals, they have to stay there. They said: "Look..." I said: "I know, I went all the way back and forth so I know where I am, that's the order, here you have to stay as long as needed!" because they asked me... they asked me if everything was prepared and so on... I wanted them to feel much better. There was nothing, nothing! But I wanted to give them a good feeling. I said: "Yes, everything is almost ready to take you out!" And one idiot, I call him "an idiot", a journalist, there was a Polish newspaper... I don't remember how it was... He asked me the question why it took me a week to do... to organize all the things. I decided not to answer, he was such an idiot, I was not going into a discussion. No reasons to give him the satisfaction that I was abused or something... no, he was an idiot, I didn't have anything in common with him if he thought so...

Tivia told me: "Stop!" Because there were people left inside and I had to make my decisions in seconds. I told you already and I will repeat it, and you can check it, even today if you go to Warsaw, or if you will go next year. I will take you over and there you will see... it was about 100 or 150 meters from Germans staying over there...

Why? I can explain it very clearly, why I had to do it, because there was no way, no other way. This was the only possibility, take it or leave it, I decided to take it... You can say everything, you know, but I wasn't stupid at all, I wasn't an idiot. I made my decisions, like I should have made them, and I don't regret anything, not then and not now. Who wants to see that I have to regret, it is his problem, not mine. My problem... I have no problem! Of course, I would prefer all of them alive, and it could have been if they would have followed exactly what I told them to do. But they didn't! Somebody else gave them the permission! How? How could they do something like this? They had talked to me, they knew my plans. They asked for permission... More of that, my best friend, he was sent to look for them. He didn't want to go, that's what they told me, people who were there listening. He didn't want to go because he remembered what I said: not to move. So he was told that we will wait for him. How could they say such a thing? Did they know in what situation...

You know? A commander - I don't know a better word now - shouted at me: "Kazik! Do you have a coverage?" I answered: "All the people around..." Not a stupid one!

Anna Rolli: Marek?

Śimḥah Rotem: No, there was somebody else. Marek was where I was, this is why I spoke about Marek. The ghetto was divided and he was from another place, so he said to me: "Kazik, do you have a coverage?" I answered: "Yes, all of them! You see?" And in the meantime, it was about 10 or 11 o'clock in the morning, people coming out were astonished, they were paralyzed. Warsaw

was a big city and people were going here and there... and they saw something that they had never seen in their life. I too had never seen it before: people coming out. And I was outside to look the Germans and to look who was coming from their side.

So I was walking around and then one man saw that it was finished, nobody was coming out, so I didn't ask anybody, I was running to the place from where they came out, shouting inside if there was somebody. No answer, I didn't see anyone. I gave the order: "We are going!"

When I went up to the truck they told me that there were people left. I said: "Ok, now I am the commander and we are going. I won't stay a minute longer!"

Anna Rolli: And Marek said nothing.

Śimḥah Rotem: Nothing! Nobody! Only Zivia... she said to me: "Wait!" I said to her: "I won't wait and I am the commander and you won't tell me what to do." I was sharp, it's written, I don't hide it. It's my responsibility what I did and you have it in the book. Believe me, until now I read many many books about the Shoah. I haven't seen anybody who takes responsibility clearly written: "Yeah, I did it!" I didn't find anybody who said: "Ok, I am responsible for all this!" But I had many talks with Marek, I told him: "Why didn't you think about it? In case if somebody... I blame you!" I told him: "Why didn't you see it?" I don't blame anyone, but what I say is that they should have obeyed to what I said, because I don't know, maybe... in fact... you have facts, that all of them who were downstairs, as I told them, I took them out. I didn't leave anyone.

He didn't say one word, I asked him: "Why didn't you take the command? You were my commander, you should..."

He said: "Look, I understood that you were the only one that knew what to do and what was going on", and that's true.

