

GIORNO DELLA MEMORIA 2010

VENERDÌ 22 GENNAIO - ORE 9:00
CONVEGNO INTERNAZIONALE

FIACCOLE DI LUCE UOMINI GIUSTI IN TEMPI OSCURI

Marek Edelman Vasilij Grossman Guelfo Zamboni

Programme

Wellcome addresses of the Authorities

Letizia Moratti, Mayor of Milan; **Manfredi Palmeri**, President of Milan City Council;
Leone Soued, President of the Jewish Community of Milan

Speeches

Gabriele Nissim

Writer and Chairman of Gariwo,
author of the book *Una bambina contro Stalin*

Antonio Ferrari

Journalist, editorialist
special correspondent of the Corriere della Sera

Konstanty Gebert

Journalist, Solidarnosc exponent

Adriano Dell'Asta

Professor of Russian language and literature
at the Università Cattolica of Milano and Brescia

Fedor Guber Grossman

Vasilij Grossman's son

Giuseppe Piperno

Chairman of UGEI

Moderator

Francesco Cataluccio

Senior Editor and Writer

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ASSOCIAZIONE
GIARDINO DEI GIUSTI
DI MILANO

THE SPEAKERS

Gabriele Nissim, an essayist, founded the Italian magazine "*L'Ottavo Giorno*" focussed on dissent in Eastern Europe, in 1982. For the networks of Canale 5 and the Italian-speaking Switzerland he directed many documentaries on the underground opposition to the Communist regimes, on the problems of post-Communism and the Jewish condition in the Eastern European Countries. He is the Chairman of the Gardens of the Righteous Worldwide Committee – Gariwo.

Antonio Ferrari, a journalist, editorialist, and special correspondent of the "Corriere della Sera", he has been committed for 26 years to cover the Middle East by following the Israeli-Palestinian issue, the wars in Iraq, the difficult balances in Lebanon, Syria and Jordan. He wrote several books including *Sami, una storia libanese*, *Islam sì, Islam no – Le colpe dei musulmani e le nostre* and he edited the book *Ebrei di Salonico - 1943* with Jannis Chrisafis and Alessandra Coppola.

Konstanty Gebert, a journalist and Jewish activist from Poland, he is one of the most important war reporters of various Polish dailies. In 1978 he was one of the main organizers of the so-called Flying university, a secret high education institution teaching the people on various subjects forbidden by the Polish Communist regime. In 1980 he joined the Solidarnosc Union. In 1989 he was one of the journalists accredited to the Polish Roundtable. Since 1990 he has been a member of the Polish Christian-Jewish Council. Since 1992 he has worked for "Gazeta Wyborcza", one of the greatest and more significant Polish dailies. For this newspaper he has been a correspondent during the war in Yugoslavia. In 1992 and 1993 he was also a consultant to Tadeusz Mazowiecki, the first Polish Head of government after the fall of the Wall and Special rapporteur of the UN Human Rights Commission for former Yugoslavia. In 1997 he also ran the Jewish-Polish monthly "Midrasz".

Adriano Dell'Asta, professor of Russian language and literature at the Università Cattolica of Brescia and Milan. Vicepresident of the Christian Russia Foundation, he is a member of the International Scientific Committee of the magazine «La Nuova Europa». He is a member of the Committee of Consultants of the international theological review "Communio" and of the magazine of the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile, "Humanitas". In his research activity he particularly deepened some core issues of the Russian culture in the XIX and XX Centuries.

Fedor Guber Grossman, the son of Grossman's late wife, Ol'ga Michajlovna Guber, legally adopted by the writer and become his heir.

Francesco Cataluccio, Senior Editor and writer, works with "Micromega", "Riga", the Polish quarterly "Zeszyty Literackie" (Literary Notebooks). Among other books, he wrote *Poland's Destiny in Europe 1700-1992 – The Age of Revolutions*, edited by E. Castelnuovo and V. Castronovo, Milan, Electa, 1991. He prefaced and editor *Literary texts and historical knowledge. Literature as a source*, Mondadori, Milan, 1986; B. Geremek's *Common Roots of Europe* in 1991 and Ch. Perechodnik's *Testament of a Jewish Ghetto Policeman* in 1996. Furthermore he published *L'immaturità*, Einaudi, Turin, 2004.

