

Curtain falls on "Voices on Primo Levi"

MARINA MELCHIONDA (September 17, 2008)



Great success for the Centro Primo Levi Annual Symposium: an embracing event that led us all through the works, life, and thoughts of the famous Italian Jewish writer and chemist



The final session of the "Voices on Primo Levi" conference proved to be as interesting as the two sessions that preceded it. There was a consistent flow of people and a diverse audience at the Primo Levi Center.

The final evening of the conference was divided into two sessions. The first session began at 6:30 p.m., when the public was invited to watch "Primo Levi: An Inconvenient Witness" (1997), a short documentary made for "Tempo", produced by the Italian National Broadcasting company.

The documentary consisted of an interview with Levi, a famous Jewish writer and chemist, and revealed new aspects of his personality.

Levi was shown as a man of our times with issues, commitments, and doubts that are common to every human being.

His life did not end at Auschwitz. He went on to have a nice family, a child for whom he made toys, and a career as a chemist where he discovered the allure of new technologies.

During the interview, Levi did not hide his emotions when he recalled the moment when he bought his first computer and began to use it.

Those present in the audience seemed to be touched by his clear and often ironic testimony, which showed that, despite his sufferings in the Holocaust, he could still feel emotions. He did not die in the concentration camp. Yes, he was still a man.

Primo Levi was a man who left us with his passionate works that, from our point of view, are already considered classics.

The historic and political relevance of these works is still uncertain; this was one of the issues during the second session of the conference, "The Politics of Memory".

The debate over Levi's works was introduced by Natalia Indrimi, the center's director. A panel of four prominent speakers discussed the topic: Mark Grief (American Prospect, London Review of Books), Robert Weil (W.W. Norton and co-editor of the forthcoming complete works of Primo Levi), Andrea Fiano (CPL), and Alessandro Cassin.

Topics discussed included the relationship between history and literature in the Holocaust experience, the real political and social message Levi wanted to spread through his works, and the



boundary between politics, history, and literature in his works.

The participants discussed these topics from different and sometimes personal perspectives. They concluded that the significance of these works is not found in their remembrance of the past but through their contribution toward preventing similar catastrophes in the future.

Because history can only teach people who are determined to remember their past.

Source URL: <http://www.iitaly.org/magazine/focus/facts-stories/article/curtain-falls-voices-primo-levi>

Links

[1] <http://www.iitaly.org/files/primo-levi21221707675jpg>