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Reviews

Conference at the University of Florence on the 70th Anniversary of the death of Enzo Bonaventura (1891-1948)

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Abstract. On April 13, 2018, in the anniversary of his assassination, a meeting was dedicated to Enzo Bonaventura at the *Aula Magna* of the Department of History, Archaeology, Geography, Art and Performance (*Dipartimento di Storia, Archeologia, Geografia, Arte e Spettacolo* [SAGAS]) of the University of Florence, Italy. Enzo Bonaventura was Professor of Psychology at the University of Florence (Department of Literature) until his expulsion under the racial laws of 1938, and at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Keywords: Enzo Bonaventura, University of Florence, Racial laws in Italy.

On 13 April, the anniversary of his assassination, a day of study was dedicated to Enzo Bonaventura, Professor of Psychology at the University of Florence (Faculty of Literature) until his expulsion under the racial laws of 1938, and at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, at the *Aula Magna* of the Department of History, Archaeology, Geography, Art and Performance (*Dipartimento di Storia, Archeologia, Geografia, Arte e Spettacolo S.A.G.A.S.*) in Florence.

Numerous institutions were represented by speakers including: Cristina Giachi, Deputy Mayor of Florence; Luigi Dei, Rector, University of Florence; Sandro De Bernardin, Ambassador and President of the Italian delegation to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) who emphasized the need for remembrance and the importance of collective memory to counter negationism and banalisation of the Shoah; Daniela Misul, President of the Jewish Community of Florence; Andrea Zorzi, Director of S.A.G.A.S. Department; and Professor David Meghnagi, curator of the conference and Culture Councillor for the Union of Italian Jewish Communities (UCEI).

The first address, given by Bonaventura's granddaughter Helly Bonaventura Snir, focused on the memories of his family and the attempt to understand why a man who had played such a central role in the history of psychology, first in Italy and later in Israel, had been so forgotten. She described how she had come to know about the importance of her grandfather's work only through his rediscovery by Professor Meghnagi. His books had lain untouched on the shelves of the family library, part of a far distant world. Bonaventura's research methods required opening dialogue between the different schools of thought of the scientific environment, which certainly made it

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convenient to put the man's work aside. This was accompanied by the closing of his department at the Hebrew University, the last place he studied.

The presentation by Professor Patrizia Guarnieri (University of Florence), who curate the conference with Professor Meghnagi, illustrated the importance of Bonaventura's research, the void that was created with the expulsion of professors of the "Jewish race" from universities under the 1938 Racial Laws, the development of Professor De Sarlo's laboratory in the Faculty of Literature and Philosophy where Bonaventura carried out his experiments, his transfer to Israel on a term contract, his return to Italy in 1947 for a year's sabbatical and, finally, his death on 13 April 1948 in Israel during a terrorist attack. Her address, the result of years of research, is particularly significant for its preeminent focus on demonstrating the effects of the decades of Fascism on the study of psychoanalysis in Italy, which was forced to follow the guidelines of Father Gemelli and Giovanni Gentile.

The technical aspects of Bonaventura's work and the results obtained in a laboratory setting were explained by Professor Caterina Primi (University of Florence) in a detailed and precise report which shed light on innovative and experimental aspects, including an overview of the instruments invented and used by the researcher himself.

Professor Ersilia Menesini (University of Florence) complemented the information by presenting Bonaventura, the developmental psychologist; referencing his work with disabled and vulnerable children whose intent was to create the men of tomorrow. Bonaventura revealed key elements in understanding the dynamics of development in children, through his pathological study of the delayed evolution of conscience and behaviour. This research was completed with the publishing of "*Manuale della psicologia evolutiva*" in 1930.

Dr. Michele Sarfatti (Fondazione CDEC, Milan) concentrated on the damage created by the expulsion of the Professors of the "Jewish race" from Italy's universities and the void thereby created whose consequences are still felt today.

A common theme, recurring in all the speakers' presentations, was Professor Meghnagi's work of historical reconstruction which, leading to the rediscovery of Bonaventura, has once again brought the attention of the scientific community to his contribution to the study of psychology in Italy, in all its complexity and innovation, and, in so doing, has reinstated that which had been removed.