SUMMARY

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GUELFO ZAMBONI



Guelfo Zamboni was born in Santa Sofia, in the Romagna region of Italy, in 1897. During the Second World War he was Consul General of Italy in Nazi-occupied Salonika, home, in 1941, to the world's largest community of Sephardic Jews (56,000 people). Following his arrival in Salonika in February 1942, for several months the consul managed to prevent the Nazis from treating the city's Jews as they had the Polish and Ukrainian Jews over the previous months. But by early 1943 he was forced to restrict his efforts to the protection of Italian Jews; Eichmann had, in fact, sent his representative to Athens for the deportation of the Salonika community. Zamboni organized a transport that left Salonika in the night of 15 July, thus enabling Italian Jews to flee to Athens. And it was thanks to his efforts and to the false papers he had provided them with, that several scores of non-Italian Jews managed to escape on the same train. Zamboni had granted them Italian citizenship on the pretext of family ties. To save them from deportation, Zamboni wrote numerous telegrams to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, woke the head of the Italian delegation in the middle of the night and successfully obtained false identity documents for 280 Jews to reach Athens; the Greek capital was in the Italian-occupied zone so they were able to evade German control and thus deportation.

Guelfo Zamboni died in 1994 in Rome. In 1992 the Yad Vashem commission in Jerusalem awarded him the title of "Righteous among the Nations". Zamboni's rescue efforts were described by his colleague, Lucillo Merci, in a diary and taken up by Daniel Carpi, an Israeli historian of Italian origin. In an essay published by the University of Tel Aviv, Carpi traced the two and a half years between the arrival of the Germans in 1941 and the almost total annihilation of the Jewish community in 1943. He based his report on documents found in the "Archives of the Council General of Italy in Salonika" in the Farnesina. The tale of the consul, which went nearly unnoticed in our Country, returned to the limelight and was told in detail to the public in the book "Salonika's Jews 1943 – Italian humanity documented" published by the Italian Embassy in Greece and edited by Alessandra Coppola, Antonio Ferrari and Jannis Chrisafis. A theatrical work on the role of Guelfo Zamboni was based on this book.

From: http://www.gariwo.net/eng_new/index.php

Site navigation: The Righteous, Righteous, Righteous in the Holocaust, Guelfo Zamboni

http://www.gariwo.net/eng_new/giusti/giusto.php?cod=191&categoria=165&sopra=157&sotto=165

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

As Second World War broke up, fascist Italy declared war to Greece, but in May 1941 Salonika surrendered to the Wehrmacht and Greece was divided into three areas occupied by Germany, Italy and Bulgaria respectively.

The anti-Semitic persecution was one of the cornerstones of the occupation policy in the territories controlled by the Nazis: in six months only, between 15th March and 10th August 1943, nearly the whole Jewish community of Salonika was deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau. This provides the context for the diplomatic action of Consul General Guelfo Zamboni's and his successor Giuseppe Castruccio's.



From: Bozen Historical Archive

BOOKS

Daniel Carpi *Italian diplomatic documents on the history of the holocaust in Greece (1941 – 1943)* Diaspora Research Institute - Tel Aviv University, 1999;
Minna Rozen, *The last Ottoman Century and Beyond: the Jews in Turkey and the Balkans 1808-1945*. Vol. II, Tel Aviv University, 2005;

MAREK EDELMAN



Marek Edelman was born in 1919 into a Jewish family in Homel, in today's Belorussia. He studied medicine, became a well-known political activist and at a very young age joined the Bund, the Jewish socialist party of Russia, Lithuania and Poland. Deputy commander of the 1943 uprising in the Warsaw ghetto – which pitted the Jews in an uneven battle against the Nazi troops after four months' siege – Edelman stood out for his courage and determination. He managed to escape being rounded up by the SS by passing through a bunker in the Aryan part of the city along with a handful of survivors of the fighting forces. Recalling that experience he said: "I was young, I had a machine gun in my hand and I was defending the ghetto from the SS. It was them or us, there was no time for niceties. My only certainty was that against a dictatorship you can always and only fight. I have always believed that when a victim is oppressed, you have to side with them. You have to shelter and hide them, fearlessly, always standing up to those intent on crushing them". One year later, in August 1944, Marek and his men took part in the citywide Warsaw uprising. After the war he completed his medical studies and began working as a cardiologist. He identified with socialism with a human face, very distant from Stalinist thinking, and dreamed of a democratic Europe in which brotherhood would reign among peoples. After being hunted by the Nazis because of his Jewish roots, he was persecuted by the Communists because of his ideals. In 1968 his independence and freedom of thought lost him his job in the hospital where he worked and he was arrested several times. In the 1970s he took an active part in Solidarnosc, which struggled against the Communist dictatorship in Poland, becoming one of the movement's leaders. In 1989, when the regime fell, he was elected a member of the Diet, Poland's national parliament, and remained in office until 1993. During the Serbian siege, in the 1990s, he sided with the people of Sarajevo. He died in Warsaw on 2 October 2009

From: http://gariwo.net/eng_new/index.php

Site navigation: Righteous, Exemplary figures, Dissidents of totalitarianism, Marek Edelman
http://gariwo.net/eng_new/giusti/giusto.php?cod=349&categoria=192&sopra=158&sotto=192

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Before the war, Warsaw Jewish citizens were over 350,000, nearly 30% of the whole city populace, and they formed the biggest Jewish community not only in Poland but all over Europe. The Germans occupied Warsaw on 29th September 1940 and in October 1940 they ordered to establish the ghetto, which all Jewish citizens were compelled to move to. The ghetto was isolated from the rest of the town in the following month of November, by the means of 3-meter high a wall surmounted by barbed wire and strictly patrolled by the guards, so that the contacts with the rest of the town were made impossible. The ghetto residents who didn't die were deported to the Treblinka concentration camp. After three years, in 1943, the Jewish uprising was organized. Marek Edelman was one of the commanders of this revolt which, as he himself recalled, was handled by "200 poorly armed boys" against the powerful Third Reich army, but heroically lasted for three weeks. It was the first broad range armed action in the history of Nazi occupations.



Map taken from: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

BOOKS

Marek Edelman, Hanna Krall, ***Shielding the Flame: An Intimate Conversation With Dr. Marek Edelman, The Last Surviving Leader of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising***, Henry Holt & Company, 1986;

MOVIES on the Warsaw ghetto

Roman Polanski, ***The Pianist***, 2002
Jon Avnet, ***Uprising***, 2001

VASILIJ GROSSMAN



Of Jewish origin, Grossman studied physics and mathematics in Moscow and worked as a chemical engineer; he published his first book in 1934 – a novel in the "productivistic" prose style extolling the successes of industrialization – along with some less panegyric short stories, in particular about the civil war, which earned him the praise and encouragement of Gorky. During World War II he followed the Red Army all the way to Berlin as a correspondent for the military newspaper "Krasnaja Zvezda". His war reports and essays made him, along with I. Erenburg, the most popular journalist and correspondent of those years. But by 1946 one of his plays had been suppressed for ideological reasons. His novel *For a Just Cause* about Stalingrad (published in 1952) is an epic tale in the mold of Stalinist socialist realism, which he hoped would rectify his situation but despite initial acclaim, it too was later suppressed (Grossman was to re-elaborate it later). Meanwhile, the general situation had changed. These were the years of the persecution and physical liquidation of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee and the alleged "assassins in white coats" plot, which died down after Stalin's death. The censors also clamped down on the impressive Black Book – an idea of Albert Einstein – in which Grossman and Erenburg denounced the genocide of Jews in the Soviet territories occupied by the Nazis. The book was not to be published in its entirety until fifty years later. As for Grossman, in *Life and Fate* (1950-60) and the unfinished *Forever Flowing* (1953-61) - books "confiscated" by the KGB, circulated in the *samizdat* and published abroad – with intellectual rigor and literary talent, he pondered the ethical, philosophical and historical issues of the time: Man pitted against an omnipotent system in the ferocious century of totalitarianism.

From: http://www.gariwo.net/eng_new/index.php

Site navigation: The Righteous, Exemplary figures, Prominent figures in the Gulag, Vasily Grossman
http://www.gariwo.net/eng_new/giusti/giusto.php?cod=145&categoria=162&sopra=158&sotto=162

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

With the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, Russia went under Communist rule. In the Twenties one witnessed the beginning of the terror policy which characterized both Lenin's and Stalin's time: the Gulag system was created. One esteems 15 to 20 million people experienced the Soviet lagers scattered in the most inhospitable places. The regime established in the URSS featured the characteristics of a totalitarian system where power was in the hands of the Communist party identifying itself with the State and using ideology as a means to rule society. The control of the media and the all-powerful political police paralyzed the population by disseminating terror and curbing all sort of dissent. This was the climate in which Vasily Grossman wrote his works.



Map taken from *Gulag – Italia*

BOOKS

Vasilij Grossman, *Life and Fate*, NYRB Classics, 2006;
Vasilij Grossman, *Everything flows*, NYRB Classics, 2009;
Vasilij Grossman, *A writer at war: a Soviet journalist with the Red Army*, Vintage, 2007;
John Kard Garrard, Carol Garrard, *Bones of Berdichev: the Life and Fate of Vasily Grossman*, Free Press, 1996;

MOVIES

Roger Young, *Gulag*, USA, 1984